



# Genesis 2011 - Lesson 39B

## Chapter 39:6b-20

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- After a brief pause in our study, we return to Joseph's situation in Potiphar's house
  - He has been made a slave by no fault of his own, but Joseph has evidently thrown himself into the work
    - He has become obedient to his new master just as he was to his father, Jacob
    - We learned last time that Joseph's diligence and obedience was an indication of his trust in God's sovereignty and a willingness to rest in God's promises
    - But then to accept that even negative circumstances are part of God's plan
  - You may have noticed that Joseph's obedience in the face of injustice is a great picture of Christ's obedience to the Father's wishes
    - Like Joseph, the Lord was appointed by God the Father to suffer injustice for the sake of a greater good

**Is. 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,**

**And our sorrows He carried;**

**Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,**

**Smitten of God, and afflicted.**

**Is. 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,**

**He was crushed for our iniquities;**

**The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,**

**And by His scourging we are healed.**

**Is. 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,**

**Each of us has turned to his own way;**

**But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all**

**To fall on Him.**

- What was the good that the Father intended when He crushed His Son on the cross?
  - Isaiah says Jesus was carrying the iniquity of sinners
- Likewise, Joseph is carrying the sin of his brothers, in the sense that his brothers' sin is responsible for placing Joseph in these circumstances
  - Just as our sin was responsible for putting Jesus on the cross
  - Nevertheless, both Jesus and Joseph accepted their situation with an obedient and trusting heart, knowing the Father knew best
- Finally, we also took note that despite obedience, Joseph's situation didn't get better – not at first
  - When we do the right thing, we might assume that only good outcomes will follow
    - But scripture and life tell us differently
    - Jesus' obedience led to a crucifixion
    - Our obedience may lead to great persecution
  - And Joseph's obedience led to further trials
    - We rejoin him at v.7 where he has gained complete authority in the master's house

- But the master's wife has taken notice of Joseph's appearance

**Gen. 39:6 ... Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.**

**Gen. 39:7 It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."**

**Gen. 39:8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.**

**Gen. 39:9 "There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"**

**Gen. 39:10 As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.**

- I read only the last part of v.6 to set the context for the rest of the passage
  - Joseph is described in terms nearly identical to the words used to describe his mother, Rachel
    - Joseph is in his early 20s, we assume, and he is handsome in form and appearance
    - These were the same words used for Rachel, so we must assume Joseph inherited his good looks from his mother
    - We can safely assume that Joseph's good looks were another reason his brothers were jealous of him
  - In Potiphar's house, Joseph's good looks are a distinct disadvantage however
    - Joseph's appearance leads Potiphar's wife to take an unhealthy interest in him
    - We learned earlier that Potiphar is a eunuch, which means he has a greatly reduced interest and capacity for intimate relations
      - This was the purpose of making a man a eunuch
      - It was believed to make a man a safer risk around the Pharaoh's harem of wives
    - Furthermore, a castrated man would have been seen as disqualified to hold a kingly rule over the nation
      - So Potiphar would have been made a eunuch to preclude him from seeking to overthrow Pharaoh and seize the throne
  - But this procedure also probably led Potiphar's wife to lose interest in her husband as well
    - So she has evidently sought other outlets to satisfy her desires
    - Why would a woman marry a eunuch in the first place?
    - Either she married before he took this position
    - Or she married for the money and power of his position
    - Or she had no choice since the marriage was arranged

- In any case, the wife eventually makes an overture to Joseph to commit adultery with her
  - Joseph's response is truly noble
    - He refuses the request, of course, because to do otherwise would have been a great sin
    - But notice the way in which he refuses
      - Joseph doesn't make excuses or try to soothe the woman's feelings
      - Instead, he states the reality of the situation and gives a clear and bold explanation for his choice
  - First, Joseph declares that were he to agree to her request, he would be sinning against Potiphar
    - As Joseph explained to the wife, Potiphar had complete trust in Joseph
    - He gave all that he had into Joseph's hands, making Joseph's authority equal to his own in the household
    - The only thing that has been withheld from Joseph are those things that are reserved to Potiphar, specifically his wife
      - So Joseph declares that he cannot lie with her, or else he sins against the trust of his master
  - Secondly, in v.9 Joseph correctly describes such an act as a great sin against God
    - Not only would his actions harm Potiphar, but they also harm his relationship with the Lord
    - God is also injured, in the sense that God's holiness demands that His people be holy as well
    - Even if it were possible to sin in such a way that Potiphar never knows about it, God will know and He will be angered by Joseph's sin
    - Joseph isn't about to risk offending a holy and just God
    - And neither should we
- Take a lesson here from Joseph, and I'm not referring to avoiding sin (I hope that part of the lesson is already clear to everyone)
  - The lesson we learn is how to understand the impact of sin and how to explain our actions to others
    - First, we must always understand that there is no such thing as a "victim-less" sin
      - Almost without exception, our sin will bring negative consequences to others
      - Just as Adam's choice in the garden enslaved the human race, each sin we commit bears consequences somewhere down the line
        - For ourselves and others
    - But even in those rare cases when we might sin in a way that has no impact on others, we are also always sinning against the Lord
      - Our sin is an offense to the God Who saves us

- To the God Who will judge us
- Imagine if you were scheduled to go before a judge next week for a verdict of some kind
  - And that judge says he will be monitoring your behavior in the meantime
  - And he will take your behavior into account before rendering his verdict
  - How would you behave during that week of waiting?
- How much more should we guard our behavior while we await the day of our judgment before the Lord, the Judge of all?
- Joseph understood his choices would have consequences for himself, for others and for his relationship with the Lord
  - And he wasn't willing to sacrifice those things he cherished for a few stolen moments of pleasure
- Secondly, notice how Joseph explains his choice to Potiphar's wife
  - He doesn't make excuses or try to soften the message
  - He tells her in clear and honest words that he cannot sin with her
    - Remember, she is the wife of the master, and as such she can be a serious threat to Joseph
    - Joseph knows this, of course, so we might expect him to find a diplomatic way to rebuff her
    - He could have used excuses, claimed to be worried about getting caught, or tried to rationalize reasons why it wouldn't be a good idea
  - Instead, Joseph called it like it was: it was sin and he wasn't willing to sin against Potiphar nor God
    - That kind of response is certain to prompt some conviction in Potiphar's wife
    - Joseph's words not only defended his choices but it also indicted her choices
  - And when we turn another person's sin around and allow it to convict them, inevitably it leads to anger and resentment
    - And hell hath no fury like a woman scorned by conviction
- We should endeavor to imitate Joseph, both in saying no to sin but also in the way we say no
  - Don't make excuses for doing the right thing in the hope of avoiding hurting someone's feelings
    - When someone else invites us to sin, they need to have their feelings hurt a little, in love of course
    - When you keep company with people who encourage you to do the wrong thing, you have a choice to make
      - Either help set them straight so you can enjoy their company without temptation to sin

- Or put an end to that company altogether, as Paul and others say, we should flee the enemy and flee immorality and flee youthful lusts
- If we don't follow Joseph in this way, we take great risks with our own walk and sanctification
  - When we negotiate with an offer to sin, we immediately begin to lose any advantage in our battle against the enemy and the flesh
  - Consider how Woman negotiated with temptation in the Garden
    - She debated the merits of the serpent's suggestion
    - She rationalized the benefits of the fruit
    - Eventually, she succumbed
  - What she should have said was what Joseph said
    - I know that this is sin
    - I know this sin will bring ruin to my husband and offends the Lord
    - And then put an end to the conversation
  - This is our best path as well
    - Don't feel any obligation to protect the feelings of someone who invites you into sin
    - Tell them you won't sin
    - Then tell them why you are determined to avoid sin
    - And encourage them to follow your example, in faith
- And of course, when we make these right choices and do the right thing, good things will always follow, correct?
  - Like we saw last time, despite doing the right thing Joseph will not see his circumstances improve
    - In fact, they will get worse
    - Once again, the scripture is calling us to a greater maturity in our understanding of what it means to be a disciple of the Christ
      - We are called to live according to the standards of a Kingdom that has not yet arrived on earth
      - As a result, our holiness offends the residents and powers of the fallen kingdom that surrounds us for now
      - And because we must offend, we must experience persecution, at least until the new Kingdom comes
  - If you feel this deal is unfair, then I must remind you once again of the deal our Lord received from the Father, which is pictured once again by Joseph
    - Jesus was tempted by the enemy just as Joseph was tempted here by Potiphar's wife
    - He was given the chance to have an earthly kingdom, given to Him by Satan
    - Jesus had only to repeat the sin of Adam, by sinning against the Father and giving authority to Satan instead

- As we know, Jesus refused the temptation to sin
- Instead, He called to mind the word of God and declared that Satan was wrong
- Joseph pictures the way Jesus confronted the temptation to sin head on, and declares in clear terms why He wouldn't accept that path
  - Just like Joseph, Jesus received all authority from the Father
  - Jesus had the complete trust and love of the Father
  - And had Jesus agreed to the enemy's temptations in the desert, as Joseph said in v.9, it would have been a great evil and sin against God
    - Jesus' obedience didn't earn an immediate relief from His persecution and trials
    - On the contrary, His unwillingness to meet Satan's demands ensured that Jesus would go to the cross
    - Because by His obedience, Jesus qualified Himself to become the perfect sacrifice necessary to atone for sin
  - Likewise, when Joseph made his declaration to Potiphar's wife, he ensured that his preferential treatment in Potiphar's house would end
    - Joseph didn't know what might happen
    - But his trust in the Lord meant he could rest in the knowledge that whatever might happen was according to God's plan

**Gen. 39:10** As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.

**Gen. 39:11** Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside.

**Gen. 39:12** She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

**Gen. 39:13** When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside,

**Gen. 39:14** she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed.

**Gen. 39:15** "When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside."

**Gen. 39:16** So she left his garment beside her until his master came home.

**Gen. 39:17** Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me;

**Gen. 39:18** and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside."

**Gen. 39:19** Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned.

**Gen. 39:20** So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

- As we expected, Potiphar's wife hasn't given up and she is determined to have her way with Joseph
  - As we read, she times her next advance for a moment when she and Joseph were alone in the house
    - She grabs onto him tightly demanding he agree to her request
    - In response, Joseph follows scripture's demands and literally flees temptation
      - There are times when the Bible's instructions to flee temptation are metaphoric, when flee means resist strongly
      - But there are also times when flee means flee
      - There is no substitute for separating yourself physically from a person, place or influence that causes us to sin
  - When he flees, she is left holding a piece of his clothing
    - Having been made a fool twice by Joseph, the wife decides to seek revenge by making a false accusation of Joseph
    - She uses the clothing to prove her case knowing that her word would not be challenged by the word of a slave
    - She makes up a story of having been sexually assaulted
  - Her accusation takes place in two parts
    - First she makes accusations before the rest of the servants to discredit Joseph in their eyes
      - In v.14 she includes the rest of the servants as co-victims with her
      - And she blames her husband publicly in front of the servants
    - Later when Potiphar comes home, she uses Joseph's clothing again to accuse him to Potiphar
      - And Potiphar's response is to imprison Joseph
      - This was actually a surprisingly mild response given the circumstances
    - More likely, Joseph should have been killed
      - I suspect that Potiphar's grace is an indication that he has some doubts about his wife's accusation
      - Or at the very least, it is evidence of God's grace in preserving Joseph in the midst of this trial
- So once again, Joseph does the right thing, yet his upright behavior lands him in greater trouble
  - But here again, the Lord is working through Joseph's circumstances
    - One small piece of evidence to indicate the Lord's work is the role Joseph's clothing played in this event
    - Remember that it was Joseph's coat that caused his brothers to have anger against him
      - And the coat became the tool they used to cover up their sin
    - Once again, Joseph's clothing has become the reason for Potiphar's wife to falsely accuse him



- And it became a tool to cover up her sin
- This detail is more than coincidence...it's God's signature in a way
  - It shows that Joseph's circumstances are part of a pattern that God created to reveal His presence
- In the same way that time and time again the birthright has been assigned to the younger over the older
  - The clothing is a clue telling us that God wants Joseph to experience more trials even as Joseph continues to act in obedience