

Joseph 4 - At Work in the World

Today we are going to see that Joseph's mission takes on a new dimension. Up until now, we have looked at Joseph while he has been in training, figuratively speaking. He has not had complete autonomy. Anyone with responsibilities is always accountable. Although, he was highly trusted and had great latitude to perform his responsibilities, he did not have power for self-determination or to initiate plans and policies as a free agent. His actions had been subject to the approval of his father, Jacob, Potiphar, to whom he had been sold in slavery, and then the keeper of the prison. Joseph is going into the next phase of his mission of preparing a place for Israel to grow. This phase will be active in the world where he will impact the whole ancient world. The challenge here is how do you perform when you finally do have control.

1. Bring your work with you in the pursuit of life.
 - "The harder I work the luckier I get."

The events of Joseph's life were not mere moments where he could check a box and say, "I did that," and was now qualified. He has spent years arriving at this point in his life. His mission, the building of momentum, and living a life of integrity had been simmering on the back burner for a number of years. Now, all these elements are going to launch him into his next role. There is a popular humorous sentiment that has been expressed in a variety of ways, that everything depends on luck and, the joke is, that the harder you work, the luckier you get. The victim mentality is tempted to excuse failure due to a lack of privilege. The self-centered mentality is tempted to think that we are entitled to whatever we want. The spiritual mentality will *look* for success in the paths where *God* leads us. The spiritual mentality is not looking for *our own*

success, but to do our part in what *God* is carrying out.

Ps 23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Ps 25:10 All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Prov 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

The success we enjoy is guaranteed, but not in personal worldly terms...and don't be so sure that what looks like worldly personal terms of wealth is success!

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

- God's timing.

God had His timing in the unfolding of events.

Gen 41:1-9 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.

2And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

3And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the *other* kine upon the brink of the river.

4And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

5And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one

stalk, rank and good.

6And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

7And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, *it was* a dream.

8And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but *there was* none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

9Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day...

Joseph had been in prison and hoped that the butler, whose dream of freedom he had interpreted for him, would put in a good word for him before Pharaoh. The butler had forgotten him and after two years God brought a dream to Pharaoh. The butler "is like," Oops! My bad!

However, a number of factors are brought into alignment here. The butler has had two years for him to see that Joseph had been right. His restoration was no fluke that went sour. It had a chance to be proven to be real and lasting.

Pharaoh had numerous counselors around him, but God had placed someone very close to him who he could trust. If one of the other counselors had spoken to him, would his counsel have carried as much weight as the man to whom he trusted his life from day to day?

God had worked in a way that the butler could see was His hand. There was not just some usual challenge but one that matched his very experience that *God* had given *him*.

By working through the butler, Joseph was confirmed to be a man of God. The butler was more credible in that he had nothing to gain since he was not making *himself* look good, but making someone *else* look good. Joseph would not be claiming anything which

would make him appear to have the bias of a self-promoter.

Prov 27:2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Joseph was no stranger to Egypt at this point. Also, he was not some common criminal in the common dungeon, but had a more elevated reputation being in the Pharaoh's prison. If Pharaoh had made any inquiry, he would have been told of his integrity.

- Joseph gave God the glory.

Gen 41:25-32 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

²⁶The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

²⁷And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

²⁸This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

²⁹Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

³⁰And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

³¹And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

³²And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Joseph attributed the ability to interpret dreams to God. He stayed on

mission, letting God get the glory. He didn't ask for any reward, but maintained his impartiality and integrity. He demonstrated that he had no self-interest but only interest in the truth.

Gen 41:33-36 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

³⁴Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

³⁵And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

³⁶And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

Joseph took his mission to the world and served faithfully, exercising his principles, not even knowing how it was going to play out to his and his family's blessing. We serve God exercising godliness, not knowing when it will have its effect. Stay on mission at your job, neighborhood, and family.

³⁷And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

³⁸And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

³⁹And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

⁴⁰Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

⁴¹And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

⁴²And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

⁴³And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

⁴⁴And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

- Joseph buys all of Egypt, Egypt's goods, and the Egyptians for Pharaoh.

Joseph proceeded to buy up food in store for the next seven years. When the famine hit, Joseph began to sell it off. In the first year of the famine, when the money failed, Joseph accepted the cattle in exchange for food. In the second year, he accepted their land and servitude in exchange for food. From that point on, they worked as vassals working the land and giving 20% of whatever they produced to the Pharaoh.

Gen 47:15-18,23-24 And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth.

¹⁶And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

¹⁷And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.

¹⁸When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is

not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands:

²³Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

²⁴And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

2. How to fulfill your mission while in the world

The question at this point is how we fulfill our mission in the world. Just being a good Christian goes a long way in carrying out our mission. It is important to not only go keep the basics in mind, but to also develop our mission while making sure that we avoid misapplying our mission.

- Basics

There are some things that are simply basic as live a holy, responsible life as we bear witness as we go through life wherever we go.

Matt 5:13-16 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

¹⁴Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Col 3:22-4:1 Servants, obey in all

things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

²³And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

²⁴Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

²⁵But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

2Thess 3:11-12 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

¹²Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

1Pet 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1Thess 4:3-4 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

⁴That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the

end of the world. Amen.

Rom 10:14-15 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

- Bear influence on the world.

Joseph is not the only one of his sort who served in the world. Daniel, Nehemiah, Cornelius, in the household of Caesar.

Daniel served four named kings, Nebuchadnezzar who went temporarily insane and was restored, Belshazzar who lost the Babylonian kingdom when he saw the writing on the wall, Darius who was happy to receive Daniel out of the lion's den, and Cyrus who would restore the Jews to the Promised Land. Daniel was a chief advisor to two of those.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer for the Persian king, Artaxerxes.

Cornelius was the centurion by whom the church was fully opened up to the Gentiles.

Paul spoke generally about the fact that Christianity had entered into the very household of Caesar.

Phil 4:22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

- Work within proper limits.

There are limitations to how we may impact the world.

We are not permitted to use worldly methods.

Rom 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,

holy, acceptable unto God, *which* is your reasonable service.

2And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Lev 10:1-2 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.

2And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

As much as we want to and ought to influence the affairs of our nation, it might seem strange that we are not to establish a Christian nation.

Luke 17:20-21 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

The Pharisees were correctly concerned about the Millennial Kingdom when Christ *will* be King over all the earth, but Jesus' response was to point out to them to be more concerned about the meantime. The concern for now is not to have Christ as King over the earth, but that the kingdom was active *in the believers*. We live in God's kingdom while we are in the world, but not as kings *over* the world.

We take our religious freedom somewhat for granted as though it such a widely understood concept. This was not always so in America. Although there is a lot to be thankful for in development of the church from the time of the reformation, there were painful struggles specifically in the birthing of religious

liberty. From the time of Constantine in the 300s AD, having a state church with ecclesiastical machinery seemed like an efficient way to promote the kingdom of God, but it was at the mercy of whoever controlled the state church. Anyone not conforming to the state church was considered heterodox, of *other belief*, as opposed to orthodox, or *right belief*. From the time of the Reformation in the 1500s each group that sought to bring Christianity back to a pure orthodoxy declared others who were trying to do the same thing to be heretic. When the reformers came into power, they tried to suppress all the others. The problem of being the official church sanctioned by the state was at the root of this problem. The oppressed came to America, but as long as any group sought to be the state sanctioned church, the problem of persecution just reared up again. In state churches, since baptism was not something an infant could choose, parents were considered to be child neglecters by not baptizing them. Hence, state churches thought that they could impose faith on people. Thomas Armitage wrote, "the Puritans came to this country 'to worship God according to their own consciences, and to prevent other people from worshiping him according to theirs.'" One of the unique things about Baptists was that faith could not be imposed on anyone, so they never sought to establish a state church. Driven out of Massachusetts, Baptists moved to the area that became the colony of Rhode Island and created the first government that kept the state out of the hands of the hands of the church and the church out of the hands of the government. That same struggle kept occurring all over the colonies for the next 150+ years as religious liberty became part of the great freedom encoded in the Bill of Rights with no state church. The Baptists didn't want to become the new state church and it is guaranteed that if they had become the state church, oppression would infect it.

The more we are successful in bringing people to Christ, the more influence we will have over the policies

of government, even though government itself remains secular. Our job is not to *take over* government, but to be active in government while requiring that those who join God's kingdom do so voluntarily in a church. We invite people to join the kingdom, but we do not impose the kingdom on the people.

This was the example of Joseph. He lived righteously and did his job. When he was called up by Pharaoh, Joseph brought the influence of God into the kingdom of Pharaoh. This will prove itself out in the next part of Joseph's work when his brothers show up. We have this same job today, calling people to the kingdom of God while we work in the kingdoms of the world. This is important because it can be so frustrating to hear what the world is doing. Our job is to do what we can in the world, but to focus on what only we, as a church can do: win souls for the kingdom of God. After the adoption of the United States Constitution, one Protestant denomination held it (and therefore all governments beneath it) to be immoral, and participation in such a government to be likewise immoral, because the Constitution contained no recognition of Christ as the King of Nations. This will be true when the Millennium comes when Christ *will* be king of the nations. But, until that day comes, we watch and work and rescue people from the world.

Luke 19:11-13 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

We stay occupied, or keep busy, living as responsible citizens, witnessing as we go, serving God faithfully at work

in God's church.

1. Bring your work with you in the pursuit of life. Ps 23:3, 25:10, Prov 3:6, Rom 8:28, Gen 41:1-9, Prov 27:2, Gen 41:25-36, 47:15-18,23-24
2. How to fulfill your mission while in the world. Matt 5:13-16, Col 3:22-4:1, 2Thess 3:11-12, 1Pet 2:12, 1Thess 4:3-4, Matt 28:18-20, Rom 10:14-15, Phil 4:22, Rom 12:1-2, Lev 10:1-2, Luke 17:20-21, 19:11-13