

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**

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**August 25, 2024**

**JOSEPH: Our God Is Always Faithful (Faithful in Temptation)**

**Genesis 39:1-20**

This morning, we are continuing our study on the life of Joseph. And what we have seen so far is that this family is deeply broken by sin. Joseph had 11 brothers and 10 of them belonged in federal prison. Last week, we saw them sell Joseph as a slave to a group of merchants who were heading to Egypt.

This morning, we will see that, in the midst of all the brokenness and sin, God was with Joseph and was faithful to him. We will also see that Joseph was faithful to God.

But, before we dig into our next text, you might notice that we skipped chapter 38. It doesn't focus on Joseph. It focuses on Joseph's brother, Judah.

After Joseph was sold into slavery, his brother, Judah, left the family behind. He married a Canaanite woman and had 3 sons, and then his wife died. One of his sons also married a Canaanite woman whose name was Tamar.

Judah's son was so wicked that God killed him before he and Tamar could have children. So, Judah's second son married her. He was also so wicked that God killed him before they could have children. Judah promised that he would send his youngest son to marry Tamar, but he never did. That left Tamar destitute and without any hope for her future.

So, Tamar made a plan. She heard that Judah was going to check on his flocks. She dressed up like a local prostitute and positioned herself alongside the road that Judah was traveling. Given Judah's track record, she was banking on the fact that he would choose sin, and she was right. Judah told her he would give her a young goat for her services, but he didn't have one with him. So, he gave her a security deposit in the form of his shepherd's staff and his signet, which was like an ancient form of ID.

Judah went his way, and so did Tamar. She wound up pregnant, and when Judah heard about it, he insisted she be put to death for her sin. As he stands in front of the crowd, he demands to know what filthy man would do this to a widowed woman. And, in the original mic-drop moment, Tamar produced Judah's staff and signet and said, "The man who owns these!"

The story ends with Tamar giving birth to twins, Perez and Zerah. It's a dark story. The story of Judah provides a complete contrast to the story of Joseph we will study this morning. Where Judah continued down the pattern of sin that characterized the sons of Jacob, Joseph stops that pattern by resisting temptation and refusing to compromise. Where Judah was wicked and completely unfaithful to God, Joseph was a man of integrity who lived with God at the center of all he did.

And that brings us to our text for this morning.

**Genesis 39:1–6**

***Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and***

**attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.**

Joseph is sold to Potiphar, the captain of the guard in Egypt. Some scholars believe Pharaoh would have been the official who oversaw the execution of criminals and political enemies of Pharaoh. Basically, Potiphar was a hard man who wasn't afraid to kill you if he thought you did something wrong. And you think your boss is tough!

But, over the course of what was likely 5 or 6 years, Joseph thrived in Potiphar's house. We will look more closely at this next week, but just notice what this section is emphasizing: The LORD was with Joseph and the LORD was the one who caused him to succeed.

### **Genesis 39:6-12**

**Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" 10 And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, 12 she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.**

Notice the contrast to Judah. Joseph is a man of integrity who lives with God at the center of everything he does. He honors God by resisting temptation. Apart from Jesus Himself, Joseph may provide the most powerful example in the entire Bible of what it looks like to face temptation and refuse to sin.

And, since temptation is part of all our lives, it's worthwhile for us to dive into Joseph's example and see what there is for us to learn.

Let's start by seeing how Joseph's temptation mirrors our own battle with temptation.

#### 1. The Enemy Desires You

**6 Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph**

Joseph was handsome and the lady of the house noticed. She cast her eyes on Joseph. When she walked into a room, she looked around to see if Joseph was there. She had a hunger, a desire, and was looking to satisfy it with him. Be careful, I'm not saying Potiphar's wife was the devil but, she was an instrument through which the devil was working, and, in a way, she is analogous to the great tempter of our souls.

And you might not feel beautiful or handsome and you might not think you are desirable. But there is an enemy who has a hunger that he wants to satisfy with you.

1 Peter 5:8

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

You are living your life in the crosshairs of the devil himself. He is like a hungry lion who wants to devour you. He notices you and desires to have you. Temptation is the invitation to be the enemy's next meal.

## 2. The Enemy is Aggressive

***7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me."***

This is an astonishing scene. The approach of Potiphar's wife is shockingly aggressive. But she is no more aggressive than the work of the enemy in our own lives. I'm afraid that our culture has become so desensitized to sin that we often don't recognize how pervasive temptation is in our lives. But everywhere you look, there are blatant appeals to sin.

- When you open social media, the temptation to gossip and slander are aggressively pursuing you.
- When you enter into conversations about your teachers or your boss, complaining and disrespect are aggressively pursuing you.
- When you look on Amazon, materialism and greed and discontentment are aggressively pursuing you.

The enemy is aggressively seeking to devour your life. Temptation is on every side.

## 3. The Enemy is Persistent

***10 And as she spoke to Joseph day after day***

Mrs. Potiphar wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. Once she set her sights on Joseph, she pursued him day after day. Temptation wasn't a one-and-done ordeal for Joseph. It never is.

There's a phrase in Hebrews 12:1 about a certain kind of sin we all have. It's called the "sin which clings so closely." It's the area in your life where you are most tempted to sin, the area you find it most difficult to say "no." Whatever that place is, it's the place where the enemy meets you every single day. It's the place where you can identify with Joseph.

You may have said "no" yesterday and you might say "no" today, but our enemy never grows tired of setting an opportunity to sin before your heart. Temptation is persistent.

## 4. The Enemy is Setting a Trap

***11 But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, 12 she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me."***

One day, Joseph was just doing his job. And that's when she saw her chance to set the trap. It was all or nothing. She sprung on him, grabbed hold of his outer garment, and urged him to sin with her. Now, some people make a point to say that Joseph should not have been alone, but the reality is that he was a slave. He didn't have the luxury to call off work or avoid doing his job. It's also very possible that Potiphar's wife is the one who sent the other men out of the house. At any rate, she waited and schemed and set her trap.

And it's not overly dramatic at all to say that the enemy of God and your soul is setting a trap for you right now. Beware. Be sober-minded. Be serious in your fight against sin.

The story of Joseph is your story and mine. We have an enemy who desires to devour us. He's aggressive and persistent and he's setting a trap for each of us at this very minute.

And he powerfully exemplifies the truth that we do not have to give in to sin. We can stop the patterns of sin that have plagues our families, our peers, and our very own lives.

That brings us to the big idea we see in Joseph's battle with temptation.

***Big Idea: When we are tempted, we need the Lord to empower righteous attitudes and actions toward sin.***

Now, let me show you where you see that in our text.

The LORD was at work in and through Joseph.

***39:2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man,  
39:3 ... the LORD was with him...the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.***

The secret of Joseph's success is found in 5 simple words: The LORD was with Joseph. Joseph wasn't made of different stuff than you and me or his brothers. It wasn't Joseph's inherent goodness that caused him to stand firm in the face of temptation. It was the gracious work of the Lord in and through Joseph that made him what he was.

Friend, you are no match against sin. If you rely on your own strength to fight against the enemy, you will lose every time. That's why you need Jesus. And you don't just need Him, you have Him if you are willing to place your faith and trust in Him.

Listen to Hebrews 4:15-16 [talking about Jesus] *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Jesus understands and has experienced every temptation you will ever face. And because He never sinned, He knows exactly how to overcome that specific area of temptation in you. If you will come to Him through faith, He will give you the grace and mercy we need to fight the good fight against sin. He will be with you just as He was with Joseph if you will look to Him in faith. That means we don't fight sin by fixating on sin or depending on self. We fight sin by looking to Jesus. Only Jesus can conquer sin, so look to Jesus.

And, as Jesus lives in you, He transforms your attitude toward sin in a way that transforms your actions.

## THE LORD'S WORK IN JOSEPH'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN

### 1. Joseph Understood That Sin Ruins Relationships

***8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge.***

**9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife.**

Joseph clearly respected Potiphar's authority and knew that Potiphar trusted him. He also knew that this act of sin would ruin a relationship God had clearly blessed.

He was able to resist the temptation for momentary pleasure by considering the devastating effect it would have on his relationship with Potiphar.

And that's a powerful deterrent to temptation. If you value the relationships God has placed in your life, you need to know that sin will ruin those very relationships. Anger will ruin your relationship with your children. Greed will ruin your relationship with your coworkers. Gossip will ruin your relationship with your friends. Lust will ruin your relationship with your spouse. Sin ruins our relationships. That's one of the very first pictures we get of sin in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony before sin entered their lives. The moment they gave into temptation, shame and separation came between them and the rest is history.

Joseph fought temptation by thinking rightly about the impact his sin would have on his relationship with his master.

## 2. Joseph Understood That Sin Is Wickedness

**9 How then can I do this great wickedness...**

Joseph saw sin for what it is - wickedness. One of the reasons we are willing to succumb to temptation is that we have become experts at marginalizing and minimizing our sin. We think of lust as normal human behavior. We think of lying as slightly bending the truth. We think of gossip as informing our friends. We think of greed as motivation to be successful.

Listen, friends, sin is wickedness in God's eyes, and we should pray for Jesus to open our hearts and help us see sin the way God sees it.

But there's something else going on here. Prepare to have your mind blown by my scholarly insights. The word wickedness is another word for bad. Sin is bad. That's really deep, isn't it? Sin is bad. But it would transform our lives if we truly believed that God set boundaries around sin precisely because it is bad, which means it's bad for you.

God is a loving and gracious God. He isn't out to ruin our lives, He's out to redeem and renew our lives in Christ. And one reason He calls us out of sin is because it's bad for us. His commands aren't restrictive; they are protective. He wants you to have joy and satisfaction and eternal pleasure. And He knows that sin will rob you of those very things.

What keeps you from drinking poison? Is it the taste? Or is it that you believe it's bad for you? We need Jesus to transform our hearts to see sin as the poison that it is.

The third attitude Joseph had toward sin was that

## 3. Joseph Knew That Sin Is Always Against God

**9 How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"**

Joseph understood that he wouldn't just be sinning against Potiphar and his wife, he would be sinning against God.

We talked about this a little last week. We are all under the authority of God. That means when we sin, we are rebelling against the authority of God on our lives. In that way, all sin is ultimately against God. It seeks to rob Him of glory by pursuing sinful pleasure rather than the pleasure God has in store for those who love and trust Him. Sin is always against God.

Just think how that would change the way you see your sin. When you lie on your taxes, you aren't just lying to the government, you are lying to God. When you take something that doesn't belong to you, you are attempting to steal from the God who owns everything. When you complain about your leaders, you are murmuring against the God who put them in authority over you.

Joseph understood that all sin is sin against God. And in the moment of temptation, he doesn't primarily see a beautiful woman, he sees His glorious God.

The Lord was with Joseph, working in and through Him to transform His attitude towards sin. And the Lord's transformation of his attitude led to a transformation of his actions.

## THE LORD'S WORK IN JOSEPH'S ACTIONS TOWARD SIN

### 1. Joseph was Decisive

***7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused***

Don't overlook this detail. Joseph didn't sin because Joseph decided not to sin. He made up his mind that he wouldn't do it. And that's what will keep you from sin, as well. Romans 8 tells us that one of the works of the Holy Spirit in our lives is that He stirs us to make war against sin.

And some of us who have toyed around with temptation and sin need to simply make up our minds to say "no" to sin in advance. Again, I'm not talking about self-resolve that depends on our own power. I'm talking about a faith-filled, Christ-centered resolve that genuinely believes Jesus will give us His power to fight against sin.

What would it look like today if you approached the sins that plague your life and, through dependence on Jesus, simply said, "I'm not going to live like that anymore. Jesus lives in me, and I'm stepping away from sin by His power in me."

### 2. Joseph Avoided Temptation

***10 And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.***

That last phrase reveals a strategy Joseph employed in fighting sin. He not only refused to lie with Potiphar's wife, but he refused to even be with her. As much as he was able, he avoided her.

And this is about as practical as it gets. When we have made up our minds not to cross into sin, we don't live a life trying to get as close as we possibly can. Many of us fall into sin because we live our lives trying to barely stay on this side of the line.

- In the purity of our dating relationships, we try to define how far is too far and then we get as close as we can.
- In our integrity at work, we try to define a line between what is right and wrong and then we get as close as we can.
- In our honesty with our spouse, we try to define a line between the truth and lie and then we get as close as we can.

And, when you live a life that constantly flirts with the line of sin, it's just a matter of time before you find yourself over the line. Your balance just isn't that good. As a matter of fact, Christ calls us to a life that pursues righteousness. So, if you are trying to get as close to the line of sin without crossing over, that means you aren't pursuing righteousness and that means you've already fallen into sin.

### 3. Joseph Valued Righteousness More

***Gen 39:11-20 11 But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, 12 she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. 13 And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, 14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. 15 And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house." 16 Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, 17 and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. 18 But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house." 19 As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. 20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.***

When the temptress finally corners Joseph and grabs hold of him, he leaves his garment in her hand. This is the second robe that Joseph has lost in this story. Some commentators think it is possible that Joseph wouldn't have had on any other clothes but maybe a loincloth, so he basically ran out of the house without even the clothes on his back. He left behind the only possession that was actually his.

He ran out of the house. In a sense, he left his place of work. He left his success and his career. He left the promise of temporary pleasure. Why? He valued righteousness more...more than his possessions, more than temporary pleasure, more than his job, even more than his reputation. He acted like something was more valuable to him than anything else...the Lord, His Kingdom, His righteousness.

And, when you value righteousness more than those things, you can say 'no' to the temptation to sin.

And that's the work that Jesus does in the hearts of those who trust Him. He transforms our attitude and actions towards sin by giving us His heart. A heart that desires His kingdom and His righteousness more than we value the pleasures of sin for a season.

And that kind of life isn't always easy, even if it's right. Joseph lost his job. He lost what little freedom he had. He lost his reputation. But he kept His integrity. And the Lord was with him.

When we are tempted, we need the Lord to empower righteous attitudes and actions toward sin.

And before we leave, I know I'm in a room full of people who have already blown it. So, what word do we have for all of us who identify more with Judah than Joseph? I'm glad you asked.

2000 years after Judah sinned with Tamar, Jesus came into this world to provide forgiveness for sinners like us. And, in Matthew 1 we find the family tree of Jesus. He came from the family of Abraham. And do you know which one of Jacob's sons is in the family tree of Jesus?

Matthew 1:2–3

*Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar...*

Jesus was born from the family of Judah. So, for all of us who have already blown it, hear the good news of Jesus: Jesus wants to have sinners in His family. He came to forgive. He came to redeem. He came to restore people like Judah just as much as He came to strengthen people like Joseph.