

That Isn't Fair! Suffering for Doing What is Right

Genesis 39

As Genesis 39 opens, Joseph is in slavery in Egypt. That's bad, but he's about to go *from the frying pan into the fire!* Anyone who has ever been punished for doing what is right will empathize with our hero this morning, and will be encouraged to trust God more.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Joseph ends up in prison

- *Joseph, in slavery in Egypt, is blessed by God (1-6)*
- *Potiphar's wife pursues Joseph for sex, but he refuses (7-12)*
- *She accuses him of sexual assault; he is imprisoned (13-20)*

P.S. Joseph is blessed by God in prison (21-23)

Lessons for Life from a Contemporary-Sounding Story

- *Joseph is a model of moral strength in tempting circumstances.*
- *Our faith in God is strengthened each time we resist sin.*
- *God rewards those who deny sin and self, and follow Him.*



When you suffer for doing what is right...

Digging Deeper

1. Society today lacks moral direction. Promiscuity is the norm. 'If it feels good, do it' is the 'moral compass' for a generation. Joseph's commitment to sexual purity flies in the face of this self-destructive ethic. What factors in Joseph's life would have heightened the lure of temptation to have sex with Potiphar's wife? How did he 'fight' her tempting advances?
2. This section of the 'Joseph narrative' in Genesis develops in three 'scenes:' Rising in power and influence as a servant in Potiphar's house; resisting the advances of Potiphar's wife and being falsely accused; being thrown in prison where he rises in power and influence. Joseph is a man of godly character, as has been seen before, yet for the second time, he suffers for doing what is right. Does this seem 'unfair' to you? What purposes might God have for allowing the righteous to suffer?
3. Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of unwanted sexual advances. Where have we seen this in recent national events? How should we as Christians respond to charges of sexual assault in a "Me-too Movement" environment?
4. Have you ever been falsely accused of doing wrong, when you knew you had done what was right? How did it make you feel? Did you feel the temptation to get back at your accusers? If you did gain revenge, how did it make you feel? What life lessons can we learn through suffering for Christ?
5. Behind this whole episode is the faithful hand of God. To get a perspective on His 'unseen' role when we face suffering, read 1 Pet 2.19-20; Matt 5.10-12; James 1.2-4; and 1 Cor. 10.13. In the world today, countless believers endure hardship for their faith. Often, just the 'circumstances of life' seem to be against us, and we wonder why, if we are seeking to follow the Lord, He does not 'smooth the way' for us! What do these scriptures tell us about God's awareness of our plight, the purposes for our suffering, and the rewards for enduring trials for Him?