

The High Cost Of Honesty

*“Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison,
the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.”*

Genesis 39:20 (NIV)

The old story of Joseph is familiar to many of us who grew up in Sunday School and paid attention to our teachers. Joseph was God’s child and, as such, the Lord had His hand on the man in spite of the many difficulties the man suffered.

The context to our verse today is the story of how Joseph’s master’s wife sought to seduce him on numerous occasions. When her attempts to get Joseph to compromise his morals failed, she lied about him and, in anger, his master had him thrown into prison.

Looking at the story we are tempted to say that it was not fair for Joseph to suffer for being honest. We must acknowledge that there is some merit to such a claim.

Joseph paid for being honest and morally pure. When his master’s wife approached him asking him to commit adultery with her, he argued against such a sin and said, Genesis 39:9 (NIV)

“No one is greater in this house than I am.
My master has withheld nothing

from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”

Joseph rightly saw that if he gave in to the temptation he would be sinning first against God and only secondly against his master. The powerful incentive here for Joseph is that he would not do what God had forbidden. He insisted on being upright and morally pure. At the time Joseph did not see into the future and know the terrible consequences that were to occur by being honest.

It is fascinating that the text tells us that the very prison into which Joseph was thrown was that which held the king’s prisoners. It mattered little to Joseph. Prison is prison regardless of who is locked up with you. Yet God was in the matter and sovereignly overruled things so that—in the specific prison where Joseph was put—he would meet Pharaoh’s servant and ultimately Pharaoh himself. So in the suffering God was at work for good. First, Joseph’s master was blessed to have such a

slave as Joseph. Then the prisoners were blessed because Joseph organized the prisoners wisely and justly.

In prison Joseph met a servant of Pharaoh and that man would be the means not only of getting Joseph out of prison but of bringing Joseph to Pharaoh’s attention. That fact led to Joseph being the commander of the entire nation of Egypt (Genesis 41:37-46). The route to Joseph being so honoured was filled with suffering, but finally God vindicated him and his life was given back to him (Acts 7:9-10).

Today if you are suffering because of your honesty, you are in good company. Joseph, like Jesus, suffered greatly for having an honest heart and life. Do not think the Lord has deserted you. In His good time you shall be lifted up by Him. You may wait years as Joseph did, but in the end the Lord will reveal to you the reasons for the sorrow and He shall lead you to glory.

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