

Genesis 39:6b-12, 16-23

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"⁸ But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care.⁹ 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?"¹⁰ And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.¹¹ One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside.¹² She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house...¹⁶ She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home.¹⁷ Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me.¹⁸ But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."¹⁹ When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger.²⁰ Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison,²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.²² So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.²³ The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Handle Opposition by having Faith in the LORD your God.

1. Be Prepared Day in and Out
2. Confess Your Faith in Word and Deed
3. Know that God will reward your faithfulness

In a way, it was just a matter of time. Joseph had been thrust into a pagan world. He was a young man, a slave, a servant in the foreign land of Egypt. At some point being a God-fearing young man in a pagan world a major conflict of interests was seemed like it was just bound to occur. He knew the commands of God, he had a different belief system and background than many of those around him. Daily differences would have been regularly apparent. His entire way of looking at the world around him and his faith would have been challenged day in and out, in various degrees of intensity. Ultimately that major conflict that seemed bound to happen eventually did occur. Potiphar's wife, his master's own wife, took notice of him and enticed him. Seeing nothing wrong with inviting a young servant to sleep with her, she bluntly made her advance. But in obedient faith Joseph refused. His answer seems to imply some advanced preparation; very likely he saw this coming. Even if his response was less planned and more off the cuff his faith made him ready, and so Joseph responded with a carefully constructed response that showed respect to his master and even his master's wife who was acting inappropriately. *"With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care.⁹ No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife.* And in that moment of pressure and enticement and temptation he then also used the opportunity to confess his faith. *How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"*

With God's help Joseph avoided the pressure of the moment, but it would not go away. This seductress was persistent in her lust and in her advances. She came back day after day. And then when that didn't work she stacked the deck against him. No doubt, she had her hand in arranging things so that one day not a single household servant was inside at a time when she knew that she could have Joseph all alone to herself. She got him all alone, caught him by the cloak and repeated her indecent proposal, "***Come to bed with me!***" This time Joseph sensed that this was not the time for discourse but for action. When she grabbed for him, he ran.

Joseph fled temptation, even though it meant leaving his cloak behind. And you know the rest of the account and how Joseph's faith played a large part in his imprisonment. Potiphar's wife lied about what happened using the very cloak that was left behind in an act of purity to incriminate this innocent young man falsely of indecency. Potiphar became enraged and threw Joseph into prison. And Joseph's faith in God, his desire to obey his God, had played a major role in this final result. Joseph lost his position of honor, his reputation in his master's house, and even his freedom. But those things were all inconsequential when it came to compromising his faith. He remained faithful to the LORD, and though this meant life altering and devastating results, the LORD enabled his servant to make a bold confession and flee temptation in a way that continues to serve as an example of faithfulness for believers still today. And we are also reminded through Joseph's experience that God was faithful. While Joseph was sent away to prison we are told the LORD was with him and took care of his faithful servant even in this time of personal difficulty and persecution.

Throughout history those who believe in the LORD have been thus persecuted and hard-pressed by the sinful, ungodly world around us. This familiar account of Joseph is an example. Moses chose to be mistreated with his people rather than remain in the heathen household of Pharaoh. Daniel was pressured and then thrown to the lions when he refused to compromise or abandon his faith in the LORD, Paul and Silas, Peter and others were imprisoned and hated, many were even killed for proclaiming the word of the LORD and following God's commands while living in this ungodly and sinful world. Throughout Bible History into more modern history, people who believe in the promised Savior, have been also promised that they will have to suffer for the sake of their faith.

We ought to be prepared that this same thing would continue today. We live in a world that looks at everything from an entirely different and sinful perspective. Daily differences will be clearly apparent in the regularly nuances of life. Our faith will be daily challenged by the world around us. We ought not hide behind the false façade that is a Christian country and therefore we will be safe from such pressures, because regardless of the faith of our founding fathers or current statistics of church affiliations of the general public, ours is a country filled with sinners, which is set in a world corrupted by sin to its core. We ought to be prepared that a vast majority in the world around us will look at wide assortment of issues in a way that conflicts with the ways of God that have been passed down to us through His Holy Word. Daily we will have to endure opposition in various degrees of intensity on a variety of topics, ranging from human sexuality to the very existence and nature of God, while also including issues of life and death such as abortion and physician assisted suicide, as well as many other issues. We should not fool ourselves into thinking that we won't have to deal with such pressures ever or that we merely need to brush them off occasionally.

We ought to be prepared to handle the daily nagging and enticements of the world around us. Daily we are surrounded and therefore we also ought to be aware that very likely a major conflict will eventually occur. A family member or friend's viewpoint will clash with our faith. Public opinion will often oppose our beliefs and will somehow come to a head. A friendly neighbor might be

involved in a way of life that is direct opposition to God's commands. Chances are increasing that a doctor might give us counsel or advice that goes against the will of our God. It is a real possibility that a friend at school or co-worker or a Facebook friend might engage us with a proposition that is actually a temptation. We too are part of the problem as the sin inside of us longs to latch onto that which this world offers. We ought to be prepared for the struggle with the world around us and the struggle that will take place in the sinful flesh that surrounds and often entangles that new self that God has created in us.

Through the study of God's Word and the refreshing of our knowledge of his will, God will prepare us for such opposition. And if the opposition of this world is daily, should not our preparation also be daily? Be in God's Word day after day. Find good Christian, doctrinally sound materials, so that you may be properly prepared to resist temptation. Pick up and read a copy of the Forward in Christ or your Meditations, receive daily devotions from wels.net or WELS mobile. A new series of daily video devotions are available on YouTube through a website called Yourtimeofgrace.org, add this to your devotional routine. Conquers through Christ (conquersthrougchrist.net) is a WELS affiliated ministry that offers online tools that helps God's people deal specifically with the sexual temptations of pornography. Get into God's Word, get familiar with these resources for your own benefit and for the benefit of others. Especially on this Father's Day it would be fitting to encourage all fathers to be spiritually fed so that you might be able to train your child in the way they should go. Fathers be prepared to speak to your kids about what God's Word says about his design for sex and marriage. Be prepared to talk to you kids about materialism, violence, alcohol, and drugs and all the other issues where the world pushes a viewpoint that is so very different from what God wills. Be prepared to speak and model how to live in a world that is so sinful, so ungodly.

Be prepared. We know the world we live in. Being a God-fearing person in a ungodly world means that we will daily face opposition to our faith and eventually a major conflict of interests is bound to occur. Be prepared; the pressures of the sinful world around us will not be a one-time inconvenience, but it will be a daily occurrence, and the world around us is nasty and relentless. Much like Joseph's cloak that he left behind was used to incriminate him, the world around us will even use our desire to promote God-pleasing purity and they will use this to villainize us. And it hurts. It is difficult to stomach. It does not seem fair, nor is a pleasant thing to be labeled as backwards, or a bigot, or one guilty of some sort of prejudice when all we are trying to do is follow God's will.

In his goodness the Lord reminds us that when Joseph suffered for his faithfulness to God the LORD remained at his side. The LORD was with him. Notice from this lesson how that is so carefully included. Remember verse 20 and 21. ***But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.*** The LORD was with his faithful servant and even in this point of such difficulty and hardship God granted him a form of blessing. When you suffer for being faithful to your Savior, know that the LORD is with you. Our faithful LORD will strengthen us in times of temptation and opposition. He will give us the means to overcome pressure and the strength to remain faithful to him and his commands. As we suffer for him our God promises that he will not leave us or forsake us, but instead he will draw near. He will be our faithful companion in times when the world isolates us, stacks the deck against us, and attacks us for the things we believe and the way we live out of our faith. Remember that the LORD is with you when those who belong to this world injure and oppose you.

This does not mean that a Christian purposely stirs up persecution and trouble for himself or herself. In this ungodly world we should be bold to defend our beliefs to speak and proclaim the Word of God in all its truth. We will not be hesitant to live out our faith in a way that pleasing to God. However, being a Christian does not give us the right to blurt out inflammatory and hateful remarks against those that oppose us. We are to go about our business as citizens of this world knowing that it will oppose us. To become angry and hateful towards individual souls that are lost in sin and darkness will do us no good nor will it help those who are perishing in their sin. Instead consider what our Lord calls us to do. He calls us to love our enemies. He directs us to speak the truth in love. The LORD Jesus instructs us to pray for those who persecute us, to be the light of the world in the midst of the darkness of unbelief, and to be a preserving salt in this dying world.

Notice how Joseph lived his life in that pagan world. He just went about his business in faithful service to God. He was living in an environment and situation that was so obviously in conflict with his beliefs and yet he was just going about his work that he had been called to do. He served an unbelieving master and he lived and work among them with God-pleasing dignity and respect. We are to confess and live our faith as we have opportunity, we are to be prepared to give the reason for the hope that we have and we are to do this with gentleness and respect. As we live in this world we may have to endure opposition, we may have to separate ourselves from sinful influences, and flee from temptation. It may be difficult. It may cause us hardship and pain. But remember the one who came for us. The perfectly pure Son of God, not only dipped his toe in the filth of this world, but he came down and lived among us. Fully immersed in the world that is so fully corrupted and yet he remained spotless, blameless, and pure for us. And then that holy God, who was wholly human, endured the pain of rejection and mistreatment as he laid down his life for us so that we might be forgiven, redeemed, and saved. And yet as we surrounded by the rottenness of evil, evil within us and outside us. it is God's will that we still remain as the preserving salt of the earth. And the LORD is with us. We are strengthened by Christ to live in accordance with his holy will. As we resist and avoid and flee from sexual temptation God will bless us, he will bless Christian marriages, he will bless our homes and lives. As we resist and avoid and flee the sinful opinions and pressures of this world God will bless us, he will sustain us and strengthen us, and one day he will deliver us from all evil as he turns the faithfulness that he has placed in us into the final result of a reward in heaven. A reward that is won for us by the spotless, blameless, a pure Lamb of God, Jesus Christ our Savior. A reward that is granted to our account through the wonderful gift of faith.

So dear Christian, know that opposition will come because of your faith. But with his help let us handle that opposition in faith. Look to Jesus' cross and his Holy Word as you take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow your LORD and Savior. Be prepared day in and out for the pressures and the temptations of this world. Confess your faith in God through word and deed. Thankfully live your life to God's glory and when opportunity arises speak the truth in love. And know when you suffer for your faith that God will reward the faithfulness that he works in you with blessings here and into eternity. The world may oppose you, hurt, harm you, and surround you, but remember the LORD is with you. Amen.