

HEROES OF FAITH - JOSEPH
He Followed the Lord in a Strange Land
Genesis 45:4-8

INTRODUCTION ... When we talk about temptation, we often think about youth who are often tempted much by the new situations they meet in life as growing up - drugs & sex are only two temptations they meet. But those of use who are older also meet many temptations in life - not with drugs or sex maybe, but with greed, jealousy, & hot temper. No-matter young or older, we need a strong faith in a loving & merciful God to help us resist those temptations, so that we can follow the Lord in every new/different/strange situation we meet ... like today's HERO OF FAITH: JOSEPH - HE FOLLOWED THE LORD IN A STRANGE LAND.

I. "Hi! My name is JOSEPH ...

"I'm not the step-father of Jesus; I lived almost 4000 years ago, 2000 years before Christ. My father, Jacob, had two wives, 12 sons and one daughter... I was son #11 ... my brother BENJAMIN (#12) and I were father's favorites, because we were born of father's favorite wife RACHEL... My father really spoiled both of us. I guess I took-advantage of that, and my older brothers got jealous.

One day when I was about 17 or 18, father sent me to my brothers who were taking care of the sheep... they grabbed me and put me in a well ... I heard them talking about killing me, but they sold me to some traders passing by ... they poured blood on my beautiful coat of many colors, so father would think some wild animal killed me! Those traders took me to Egypt, and sold me as a slave to one of the king's chief officers. Egypt was a strange place ... people did not worship the Lord, as father taught me ...they worshipped the sun and idols.

"But in that slavery, God had strong lessons to teach me. God taught me how to contol myself and do what pleased Him, and that also pleased my master. My master taught me how to manage his house and business, so then I finally managed everything, and my master trusted me.

"But then temptation: my master's wife thought I was good-looking ... she asked me to go to bed with her ... Maybe you thing that is nothing. But my master trusted me, and I must not shame him. And God taught me to know right and wrong. I can hide nothing from God, and I cannot shame Him in my life. I tried avoiding

her. I told her, 'No! How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' ... she didn't stop - every day she kept asking me - one day I ran from her and she grabbed my robe and later accused me of trying to rape her! ... my master put me into prison, a dirty awful place!

"But the Lord stayed with me ... and helped me understand some dreams that the king had - dreams that showed 7 good years of growing/harvest, followed by 7 bad years of drought/no-harvest ... God warned this king - and he didn't even know/love God! - so that Egypt could save food during the good years, so there will be food during the dry years. The king was so pleased that I could explain the dreams, that he made me boss - me, the stranger in a strange land! During all this time God was certainly with me, and I trusted Him to guide and to bless.

"When the drought began, people from other countries came to Egypt to buy food didn't recognize me ... again temptation: now I could get- even with them for the awful things they did to me ... but again the Lord helped me resist that temptation, and I finally told them who I was ... your Bible tells about that

"My brothers meant to hurt me. But God used that for a very good reason, to help me, help my family, and help many people in the world to live.

II. With faith in Christ we follow the Lord.

He leads us into new situations/places in our lives ... [examples: losing hearing, moving to a new city far from home, becoming sick with cancer, retiring from work, losing a loved one] ... sometimes they are like 'strange lands' where people do not seem to love the Lord or care about His ways ... but we are still His people - He chose us - He washed us clean from sin through Baptism - He made us His children joined with Christ ... what do we do in those 'strange lands'? With faith in Jesus we see God's guiding hand in all things - even the evil things that happen to us, sometimes planned/done by evil people... like Joseph we can say, "You plotted evil against me, but God turned it to good" (Gen 50.20) ... God's love/mercy can turn even the bad things of life into good ... without faith in Jesus we do not see His guiding hand.

With faith in Jesus we love/serve/obey our God no-matter what happens to us or what temptations, because we know what God has done for us ... so we boast about the cross of Jesus (cf Epistle

- Gal 6.1-16) and we live as His new people, trusting the power of the Spirit ... also trusting His forgiveness for the many times we fail to resist temptation or fail to see God's guiding hand in our lives ... trusting the promise that God's peace and mercy will always be with us.