

THE



“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

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A STRONG POSITION

Part II

Last month, we looked at examples from the Old Testament of individuals putting themselves in a “weak position,” making them more susceptible to sin. In this issue, we will see an example of an individual putting himself in a “strong position.”

What is a strong position? We see a prime example in the Old Testament from Joseph. In Genesis 39, an opportunity for sin presents itself, and Joseph puts himself in a strong position to avoid falling to it. Joseph has risen to a good position under a high ranking Egyptian, Potiphar, and has it about as good as it

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can get (considering he was sold into slavery to the Egyptians). Joseph was trusted by Potiphar to oversee all of Potiphar's interests, which were only improving since Joseph made his way into Potiphar's household. Potiphar

...left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. (Gen. 39:6)

Potiphar trusted Joseph with practically everything. There were only 2 things that Potiphar did not entrust to Joseph's knowledge or handling: 1) Potiphar and Joseph did not eat together ("...save the bread which he did eat.") as the Egyptians considered breaking bread with Hebrews an abomination (Gen. 43:32); and 2) Potiphar's wife. Continuing in from verse 7,

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

Here's the temptation. Like a lot of temptation we face, it came calling daily whether Joseph sought it out or not. Let's see how Joseph puts himself in a strong position to overcome this temptation in verse 11:

And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

Joseph literally ran from temptation. How much stronger of a position can you be in than to not be physically in the same room with temptation?

Here, Joseph provides us several lessons on keeping a strong position against sin. First, Joseph probably could have “gotten away with it.” There were no witnesses, and the house was empty. Potiphar’s wife surely would have preferred to keep this secret, herself (remember, Joseph is a low-down, dirty Hebrew to Egyptians). Still, Joseph knew there is no such thing as “getting away with it;” God sees, hears, and knows all of our sins whether committed in secret or in public. Joseph is clearly aware of this, because his priority wasn’t to please his master’s wife or even his master - it was to please God: “...*how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” (v9)

Second, Joseph doesn’t try to rationalize this situation as a reward he deserves after all of the hardships he’d endured. Sadly, this is something we tend to do: reward ourselves for being good by doing something bad. Back to our cake example, it’s very common to hear someone say “well, I’ve been good; I haven’t touched cake in 2 weeks (because it’s bad for me). Therefore, I’m going to reward myself with cake...even though it’s bad for me.” Sadly, this is the equivalent for us rationalizing why it’s ok for us to give in to a temptation. We decide we’ve “earned” it, or we deserve it to make up for all of the hard times we’ve been having lately. “I haven’t given in to my vice. I’ve avoided sin. I’ve been so good, that to reward myself, I think I’ll sin.” “It’s been a bad day, so I think I’ll do a bad thing.” These thoughts sound ridiculous, but we do it. Joseph did not. After being mistreated (an understatement) by his own brothers and sold into slavery to Egyptians who find his Hebrew nationality inferior, Joseph didn’t look at Potiphar’s wife and say “You know what...I deserve this.” Joseph didn’t see Potiphar’s wife demanding he commit adultery with her as “I know it’s wrong, but I’ve had a hard life, so I’m going to do what I want.” Society is increasingly telling us to do what makes you feel good when it makes you feel good, but that is a weak position

to sin. Joseph shows us the strong position is doing what God wants. Joseph was later falsely accused and goes through additional hardships, but despite knowing such negative “undeserved” consequences could have resulted, he prioritized pleasing God over pleasing himself.

Joseph’s strong position is an interesting compare/contrast to David’s weak position with Bathsheba. Both Joseph and David didn’t walk into their situations with the intent to be tempted. David was just taking a walk and Joseph was just going to work. They both had power in their positions. Joseph could have gotten away with much with his position, power, and influence - similar to David (again, who can deny the king?!). They both could have “gotten away” with a sin committed in private. Where’s the difference? Where did David’s weak position and Joseph’s strong position occur? David’s weak position came when David said, “Who is that?” Joseph’s strong position came when Joseph said “...” as he ran away. Getting away from the temptation is the strongest position to be in to avoid committing the sin. This is what Jesus means in Matthew 5:29:

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

We will face temptation and struggle with it, but we will always face a battle with temptation that we can win (1 Cor. 10:13). However, it is our Christian duty to set ourselves up for success in these daily battles, and that means putting ourselves in a strong position. We need to examine our weakest

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positions - the who, what, when, and where's - and simply avoid them. Often, our strongest position will simply be when we put distance between us and our temptations. This often means running like Joseph or severing ties between us and the people, places, sights, and sounds that make up our weak positions. There is no doubt, however, that our strongest position is the one that places us closest to God.

BEN

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. In which Jewish month is the Passover?
2. Who did Joseph's brothers sell him to?
3. What happened to the soldiers of Gideon who lapped the river water with their tongues like dogs, putting their hand to their mouth?
4. In Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount, what was the first of the Beatitudes?
5. What argument prompted Jesus to tell his disciples that they would judge the twelve tribes in the kingdom?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

COMFORT

When tribulations come upon you, it is natural for you to become troubled in your spirit. Maybe you are suffering persecution for your faith. Maybe you have lost someone very special in your life. Maybe you have suffered some tragedy. Or maybe it is just an accumulation of many trials and disappointments in your life. Wouldn't it be great to have someone to come along side of you and assure you that everything will be all right and comfort you in your tribulations? You and I have that someone, and it is God the Father.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who com-

forteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (2 Cor. 1:3-4)

God is the Father of all mercies and God of all comfort.

You can feel comforted when you realize that you are not alone; there is someone else who walks beside you in your time of trial – someone who sees everything that is happening, understands what you are going through, and cares for you.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (1 Pet. 5:6-7)

The hurt will not last forever; the Father will make sure that eventually all will work out for your good. That is the kind of God that we have; the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

There is another kind of comfort from God. In the 5th chapter of 1 Corinthians we find that the church in Corinth was tolerating a man who had his father's wife. The apostle Paul was very critical of them for their tolerance of sexual immorality and told them to discipline the man by not keeping company with him. In 2 Corinthians, we find that Paul's criticism and instruction had an impact upon the Corinthians. They repented of their sin and demonstrated Godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:8-11). The sexually immoral man also repented and was sorrowful for his sin (2 Cor. 2:6-8). So the apostle Paul starts off the book of 2 Corinthians by telling them that our God is a Father of mercies and God of all comfort. He is merciful and forgiving of their sin and He is now there to comfort them. In Luke 15:11-32, Jesus tells the story of the man who had two sons. The younger son took his inheritance and wasted his possessions with prodigal living. When all was spent, he found himself hungry and in need. He determined to go back to his father, confess his sin, and ask to be made a hired servant. But the father had compassion, ran to meet him, and

welcomed him home. He made a feast to celebrate his son's return. He had mercy on his son and then sought to comfort him because he had repented and returned. The lesson we learn from the Corinthian church and from the story of the prodigal son is that God is a Father of mercies and God of all comfort. If you have sinned and departed from God, return and discover that He is a Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

Regardless of what happens to you here, you can be comforted by the promise of eternal life. Jesus said in John 14:1-3,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

You can be comforted about those who precede you in death.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thes. 4:15-18)

When others suffer trials, you should be there to support them. “*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*” (Rom. 12:15). When you successfully come through a trial, you can realize that God was with you and He used the trial to build your character.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; be-

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
April 4 - 7	Goochtown Eubank, KY	Thad Eubank & Timothy Lewis
April 5 - 7	Owens Road Prattville, AL	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
April 25 - 28	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

cause the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Rom. 5:3-5)

From your experience, you can comfort others in the trials that they experience.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (2 Cor. 1:3-4)

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. (1 Thes. 5:11)

My encouragement to you is to seek comfort from the Father.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work. (2 Thes. 2:16-17)

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We are so thankful to have published the 400th issue of The Harvester. Over the years, there have been many article contributors, donations, words of encouragement, volunteers to fold and label the paper, printers, and of course, readers. Thank you all for keeping this paper going from issue 1 to issue 400, and we look forward to many more. God has truly blessed us.