

The Broadmoor Bulletin

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Joseph

Flee Youthful Lust

Paul admonishes Timothy to “flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace” (2 Tim. 2:22). Youthful lusts are presented as a great danger that must be avoided at all costs. The young are not to merely go the other direction. They must flee as if their life depended upon it. Having fled youthful lusts, young people should pursue godliness. A great example of one who fled youthful lusts was Joseph. When the wife of Joseph’s master tried to lie with him, he refused and chose purity instead.

Joseph’s Susceptibility

It was not easy for Joseph to do what was right. Many people would have sinned if they were in his place. First, notice that the Lord was with Joseph so that he became a successful man (Gen. 39:2-3). While this may seem like a deterrent from sin, many have fallen victim to earthly success. In the midst of extraordinary military success (2 Sam. 8-10), David brazenly sinned with Bathsheba and murdered her husband (2 Sam. 11). After Uzziah, a king of Judah, was blessed by God, he became proud and acted unfaithfully (2 Chron. 26:16). Success breeds arrogance, and we must guard against sin at those times (1 Cor. 10:12). Second, Joseph could have escaped detection from those around him. He was entrusted with everything in the house by his master (Gen. 39:4-6). At one point, Joseph was left alone in the house with the master’s wife (Gen. 39:11). Even if no one else found out, Joseph recognized that he was in God’s presence (Gen. 39:9). God would know what he had done (Ps. 139). Third, Joseph was a young man. Many people use youth as an excuse to sin. However, youth is a time when a person should devote their lives to God and become examples of godliness (Ecc. 12:1; Ps. 119:9). Despite Joseph’s susceptibility, he refused to sin against God.

Joseph’s Stand

Joseph made a true stand for the Lord. When Potiphar’s wife requested that Joseph lie with her, he simply refused, explaining that such action was a great evil and sin against God (Gen. 39:8-9). He did not yield to sin to impress her. He was not embarrassed. He simply stated that it was sin. Joseph overcame more than her initial request. She repeatedly enticed Joseph, but he continued to refuse. His resolve to obey God could not be worn down. Finally, she grabbed his garment and tried to physically make him lie with her. The time for talk was over. Joseph fled, leaving the garment in her hand. He removed himself completely from the temptation.

Joseph’s Suffering

Even though Joseph did everything that he was supposed to do, he had to endure suffering for his decision to serve God.

Real Men Cry

I’ve never seen my dad cry. I’ve never seen my granddad cry. As a matter of fact, none of the men in my life have ever shed a tear in front of me. Crying was a sign of weakness. Although Dad has never said it, he has lived by the maxim “Keep your emotions in check and your feet on the ground.” And I admire his ability to stay objective and make wise decisions even in the most turbulent of times.

That being said, hiding your emotions has nothing to do with strength or being a “good Christian”. The Bible is filled with examples of great leaders showing emotion. Moses felt intense anger (Num. 11:4-15). David despaired (II Sam. 18; Ps 22:1-2). Elijah trembled with fear (I Kings 19:1-4). Jesus wept (Mark 14:32-41; John 11:1-35). Keeping your feelings hidden has more to do with fear than strength. It exhibits a fear of being vulnerable and transparent, which is ultimately rooted in the fear of being rejected. What if you shared your fears, revealed your sins? What if you broke down and cried? How would people react? Hopefully they would embrace you, weep with you. Unfortunately, some can’t handle the expression of true emotions. They reject tender hearts, preferring those who *never* expose their weaknesses.

Joseph had a tender heart, unafraid of showing his emotions. In Genesis 45 he was so overwhelmed by his penitent brothers, that when disclosed his true self he wept.

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, “Have everyone go out from me.” So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph!” (Gen. 45:1-3)

Joseph let it all out, sobbing uncontrollably. His brothers were in shock, speechless. Before, they were afraid of Pharaoh, but now, their knees knocked at the revelation that the prime minister was none other than the brother they betrayed.

Following his sobs he proved his strength as a spiritual leader. Instead of capitalizing on self-indulgent revenge, he showed grace. How was that possible? Because of his vertical perspective. Look at what he says to his brothers.

For God sent me before you to preserve life... God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.” (Gen. 45:5-7)

Joseph’s emotional outpouring was a reflection of his tender heart, his Godly perspective, and his inner strength. Joseph was a real man, and real men do cry.

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Jonathan Sheahen

Flee Youthful Lust

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He experienced a loss of reputation. Potiphar's wife claimed that Joseph tried to rape her (Gen. 39:13-15). Although this was untrue, others may have believed such a lie. Joseph also experienced a loss of position. He was entrusted with all that was in the house. However, his trust and position were removed. As if Joseph had not endured enough, he also lost his freedom. Joseph was treated like a common criminal and thrown into jail by Potiphar (Gen. 39:20). Today, Christians may also suffer for doing what is right (2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:15-16).

When Joseph was presented with the opportunity to fulfill his lusts, he chose purity and obedience to God. Let us make the same decision when we are faced with lusts today.

Jeremy Sweets

Bloom Where You Are Planted

From time to time we will feel as though we could do greater work for the Lord. However, we usually imagine ourselves doing this in an ideal place, and under favorable circumstances. As Christians, we don't always know where God will lead us, but we should make the absolute most of it wherever that might be. Eph.5:16

Joseph's motto was "*Bloom right here, right now*". He became successful in Egypt because God was with him. (Gen. 39:2) God is no less with His people today and we must trust that to be true. Joseph served God in spite of family jealousy and division, and being taken far away from home into slavery. He was always aware of the fact that his abilities came from God. (Gen. 40:8) Joseph could have easily become discouraged in his circumstances, but rather determined to look for the best in every place and person. (Rom. 8:28, Phil. 2:3) He understood the need to react positively to negative conditions. (II Cor. 1:3-8)

God demonstrated His power when He made Joseph successful in Egypt, when He gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams, and when He brought abundance and then famine to Egypt. Joseph's story is not one about his success in trial, but a story about God's faithfulness to His promise and Joseph trusting God in every circumstance. (Phil. 4:11-13)

Are you blooming or are you complaining about who you are or where you are? Have you ever thought that where you are is right where you are supposed to be? **Grow!!!! Bloom where you have been planted.** (Is. 35:1-2)

Kevin Bain

The Ultimate Reason to Refuse Sin

"But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife.

How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

(Genesis 39:8-9).

There are many reasons to abstain from sin, but the most important is simply the thought that sin is an offense against the goodness of God Himself. Although we injure ourselves greatly when we sin, that is not the worst thing about it. Sin is an issue that has much more to do with God than with us. And just as the love of God is the most powerful reason for doing right, it is also the main thing that should keep us from doing wrong.

After committing adultery with Bathsheba and then murdering her husband, David expressed his sin in these words: "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight; that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge" (Psalm 51:4). Surely, many other people were hurt by David's transgression, including David himself. But compared to the wrong done to God, all of these wrongs were as nothing.

In spiritual matters, deciding to take God seriously is the most effective precaution we can take. If we love God as unselfishly as we should, we'll hold His honor dearer than our own, and that sense of honor will defend us and protect us from doing anything that would detract from His glory. Loving reverence is always the ultimate prophylaxis against evil. The willpower we need can only come from a combination of love and respect for God Himself.

This was clearly true in Joseph's case. When he was being seduced by his master's wife, there would have been any number of pragmatic reasons to refuse her advances. Had he been so foolish as to yield, he would have jeopardized nearly every aspect of the good life he had begun to build for himself in Egypt. Yet all of these considerations put together did not weigh as heavily in his thinking as the single factor that mattered most: God's honor. Whatever else might have been said, Joseph showed that he understood the crux of the matter when he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

"Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, and the contempt of his love" (John Bunyan).

Gary Henry

?? Did You Know??

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1. Joseph means “May God add”. (Genesis 30:24)
2. Joseph’s name is mentioned only 9 times in 4 different chapters in the New Testament. (John 4:5, Acts 7:9, 13, 14, and 18, Hebrews 11:21 – 22, and Revelation 7:8)
3. Joseph’s wife was Asenath, a daughter of a priest of Heliopolis or On. (Genesis 41:50)

Adam Booher

Grin and Bear It

Dealing with the pain of suffering unjustly is one of the severest trials we can face. For Elie Wiesel, surviving the Holocaust reduced what faith he had to ashes. He reflected on his anguish in his book *Night*.

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turn into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget the flames that consumed my faith forever.

Suffering is a sanctuary of flames that either burns God or clarifies Him.

We cannot control whether today or tomorrow we will be faced with distress or tragedy. As my dad used to say, “Life isn’t fair”. Every day children are stolen, abused, and aborted. Spouses are abandoned by unfaithful partners. Gossip and slander ruin lives. All of these are victims of undeserving circumstances.

What we can control is how we respond to such circumstances. God gives us guidance in this department:

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. (1 Peter 2:20-21)

God’s message echoes what many parents have said to their own children for generations, “It’s only fair that you take your licking when you have it coming, but when you grin and bear undeserved pain, that builds character.”

Joseph did what was right and suffered for it. He grinned and bore it. He refused Mrs. Potiphar’s advances, and she had him thrown in prison. Joseph went from a favored son to slave to prisoner, each phase in his life getting progressively worse. From the outside looking in it might appear that God had forgotten him.

It would have been so easy for Joseph to become bitter and vengeful. To throw his hands up in the air and scream out,

“It’s not fair!” Instead he chose to patiently endure prison and the Lord gave him inner peace. *The Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him* (Genesis 39:21). As a matter of fact, he made lemonade out of lemons. *The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s charge all the prisoners who were in the jail, so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it* (Genesis 39:22). Whatever circumstance Joseph found himself in he rose to the top; he was in charge of Potiphar’s house, the jail, and eventually the nation of Egypt. Do you think this was all just luck?

I think we can attribute Joseph’s success to his trust in God. Joseph’s prison home was where God wanted him. He doesn’t argue or take it personally. Instead, he recognized that God’s hand was in it and saw his confinement as an opportunity for God to work in his life. What a great attitude.

God was able to use him in the lives of two prisoners, the baker and the cupbearer. These two were moping around the prison one day and Joseph noticed. He asked, “*Why are your faces so sad today?*” (Gen. 40:7) Notice Joseph wasn’t moping. His attitude of patient endurance enabled him to see the needs of others. He handled his own troubles by looking to God and focusing on others. Even his response was God-centered.

Then they (baker and cupbearer) said to him, “We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it.” Then Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me please.” (v. 8)

Joseph entreated God and gave them good news and bad news. The cupbearer was getting his old job back (vv. 9-13), while the baker was not. In a cruel twist of irony he was going to become food for the birds (vv. 16-19).

Three days later everything happened just as Joseph had said. The only problem was that the cupbearer had a short memory. Back in verse 14 Joseph asked the cupbearer to remember him when he was restored to his position. Unfortunately, the cupbearer failed to do this for *two full years* (Gen. 41:1).

Joseph’s ticket out was put on hold. I can only imagine the disappointment he felt when his name wasn’t called. Waiting for days, months, years. I wouldn’t have blamed him if he became bitter, or held a grudge. Abandonment and betrayal are the maggots that eat away at our positive attitude.

But Joseph’s hope and trust were ultimately in God, whose care never falters and whose plan never fails. With God on our side, all the mistreatment the world has to offer need not scorch our faith. Keep in mind that suffering just does the opposite, it strengthens our faith and clarifies God. Next time you feel forgotten, forsaken or abandoned remember Moses’ departing words to Israel and James’ encouragement to fellow Christians.

Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. (Deut. 31:6)

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial, for once he has been approved he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)

Joseph, a Study of God's Providence

To introduce our study of the providence of God as seen in the case of Joseph, allow me to present some cogent statements pertaining to God's dealings that reveal his foreknowledge and pre-arrangements (Joseph is speaking to his brothers at the end of the thirteen years of providential events in the following quotation):

"5: Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. 6: For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. 7: And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8: So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. 9: Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not" (Gen. 45).

Providence is derived from the Greek word *pronoia* (Acts 24: 2). *Pronoia* is made up of two words, *pro*, before, and *noeo*, to think. Hence, providence means to "think before." Providence, then, necessarily involves predestination and presupposes foreknowledge (Rom. 8: 28, 29, Eph. 1: 4, 5). I suggest to you that in our consideration of the Bible story of Joseph, we see God's providence at work in the life of the young man Joseph, whom God loved and used. For the sake of order, we shall divide our study of Joseph into three parts. They are: Joseph sold into slavery; Joseph in Potiphar's house; and Joseph as Prime Minister in Egypt. Our study covers Genesis 37 through chapter 47.

Joseph sold into slavery. Joseph was a special gifted child. Joseph was Jacob's "son of his old age" (Gen. 37: 3). Jacob appears to have been 91 when he and Rachel had Joseph; hence, Jacob would have been 108 at the time of Genesis 37 when Joseph was 17 (Gen. 37: 2). Early in life, Joseph was loyal to Jacob and had a special character of great spiritual quality (cp. Gen. 37: 2). Jacob gave Joseph a "coat of many colors". This coat seems to have stood for the fact that Jacob viewed Joseph as a prince (Gen. 37: 3, Joseph's dreams revealed to him that he would be a prince and ruler, even over his father and brothers, Gen. 37: 5-11). Joseph was endowed with a special supernatural gift of being able to interpret dreams (Gen. 37: 5 ff.). However, his brothers did not appreciate Joseph's special place and gift. His brothers hated him and were envious against him (Gen. 37: 5-11, cp. Acts 7: 9). They hated and envied Joseph so greatly that they plotted to kill Joseph (Gen. 37: 18). Joseph must have been very lonely and have felt rejected in view of his brother's hatred of him.

The envy and hatred of Joseph's brothers continued to build until they decided to take action. Had it not been for Reuben and Judah, the brothers would have killed Joseph (the human element only considered). Instead of killing Joseph, he was sold to some passing by Midianite merchantmen for twenty pieces of silver (probably the price of a juvenile slave, Gen. 37: 29, cp. Matt. 27: 3). The Midianites sold Joseph into Egyptian slavery (Gen. 37: 36). Joseph's brothers returned to

their father and told Jacob that Joseph had been "devoured by an evil beast." They presented Joseph's coat of many colors to Jacob with goat blood on it as proof (Gen. 37: 31 ff.). Jacob grieved as if it were true (Gen. 37: 34). Under ordinary circumstances, this would have been the end of the story of Joseph. However, God's providence was involved in Joseph's life and as a result, this was only the beginning.

Joseph in Potiphar's house. Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard purchased Joseph from the Ishmaelites (Gen. 39: 1). Potiphar was of great political force, being probably the head of the Egyptian military. The future is dark indeed for Joseph. Such slavery would have been bad enough but to have such a high ranking military leader as a master would have meant total doom for Joseph. "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man, and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian," we are told (Gen. 39: 2). Let us appreciate that when the Lord is with one, such a relationship also reflects admirably on the person. Hence, we read, "And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand" (Gen. 39: 3). In view of the excellent character of Joseph, Potiphar placed great confidence in Joseph and he soon excelled in the household and estate of Potiphar. We are not sure how long Joseph served Potiphar, but the usual estimate is ten years.

Toward the end of Joseph's stay in the house of Potiphar, a serious problem began to develop. Life is often a series of ups and downs, highs and lows, joyful and sad experiences. What the godly have to realize is that sometimes these experiences may be a part of God's workings in the lives of his people. Single events, especially the bad ones are usually such that we throw up our hands in despair and say, "Why is this happening to me?" The pivotal event that changed Joseph's life again is seen in the following:

"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. 8: But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; 9: 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? 10: 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. 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. 12: 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" (Gen. 39).

There are few young single men of Joseph's age (probably 27) and opportunity who would have continued to have refused the invitation to commit fornication (see Gen. 39: 10, cp. 2 Pet. 2:7, 8). As a result of Joseph's refusal, Potiphar's wife became a scorned woman. She then slanders Joseph (Gen. 39: 14). Potiphar accepts her word and then something terrible, as we would view it, happened: "And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison..." (Gen. 39: 20). Joseph has now incurred the wrath of one of the most powerful men in all Egypt. Again, this would surely seem to be end of the story of

Joseph. What chance would a foreign slave have, especially after having made such an enemy? Can you imagine how Joseph must have felt? Keep in mind also that some of Joseph's miraculous dreams had revealed to him that he would be a ruler (Gen. 37: 6-11). Joseph had remained pure and loyal to his God and his master, but he has been lied on and is now in prison. It could have also been that Joseph might feel God has taunted him regarding his reigning as a ruler. All would seem hopeless to most people. However, we still read: "And the Lord was with Joseph..." (Gen. 39: 21). Soon, Joseph is again excelling and gaining the recognition of his superiors (Gen. 39: 21 ff.). Alas, how could the terrible experience with Potiphar and his wife do anything but permanently doom Joseph to failure and the worst of conditions?

Joseph as ruler in Egypt. Joseph had not been in prison long when an event occurred that at the time, seemed totally without any consequence. Two important men in the King of Egypt's structure "offended their Lord" (Gen. 40: 1). These men held the positions of chief butler and chief baker. As a rule, involved in these men's responsibility would not only be the matter of feeding and seeing to such related matters pertaining to the King and his household but the matter of making sure no one poisoned the King by food or drink. (The idea of "butler" is cupbearer; these men were "chief," which would imply that they were in charge of men under them). The chief butler and baker were placed in prison with Joseph. They each dreamed a dream, and Joseph interpreted the dreams for them (Gen. 40: 5-19). The butler was to be restored to his position in the King's house and the baker would be hanged within three days (Gen. 40: 18, 19). Joseph's interpretation came to pass on the third day (vs. 22, 23). However, yet "did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (vs. 23). Again, all hope seems to be gone.

At the end of two years (probably three years since Joseph was imprisoned), Pharaoh himself dreamed a dream and none of his "wise men" could interpret the dreams he had experienced (Gen. 41: 1-8). Two years after the butler's release from prison, he told the King of Joseph's ability to interpret dreams (vs. 9-13). Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Joseph interpreted the dream for Pharaoh (Gen. 41: 25-36). Pharaoh rewards Joseph to the point of making Pharaoh only superior to Joseph. Joseph, in effect, is appointed Prime Minister over all the vast and powerful empire of Egypt (Gen. 41: 37-43, see also Acts 7: 10). (This event was the realization of the dream Joseph had experienced thirteen years earlier when he was a lad of seventeen, Gen. 37: 5-11.)

Thus far, Joseph had experienced a life of many ups and downs. As we have seen, all pointed to a total impossibility of Joseph ever arising above the condition of a foreign slave. However, Joseph now has power and riches unimaginable. Joseph marries and has sons (Gen. 41: 45, 46: 20). Joseph also enjoys a warm and tender family reunion, first with his brothers and then with his father (Gen. 45, 46). Joseph is thirty years of age at this time (Gen. 41: 46). Thirteen years have gone by since Joseph was sold into slavery (Gen. 37: 2). He was probably a slave in Potiphar's house for ten years and three years in prison. Remember what was said in Genesis 45: 5-9? God arranged for Joseph to be Prime Minister in Egypt. The likelihood of a Hebrew raising to any position of importance in Egypt was very remote. For a Hebrew slave to rise to Prime Minister was humanly impossible!

Based on a consideration of God's providence in the case of Joseph, we see that God's plans and arrangements can take time to come to fruition. It is also apparent regarding Joseph that the events that are involved in providence when viewed in isolation, appear to be inconsequential. Not only do they appear to be of no future value, but also often times they seem to be totally preclusive of any future good. We have seen that the particular events in Joseph's life involved both the "ordinary" and the "extraordinary." By "extraordinary," I am referring to the miraculous. For instance, the dreams and their interpretation involved the supernatural. In the case of providence today, we must realize that the extraordinary is not involved (I Cor. 13: 8-10). God used a number of people and circumstances to make Joseph Prime Minister of Egypt. "God made Potiphar's wife evil," some would argue. Some further explain, "Potiphar's wife had no choice, God made her that way before he created the earth." They would correspondingly say, "Joseph had no choice but to refuse the advances of Potiphar's wife, each simply acted out how God had programmed them." Such a doctrine (Calvinistic predestination) is patently false and presents God as a totally arbitrary Being. God did not make Potiphar's wife evil and God did not arbitrarily make Joseph good; God did, however, use both Potiphar's wife and Joseph to effect his will. After a similar fashion, God uses people today. The fact that God used Potiphar's wife and Joseph does prove God knew their natures and what they would do (this point ascends the scale of foreordination to a higher point of difficulty of understanding, cp. Acts 18: 9, 10).

How about God's providence today? Some will concede that God's providence is seen in the case of Joseph (Gen. 45: 5-9). However, they contend that the matter of Joseph is in "the Old Testament" and that God no longer so functions in the affairs of individual men. I would ask, then, how does God "make a way to escape" if God is removed and inoperative today? (I Cor. 13: 10.) What does the language "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous" mean if God is incognizant of man? (I Pet. 3: 12.) (For additional study, please consider Philemon vs.15, vs.10; 2 Peter 2: 9; Proverbs 20: 24; 16: 3; and 3: 6.)

As we close our study of "Joseph, a Study of God's Providence," let us be assured that God is on his throne (Rev. 4). God in his dealing with men does not act arbitrarily to his moral laws and to the free moral agency of man, but he is presently involved with his people. It is certain that some events are just happenings that have been occasioned by happenstance; however, other occurrences may be providential. How can the righteous distinguish between the happenstance and the providential? Herein lies a serious problem. In the course of time, it is much easier to look back and say, "I see now that...may have been providential." Since man cannot always tell, the attitude should be to examine the events of life by applying applicable biblical principles and to always have a godly character, as was the case with Joseph.

Don Martin