

## THE TESTING OF PATIENCE

Psalms 105: 19, how God tested his (Joseph's) patience. LB

While these are very short words, they speak volumes regarding the life of Joseph. It is not hard to look at the life of Joseph and think about his ruler ship, and his power and prestige. Yet, before there were any of those there was the testing of Joseph through long years of waiting for God's deliverance. Joseph is one man who did nothing wrong for his crimes, yet here is his lot for a season- fetters on his feet and an iron collar for his neck. Surely, you say this could not have been the plan of God. However, had this not been permitted by God it never could have happened. There are so many things that appear horrible on the surface but are not really that horrible at all in the long run. On the surface it may appear horrible for a father to discipline his child to the point the child is crying. Yet what appears bad on the surface is literally the removal of ungodly ways and actions. On the surface it appears horrible to take a person and open his body up by means of surgery. Yet, in the long run, the surgery leads to a better quality of life. God's ways are not our ways; neither are our ways God's way. When we think that the iron collar could not be God's design, we must stop and admit that we don't really know fully the ways of God. God does what He knows best. And His best is absolutely best. Through bondage Joseph learned dependence on God. If Joseph was going to make it on a daily basis, he must depend upon God for His sanity, spiritual strength, and emotional strength as well. Joseph was no less human than any other person born. He was fully human with all the human tendencies. What made the difference? He learned to depend in God, by God allowing him to encounter positions where he could not help himself. When we are helpless and unable to do for ourselves, then we learn to either depend in God, or deter from God.

Through bondage, Joseph learned that God's plan would not fail. No doubt Joseph rethought over and over again the dream that he had as a 17 year old boy. No doubt he asked, how can I arrive in a position when I am here in prison? When you read the full story, it is quite sobering to realize that the things that seem so impossible for us are totally and completely possible to the mind of Almighty God. It was in the times that were least comfortable that God took the initiative to encourage Joseph's heart. Because the nature of God is to encourage us regarding His promise when we find ourselves in positions that appear hopeless.

Through bondage, Joseph's inner person was being strengthened. God is fully aware that there is no such thing as a strong, faithful and godly leader that lives by impulse, moves my impulse. Godly leaders are men of patience that wait upon the Lord. The Bible is filled with many who fell because of their impulsive decision making. The first couple in the Bible fell because of making an impulsive decision. King Saul lost his position as king by making an impulsive decision to offer the sacrifice unto the Lord rather than waiting on Samuel to arrive. In the end he lost all that God had initially given him. Patience is a must for spiritual leaders. Therefore God had to place Joseph in times of waiting to grow and develop his patience. To fail to grow in patience is to miss out on the best of God's blessings. It is no surprise that Joseph became great, because he learned to deliberately wait upon the Lord for His leadership and His guidance.