

Absolute Dominion

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The lives of the patriarchs as recorded in Genesis are of great value to us, since they illustrate God's ways in grace and government with men of like passions to ourselves. Two of them are of much less interest than the others from this point of view, viz., Isaac and Joseph. Yet these are just the two that stand out pre-eminently as types of Christ; and the main object of the Holy Spirit's record of their history is evidently to give a foreshadowing of Christ in His sufferings and glory rather than to illustrate God's ways with His people.

Isaac is spoken of as the "only son" of Abraham, for Ishmael, the son after the flesh, did not count. Joseph was the beloved son of his father. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children (Gen. 37: 3). The details we have of Isaac's life are mainly concerned with the events which typify Christ as the chosen Seed, in death and resurrection, and the way in which, as the Risen One, a bride of His own kindred is found for Him. (Gen. 22 and Gen. 24). We have much fuller details of Joseph than of Isaac, and all seem designed to show how the One who was cast down and sold by his brethren according to the flesh, and even abased among the Gentiles, is to be exalted to a place of absolute dominion amongst them, and become not only the nourisher of His brethren, but the Saviour of the world.

In Genesis 37 we see Joseph as the rejected one of his brethren. He suffers in passivity. In Genesis 39 we find him in Egypt and the hour of his activity is come. First of all he is active in the comparatively small and secluded sphere of Potiphar's house and possessions, and he at once comes before us as a man of skilful and powerful hands, so much so that his master, finding in him a treasure, allowed all that he had to be manipulated by him. The record runs:- "His master saw . . . that the Lord made all that he did to prosper *in his hand* . . . and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put *into his hand* . . . and he left all that he had *in Joseph's hand*; and he knew not ought that he had, save the bread which he did eat."

Joseph was in humiliation and obscurity, yet his abilities could not be hid. The power of his hands was such that everything naturally fell into them and he became the overseer or administrator. Everything in Potiphar's house took its direction from him.

It is not difficult to trace an analogy between this and what marked our Lord Jesus Christ when He appeared in humiliation amongst men. He stepped into our little world with its limitation and obscurity. No sooner did He come forth to serve than His power became manifest. "He could not be hid" (Mark 7: 24), and wherever He went He proved Himself the Master of the situation and things simply lapsed into His hand. The Gospels are the record of this, particularly the Gospel of Mark.

In the case of Joseph it is emphasised that he was what he was by the blessing of Jehovah (Gen. 39: 3 and 5), and if the blessing of Jehovah was upon Potiphar's house it was "for Joseph's sake." So too with the Lord Jesus. He "went about doing good . . . for God was with Him" (Acts 10: 38), and the blessing of the Lord was manifested amongst men as never before: healing, deliverance from all kinds of evil, and spiritual life visited them, but it was "for Jesus' sake." It is noteworthy that though all Joseph's career was marked by Divine blessing it is at this point, when he was in servitude and obscurity, that it is mentioned, and that not once only but thrice. In the case of the Lord Jesus it was during the time of His lowly service in the restricted sphere of this world, that His mission and work

had the appearance of failure. It was just then that He had to say in the words of the prophet, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord and my work with my God" (Isa. 49: 4). But Jehovah had just said, "Thou art My servant . . . *in whom I will be glorified.*"

The career of Joseph in Potiphar's house, in spite of the blessing that attended it and the physical perfection that marked him — it says, "And Joseph was of a beautiful form and of a beautiful countenance" (Gen. 39: 6, N. Tr.) — was suddenly cut short, and as the victim of false accusation he was thrust into prison. The end of Genesis 39 tells us of the result of this apparently disastrous reverse. "The Lord was with Joseph . . . and the keeper of the prison *committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison: and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.*"

Joseph was simply irresistible! Placed in servitude he became the factotum in the house of his master. Cast down into prison, his feet "hurt with fetters" since he was "laid in iron" (Ps. 105: 18), once more all things fall into his hands. The enchained prisoner becomes the ruler of the prison. The official keeper of the prison found in him such a treasure that he gave him full powers and "looked not to anything that was under his hand: because the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper."

From Joseph we turn to the One whom he prefigured, and surely our hearts are moved to worship. Our Lord Jesus Christ, too, had His career of service cut short. As a victim of false accusation He entered into the prison house of death and to all appearance its shackles were made fast upon Him. Yet He only entered into death and the grave to prove Himself once more the Master of the situation. Instead of being enslaved by them, He subdued them to Himself. The keys of death and hades passed into His hands. He led captivity captive, though this was not manifested until He ascended on high. We may truly say that whatsoever was done in that gloomy domain, "He was the doer of it"! not a soul there but has passed into His hands. "For to this end Christ . . . died . . . that He might be *Lord . . . of the dead.*" (Rom. 14: 9). He has proved His power in the lowest and darkest place.

Reverting again to Joseph we learn how God in His own time publicly vindicated him. His powers could not be permanently hid, and in the hour when Egypt's potentate and wise men were alike troubled, and baffled, and helpless, he proved himself to be to Pharaoh both wisdom and power. He knew what was impending; he knew what to do, and he was the man to do it. That which had been true of him in his obscurity, and even in his abasement, was now true of him in his exaltation. Everything in Egypt's wide dominions lapsed into his hands, "and Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt, *and Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and PUT IT UPON JOSEPH'S HAND*" (Gen. 41: 41, 42).

Joseph had now reached the zenith of his glory. According to his word all Egypt was ruled, and to him every knee had to bow. Pharaoh "made him Lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; to bind his princes at his pleasure; and to teach his senators wisdom" (Ps. 105: 21, 22). His dominion thus was absolute, subject only to the king in his throne, and upon his hand there reposed the signet ring of authority and it became true again that "whatsoever they did there he was the doer of it." Wielding the executive power of the kingdom he subdued all things in the realm to Pharaoh, as Genesis 47: 13-26 shows.

How strikingly all this foreshadows the coming glory of Christ. Risen and ascended He is already glorified at the right hand of the Majesty on high, but that is a private thing, unknown by the world. The hour of His public glory approaches when He will come forth to this world as the great Administrator on God's behalf. All judgment will be committed to him; He will, as it were, hold the

signet ring upon His hand, and not one executive act will take place without Him; the result of all being the subjugation of all things to Himself, so that ultimately God may be all in all. Then shall be fulfilled that other word in Isaiah 49, "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose Thee."

Though the day of Christ's glory seems to tarry, we wait for it with confidence. It is the determinate counsel of God. Joseph's advancement and glory seemed to tarry long. All seemed failure and gloom, "Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him" (Ps. 105: 19), then at one mighty bound he leapt from the prison to the throne. His mighty hands at last wielded the sceptre. All was of God for, as his father Jacob said in his prophetic blessing of his sons, "His bow abode in strength, and the arms of *his hands WERE MADE STRONG BY THE HANDS OF THE MIGHTY GOD OF JACOB*" (Gen. 49: 24). We wait for Christ with a double assurance inasmuch as we are cognizant of His present glory in private at the Father's right hand. As we wait we can rejoice.

"Sing His blest triumphant rising,
Sing Him on the Father's throne
Sing, till heaven and earth surprising
Reigns the Nazarene alone!"