

00-03-19b

We're ready now to resume our study in Genesis chapter 39. It is remarkable to see these pictures that we examined in our first lesson this morning, the foreshadowing of different aspects of Jesus' work. And it reminds me of something I've been thinking about this past week in listening to a very good friend of mine teach on the subject of divine guidance and on the means by which God leads and guides us in our daily circumstances.

We have to make decisions. We have to set priorities. We have to determine how best to spend our time and our efforts.

There was a pastor on the radio this morning talking about the responsibility that we have for stewardship, not only of our finances, but also of our time and our energy and our attention. And obviously we have an issue of what would God have us do in specific situations. We have a range of choices in a lot of different areas of life.

Which choice is the best? And as we saw when we did a formal study of divine guidance a few years ago, one of the things that is critically important for us is to step back and ask ourselves this question. When we think about divine guidance, what would God have me do? How are we framing that question? Are we wanting an answer? What is it that we want? Are we wanting an answer to a particular dilemma that we face or a choice out of a set of options that we have? What is our goal? What is our motivation? Do we want this to work out well in circumstances? Do we want it to come to a happy conclusion as far as the course of our life is concerned? We don't want to make ourselves or others miserable. We don't want to cost ourselves money.

We don't want to have some bad outcome in a particular area. And so we say, well, I'll go to God and see if God will help me make this decision or show me the right way to go. But sometimes we really have our self-interest in view.

I don't want to take a path that's going to cause me pain. I don't want to take a path that's going to cost me money. I don't want to take a path that's going to make me unhappy is what it boils down to.

And really the goal when we look to God for guidance should be how can I best align myself with the plans and the purposes of the Father? What is the course that will be most pleasing in His sight, that will be in the center of His will for His purposes? We've talked about this in relation to prayer. We have a list of things that we want to bring to God by way of request, by way of intercession for others. What is our goal in beseeching God for assistance in these areas? We say, well, so-and-so is in the hospital.

Oh, Lord, please heal them. So-and-so is having a difficult time. Please assist them.

Well, this is our human viewpoint. We want a good outcome in circumstances. If we step back and say, what is the will of the Father? What could God be doing in this situation? Why would God have this particular confluence of circumstances in my life or in someone else's life? And to pray, because we always close our prayers in a biblical manner, don't we? We say, in Jesus' name, I pray.

Well, if you're praying in Jesus' name, this is like an ambassador. You know, the ambassador goes overseas to try to get two sides to come together for peace or to advance the purposes of the United States. And he goes in the name of the President of the United States or on behalf of.

He is an emissary seeking the interests of the country that he represents. So when we pray in Jesus' name, ostensibly, we are asking God to do something that is in Jesus' best interest, that reflects his glory and furthers his purpose. But we sometimes get a little bit more of a narrow view.

And you can see some of these. I haven't really watched it much, but there is a program on PBS called Yes Minister. And I understand there was a follow-on called Yes Prime Minister, which shows this man who is a minister in the British government.

And if you watch a little bit of that, I saw some excerpts last night, because they are having a telethon for money and they are showing British comedy excerpts. But a lot of times, this is the substance of the plot of this show, is the balance between personal interest and the interest of the state or the British people at large. So on the one hand, he should be doing something to help make good use of their funds and not waste it on funding scholarships at the law school, for example.

They had a situation where the law schools had traditionally been funded by the government with these scholarships for foreign students. And this really helps the school out. Well, the minister gets up there and with his objectivity and fresh, clear vision, he says, why are the British people having to fund the education of foreign lawyers? And so he said, we are going to cut that out.

Well, then these little political manipulators that surround the minister come up and say, oh, by the way, that particular law school that you are fixing to cut off the funding for their international scholarships, I heard if you will come down and attend this function, I think they are wanting to announce that they are going to bestow an honorary doctorate on you. Well, then suddenly his whole attitude about this money from the government changes because there is a self-interest in view. And the perspective shifts when you are looking at it in terms of, well, what is my benefit? And of course you can say, you can try to justify and rationalize, but this is what we do in our own life.

When our self-interest starts to take center stage, it is going to warp our view and affect our judgment. And we are not going to rightly prioritize. We are not going to be able to

see what really needs to be done.

And if we go to God looking for divine guidance, and yet what we really have at heart is self-interest, and even when we are praying for others, a lot of times we have our self-interest in view. Oh Lord, spare this person because I love them, and they make me happy, and I don't want to lose them. So, give me this thing that I want.

Rather than trying, to the extent that we can in our human perspective, to see what God's purpose and what God's plan, and what are the issues of faith, of hope, and of love that exist. And when we pray, rather than saying, Oh God, please cure so and so of their cancer, to think, what could God be doing? Oh Lord, please let this be an occasion for strengthening of faith, for reflecting of your glory, for the manifesting of that hope that will cause people to ask a reason for the hope that is in that person, or in their family. That the grace of God, and the glory of God, and the truth of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ will be made manifest, whichever way it goes.

We sometimes say, well, you know, I prayed and prayed for that person to be healed, and they weren't. Or I prayed and prayed for this situation to come to a happy resolution, and it didn't. Well, what were we praying for? We were praying for the plan of Sam, instead of the plan of God.

And if you pray in accordance with the will of God, you're always going to get a yes. Because if you pray, Lord, manifest your glory in that situation, comfort. You are the God of all comfort.

Comfort the people who are enduring this affliction, or going through this trial. You know God is the God of comfort, and He's always going to comfort. He's not going to fail to comfort.

So that prayer got answered with a yes. If you say, Lord, reflect your glory, and enable this person, bolster their faith, give them encouragement through the fellowship of other believers. Let this be a case where the body of Christ is manifested in its beneficial relationship between the parts.

Let this be a place where the trial of faith will produce patience, and produce the fruit of the Spirit that will redound to your eternal glory. You're going to get a yes to each one of those things. And you can pray with confidence.

Why? Because you know. You don't know whether that person is going to survive this physical malady or not, whether it's God's time for them to go or not. And to pray in one way, you've only got a 50% chance of guessing right.

But you can always pray in accordance with the known will of God. And it's the same thing when we face individual situations. In your early life, when you graduate high school, and you're looking for a college, or trying to determine should you marry this

person you're dating, and so forth.

You can say, oh, there's a lot of things you can say, but wouldn't it be great to be praying, Lord, show me the way that is pleasing in your sight. Perhaps none of these choices. Maybe I shouldn't even be making a decision about a school.

Maybe I shouldn't even be making a decision about a person to go through life with at this point. I was telling somebody here just the other day, this is one of the interesting things about Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple during His temptations. Turn these stones into bread.

Show Him all the kingdoms of the world. And then when Satan takes Jesus and stands Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and he says, jump down. Because doesn't the Scripture say that His angels will bear thee up lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone? And he makes out like, well, Jesus has to make a decision about this.

He's got to decide, well, I wonder if it really is the will of God for me to jump and demonstrate God's power is the will of God for me not to jump. And Satan tries to make the issue to jump or not to jump. That is the question.

But to Jesus, the question is not jumping or not jumping, the specific circumstance. It is, are you putting God to the test? What is this doing to a relationship with God? Satan makes it seem like you've got to make a decision about this jumping. But Jesus is thinking, where am I in my relationship with the Father? I'm not going to put my Father's love and my Father's promise to the test.

And I don't need to. And there's no need to make that decision to jump or not to jump. We can wrap ourselves around the ax, well, maybe God would be glorified when all the people see my human body physically kept from death.

And can't I claim that promise? My time is not yet and so forth. It's a completely different issue because Jesus is thinking about the Father. What does the Father think? Not what will people think.

Not what will Satan think. His view is, what will the Father think? And if we can take that attitude in our prayer life, if we can take that attitude when we look for divine guidance, we're going to find that it will permeate all of our perceptions and viewpoint in life. And when you find a situation such as Joseph is in, he could be asking himself, what did I do to deserve this? I've been sold into slavery by my own brothers.

You can second guess. You can go back and try to relive ancient history and decide whether or not he should have communicated the dreams and torture himself over this. But what Joseph does is remain faithful.

If his lot in life now is to be a servant, he's going to be the best servant he knows how to

be. And he doesn't torture himself with questions, well, aren't these the Egyptians and aren't these the scurvy knaves that ran my great-grandfather out of the land? Maybe I shouldn't help them and I'll be an underground working against them. He says, well, God has put me in this circumstance.

I'm going to be a reflection of a man of faith. And God blesses everything that he does. And leave the details to God.

Just be found faithful. It is required in a steward, it says in the New Testament, that a man be found faithful. And so if we can take whatever circumstances come along through the foreknowledge of God and concentrate on being faithful, if we can look at the circumstances around us, both when we pray for ourselves and pray for others, and say, what is the path of faith? What is the path of confidence that God knows what he's doing? What is the purpose of God in human history? To reveal himself, to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ as the author and finisher of our faith, as our savior, as our prophet, our priest, and our king.

That is where the will of God lies. And we can orient ourselves to that. We can pray in that way.

And it completely changes your whole view of what divine guidance is. Because now you want to be led into that good and perfect will of God, not the good and perfect will of Sam. As I see it, wouldn't it be great if it worked out this way? You see this, of course, in the Lord's prayer in Gethsemane.

So we find Joseph here, and things are starting to look up. But the other thing that we tend to do is, we often tend to measure where we are and how we're doing by how things are going. Joseph got the coat of many colors, put in charge of his brothers, he's doing pretty well.

Did Joseph make a mistake, and God punished him by having him be sold into slavery? There's no record of that in the Scripture. Joseph may have been insensitive to what his brothers would think. He may have been naive as to the depth of their envy and hatred.

But there's no record that Joseph started lording it over his brothers, or was high and mighty, or began to have the attitude of the servant in Jesus' parable, where he began to abuse the other servants because of his authority. There's no record of that. He told them the truth.

He told them the truth of the dream that was sent him by God. And that pushed them over the edge, and they pushed him over the edge of the pit. So, if Joseph started saying, well, I must have done something wrong.

I fell up somewhere, because look at this bad circumstance. And in this situation coming up, he could do it again. He survived this big fall into slavery, and now he's prospering,

and he's in the household, and he's an honored member of the staff here on the part of Potiphar.

But look at what happens. It says at the end of verse 6, Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. There are only two people in Scripture of which this is said, and we've already looked at the other one.

If you look at chapter 29, verse 17 of Genesis, Genesis 29, 17, this exact same phrase is used of another individual. Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance, like mother, like son. And isn't it interesting that in the prophets, it is said of the Lord Jesus, He hath no form or comeliness that we should desire Him.

This kind of cuts both ways. Jesus didn't have the personal beauty and charisma that would draw a large crowd on its own merits. But Joseph here, as the son of Rachel, seems to have inherited this extraordinary physical beauty and symmetry.

So this very same phrase, only two places in the Old Testament where this is used. So it came to pass in verse 7 of chapter 39, after these things, that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph. And she said, lie with me.

Nothing like the direct approach. 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? It's interesting to compare the proportion of what she says and what Joseph says. She says basically two words in Hebrew, lie with me. Joseph gives this very well-reasoned and well-structured response.

He says, look, let's think about this for a moment. And he lays out the facts of the trust that has been placed in him by Potiphar. So he says, he makes basically three arguments.

This is a betrayal of trust, number one. Secondly, it is a great wickedness because it is adultery. It's a sin against a marriage.

And thirdly, it's a sin against God. It's a sin against Potiphar. It's a sin against the marriage.

And it's a sin against God. So there's three different ways that this is wrong. But in verse 10, so it was that she spoke to Joseph day by day that he did not heed her to lie with her or to be with her.

And this is a very important statement to make because Joseph not only... And there are people that like to be the moth dancing around the flame and to sort of mentally toy with

a possibility. When they find out that someone is attracted to them in the physical sense, people will indulge in what they will rationalize as harmless flirtation or harmless dalliance or just spending time that they would not otherwise spend. Maybe they'll stay, you know, this typically happens in workplaces, and someone will decide that they need to stay late because this other person happens to be staying late.

Or they will find an excuse to be in the presence of someone. And they say, well, you know, nothing's going to happen. It's harmless.

Well, Joseph knows better. And Joseph not only refuses this... It's a little bit more than a request. This is an imperative.

This is a demand on the part of his master's wife. But not only does he say no to that, but he avoids her. She evidently tried not only to get him to commit this physical act, but apparently said much more like, well, just come in the house and help me straighten this tablecloth or I need help dusting these blinds or something and was trying to entice him with what seemed to be harmless.

And not only would he not lie with her, but he would not be with her. He would not go near her, even for what she might offer as sort of an innocent contact. So Joseph is doing the right thing.

And you have a lot of things said in Proverbs about this idea. If you go over to Proverbs 4, this is wisdom that Joseph has on board in his soul. The first several chapters of Proverbs address this issue.

But you can start there in Proverbs 5 where he says to pay attention to knowledge and understanding, to preserve discretion and your lips may keep knowledge. Because in verse 3 of Proverbs 5, the lips of an immoral woman drip honey and her mouth is smoother than oil. But in the end, she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

Her feet go down to death. Her steps lay hold of Sheol. Lest you ponder her path of life, her ways are unstable.

You do not know them. Therefore, hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house.

Lest you give your honor to others and your years to the cruel one. Lest aliens be filled with your wealth and your labors, go to the house of a foreigner and you mourn at last when your flesh and your body are consumed and say how I have hated instruction and my heart despised correction. I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me.

You can go on down to verse 20. Why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman and be embraced in the arms of a seductress? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord and he ponders all his paths. His own iniquities will entrap the wicked man and he is caught in the cords of his sin.

He shall die for lack of instruction and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray. This theme is developed further in Proverbs 6. When you get down to Proverbs 6.24, the commandment is a lamp and the law is a light to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart nor allure you with her eyelids.

For by means of a harlot, a man is reduced to a crust of bread and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife. Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.

So, even before these words were written by Solomon, recording the teaching of his father David, Joseph understood this. Joseph was possessed of wisdom and knowledge and so he took heed and he didn't go anywhere near. Not only did he not lie with her, but he did not spend any time near her either.

But, verse 11, it happened about this time when Joseph went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was inside. And this is the one lapse perhaps in Joseph's watchfulness. If he did have to go into the house, it would have been wise, in retrospect of course, to make sure that he didn't go in there when there wasn't anyone else around.

But she evidently has been waiting for this moment. She caught him by his garment saying, lie with me. She's just singing a one note song in here.

She must have really been mashed on him as they used to say. But he left his garment in her hand and fled and ran outside. So it was when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, she called to the men of her house and spoke to them saying, see, he has brought into us a Hebrew to mock us.

He came in to me to lie with me and I cried out with a loud voice. And she goes on to tell this tale. But you'll notice there's another little particular Hebrew thing going on here because it says that when Joseph went into the house to do his work, none of the men of the house was inside.

She caught him by his garment. Joseph, a lot of the turning points in his life had to do with his garments because his brothers stripped off his garment to sell him into slavery and take that garment as proof that he's dead to Jacob. Here he's got on a garment and it is snatched from him.

And this had to be something of an act of violence. These weren't the kind of garments, it's not like he had a tablecloth folded around him that you could just grab one corner and away we go. Typically, at this period, people wore something kind of like long boxer shorts and then a tunic over that.

And so for him to flee the house naked, she had to have taken him unawares and grabbed these things and literally torn them off his body. And so he fled and ran outside and he left his garment in her hand. The phrase here is the same as what you have in verse 6. Potiphar left all that he had in Joseph's hand.

Here, Joseph leaves all that he had in Mrs. Potiphar's hand. And this trust that Potiphar placed in Joseph, Joseph has a little bit too much of a trusting nature here that this woman will just take no for an answer. And Potiphar is going to feel that his trust is betrayed when the wife tells this tale.

Anyway, it's interesting. It repeats it twice in verse 12 and in verse 13 that Joseph left his garment in her hand. And so you have the pulling together almost literally of a couple of different themes here.

The garment and the putting into the hand. So she calls these men and tells this story. And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice in verse 15 and cried out, he left his garment with me and fled and went outside.

This is the third time that garment has been mentioned. And she kept his garment with her until his master came home. That's four times on the garment.

Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came into me to mock me. So it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside. That's five on the garment.

So it was when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, Your servant did to me after this manner, that his anger was aroused. So just as Joseph's coat of many colors was used to convince Jacob of something that was not true about Joseph, now his servant's garment is used by the wife to convince Potiphar of something about Joseph that is not true. Joseph's going to begin to think, I ought to just stop wearing these garments.

People keep taking my garments and using them for evil purposes. But it was when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, Your servant did to me after this manner, that his anger was aroused. So Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in the prison.

This word is unique. It's only used here, this word for prison. And it literally means, it's Beit Sahar.

S-A-H-A-R. And it means the round house or the house of roundness. And apparently, this was not a dungeon per se.

This is the place where the political prisoners were kept, the king's prisoners. And this is something that is under Potiphar's personal control. And you get the idea that Potiphar, even though he's angry and even though he consigns Joseph to this round house, to this prison, has an inkling that Joseph may not be totally guilty.

On the one hand, he has all of Joseph's previous service and he's never abused his trust. He's never taken advantage of anything before. And the penalty for this sort of behavior, Potiphar's wife uses the term, he came in to me, which sometimes it just means somebody came in and other times it is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

And so when she uses this phrase, well, if that were true, that rape or attempted rape, that is a death penalty offense. And Potiphar could have just had Joseph's head lopped off. You can find this even in the Word of God in Deuteronomy 22, 23-27.

Clearly, the penalty for this type of behavior is death for the perpetrator. And of course, that's in the Law of Moses. You can imagine what it might be in a pagan land, especially of a servant who doesn't have the standing that a citizen in the nation of Israel would have.

But Potiphar puts him in a prison, but it's under Potiphar's control. We know that Potiphar controlled this. If you flip over to chapter 40, verse 3, the butler and the baker, when they get put in prison, they're put into custody in the house of the captain of the guard in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined.

So that roundhouse belongs to the captain of the guard, which in this case is Potiphar. And you can see this again in verse 7 and in 41.10, that this stuff belongs to Potiphar. So Potiphar incarcerates him, but you get the idea that this may have been as much to humor his wife as to punish Joseph.

And I'm sure it was regretful on Potiphar's part because he's done well. He's enjoyed great blessing with Joseph at the helm, and now he's got to retake control of all of these things and try to manage it himself, and he's probably going to suffer a loss. But Joseph's master in verse 20 took him and put him in the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in the prison, but, verse 21, the Lord was with Joseph.

What are the conditions where the Lord is with someone? Does God just arbitrarily decide that He's going to grace someone with His presence? This tells us a lot about Joseph, and it's amazing when you think of the circumstances. This is the second time under very similar circumstances when you look at it, that Joseph has been wrongly punished and has suffered a very cruel fate at the hands of others who have lied to him. There's nothing worse than being lied about.

There's nothing worse than being misrepresented to someone else and being falsely accused and to have your motives impugned and to be labeled as something that you're not. And our instinct is to defend ourself to noise it abroad and to vindicate ourselves. And as soon as you get into self-defense and self-vindication, you have your eyes on yourself.

You remember the great classic definition of subjectivity versus objectivity. If you want to be objective in life as a believer, you keep your eyes on Christ. Keep your eyes on the things of God.

If you're going to be subjective and take your eyes off of the things of God in the person of Christ, where are your eyes going to rest? There are three destinations, and your eyes will always be in one of these three places. It's either eyes on self, eyes on people, or eyes on circumstances, details of life, things. If you're not looking at Christ and you're not looking at God, you're going to be either looking at yourself, looking at people, or looking at circumstances or some combination of the three.

Well, here's a classic case where everything, poor me, this is always happening to me, unjustified, undeserved suffering. Look at these people and how they have wronged me. Look at these lying, conniving, deceitful people I'm surrounded with and look at these circumstances that I'm now in as a result.

If there was ever a triple temptation, a triple pressure to literally fall from grace and fall from faith, Joseph is in it. But when it says here in verse 21 that the Lord was with Joseph, you know what that tells us? It tells us that Joseph did not lose his objectivity. I am sure that he was traumatized.

I am sure that he had a broiling cauldron of emotions in his soul. All of his hard work down the tubes, loss of everything he had gained after being sold as a slave, but he got that under control. And he is still functioning in faith because you look at the Word of God, if he was not functioning in faith, God would not be with him.

The condition for God being with you, look at what Jesus says to His disciples in the upper room over in John 15. He that has My words and keeps them, he is the one that loves Me. And I and My Father will come to him and make our home with him.

It's by having the Word of God and keeping it. And Joseph, whatever he understood of God's Word, whatever he had figured out about his own dreams and God's promise, he said, well, I am not going to forsake my trust in God. I am not going to abandon all hope.

That thing they have, abandon all hope ye who enter here. And this is a double blow. He suffered a series of big setbacks here, but it says the Lord was with him.

And that tells us not only something great about the Lord God and His grace and faithfulness, but it tells us something about Joseph. Joseph qualified for the presence of

God because of his faith. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.

Go through those chapters in Hebrews, chapter 2, 3 and 4, chapter 4 particularly, where the promise of God was not mixed with faith in them that heard it. Talking about the Israelites who dropped in the wilderness. Well, like Abraham, his great-grandfather, Joseph staggered not at the promise of God.

Even when it looked as hopeless as a hundred-year-old man fathering a son, Joseph didn't stagger. And as a result, God was with him. And you can imagine that even in the prison, Joseph had peace.

Maybe not perfect peace, but he had enough peace and enough faith that God was with him. It showed him mercy and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And once again, after this big drop in the graph here, you see God starting to bless Joseph in yet another circumstance.

And this happens in our lives. Even when things seem dark, if you look around, you can usually find evidence of encouragement and evidence of God's presence and God's attention. In the ministry of fellow believers and the exercise of their spiritual gift on your behalf, you realize that even though things are going badly, people have secularized this into, well, look on the bright side or look for the silver lining in the dark cloud.

But God will give us encouragement. He is the God of all comfort. The Holy Spirit's title is the Comforter.

And if we have not driven away the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in our souls through faithlessness and subjectivity, God the Holy Spirit will comfort us and will bring to our mind the reality of God's presence and God's purpose and God's love for us and God's sustaining grace. But we have to be listening. We have to be looking for that.

And we decide whether these things are going to cause us to stumble and make us miserable or whether it is going to be an opportunity for God to strengthen us and to accomplish His purpose, whatever that may be. So we decide, is it fear or is it faith? Is it subjectivity or objectivity? Are my eyes going to dwell on others' circumstances, myself and my pitiful state, or are they going to rest on the Lord who is somehow in His omnipotence and His wisdom working this together for His great glory and my great blessing? That's the choice we make. And we make this to a greater or lesser degree almost every day.

Because as we decide how to spend our time, what are we deciding? Well, do I know best? Am I seeing clearly and have I got this figured out what needs to be done? Or am I looking to God's instruction, God's perspective? What is a good use of time? What is a good use of effort? What is a good use of my thinking? Should I let my thinking dwell on this subject or should I turn it back to God? It's one of the reasons I'm so happy that

we're doing our memory work here learning verses each week. Because if you say, well, I know I shouldn't be thinking this way. I need to get my eyes off of people and off of myself and off of circumstances.

Well, it's just like when you talk about metanoeo, about the change of mind that's translated repentance in the New Testament. If you change your mind away from sin, you've got to put it somewhere. You can't just pull it out of sin and have it float in space doing nothing.

If you take it off of one thing, it's got to be put onto something else. Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee. Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

It is the Word of God that is living and powerful and sharp. It is our diligence in meditating on those things that enables us to rightly divide the Word of Truth and to be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. So we've got to not only turn our eyes and our attention away from these subjective things, but we have to have something to put it on.

If we don't have the Word of God in our souls, this does not mean, by the way, turn on a tape or run out to a Bible class. It's got to be in our soul because this operation is taking place in our soul. And I think sometimes we've gotten the idea that I'll listen to a lesson or I'll go to Bible class and now my spiritual momentum is good for three or four or five days perhaps.

It isn't what we hear, it's what we meditate on that counts. And all of the hearing in the world doesn't strengthen our faith. Faith is not the hearing.

Faith comes by hearing, but faith is not hearing. That verse tells us that there is a distinction. And hearing is not faith.

But you can't have faith without the hearing. So it's what we hear that we go back later and seize and lay hold of. And that's what Joseph is doing here.

The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. The keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever they did there, it was his doing.

The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it to prosper. It's almost a carbon copy of what God did with Joseph in Potiphar's house.

And they say you can't keep a good man down. Well, if it's divine good and if it's the power of God, you absolutely cannot keep a good man down. And God's grace and God's faithfulness is demonstrated.

And you think, well, but he's only the favored man and the blessed man in a prison. It seems like he's gone down. At least he was in a powerful man's house.

Now he's just the head guy in a prison. Well, it is the least things and the foolish things of this world that God uses to confound the wise. And it is in this smallest arena that Joseph has ever had for authority.

He started out in Israel's household supervising his brothers in the great flocks and herds. And then he was in a pagan land in a household and now he's in a pagan land in a prison. He could look at that and say, oh, how I've diminished, how the mighty are fallen.

Or he can look at the grace and faithfulness of God and say I know that there are good things coming. And we can do the same thing. The greatest thing that God ever did for us was at the point of our salvation.

We have ups and downs in this life, but depending on how real the grace of God and the plan of God, the foreknowledge of God, how real that is to us, that's going to determine what God is able to do with us both now and in the days and the ages to come. So it's our calling to not lose sight of God. Turning our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the one who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

He is our greatest and best example. Joseph is a wonderful foreshadowing of him. But in all of these things, what do we set our eyes on? What is our goal? Everything else is going to fall into place if we keep our eyes on eternal things.

This is a good place for us to stop. We begin a new chapter next week on dreams. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of studying your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will use it to transform our souls, that in his hands that sharp sword will expose where we need change, where we need correction and improvement in our thinking and in our priorities. We pray that as a result, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be glorified.

We ask it in his name. Amen.