



November 4, 2007

Sold Out

As we continue our sermon series on Covenant Keepers we will reverse our direction and go back in time. We began with Daniel and then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo then last week we fast-forwarded and looked at a number of the reformers from the 1500's today we go back the Old Testament to the first book of the Bible where God first established the covenant, the covenant, that two way promise between God and man an agreement that says be holy as the Lord your God is holy. Holy meaning set apart God set himself apart for us and he set himself apart to provide us with our salvation. Holy, we are to set ourselves apart for God's service. Today we will look at an individual who had totally sold out to the covenant. An individual who had definite trials in life, an individual who, motivated by belief in the covenant, set himself apart to follow God's plan, a person who saw the triumph of God's plan in his life. A simple teenager, yet a man, by the name of Joseph.

The Covenant was first given to Abraham and it applied to him and all his descendants. His son Isaac, his grandson Jacob, who God renamed Israel, and then to Jacob's children, Abraham's great grandchildren, the twelve children of Israel. Joseph was great grandson number eleven. What do we know about Joseph? Well Genesis 37:3 says, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he had been born to him in his old age and he made a richly ornamented robe for him." So begins Joseph's first trial. The very next verse makes it clear, Genesis 37:4 says, "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him." Add to that Joseph had some dreams, dream that indicated that he was going to be the master of his brothers in fact be the master of his father and mother too. Joseph probably not understanding how jealousy works among brothers gladly shared these dreams with his brothers, which

just further infuriated them. The story is almost American we like to say three strikes your out well I guess you could say the robe was strike one, the dreams were strike two and strike three comes in a little different form.

As we continue to move through Genesis 3 we get to verses 12-14 which tells us that his brothers were grazing the sheep about 50 miles away, Joseph is not with them he is 17 years old and easily capable of work but he's at home with dad in other words Joseph is coddled, on top of that we see Jacob saying to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks and bring word back to me." I guess you could say that's strike three Joseph is checking up on his brothers now. The brothers had had it. They saw him coming they said, "Here comes that dreamer come now lets kill him then we'll see what comes of his dreams." You know the story older Ruben says let put him in a cistern, Judah sees a caravan of traders, "and says what will gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood come lets sell him", the Ishmaelites gladly took him and took him to Egypt where they sold him into slavery to Potiphar. Now that's a trial from favorite son to hated son to slave. His response? Do the righteous thing work hard and honestly for his master. The result? Two things happened, first, Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his whole household. Genesis 40:6 tells us, "With Joseph in charge he did not concern himself with anything except the food that he ate." Second, Potiphars' wife wished to have an affair with him Joseph's response, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" There's a saying about a woman scorned and Potiphars' wife lives up to it and cried rape as a result of being a covenant keeper Joseph is put in prison. The result of that? Joseph remains a covenant keeper he lives righteously and "the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in prison and he was made responsible for all that was done there." And "the warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care."

Now lets see how this works Favorite son, hated brother, slave, head of house, prisoner, head of prison this by all accounts is not a triumph, you know what happens Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker are both thrown in prison and have dreams. Joseph interprets them giving all the glory to God, as a covenant keeper will do. The cupbearer will be restored to his position he says the baker executed and this is what comes to pass in three days. However it takes two years for this to be made known, two years later Pharaoh has a

dream and he's troubled by it, the cupbearer then remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh about him and Joseph is brought out of prison. He interprets the dream, again as a true covenant keeper giving all glory to God, and Pharaoh promotes him saying, "Since God has made all this known to you there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace and all of my people are to submit to your orders only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you. I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." The pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger, he dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second in command and men shouted before him, "Make way!" He put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh but with out your word no one will lift hand or foot in all of Egypt."

Let's play it one more time, favorite son, hated brother, slave, head of house, prisoner, head of prison, second in command of Egypt the super power at that time. Now that's trial and triumph right? Well yes but the real trial comes in Joseph's prosperity. A famine hits the land and Joseph's brothers come to buy food in the land of Egypt. Now I have to ask if your siblings hated you almost killed you and caused you to become a slave and a prisoner and then you had the power to get them back what would you do? Listen to Joseph's response from Genesis 45:4-8, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. Why was he able to say this? The covenant God set himself apart to forgive us so we are to forgive others. Is there someone you have a problem with? A brother, sister, father, mother, co-worker, neighbor? God doesn't recommend that you meet with the individual and seek reconciliation God demands it because he did it for us.

Like all the other aspects of righteous living, covenant living that we've seen God doesn't give as any exception to the rule. Joseph knows this he did it that's why he is a covenant keeper. None of us

have been through what he has been through probably the closest was Merle Warner, one of our saints who passed away this year and even Merle knew what he had to do, he had to forgive the Germans for what they put him through and he did eh was a covenant keeper. May we take this opportunity and be a covenant keeper. Seek out the person you have a struggle with and bring God's peace and forgiveness to them.

In our Savior's name, Amen.