

“Who’s That With You?  
Pastor Sam Richards  
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Charles Spurgeon wrote: “If you go through the world selfish, morose, bitter, suspicious, bigoted, hard (harsh?), the devil is with you, *God is not.*” And, as Orphan Annie would say, “Leapin’ Lizards!” that is saying a mouthful. Spurgeon was describing Joseph’s “right state of heart,” the state which empowered him to “seek the good” of his his cruel, and decidedly less gracious/loving brothers. “He (Joseph) loved with all his soul, and so will every man *who has God with him, for God is love.*” It’s all about the fruit—it’s either the fruit of the Spirit, or the fruit of the devil (whichever one is with you) that we unavoidably put out there. It is possible that you, upon hearing this, experience more than just a *twinge* of conviction. I did, and do. “Selfish, morose, bitter, suspicious, bigoted, hard (harsh?)”. . . yep, that’s me on more days than I care to remember. A spiritual litmus test. BUT, here’s the oxygen of salvation for those who need to breath, bearing the fruit of the devil is not inevitable! Those who hear this indictment and sigh, “Yes, I know . . . that just the way I am. Can’t help it.” To you I say, “Stop it. You see your need for change, so do it! Undertake change, change of management, change of leadership, change of allegiance, and change of behavior—and the effects of this shift, this realignment with the character, will and purpose of God, will transform you from what you were to a Joseph. It is always in line to greet one another with love, and to say, “Yes, I see you . . . and who’s that with you?” The fruit provides the clue. The fruit exposes what spirit you are of! Oh, it is indeed wonderful to embark on an exposition of so decent, so godly a chap as Joseph. **God was with him.** This is not only the secret of Joseph’s success; it is the cause of his splendid character. Joseph is totally worth emulating, only Jesus is more worthy of emulation. Let’s dig into that!

On a note of review, I remind you of the recent word we had on **two nations** being born as twins to Rebekah, one Edomite and one Jacobite. That is who they were at birth, divided in allegiance between God (Jacob) and the world (Esau). And we rejoiced to learn that what is natural is not unalterable—that it is possible, and necessary, to change one’s allegiance, to change one’s nationality. The shift from worldliness to godliness underscores why we have, in this divided world, evangelism and outreach. We have recruitment from both sides by divine plan! Now I refresh that business because it resurfaces here, only the choice is framed in terms of being a true Israelite, or of becoming an Egyptian—the latter being the same as choosing to be an Edomite, a worldling, whose ultimate destination is perdition.

So, here’s something we do not know, we do not know if Joseph was ever an Edomite as were his ten elder brothers. Indeed, we noted that Jacob’s walk was hugely colored by Edomite tendencies: he lived for health, wealth and prosperity just like his brother, Esau. The key difference, the essential difference was this: God was with Jacob. God said, **I will be with you.** And that, beloved, is what makes all the difference. When the stew of the Edomite in his first ten sons boiled up, and over,—in Shechem and particularly with the Dinah incident, and Jacob was challenged to keep his vow (called out), to return to Bethel and to worship God there (**the God who**

**appeared to you**, Gen. 35:1), Jacob describes God as **the God who answers me . . .** and as the God **who has been with me wherever I have gone** (35:3) and my hypothesis, and it can't exceed that status, *my hypothesis* is that Joseph, chosen and elect, experienced and inner confirmation—an answering faith, perhaps, and he decided for this God. “That’s the God for me.” Be that as it may, because the origins of his faith can only be inferred, it is no surprise to us to observe repeatedly how clearly God was with Joseph . . . yes, in an exact spiritual parallel to Jesus of whom Joseph was a “type!”:

**38 [a]You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, [b]and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. 39 We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the [c]land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a [d]cross. 40 God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.**

Footnotes

- a. Acts 10:38 Or **How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth**
- b. Acts 10:38 Lit. **who went**
- c. Acts 10:39 Or **countryside**
- d. Acts 10:39 Lit. **wood**

Charles Spurgeon preached, “A Miniature Portrait of Joseph” (Sermon #1612) on July 24, 1881. There is an amazing symmetry to that sermon. He expounds on God being with Joseph and covers five facts, five pieces of evidence and five results of this spiritual reality. I am quite sure that there’s little to be improved upon in his portrait of the man Joseph so, rather than re-invent the wheel I will share with you his facts evidence and results. This will shed light on the glory of character which Spurgeon uncovers to our view.

Fact One: God was gracious with Joseph for his youth onward—speaking to him in dreams and visions, cultivated an early piety which foreshadowed an eminent piety in his maturity.

Fact Two: God was with Joseph wherever he was. Whether at home, or sent away. His brothers moved by envy (as were the opponents and detractors of Christ!) and sold him into slavery, but in a profound sense Joseph could never be bought. He was honored for his integrity, purity and honesty. He took advantage of no-one and no situation. Therefore he was constantly finding favor with God and man—it is still that way. Because **God was with him**, Joseph displayed diligence, integrity and gentleness (more on that later).

Fact Three: God's presence stayed him well in a time of temptation and crisis. Joseph withstood the unholy solicitations of Potiphar's wife (**the strange woman**) and escaped enslavement to lust unlike his other brothers. Joseph lived before God and would not succumb to great wickedness as a result; he was a pure, chaste man.

Fact Four: Joseph displayed prophetic powers (in dream interpretation). The wisdom was from God, but his words were prophetic (truthful and predictive). He gave credit to God alone.

Fact Five: Because God was with him, he was always ready when opportunity knocked. Should should we all be. He was calm, dignified, and respectful . . . humble before God. Therefore God used him to save the world from imminent starvation and global disaster. And not only the known world, but providing for his family the best land in Goshen where the waters of the Nile supplied what rain did not! And yet, Joseph remained faithful to the covenant. While others may have turned Egyptian, he renounced the riches and glories of this world for what was promised him!

So much for the facts, now let's examine the evidence that God was with him.

Against, being fully conscious of the presence of God in his life, Joseph always acted under the influence of this spiritual truth—always, and he enjoyed its benefits. This sense of divine presence is hinted at in the experience of Ishmael (**God hears**), of Hagar (**God sees**) and of Jacob (**God is in this place and I did not know it**) but is seen in full bloom when Joseph, out of his filial fear of God, rebuffs the advances of Potiphar's wife! Judah lack such moral fiber. Presence translates into immediate, personal accountability: **how could I do this great wickedness against God?** The lady's charms could not prevail against such integrity. Furthermore, Joseph ascribes his gifts and works both to God—as did Jesus! The presence of God was everything to both of them.

Secondarily, there is Joseph's purity of heart. Such purity does not just happen, friends, it has to be cultivated and maintained. Joseph did that. Not only did he see God in all, he knew that God kept his feet from stumbling. That is the experience of every saint of God.

That brings us to diligence which I promised to revisit. The third grounds of evidence has to do with Joseph as a worker—wherever he was he worked hard. He applied himself heartily, with all his strength, vigor and aptitude. He expressed no sense of injustice, of being wronged . . . he didn't waste time espousing his rights, vaunting his freedom and that is because "the godly man is ready for anything." Changing circumstances are not basis for a failure of diligence: God always has work for those willing to work! The unemployment line in the kingdom is very short! Diligence made him invest himself in his work, he was engaged, busy, looking out for others and seeking to bless his boss. These are the marks of an exemplary Christian worker which when added to purity and honesty always result in promotion and advancement as God directs. God says, **Whom shall I send?** And our response is to be: "Here am I, Lord, send me. Joseph was not so worn out by the process of getting a position that, having

arrived, he had no energy to follow through and get the job done. He was glad to work! Grateful to work! BUT he was not driven by either ambition or profit itself—it was always service to his God and King. That influences both quantity and quality of output! We do not see procrastination, or excuse-making on his resume. Because God was with him, Joseph took on responsibility and was indifferent to affirmation from men.

Fourthly, there is the wonderful economic plan Joseph had for a prolonged season of genuine crisis. His was not a peace time plan, but a famine relief plan—he either got it done, with God’s help, or people would die—by the millions. I want to stress that Joseph’s emergency plan is not standard operating procedure; it’s key usefulness expired with the end of the famine. Then, one hopes, a return to normalcy would occur: the land returned to the people and private ownership would be restored—but that extends beyond the reach of Genesis. Joseph was tender-hearted and compassionate because of God’s influence on him. The servant of all is sympathetic to all.

Our transition to the fifth evidence is very smooth because it relates to the great (divine) wisdom that Joseph implemented in his governorship. What is indicative to that? His ability to remain silent, uncomplaining, above retaliation and revenge. Joseph was remarkably non-defensive when his character came under attack—we recall that he was attacked for his dreams of leadership well before the moral catastrophe in Potiphar’s house. There’s not a word of complaint against Potiphar’s wife (that I can find). He leaves her to Potiphar’s care and cooler temperament. What she was, unless she repented, would prove itself out regardless. Those who sought to derail him, by wronging him, failed magnificently! Joseph saw deeper, and wider than his contemporaries because **God was with him**. He escaped the trap too many fall into by becoming censorious, hypercritical and fault finding—there is an amazing connect between fault finding and blame shifting in this world. Thieves cry “Thief, Thief!” to cover their own robbery! And those who say, “Liar, Liar” have little idea how long their own noses have grown.

Again, it is the glory of his character, formed in him by God, and the resultant nobility of being that we acclaim in Joseph—it was all God’s work. It all came about by the influence of the divine on him over time, throughout life. Somehow Joseph, despite the disappointment of his brothers, the fractured nature of his home life, emerges a more devoted family man! He emerges a true Israelite, against the odds—loyal to God, to God’s people and to the land of promise. Too many meeting with some success in this life are “off to Egypt!” They seek the society of a better placed church . . . or worse, they are off to Egypt and worldliness. Joseph’s fabulous tomb in Egypt, a tribute to his leadership, lies empty, Joseph’s bones are buried in the Promised Land. Like I said, loyal. Of him, as Ruth affirmed: **Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people, and your God my God.** (Ruth 1:16) What a standard! What a true Jacobite!

And, in conclusion, the results may be summarized briefly. Prosperity is Joseph’s (spiritual prosperity, not necessarily material!) but it does not mean he is shielded from

hatred, temptation, slander, pain and disappointment. The longer I live the wider the participation I note among those who love the Lord. Joseph is grandly saved from sin and, as a result, lives grandly. He fulfills a glorious destiny despite—or perhaps even through the opposition! His is a happy, enviable life but, I am not tempting you to envy at all *because this life is available to all who by faith live with God, for God—for all who stay within voice range of the Almighty*. It is a grace note, I think, that Joseph ends up getting a double portion in Israel—both his sons are adopted into the tribe of Israel—Levi is removed, Ephraim and Manasseh are added in! A double portion! That is what comes to *those who are loyal to God and to the people of God*. Seek a double portion though it may come through suffering and deprivation. For, truly, it is those who carry the cross who get to wear the crown.

Slogging through the muck, slime and mire of this world is totally worth it, if, through our journey, we come at last to the Celestial City and, washed in the River Jordan, in life's final crossing, we assume our places of honor (as guests and co-heirs with Christ) in His palaces of Glory. There infinite joy will be a steady state, and not just a peak experience. That, friends, was the life-long aspiration of Joseph. If we were to think more of that, we would be freer, less entangled in the world, enable to live more nobly and above the fray as we await that Glorious Day. Until that glory our pray is that the Lord God would be Emmanuel . . . *God with us!*

**Amen.**