

Lessons from the Land of Affliction

Text: Genesis 41:46-52

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47 Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. 48 So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. 49 Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable.

*50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "**For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.**"*

Introduction: Regardless of how good anyone can have it in this life, I haven't yet come across anyone who can say that they haven't experienced some measure of affliction in one way or another. Pain, disappointment, suffering is common to all of us.

At the time of this account, Joseph was a man 'living the dream' – quite literally! God gave him a dream that had literally come to pass. He was young (30 years of age), second in authority only to Pharaoh, his wealth was immeasurable, and he was at the top of his game, in every sense of the word. Interestingly however, he still called it, *the land of his affliction*.

When we read about some of these earliest believers in God, (people like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and many of those mentioned in Hebrews 11), we see how they didn't think too highly of this world, they didn't have a great attachment to earthly stuff: they simply declared that they were pilgrims here – people on a journey, just passing through. The big deal for them was not what the world had to offer but what God had for them.

Hebrews 11:13-16 - *13b* - *They ... confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.*

*v.16 But now they desire a **better**, that is, a **heavenly country**. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

Joseph and his ancestors confessed that they were simply 'pilgrims' in this earth. They declared that their real homeland was a heavenly one. Compared to heaven, the very best earth could offer... still looked a lot like trouble and affliction! On earth, pilgrims but in heaven, citizens!

So, here's the first lesson we can learn from Joseph's 'land of affliction':

1. We need to live mindful of eternal things

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 - *For our light **affliction**, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are **eternal**.*

Regardless of how much 'success' one may experience in life, it is never detached from a measure of affliction. That is why we need to keep an eternal perspective.

2. We need to live mindful of God

V.51 ⁵¹*Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."* ⁵²*And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

Joseph gave his sons Hebrew names, not Egyptian ones. He did that to acknowledge what God had done for him. He was mindful of Yahweh and grateful to Him.

He knew what God had done in his life. He knew that all his achievements, his fruitfulness, only happened because of the hand of God upon his life:

He said in **verse 51**: *God made me*, and in **verse 52**, *God caused me* !

He was not a 'self-made man'. He said, *God made me*, and *God caused me to be fruitful*. It was all God.

Genesis 39:5 b - ... "*and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field*"

V.21 - *But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*

V.23b - ... "*the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper*".

God made me, God caused me!

In tough times, as we journey through the land of affliction, we may wonder if God is doing anything. He always is: He is making all things work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose! (Rom.8:28)

Philippians 2:13 - *For it is God who **works** in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

2 Corinthians 4:17 - ¹⁷*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, **is working** for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*

3. We need to live forgetful about the offenses of men

⁵¹*Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me **forget** all my toil and all my father's house*

We need to be mindful of eternal things, mindful of God, even mindful of the dreams He gave us (42:8) but forgetful when it comes to the wrongs suffered at the hands of other man. We need to keep ourselves free from offense.

The story of Joseph is such a wonderful story about the power of forgiveness. Joseph had been betrayed, abandoned, sold and hurt by his own brothers. However, he forgave them and kissed them. 13 years had not diminished his love and acceptance of them.

Unforgiveness keeps the pain alive. However, when you forgive, when you release someone who hurt you, then you are the one who walks out of prison!

I like what Paul said by inspiration of the Holy spirit:

Acts 24:16 - *This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

When you are forgetful then you are ready to be fruitful. God gave him a second son and he named him 'Ephraim'. Ephraim means 'twice fruitful'.

4. We can live fruitful in the land of affliction.

V.52 - *And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

It is wonderful when we come through trials with the kind of attitude Joseph had, burying past hurts and rejoicing in present blessings, being forgetful and fruitful at the same time!

V. 49 - *Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable.*

Genesis 39:2-3 - *The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a **successful man**; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. ³And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to **prosper** in his hand.*

Despite the afflictions and all he went through, it is undeniable that this man experienced fruitfulness, blessing, favour, promotion, the healing of his own memories and, in the end, there was of so much blessing left over that his family and even nations surrounding Egypt were blessed.

If we can be mindful of eternal things, mindful of God, forgetful of the wrongs of others, I believe we can also experience the same blessing and fruitfulness and the favor of God here, now.