

James T. Jeremiah  
Temptation and Triumph  
October 29, 1979

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Liked that, didn't you?

Audience:

Amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

Hey, wonderful. I was hopeful one day when I was a young man I'd learn to play a trombone, but I gave up. Everybody was glad.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's great to be back. We've been out in beautiful state of Colorado. By the way, how many students we have here from Colorado? Hey, how about that. We're glad you're here. I like that country. If we could just find a way to move the area about 15 miles east of Denver and connect it with the Indiana line, then it would be very nice. We could just go to the mountains and no offense against Kansas, but it sure is a million miles across it, I discovered. And the nice thing about it is you never, never get excited about seeing anything new.

James T. Jeremiah:

We had a meeting of the alumni association, about 35 people in Denver that met with us. Some of them couldn't be there. And it was great to see what the Lord is doing in the lives of many of our graduates. And we appreciate your prayers. During that time we were away, I guess, about four or five weeks, I had 45 different meetings. And I do that in order to keep in practice. But we had a great time. Thank you for your prayers. Will you open your Bibles this morning, to begin with, to the 105th Psalm. During the past few weeks, I've been thinking a great deal about an Old Testament character that has always thrilled my life. A young man by the name of Joseph. A man who came to the scene of importance when he was but 17. Went through some great trials when he was in his mid 20s, perhaps, early 30s, but his life is outlined in the 105th Psalm.

James T. Jeremiah:

We're just going to read it and then go to the study of Genesis and this man's life today. I want you to look with me at Psalm 105:17. Before we read it, let's pray together. This morning, our father, we need your help as we come to the word of God to proclaim it and to hear it, to understand it and apply it. We asked thee that the Holy Spirit who lives and abides in the bodies of every Christian may speak to our hearts. Since he is the author of this book, we pray he may be the interpreter and the one who can apply it to us. As we submit to the teaching of scripture, we pray in Jesus name, amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

Verse 17, Psalm, 105. "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; whose feet they hurt with the fetters. He was laid in iron: until the time his word came: the word of the Lord tried him." Or the word that he foretold came to pass and came to prove him.

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James T. Jeremiah:

"The King sent and loosed him, even the ruler of the people and let him go. He made him Lord of his house, ruler of all his substance to bind his princes at his pleasure and to teach his senators wisdom. Israel also came into Egypt."

James T. Jeremiah:

Someone has suggested that Joseph is the greatest of all messianic patriarchs. He is a picture and the type of the Lord Jesus, as perhaps there's no other patriarch is. In this particular chapter of the Psalms, you see him as a son. He was sold for a servant. You'll see him as a sufferer. His feet were bound with fetters. He was laid in iron. You'll see him as a sovereign. Out of the prison, he was made equal almost to the king. And you'll see him as a savior. Israel also came in to Egypt. The story of Joseph is one of the most interesting perhaps in all the Bible. You will see in contrast and sometimes working together, youth and beauty, you will see ambition and temptation.

James T. Jeremiah:

You will see jealousy and hatred, suffering and sorrow, forgiveness without hatred or without bitterness. Joseph's name means adding. Adding. Genesis 30:24, it says, "The Lord shall add to me another son." When his mother gave birth to him, God gave her a promise of another son. And so she called Joseph's name Joseph, meaning adding. Thinking of him as a type of Christ in this respect,

James T. Jeremiah:

we see that the Lord Jesus Christ came as a manifestation. The manifestation of God in the flesh. He adds to us knowledge about God. He adds to heaven's inhabitants by bringing the salvation of grace that makes it possible for heaven to be our home. And he adds of course, to the church. The Lord added to the church daily, such as were being saved. And so many things about his name that would be of interest. But as you go back to the book of Genesis, to chapter 37, and I hope you'll look at it briefly, you will discover in this chapter some of the remarkable types of Joseph. Types, perhaps if you want to, if you're a little technical, maybe you don't want to call it a type, but call Joseph's life at least an illustration of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

James T. Jeremiah:

You will see in verse two, he is feeding the flock. The Lord Jesus Christ is the good shepherd, the great shepherd and the chief shepherd in the scriptures. You will see that he brought their evil report, the evil report of his brothers to his father. Some have criticized Joseph for this. But when you realize that the sons of Jacob had made the family name to be a sign of disgrace, here's a young man who perhaps is trying to defend the family name. That's not a bad idea to think about when it comes to the family of the Lord. We ought to take our stand for God, regardless of what it costs, in order to speak well of the family of the Lord. Here's a young man who was speaking well of his family. He is seen here bringing their evil report, and their deeds were evil in the days of Christ. They loved darkness because their deeds were evil.

James T. Jeremiah:

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Bible says in verse three that Israel loved Joseph. When the Holy Spirit came upon him at his baptism, the Lord Jesus Christ here and then in the transfiguration, is called his beloved son. Down in verse four, it says that his brethren hated him. In the New Testament, it says that the Lord Jesus Christ was hated without a cause or without reason. And as you read on in the place, you'll find that, that he predicts that they will give obeisance to him, and he will reign over them, his father, his mother, as the scripture say, and his and his brothers. The word of God tells us in Colossians 1:18, that in all things, he should have the preeminence. He was envied in verse 11, his brother brethren envied him. And that is true. He was delivered. Jesus was delivered because of envy.

James T. Jeremiah:

His father observed the saying in relation to Christ. His mother observed the sayings that she heard when the birth of Christ was announced. And as you go on through the chapter, we could go on and on, but time will not permit. You take your Bible and read that chapter and see how well it fits into the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, as you come to the part we want to discuss today, we want to talk about his temptation, his triumph, and his trouble. Well, one would think that if one overcame temptation, he would be delivered from trouble.

James T. Jeremiah:

The Old Testament book, the oldest one in the Bible, records the statement, "Man was born in trouble." As the sparks fly upward. One thing you can expect, I guess, in this world is trouble. Lord Jesus promised that his word would give us peace. "In the world, ye should have tribulation," he said. Be of good cheer I have overcome the world. I read somewhere not too long ago about a businessman. I guess you could apply it to a Baptist preacher. Or maybe you could apply it to a Cedarville College student. Said everybody who is a preacher or a businessman or a college student ought to have a basset hound to come home to. The reason being that when you were out in the work and you had all those troubles, you could come home and look at something that gave you the impression that he had more trouble than you have.

James T. Jeremiah:

So I don't imagine the dean of students will permit a basset hound in the dormitory, but maybe you could get a picture of one and look at it when you come home and the troubles are overcoming you. I want to talk this morning about his temptation. After Joseph had been sold into Egypt, as you know the story, he had been given a place of service with Potiphar, officer of the guard. Bible makes it clear that he was an Egyptian. Joseph was a Jew. And later on the King apparently was not an Egyptian. That is in the sense that we read about Potiphar being an Egyptian, for this is maybe one of the reasons why the children of Israel were accepted in the land of Egypt. But at any rate, while he was serving this man Potiphar, he was tempted by Potiphar's wife.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, this is not an not a delightful story to read. However, may I suggest that it reads like some of the things we see and hear and observe in our time. The Bible tells it as it was. And the Bible tells it as it is. You think about the temptation of this man, you'll read the story in the 39th chapter of Genesis in verses seven to 12. Came to pass after these things. After what things? After all of Joseph's prosperity. Here he is now, sold by his brethren into the Ishmaelites, finding himself in Egypt, purchased by Potiphar, king of

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the guard, put in a position of responsibility in Potiphar's home, Potiphar's house. And here he is now in a position of great honor. While he's in this position, Potiphar's wife seeks to seduce him and lead him into immorality. This temptation was a crucial test. They thought a moment. What would have happened if Joseph had failed? Well, of course he would've lost his own purity, but he would also have been responsible possibly for the extinction of his whole family.

James T. Jeremiah:

No one falls into sin without affecting others. Had he sinned, there would have been no deliverer for Jacob and his sons. Had they not been delivered, we think some terrible things about the future, because through the Jews came the savior and had there been no protection of the Jewish race, there would have been no Messiah. Oh, you say, now wait a minute. God would have provided some other way, but God's way was predicted. And God's way had to come to pass as God predicted it. And God used a man in a crucial time to face a test and be victorious. And I need not tell you today or tell myself today that as the children of God, he puts us in positions of responsibility and puts us through the crucial time of testing.

James T. Jeremiah:

This attack by the enemy was unexpected. Notice in verses three and five of this passage. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord had made all that he did to prosper in his hand. The last part of verse five or the middle part of it, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake. And the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field.

James T. Jeremiah:

Here is a time in a man's life, young man's life, when everything is going rosy, everything is going well, everything is up and up. Victory. Success. Blessing is here. All of a sudden the devil attacks. I've lived a few years and I look back over my days as a pastor, think back over the years as this school has grown and we've seen God bless it. I can almost assure you of something. Whenever you find yourself in a period of blessing, whenever there's success and it's going on, watch out, for the old devil is there to cause your ruin if he can.

James T. Jeremiah:

It was so with Joseph. Not even a believer can build a wall high enough by himself to avoid or escape temptation. Joseph had something going for him that made him able to face the problem. We want to talk about that in a minute. The temptation was a constant pressure. Verse 10. She spoke to him day by day. Day by day. There is a song we sing. Something about temptation. If you win this temptation, it'll help you another to win. The only thing that that song does is remind you the temptation is going to be continuous. The victory you win today will not be the means of winning it tomorrow. What you won back in your school days in high school or in your local churches are not going to mean that you're going to have victory here, unless you're on your guard.

James T. Jeremiah:

There's always a constant pressure of the enemy. One way or the other discouragement, defeat, opposition, difficulties. He'll see to it that you have one every day, whether you want it or not. It was offered to Joseph at a favorable opportunity. This wicked woman who probably is following the policies

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of the women of that land of that time, reminding us something of the people who live in immorality of our day. This woman, the word of God says, was there when he went in the line of duty, in verse 11, to do his business, and none of the men were there. Satan always uses the best opportunities to accomplish his purpose. He will do it to you and to me, and he'll make everything he can with the opportunities that are his.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, I suppose Joseph could have argued, "This is a personal advantage for me. If I follow her suggestion, after all, I belong to Potiphar and really you see if I want to please my boss, I ought to do what his dear wife wants me to do. I will get a better position with my master if I please her." Ever hear that argument? That's the argument of a philosophy that Joseph did not know or did not practice. It was the philosophy of situation ethics. Not much ethics, a lot of situation.

James T. Jeremiah:

We have people argue that today. There may be some students who do this occasionally. Not perhaps in this particular background, but in another one. Here you are in class. And you know that if you don't get that grade that somebody expects you to get, and you don't come out of this institution with grades that are superior, you're not going to have an advantage in your line of business or your calling. And so in order to make it better and easier, and to reach the goal with less effort, you will try to find a way to use somebody else's brains to acquire your goal. That is called cheating, in case I haven't made the point.

James T. Jeremiah:

You see, the devil always wants us to use a shortcut to bypass God's plan of righteousness in order that we may be satisfied and he may be honored. He was not an advocate of this. The Lord Jesus Christ had to face this at his temptation. The devil said, "If you will bow down to me, I'll give you the kingdoms of the world." Well, the devil must've known that one day the kingdoms of the world would be his anyway. But he waited for God's time in the fulfillment of God's promise. And he didn't follow the plan of Satan to gain a victory that would have been an utter, complete, catastrophic defeat.

James T. Jeremiah:

Joseph was facing an opportunity to follow personal advantage to his ruin and to the ruin of others. I don't think we realize what Joseph's possible failure would have done to him and to his family. We follow lines of sin sometimes with the idea that we want this for our own personal satisfaction. Come what may, it's for me, my own desire. If Joseph had followed that practice, it would have been a sad, sad story. And let me tell you if you do, or if I do, it's a sadder story, because it means us. And Joseph lived about 1800 years before Christ. We are living now.

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, he was tempted. That wicked woman, and there are wicked men like that, too, who caused a good many young women to fall into sin. And if you think it happens only in worldly schools or in liberal churches or in a godless world, forget it. God knows. And you know that the devil's attack is as great today against teenagers and those in their twenties and thirties and all the way through life as his attack was back then. Read that chapter and see what that young man faced and how he faced it. He was triumphant.

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James T. Jeremiah:

Why did he become victorious? Well, I'll tell you why I think he did. He was a man of character. That's what he really was, not what somebody said about him. But back in verse 8, and you'll discover in this passage of scripture that he refused to follow this way of sin. And the reason he gives is because his master had committed all that he had to his hand. He was a man to be trusted, a man of character, a man with a desire for purity.

James T. Jeremiah:

Okay. He was habitually prepared. He had the armor of God, if you please. Secondly, I think he became victorious because of his convictions. In verse nine, it reads, how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? What did he believe? He believed that sin was essentially and primarily against God. He didn't say, how can I do this great sin against Pharaoh. Potiphar, Mrs. Potiphar, my family or myself. Young people, may God put upon our hearts and minds always that sin primarily is against God.

James T. Jeremiah:

We know a Holy God and he's our father because Jesus Christ is our savior and the Holy Spirit lives in us as his temples. Then we must recognize that when we sin primarily in, first of all, though, we sin against others when we sin. Our primary target in sinning is against God. He was a man of conviction. He was a victorious young man because of his communion. Verse 21, the Lord was with Joseph. And when Pharaoh finally picked him to be second in charge, we read in Genesis 41:38, that he was a man in whom the spirit of God is.

James T. Jeremiah:

The New Testament tells us if we walk in the spirit, we shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. How do we walk in the spirit? By knowing the directions the spirit has given in the book he has inspired. By obeying what we find in that book. Walking in the spirit will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. He was in communion with God. May I suggest he didn't brag about it. His spirituality was noticed by someone else. I get weary with people and I don't have much confidence, really, in when they tell me how spiritual they are. I remember a friend years ago used to tell me how many hours each day he prayed. I never meet him without him telling me how many hours a day he prayed. I was glad because he outdid me.

James T. Jeremiah:

And maybe that was the reason I was convicted. But I'd have been much more impressed if I could have seen the results in the light, rather than having to make one's own estimation of how we arrive. There isn't anything in the world more sickening than piosity.

James T. Jeremiah:

I have a friend who is now in the glory. He used to say the only thing he liked about the word "pious" was the first syllable.

James T. Jeremiah:

And I think he had a point. Joseph wasn't like that. He lived his life. He took his stand. He was a man who had some convictions. He had communion with God. He was a man of character. Another thing I think

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helped him to win it is that he was a man of confidence in the future. You read in verses seven to nine, what this woman tried to get him to do. He had some other things in mind for the future. What did he have in mind? You remember the dreamer, all the sheaves bow down to him and the sun and the moon bow down to Jacob and his family, and to Joseph. What was he thinking about? God put in his heart as a young man, a glorious future. He had his mind on it.

James T. Jeremiah:

One of the reasons why God ought to put upon our hearts as Christians a desire not to yield to the temptation of sin is that by his grace, he has given us the most glorious future of any group of people on the face of God's earth. Well we read in 2 Corinthians 5:10, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or worthless. Your present and my present responsibility and reaction to temptation has a lot to do, my friend, with what we will face at the judgment seat of Christ. Here's a man who is a young man. He dreamed of something greater.

James T. Jeremiah:

Our future reward and blessing depends upon our present conduct. And let's not forget that. Oh, someone said, I don't believe when we get to the judgment seat of Christ we're going to have to answer for our sins. No? But we're going to answer for the result of what we've done down here with sin, whether we've yielded to it, lost our testimony, lost our reward. Listen friend, does your confidence in the future help you in the hour of temptation to live for God and be victorious? It ought to. His conduct was a major factor. Verse 12 of this chapter. Well, let's look at verse eight. He refused. He didn't pray about it. He refused.

James T. Jeremiah:

In verse 12 and he fled and got him out. He didn't pray. And in verse 15, he fled and got him out. One refusal and two fleeing. Aren't you supposed to stand in battle the devil? There's a time to battle, time to fight and a time to flee. And in Joseph's case, it was fleeing time. Listen, my friend, don't ever get to the place where you think there is no human responsibility on the part of a Christian to run. Paul, the apostle, in writing to a young preacher said flee youthful lust. The same one who wrote to the Corinthians, dealing with a immorality problem, said in one part of chapter six, first Corinthians, flee idolatry. A few verses on, he said flee fornication and in our ungodly civilization, fornication, immorality, and adultery have become the means of idolatrous worship. And God's people, young people, older people, all of God's people need to recognize the importance of not counseling with it, but fleeing from it, not praying about it, but getting away from it. Somebody said we are not to stroke and pet the serpent. We're to kill it.

James T. Jeremiah:

And that certainly was a good suggestion, better to lose your garment, Joseph, than to lose your purity. But here he is now, man of God, taking the stand. He's left sin. Went on to live, he thought, good upright life. And as a consequence, he finds himself in jail. How do you like that? Wouldn't it be true that if we just take a stand for God, love the Lord, run from sin, that from here on out, it's going to be a life of ease? No, it may be a jailhouse experience. He was falsely accused by this wicked woman. He was

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wrongly imprisoned by Potiphar. He was totally forgotten. He said in there, when he was interpreting the dreams of all the butler and the baker, "Remember me," but the Bible says they forgot him.

James T. Jeremiah:

After he [inaudible]. Are you able to take all of this? Somebody wrote these few lines. Able to suffer without complaining, to be misunderstood without explaining, able to endure without breaking, to be forsaken without forsaking, able to give without receiving, able to ask without commanding, able to love despite misunderstanding, able to turn to the Lord for guarding, able to wait for his own rewarding. Are you able? Are you able, Joseph? God made him able. You know what that did for him? Let me tell you briefly. And we'll close. God gave Joseph an opportunity for greater blessing for in 39:23, it said in jail, the Lord made him to prosper. Seems somehow that wherever God put this young man in his obedient walk with God, God made him to prosper. God made him to do it. Secondly, gave him an opportunity to have personal service to somebody he never would have reached otherwise. The Butler and the Baker were there and he served them, we're told in verse four and 41.

James T. Jeremiah:

And let me tell you what happened to him. You know, it was a step to further blessing because he had been serving the captain of the guard. Just a part, one of the, one of the bureaucratic divisions of the Egyptian government, just a little part of it. He was doing well. Took his stand for God, found himself in jail. And as a consequence, let's look at chapter 41 and verse 16. Joseph answered Pharaoh saying not unto me to answer your dreams. God shall give Pharaoh an answer. Pharaoh had been dreaming too. Joseph was an interpreter. Verse 38. We're told that he was a man in whom the spirit of the Lord is. Who will I put over this responsibility? e said? Verse 41, and Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. Hey, you know something I'm going to have responsibilities. I'd rather be over all the land of Egypt, than just taking care of the people in the guard house.

James T. Jeremiah:

Isn't it wonderful? The Bible tells us very clearly that we suffer with him. We will reign with him. The saints are going to judge the angels. And when he comes in power and great glory in that day when he, his feet touch the top of Mount of Olives, when he will establish the throne of his father, David, the city of Jerusalem and peace and righteousness will cover the earth. The children of God, God's people been faithful to him during the hour of temptation and trial. We're going to reign with him. Hey, friend, when you know the Lord, you're on the victory side. One day soon, he's coming to receive his own. Think of this man. Think about his life. Young man, teenager like you. I wish I could say young teenager like me. But a young man with trials, but faithful to God. Listen to me.

James T. Jeremiah:

As I close with this one word, it's far better for you, as a student in this college to come out of this school with a degree, having done what you've done with victory in your life over sin for the glory of God, than they come out with all the honors the dean may read to you on that wonderful day. You can have both. But it's possible to have all the earthly honors and miss the most important thing in life as a Christian.

James T. Jeremiah:

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If you don't learn the fact that temptation and God's power of trial of testing and triumphal. God help us in days like these to live for a God like ours. Let's stand for prayer. We thank you today, our father, for men like Joseph, many of them in the Bible. We pray that this young man's life may be the means of challenging us today to live for his glory. There are those here in this audience this morning who have been troubled with temptation to follow the ways of sin, rather than the ways of righteousness. We pray that this man's example may challenge them to do the right thing, to live for God in a day like this. In Jesus' name, amen. You're dismissed.