

FROM PRISONER TO PRIME MINISTER

THE SEVEN SECRETS OF JOSEPH

ABIA FRIDAY ABIA

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Dedication

To my Family, for surviving the Fiery Furnace (Dan. 3) and the Den of Lions (Dan. 6), and for successfully graduating from the School of Affliction, the highest School of Discipleship.

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PREFACE

Joseph, a Hebrew of thirty years of age (Gen. 41:46) became the Prime Minister of Egypt after being sold into slavery there (Gen. 37:36; 39:1), and falsely accused by his Master's wife (Gen. 39:8-18), and unjustly imprisoned for an offence he never committed (Gen. 39:19-23).

What were his secrets? Quite a number of factors was involved. These factors are thoroughly discussed in this book. Like Joseph, our destiny is completely safe and irrevocable (Rom. 11:29), if we are prepared to follow his secrets.

Joseph's secrets are highly and wholly recommended because they are completely biblical. Unlike other theories of how to attain one's destiny that are not founded on the Scripture, Joseph's model as presented in this book is guaranteed to succeed because it is based on the Scripture. Theories of how to attain one's destiny that are not based on the Scripture are never guaranteed to succeed.

With Joseph's secrets as seen in this book, we do have a tested and proven model of how to attain our destiny.

I am most grateful to God (Exod. 3:14-15; Rev. 1:8) for His grace to write this little volume. It is quite true that I could not have done it apart from Him (Jn. 15:4-5). I am also grateful to my family for their support and encouragement while this book was being written. I will not fail to thank the Chief Executive and staff of Footsteps Publications for their roles in making this publication possible.

Like Joseph, we can all attain our God-ordained destiny by putting his secrets into practise. God's grace is sufficient to us for this purpose (Cf. 2 Cor. 12:9).

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CHAPTER ONE

HIS DREAMS

Then he had another dream, and told it to his brothers. “Listen”, he said, “I had another dream, and this time the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me”(Gen. 37:9).

God showed Joseph his destiny through dreams (Gen. 37:5-11). He showed the same thing to him in two forms (Gen. 37:5-11). Joseph's dreams of his destiny were not well received by his siblings (Gen. 37:5-11). His dreams made them jealous of him (Gen. 37:11). But their jealousy did not stop Joseph's dreams from being fulfilled.

It is important to note that Joseph's destiny began as mere dreams (Gen. 37:5-11). And his dreams were fulfilled because God sent them. Joseph's dreams were not ordinary dreams. God sent the dreams to show him the destiny that He had for him. These dreams indeed came from God.

For years his dreams were not heard of again. Obstacles arose against the dreams that they appeared to have vanished into the air. But at God's own time, Joseph's dreams were fulfilled to their letter. What began as mere dreams became a living reality. His siblings actually literally came to bow down to him, according to his dreams (Gen. 37:5-11; Gen. 42:6-9; Gen. 43:28).

We must note that nothing was able to stop Joseph's dreams from being fulfilled. When God sends a dream, He fulfills it. God never reveals what He will not bring to pass.

Dream is one of the media through which God speaks and makes His will known ((Gen. 37:5-11; Gen. 41:1-32; Dan. 4:1-37; Joel 2:28; Matt. 1:20-25;

Matt. 2:13-15). Therefore to dream is not sin or evil. However, not all dreams are sent by God.

How do we handle our own dreams in the light of Joseph's dreams and what happened to them? This is quite a pertinent question to answer. And several suggestions are readily available.

First, we must note that to dream is not sin or evil. God does speak through¹¹ dreams, if He chooses to do so (Gen. 37:5-11; Gen. 41:1-32; Dan. 4:1-37; Joel 2:28; Matt. 1:20-25; Matt. 2:13-15). But we must also note that not all dreams are sent by God. Dreams that are not sent by God are illegitimate and not worth giving any attention to. But dreams sent by God are not seeds of sin or evil but of destiny, as was the case for Joseph.

Second, it is not enough to dream dreams, we must make sure God is in our dreams by subjecting them to the test of Scripture (cf. 1 Jn. 4:1-3). Any dream that contradicts the Scripture must be rejected. God is not in such a dream. Our dreams must be consistent with the Scripture and God's will as revealed therein to be considered sent by God and thereby legitimate. Dreams not supported by God's word are not worth keeping, nurturing, or pursuing. Such dreams will never come to pass since God is not in them. It is vain to keep, nurture, or pursue such dreams.

Third, we must keep all our legitimate dreams alive. We must not allow our legitimate dreams to die. We must not give up our legitimate dreams. We must keep them in view. We are not talking about keeping evil ambitions alive. We are talking about keeping our legitimate, God-given, God-driven, dreams alive. If we allow our legitimate dreams to die, they will not come to pass. But if

we keep them alive, they will come to pass, no matter the obstacles or delay. Fourth, we must hand all our legitimate dreams over to God to bring them to pass. We must allow Him to fulfil them. We must not rely on self or human efforts to bring our dreams to pass. It is not man who fulfils dreams but God. God alone can bring to pass dreams He has sent. Self or human efforts will never bring us to the fulfilment of our dreams (cf. Jer. 17:5-8; Ps. 127:1-2). Self and human efforts will rather keep our dreams from being fulfilled (cf. Jer. 17:5-8; Ps. 127:1-2). Therefore, we must seek the fulfilment of our dreams from God alone. And there can be no fulfilment of the dreams sent by God outside or without Him. If God sent the dream, He will fulfil it. If our dreams are not being fulfilled, it means God was never in them. The fulfilment of our dreams is more God's responsibility than our own (cf. 2 Chron. 20:14-17; 1 Sam. 17:47). We must be rest assured that He who sent us the dreams will most certainly fulfil them.

Fifth, we must not sin to get our dreams fulfilled. There is no need to commit sin or evil to get our dreams fulfilled. The things we acquire or attain by evil means are not truly our own. The things we acquire or attain that are not given to us by God are evil. God does not need us to indulge in any form of sin or evil before He brings our dreams to pass. Our resort to sinful means will rather cancel or delay the fulfilment of our dreams than bring us nearer to it. Therefore, we must pursue our dreams within God's stated will and prescribed means. There is no fulfilment of our dreams outside God's will and means. God will never bring our dreams to pass while we remain outside of His will and means. If God meant us to live long, He does not need us to belong to secret cults or fraternities to bring it to pass. Sin can never and will never help to bring our dreams to pass. We do not need to sin to attain or realise our dreams.

CHAPTER TWO

HIS TRIALS

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives (Gen. 50:20).

Trials are what we all dread. We tremble violently even at the mention of the word. Apart from dreading the word, there are many who would rather wish that trials were never part of life's experience. Yet it was the path of trials that Joseph walked to his destiny. In fact, if we consider the trials he went through, none of us would be able to see his destiny in them. But it was in these trials that Joseph's destiny lay.

Joseph went through several trials before he got to his destiny. First, his brothers hated him (Gen. 37:4,5,8). From the Biblical account, there is no valid basis for the hatred. Jesus our Saviour and Lord also experienced this kind of hatred (Jn. 15:18-25). Like Joseph, Jesus was hated without reason (Jn. 15:25). Second, Joseph's brothers were jealous of him (Gen. 37:11). There is also no reasonable ground for the jealousy. Our Lord Jesus and His early disciples also encountered this kind of jealousy (Acts 5:17; Acts 17:5). Third, Joseph's brothers plotted to kill him (Gen. 37:18-20). This was not a joke or mere threat, but a real plot to take his life (Gen. 37:18-20). This is also what happened to our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ (Lk. 19:47; Lk. 20:20; Lk. 22:1-2).

Joseph went through other kinds of trials in his brothers' hands. The fourth kind of trial that Joseph encountered is that he was stripped of

the robe he was wearing (Gen. 37:23). Our Lord Jesus also received this form of treatment (Matt. 27:28). Fifth, Joseph was thrown into a cistern (Gen. 37:24). Prophet Jeremiah of the Old Treatment experienced the exact treatment hundreds of years later (Jer. 38:6). Sixth, Joseph was sold twice. His brothers first sold him to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt (Gen. 37:28). In Egypt, he was resold to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard (Gen. 37:36; Gen. 39:1). Thus Joseph, the object of destiny, became an object or commodity of trade. Jesus our Saviour was also sold for money by Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples (Lk. 22:1-6).

In the seventh place, Joseph was lied against and falsely accused by his master's wife (Gen. 39:11-18). Jesus our Saviour was also lied against and falsely accused (Mk. 14:55-59). Lastly, Joseph was imprisoned for an offense he never committed (Gen. 39:19-20). Like Joseph, some of the early disciples were also wrongly imprisoned (Acts 5:18; Acts 12:5; Acts 16:22-24).

We can say without fear of contradiction that neither Joseph nor his brothers ever thought or knew that in Joseph's trials which were spearheaded by his very brothers lay the path to the fulfilment of God's plan for his life.

Whether we attain or miss out of God's will depends on our attitude to whatever trials He may allow to come our way. It is a well known fact that so many individuals have lost out of God's plan or will for their lives as a result of how they handled trials. It is of utmost importance that we handle trials as God expects us to do. The realization of His will or plan for our lives

depends on how we handled them.

How should we handle trials in order not to jeopardise or even prevent God's destiny for our lives? To answer this question, we shall consider six factors only.

The first and foremost thing to do under trials is to have the correct perspective or understanding of it. This is what we discover about how Joseph took his trials. Joseph did not hold his brothers responsible for his trials. According to him, they were not the ones who tried him, but God (Gen. 45:5,7,8). Joseph did not only see God in all his travails, he considered Him responsible for them all (Gen. 45:5,7,8). For believers, Joseph's perspective with regard to trials and afflictions as seen here is the biblical perspective. Our God is Sovereign and He rules over all of His creation. Everything is subject to Him. He owns our lives and rules over everything concerning us. No trial can befall us without His authorisation (see Matt. 10:28-31). Every creation is subject to Him alone, including demons and those who persecute us. It is God who rules over our lives, not anyone or anything else. We must accept everything as coming from His good, loving and faithful arms.

Besides, Joseph saw good in his trials. According to him, it was to serve lives that he went through these trials (Gen. 45:5,7). His brothers intended to harm him, but God intended it for good (Gen. 50:19-20). Joseph did not see his trials as evil (Gen. 45:5-8; Gen. 50:19-20). If Joseph did not go through these trials, God's purpose or plan for his life would not have been realised. Again, this is how Scripture expects believers to regard trials. We may not know how and why He does it, but God has

promised and assured us that everything works together for good for His children (Rom. 8:28). We are tried for our own good (see Heb. 12:10). God always brings good out of the trials of His children (Job 42:10-17). Even under trials, God is treating us as His children (Heb. 12:7-9). Trials do not separate us from God's love (Rom. 8:38-39). According to the Scripture, trials produce a harvest of righteousness and peace for those trained by it (Heb. 12:11). Like Joseph, we must understand that trials are meant for our own good not evil. We must see God in them, not the instruments He chooses to use.

Second, believers must persevere under trials. Trial develops perseverance (Jam. 1:2-3). Perseverance results in maturity (Jam. 1:4). It is those who persevere under trials who receive the victor's crown, not those who give up under it (cf. Rev. 2:10). If Joseph had succumbed to his numerous trials, his destiny would have eluded him. Those who give in to trials cannot attain their destinies. Like Joseph, persevering under trials guarantees our destiny.

Third, in response to trials, believers are urged to fix their eyes on Jesus, who Himself was tried most severely (Heb. 12:2-3). Forsaking Him under trials is the worst and most foolish response. Realising one's destiny lies in holding on to Jesus under trials, not in forsaking or renouncing Him. We must fix our eyes not on the trials or on their human causes but on Jesus Christ Himself. Those who fix their eyes on their trials and human causes can only find despair. Those who fix their eyes on Jesus under trials are sure to find hope, comfort and strength. The fourth response to trials is to endure them (Heb. 12:7). This is what

Joseph did. This is how Jesus handled His trials (Heb. 12:2-3). Trials may pain (Heb. 12:11), but they cannot reverse or set aside God's destiny for our lives if we endure them. Bitterness and despair under trials serve the devil's purpose. But with endurance our destiny is completely safe and secure in spite of our trials. It is our lack of endurance under trials that can cause us to lose out of our destiny. No one who endured to the end ever lost his destiny.

In the fifth place, believers must learn to strengthen and encourage one another under trials (see 1 Thess. 3:2-3). Since we now know that trials and afflictions are meant for our own good (cf. Rom. 8:28), we must make up our minds to strengthen and encourage one another under them (see 1 Thess. 3:2-3). It is quite common for believers to make discouraging, despairing and even unscriptural comments to one another during trials. Such comments must be replaced with comforting and encouraging ones.

The sixth and last response to trials is for believers to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel whatever trials they may encounter (see Eph. 1:27-28). It is quite easy and common to throw the gospel away and act like unbelievers when facing trials and afflictions. This is improper and unacceptable for believers. Believers have a duty to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel whatever the trials they experience (see Eph. 1:27-28). We must behave like our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and please and glorify Him in spite of the trials and afflictions we may face (see Eph. 1:27-28). Trials and afflictions are no excuse or justification for unchristian conduct, no matter how unjust, severe, and painful they may be.

When God brings or allows trials to come our way, we should take them not as evil, but good, since they come from Him. We ought to see God in all our trials. If we have the correct understanding of our trials and persevere in them, fix our eyes not on the trials or their human agencies but on our Lord Jesus Christ and endure to the end, we will most certainly come to the same conclusion that Joseph did, that “you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen. 50:20).

CHAPTER THREE

HIS GOD

Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the King's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warder (Gen. 39:20-21).

By God we mean the one who alone is God, besides whom there is no other. We mean the creator of all creation (Gen. 1:1). We mean the sovereign and ever – living God. We mean the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the beginning and the end, the Lord Almighty (Rev. 22:13). While trials were besetting Joseph, this God was with him.

He was with Joseph while in Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:2-3). The Midianites who had bought him from his brothers resold him to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials (Gen. 39:2-3). Here the Lord prospered Joseph (Gen. 39:2), and even blessed Potiphar's household because of him (Gen. 39:5).

God was with Joseph when he was wrongly and unjustly imprisoned (Gen. 39:20-21). There at prison, He showed him kindness and granted him favour before the prison warder (Gen. 39:21). The prison warder put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did (Gen. 39:22-23).

Jacob, Joseph's Father, admitted that he never expected to see Joseph's face again, but God has allowed him not only to see Joseph again, but his children as well (Gen. 48:11).

The fact that God was with Joseph made the whole difference in his life. First, the presence of the Lord with him kept him completely safe from the hands of all his adversaries, in Canaan his native land, and in Egypt. He did not come to any harm whatever because God was with him. This is what God did for the Israelites when Pharaoh and his armies pursued them after they left Egypt (Exod. 14:19-20).

The second benefit of God's presence with Joseph is that all his trials were turned to good. As a slave in Potiphar's house it was well with him (Gen. 39:2). His blessings spilled over to his master's household (Gen. 39:5). In prison, it was well with him (Gen. 39:21). His blessings also spilled over to the prison (Gen. 39:22-23). With God with him, his trials became a blessing instead of harmful tools of his adversaries.

Third, God's presence with Joseph brought all the evil plans and schemes of his adversaries to nought. Their intention to destroy him never materialised. God rendered all their evil machinations impotent, useless, and of no effect against Joseph.

The Fourth benefit to Joseph of God's presence with him is that his destiny was quite safe and remained on course. God ensured that Joseph's trials did not alter or set back His destiny for him. He superintended over Joseph's trials and ensured that they never affected Joseph's destiny adversely.

We can draw the conclusion that it was God's presence with Joseph, more than any other factor, that kept him through his travails and

brought him to God's destiny for his life. If it were not for God, Joseph would never have made it through his trials to his destiny. If God were not with him, Joseph would have been swallowed up or swept away by his trials and adversaries.

What God did for Joseph, he also did for the Israelites. He went before them in their journey to the promised land until He brought them safely there. He overthrew all the nations that stood in their way until He brought the Israelites safely to the land He promised to give them (Josh. 21:43-45).

The Lord also did the same thing for the early Christian believers. In spite of severe opposition, they were able to reach the whole world of their time with the gospel message (see Rom. 15:19). It was His unfailing presence with them that gave them victory over all their adversaries. If it were not for God's presence with the early Christian disciples, there would be no Christian Church today. The history of the Christian faith from the birth of Jesus Christ till today is the history of God's unfailing presence. Without this, the Christian Church would have been unthinkable.

What God did for Joseph is what He has been doing for all His children till today. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Ps. 102:25-27; Heb. 13:8). He is sovereign, almighty, unequalled, and unrivalled. The entire creation and everything in it are His (Ps. 24:1-2). He rules over all creation, including all aspects of it (cf. Ezek. 20:33; Zech. 9:10). He appoints Kings and deposes them (Dan. 2:21). He sets up nations and

their rulers (see Dan. 2:21). Everything, everyone is subject to Him and to no other. He does whatever pleases Him and only His will prevails everywhere, every time. He alone is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords (Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16).

God alone is adequate for all our needs. He alone can see us through all the trials, tempests, challenges, and obstacles of life. No one else can (Ps. 127:1-2; Lk. 1:37). He alone can loose what has been bound, regardless of who or what bound it. He alone can set the prisoners free (Ps. 146:7-9). He alone judges rightly, with justice (Ps. 9:4, 16). He alone can speak and it comes to pass (cf. Gen. 1:3,9,11,14-15,24). No one can stand before Him (Ps. 76:5-7). No one can close the door that He has opened. No one can say no, when He has said yes. With God on our side, no one can prevail or succeed against us (Rom. 8:31). With Him on our side, those who rise up against us can never stand. No one, no circumstance, can reverse His will or plan for our lives. Like Joseph, God alone can see us through the trials and travails of life to our destiny. As was the case for Joseph, we need God with us before we can make it through the storms and hazards of life to our destiny. In fact, apart from God, we can accomplish nothing whatsoever (Jn. 15:4-6).

We have seen that it is only with God on our side that we can get through the torrents of life to our destiny. What then do we need to do in order to bring God to our side? To answer this question, we draw attention to five factors.

First in order to get God to our side of life, we must acknowledge Him. He really does exist. He is the best explanation not only for the existence of the universe but for our own existence as well. Anyone who comes to Him must believe that

He exists (Heb. 11:6). Only the fool would say that He does not exist (Ps. 14:1). Anyone who fails to acknowledge God is not entitled to His abiding presence in his life. God's own rule is that He is with someone when he is with Him, and He forsakes someone who forsakes Him (2 Chron. 15:1-2). This is the case even in ordinary life. If a man does not acknowledge his ruler, he will not receive the ruler's support. This is true whether it is with regards to the family, state, or nation. It is when we acknowledge God that He becomes our God.

Second, in order to be entitled to God's abiding presence in our lives, we must know God in Christ. This is how God expects to be known today. In Christ, the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form (Col. 2:9). And Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). Christ and the Father are one (Jn. 10:30). He who has seen the Christ has seen the Father (Jn. 14:8-9). In the past, God spoke to us through the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us through Christ (Heb. 1:1-4). No one knows the Father except through Christ (Jn. 14:6; cf. Acts 4:12). Anyone who does not know God in Christ does not know God at all (Jn. 14:6). And anyone who does not know God in Christ is still in enmity with God and is yet to be reconciled to Him (see 2 Cor. 5:17-19). Such a person cannot have the presence of God to enable him attain his destiny.

We must know God in Christ by believing in Him, before we could get God to be with us to realise our destiny (see Jn. 1:12-13). Anyone who does not have Christ does not have God with him. And anyone who does not have God with him does not have the one to bring him to his destiny. Christ Himself has issued a universal invitation to all to come to Him (Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 3:20) and has guaranteed us that whoever comes to Him will never be driven away (Jn. 6:37). Anyone who refuses to come to Christ forgoes having God with him

as well as his destiny.

The third thing we need to do in order to get God to be with us to sustain us through our trials and attain our destiny is to depend entirely on Him for all things and at all times. It is one thing to know and have God, but another thing to depend on Him to sustain us through life and fight our battles and bring us to our destiny. The normal human inclination is to trust in human instruments and means like money, connections in high places, etc. But these have never been effective against the battles that are waged against us and our destines (Ps. 44:5-8). God has unlimited number of methods and instruments to sustain us, fight our battles and bring us to our destiny (2 Kings 6:15-17; Ps. 68:17). He is never lacking or exhausted of means, strategies and instruments (cf. Is. 55:8-9). And His own methods and instruments are the best and most effective. All we need to do is to depend on Him and allow Him to sustain us, fight our battles and bring us to our own destiny. Neither our own methods and instruments or anxieties can avail for us as far as the battles for our destinies are concerned (see Matt. 6:27).

Fourth, if we desire to get God to be with us to sustain us through the torrents of life and bring us to our destiny, then we must be willing to wait upon Him. He has His own time for His actions (see Hab. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:8-9). For us we expect Him to act momentarily, now, on the spot, today, without delay. In some cases or instances He does act momentarily, speedily, without delay, but not in all. He has His own time table or program for all His actions, as was the case in Joseph's life. But He never fails to sustain His children until He brings them to their destinies (cf. Jos. 21:45; Jos. 23:14). If He never answers, then His will is not in the matter or He is never with us in it. Therefore, we

ought to give Him time to act for us and bring us to our destiny. There is no failure with Him. What may seem to us like a delay is part of His own timing. We must wait for Him to answer us and come to our rescue. This is exactly what other believers did in order to overcome their enemies and enter into their destiny (Ps. 40:1-3). This is what Joseph in particular did.

Lastly, one can bring God to be with him to realise his destiny by living entirely for Him. This book will point out four ways in which one can live for God.

One, to live for God, one must live in holiness unto him. God is holy in His being (Ps. 99:9; Is. 6:3; Rev. 4:8). There is no impurity with Him. This is why He requires holiness of all his children (Lev. 11:44, 45; Lev. 20:26). Without holiness no one can see Him (Heb. 12:14). Anyone who lives an unholy life cannot have God with him. Impurity alienates from God than draws to Him. Therefore, we must discard all forms of impurity in order to have God with us to realise our destiny. A life of impurity can bring one neither to God nor his destiny.

Two, to live for God, we must live in full obedience to Him. Obedience is the mark of belonging to God (cf. Jn. 8:31; Jn. 15:14). God does not accept partial obedience to Him (see Deut. 6:5; cf. Deut. 28:1-2). In fact, to God, partial obedience is no obedience at all (see 1 Sam. 15:1-35). If we desire to have God with us in order to overcome all our trials and attain our destiny, nothing short of full obedience to Him will suffice (see Deut. 28:1-2). We cannot claim to be living for God if there is any aspect of our lives in which we are not living in full or complete obedience to Him. A life lived in disobedience to God cannot bring anyone to his destiny. Our victory over all our trials and our destiny

depend on living all aspects of our lives in total obedience to God (see Deut. 28:1-14).

Three, we can live for God by serving Him with our lives. We can serve God through our legitimate vocations. If our lives are not serving Him or His purpose, then we are not living for Him. Everything concerning us must serve him or His purpose. We alienate God from us if we do not serve Him or His purpose in all things and at all times. We need to serve Him and his purpose always before we can claim to live for Him and have Him with us.

Four, we live for God when everything concerning us pleases, honours, glorifies, and exalts Him. We cannot claim to live for Him if this is not the case. Those whose lives do not please, honour, glorify, and exalt God are not living their lives for Him. Such persons cannot bring God to be with them to sustain them through their trials and bring them to their destiny. To live for God and get Him to be with us for the purpose of overcoming our trials and attaining our destiny, it is indispensable that we please, honour, glorify, and exalt him in all aspects of our lives. There must be no aspect of our lives in which we are not pleasing, honouring, glorying, and exalting God. This is how to live for God and bring Him to be with us to sustain us through all our trials and enter into our destiny.

As we can see, none of the factors we have discussed above can be dispensed with or discarded if we really desire to get God to be with us to sustain us through the turbulent seas of life and bring us to our destiny. And when we do have God with us, this is enough for us. We need no other. And let come what may, He will most certainly see us through to our destiny.

CHAPTER FOUR

HIS VICTORY

“And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, “Come to bed with me”. But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house” (Gen. 39:10-12).

Joseph faced a major test or obstacle on the road or path to his destiny, more formidable than all his trials put together. His trials put together seem trivial, in comparison with this test or obstacle.

What was the test or obstacle? While Joseph was serving in Potiphar's house after being sold there, his master's wife took notice of him and asked Joseph to go bed with her (Gen. 39:6-7). She offered herself voluntarily to him and was most persistent about it (Gen. 39:6-12). By whatever measurement, this was obviously the greatest test of Joseph's life.

But what did Joseph do about her offer? We are told that he refused her immoral request (Gen. 39:6-10). Joseph was most resolute in his decision to refuse her demand. In spite of the 'conducive' environment and her persistence, Joseph refused to go to bed with her (Gen. 39:11-12). He did not waver about it. He was not indecisive concerning it. He refused it categorically. Thus, Joseph passed the greatest test of his life and overcame the greatest obstacle to his destiny.

Why did Joseph refuse her, in spite of her persistent entreaty? The answer to this question is given in the passage narrating the incident.

First, as stated by Joseph, she was his master's wife (Gen. 39:9). Several years back God had afflicted the household of Abimelech, King of Gerar, for taking Sarah, Abraham's wife, because she was a married woman (Gen. 20:1-18). Joseph's decision to turn down her request was in full compliance with the teaching of the Law, given several years later (Exod. 20:17; Lev. 18:20). The Law clearly forbids having sexual relations with someone else's wife and thus defiling oneself with her (Lev. 18:20; cf. Exod. 20:17).

Second, Joseph considered the act requested by her as a wicked act (Gen. 39:9). This is a most fitting description of her proposal to Joseph (Gen. 39:9). Any act that contravenes God's will and His word is indeed a wicked act.

Third, Joseph refused her request to go to bed with her because he regarded it as a sin against God (Gen. 39:9). It would not only be a sin against her husband, it would be a sin against God (Gen. 9:9). For Joseph, God would be directly and personally grieved by the act, hence his blunt refusal. Joseph's definition of sin as found here is completely in agreement with the definition taught throughout the Scripture. Every act of sin is primarily an act against God. As far as Joseph was concerned, the act would not have ended between him and her, but with God. Therefore, to Joseph, the act was not only between him and her, but between him and God (Gen. 39:9).

The incident involving Joseph and Potiphar's wife was undoubtedly the greatest test of Joseph's life. And he passed the test with flying colours, with distinction, with one hundred percent of the total score. But what would have happened to Joseph if he had failed this test?

It was not Joseph's trials, but Potiphar's wife that was the greatest threat to Joseph's destiny. His trials led him along the path to his destiny. But Potiphar's wife would have led him away from it, had he consented to her sinful demand. There is no doubt that his destiny would have been adversely affected had he yielded to her inordinate proposal. If Joseph had accepted her offer and gone to bed with her, he would never have become Prime Minister of Egypt. Had he yielded to her, the steps and processes that led to his emergence as the Prime Minister of Egypt would have been terminated (Gen. 39:13-40:23). And God would have abandoned or forsaken him to be swallowed up by his adversaries (cf. 2 Chron. 15:1-2). But Joseph's victory over her confirmed and retained him on the path to his destiny.

As was the case for Joseph, realising or attaining our destiny depends on our victory over sin. Sin is completely incompatible with destiny. It is the mightiest gulf between us and our destiny. It is true that sin can reverse, alter, set back, or even vacate or remove our destiny in its entirety. We have found this to be the case throughout the Scripture.

The story of Adam and Eve, our first parents, is one clear example of how sin affected destiny. God had created them in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) and planted a garden and put them in it to work it and take care of it (Gen. 2:8, 15). He commanded the man to eat from any tree in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17). God warned the man that he will surely die when he eats from it (Gen.

2:16-17). But Satan told the woman that they will not surely die but will be like God, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:4-5). In spite of God's warning, the man and the woman chose to disobey God and ate the forbidden fruit, thereby obeying Satan instead (Gen. 3:6). This one act of disobedience damaged not only their personal destiny, but the destiny of all their progenitors (Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 5:12-19). It ruined not only their destiny, but that of all mankind as well (Rom. 5:12-19). It is only through Jesus Christ that this damage is being cured (Rom. 5:12-19; Rom. 8:1-4).

What happened to Moses and Aaron at the peak of their careers is another pertinent example of how sin could affect destiny. God chose Moses to bring the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land (Exod. 3:10). In the course of their journey, there was no water for the community and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron (Num. 20:1-2). God told them to take their staff, gather the people together and speak to the rock before their eyes so that it will pour out its water (Num. 20:7-8). But instead of speaking to the rock as God instructed them, Moses struck the rock twice with his staff (Num. 20:10-11). Although the Lord allowed water to come out of the rock for the people and their livestock to drink, He was not pleased with Moses and Aaron (Num. 20:11-12). As a direct response to their failure to obey Him in this matter, God stopped them from bringing the Israelites into the Promised Land and entering it themselves (Num. 20:12, 22:29).

Moses was allowed to see the land from a distance but not to enter it (Num. 27:12-14; Deut. 32:48-52). The Lord attributed His action of denying them entry into the promised land to their action in the matter of the waters of Meribah explained above (Num. 20:12, 22-29; Num. 27:12-14; Deut. 32:48-52). If Moses and Aaron had not acted the way they did, God would have allowed them to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land and to enter it themselves. It was their disobedience which deprived them of entering the land. Moses' celebrated past faithfulness was not taken into account concerning his present act of disobedience (Num. 12:7-8; Ezek. 18:24).

King Saul is another individual whose destiny was reversed as a result of his sin. He was anointed King of Israel (1 Sam. 10:1,17-25) and later confirmed as King (1 Sam. 11:14-15). In order to punish the Amalekites for waylaying the Israelites as they were coming out of Egypt, God commanded King Saul to attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belong to them, putting to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys, without sparing anything (1 Sam. 15:1-3). King Saul went to Amalek, attacked the city , but spared her King and the best of sheep and cattle, fat calves and lambs and everything good, destroying only everything that was despised and weak (1 Sam. 15:7-9). His action grieved the Lord (1 Sam. 15:10-11), who rejected him as King (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Samuel the Prophet who had earlier anointed him as King made it quite clear to Saul that God rejected him as King because he himself rejected the word of God (1 Sam. 15:26). His lost of the kingship was a direct result of his act of disobedience (1 Sam. 15:12-23). He would have retained his kingship

and continued on his throne had he fully obeyed the word of the Lord (1 Sam. 15:1-35).

Not even David's destiny was spared when he sinned against the Lord in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. David was a man reputed to be after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). In the course of his life, after settling in Jerusalem, he saw Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, and sent messengers to get her, and slept with her, and she became pregnant (2 Sam. 11:2-5). In order to cover up his sin, he had Uriah, the woman's husband, murdered, and took her to be his wife (2 Sam. 11:6-17; 2 Sam. 12:9-14). Although David repented of his act and was forgiven (2 Sam. 12:13), his destiny was badly affected by what he did as the Lord pronounced calamity upon calamity upon him and his household (2 Sam. 12:7-14; 2 Sam. 13:1-19:43).

One other well known example of how sin affected destiny is that of the Israelites of the Old Testament era. The Lord had chosen them to be His people (Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12). He actually brought them to the land of Canaan, which he had promised to give to them. But the people forsook God and worshipped other gods. The Lord sent several Prophets to persuade them to return to Him, but they would not listen. And because they forsook Him, He also forsook them and removed them from the Promised Land and dispersed them to foreign countries (2 Kgs. 17:3-20; 2 Kgs. 25:1-21).

From the foregoing examples, we have seen quite clearly therefore that sin is incompatible with destiny. Many can readily provide other

examples that they are personally familiar with. Sin can only drive us away from our destiny than bring us to it. No one has ever attained his God – given destiny by thriving or living in sin. Since this is the case, we must be willing to do something about sin, if we are serious about attaining our God – given destiny. A good number of actions are readily available for us to take concerning sin.

First, we must see sin as Joseph saw it. Joseph saw sin not only as a wicked act but as an act against God (Gen. 39:9). One must take sin as sin before he can overcome it. Anyone who is complacent or indifferent concerning his definition or understanding of sin or attitude to it can never overcome it. As Joseph saw it, every sin is indeed a wicked act and an act against God. We must see sin no less. Victory over sin begins when sin is seen as sin.

Second, we must know that God not only sees every act of sin, He takes account of it (Gen. 4:8-12; Ps. 139:1-12). The Lord knows everything and His eyes are everywhere (Prov. 15:3). No single act escapes His attention. Whatever it is that we do is not hidden from God. We may succeed in hiding our sins from our fellow human beings, but not from God. He sees through the duplicity and pretences of our thoughts and hearts. We must stop the act that we know He sees and is grieved about and will hold against us.

Third, we must have respect for marriage as Joseph did (Gen. 39:9). When Abimelech King of Gerar took Sarah, Abraham's wife, the Lord closed up every womb in his household until he returned her to Abraham (Gen. 20:1-18). Who knows whether many wombs are being closed up today for the same reason? God specifically commands us to

honour marriage and keep the marriage bed pure (Heb. 13:4). He forbids us from coveting someone else's wife and from having sexual relations with her (Exod. 20:17; Lev. 18:20). It is well known today that sexual immorality is one of the most common and most effective enemies or destroyers of destiny among young people and adults alike. No age group is spared of the act or its destructive effects against destiny. The fact that sexual immorality is one of the most common and most effective destroyers of destiny ought to deter us from it. Besides, God has promised to judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral (Heb. 13:4). It is by overcoming sexual immorality, not by yielding to it or persisting in it, that we can safeguard our destiny. The sin of sexual immorality can never bring us to our destiny. It is incompatible with destiny.

Fourth, we must repent of all past sins. Repentance is the first step in dealing with sin (Ezek. 18:30-31). Anyone who does not repent from sin is not willing or ready to part with it. Without repentance, there is neither forgiveness nor restoration nor victory over sin (see Jer. 15:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19-20). Anyone who is not willing to repent remains an object for destruction (Lk. 13:3-5). There can be no realization or attainment of destiny for the unrepentant. Only the repentant can attain his destiny (Acts 3:19-20). Sin is a well known clog on the wheel of destiny. The wheel of destiny can never turn where sin persists. Repentance is a fundamental condition for attaining destiny. There can be no destiny without repentance. Anyone who is unwilling to repent forfeits his destiny.

The fifth thing to do to deal with sin and ensure that nothing hinders one's destiny is to ask God to forgive all past sins (Matt. 6:12). God is ready and willing to forgive us our sins if we ask Him to do so. It is God's will to forgive all

our sins, and no sin is beyond His forgiving grace in Jesus Christ. Anyone who asks God for forgiveness is certain to receive it. But forgiveness is for the one who turns away from sin. Forgiveness is not available to one who remains and persists in sin (Acts 2:38-39).

Sixth, to deal with sin and clear the path to our destiny, we must resolve not to yield to sin, as Joseph did. When we resolve not to yield to sin, it moves God to our side. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego resolved not to worship the image of gold set up by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in spite of the threat to be thrown into the blazing furnace, their act moved God to arise to save and rescue them when they were eventually thrown into the blazing furnace (Dan. 3:1-30; cf. Dan. 6:1-28). God can never remain indifferent to the cause of His children who resolve not to sin against Him. When a believer resolves not to yield to sin as Joseph did, it brings down God's favour upon him. Besides, when a believer resolves not to yield to sin, it rattles, upstages, upsets and frustrates the kingdoms and rulers of darkness and their plans and schemes against him. To resolve not to yield to sin is what is deserving of believers. With this, every obstacle to destiny is certain to be removed. When we yield to sin, we block or even close the path to our destiny. It is when we resolve not to yield to sin, whatever the cost or lost to us, that the path to our destiny is opened and cleared. The key to our destiny lies not in yielding to sin, but in resolving not to yield to it.

The seventh and last thing to do to deal with sin so that it does not obstruct or cancel one's destiny is to ask God for the grace to overcome it. No one can overcome sin by his own efforts. It is the work of Jesus Christ not only to forgive sin but to destroy and overcome it (1 Jn. 3:8-9). The grace of God is

available and sufficient for every sin (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9). Whatever sin it is that entangles us, Jesus is ready and willing and able not only to forgive us of it but to destroy and overcome it for us, if we are willing to part with it and let Him deliver us from its power and hold. There is no sin that defies the grace of God in Christ to pardon or destroy (Jn. 1:29; Matt. 1:21). There is no sin that is handed over to Jesus that he does not pardon and take away. The reason sin may remain is that we have not given it over to Jesus to pardon and destroy. Whatever sin it is, give it over to Jesus, and He will take both its guilt and power away.

It is sin that is the primary obstacle to our destiny. The persecutions and sufferings we may face do not threaten or undermine our destiny as sin. Our destiny is secure when we do away with sin. We can never ride to our destiny with sin in our lives and on our paths. And the grace of God is available in Christ to give us pardon and victory over sin, if we really desire to get rid of it and ride successfully to our destiny.

CHAPTER FIVE

HIS WISDOM

“I cannot do it”, Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires”(Gen. 41:16).

God gave Joseph the gift of wisdom which helped to bring him to his destiny and be successful in it. It was this gift that enabled him to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh's officials (Gen. 40:1-23) and those of Pharaoh (Gen. 41:1-32). Both Joseph (Gen. 40:8; Gen. 41:16) and Pharaoh (Gen. 41:39) acknowledged that Joseph's wisdom came from God.

It was Joseph's gift of wisdom that brought him to Pharaoh and to his destiny (Gen. 41: 1ff.). It was also this gift that enabled him to be successful in running the affairs brought upon him by his destiny (Gen. 41:33-49). God used the wisdom He gave Joseph to bring him to his destiny. Joseph would not have gotten to his destiny or be successful in it without this gift.

Many take this gift for granted especially in relation to destiny. But this gift is quite fundamental and critical as far as attaining our destiny and being successful in it are concerned. Like Joseph, we all need wisdom to bring us to our destiny and make us successful in it. No one can make it to his destiny or be successful in it without this gift.

The benefits of wisdom are indeed numerous and inexhaustive. They include joy (Prov. 10:1), safety and protection (Prov. 1:33; Prov. 2:11; Prov. 4:6), peace (Prov. 3:17), long life, riches, honour and enduring wealth (Prov. 3:16; Prov. 8:18, 20-21). It is with wisdom that God made

the heavens and the earth (Prov. 3:19-20; Prov. 7:22-31). Wisdom is better than silver, gold and rubies (Prov. 3:13-15; Prov. 8:11,19). Rulers rule by wisdom (Prov. 8:15-16). It brings God's favour (Prov. 8:35). He who finds wisdom finds life (Prov. 8:35). To put it briefly and simply, wisdom is supreme (Prov. 4:7). Nothing can indeed be compared with it (Prov. 8:11).

The opposite of wisdom is well known to be folly. Folly can never bring anyone to his destiny. Instead of bringing one to his destiny, it can only draw him away from it. Folly brings grief, not destiny (Prov. 10:1). To put it briefly and simply, what folly can bring is disaster, not destiny (Prov. 1:24-27). As a matter of fact, a fool will never be able to attain his destiny. Instead, he will become the servant of the wise (Prov. 11:29). Therefore, like Joseph, we need wisdom to bring us surely and safely to our destiny. This brings us to the inevitable question, how can we acquire wisdom in order to get to our destiny? A few suggestions will suffice.

First, one must have a desire for wisdom. A man who has no desire for food will consume little or nothing of it when served on him. Similarly, one who has no desire for wisdom will see little or no need to look for it. Second, we must ask God for it. It is God who gives wisdom (Prov. 2:6; Jam. 1:5). He gave wisdom to Joseph (Gen. 40:8; Gen. 41:16). He gave to King Solomon (1 Kgs. 3:4-15; 1 Kgs. 4:29). He also gave to Daniel (see Dan. 4:1-37; Dan. 5:1-30). There is no other source for wisdom than God. There is no point seeking wisdom elsewhere. Only God can provide it. One cannot get or find it elsewhere. And God gives freely and

generously to anyone who asks Him for it (Jam. 1:5). Those who seek for wisdom will certainly find it (Prov. 8:17; Lk. 11:9-10). There is no excuse for not having wisdom. God is ready and willing to give it to anyone who will ask Him for it (Jam. 1:5).

Third, we must believe God for it (Jam. 1:6-8). It is not enough to ask God for it, we must believe Him for it (Jam. 1:5-8). He who does not believe God for it cannot receive it (Jam. 1:6-8). It is useless to ask God for wisdom without believing Him for it. No faith means no wisdom (Jam. 1:6-8).

Fourth, in order to get wisdom and get to our destiny and be successful in it, we must fear God. The Scripture states distinctly that wisdom begins with fearing Him (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 9:10; cf. Prov. 15:33). To fear God means to obey Him and His word totally (Ps. 112:1; Is. 50:10; cf. Gen. 22:12). And to obey God is indeed a proof or mark of wisdom (Deut. 4:5-6). The one who fears God obeys Him, and the one who obeys God is truly wise.

As we have discovered in the case of Joseph, wisdom is indispensable for attaining destiny and becoming successful in it. Let fools despise wisdom (Prov. 1:7). But let the wise never relent in seeking it until they find it and it brings them to their destiny and makes them successful in it. It is a proven fact that anyone who does not find wisdom harms or ruins himself and his destiny (Prov. 8:35).

CHAPTER SIX

HIS DESTINY

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you” (Gen. 41:39-40).

At the young and tender age of thirty, Joseph became the Prime Minister of Egypt, thereby becoming one of the youngest Prime Ministers in the history of human civilization and Governments (Gen. 41:46). Although he was a foreigner, recently released from prison, he took charge of the whole land and people of Egypt, except with regard to Pharaoh and his throne (Gen. 41:37-46). This is what God destined for him. In spite of numerous trials and obstacles, God fulfilled His plan for Joseph's life. What began as mere dreams came to pass (Gen. 37:5-9). His brothers actually came to bow down to him as he had dreamt (Gen. 42:6; Gen. 43:26, 28).

Since God destined it, nothing or no one was able to reverse or withhold it or set it aside. No circumstance of any kind could prevent it. No one could destroy Joseph's destiny. All his trials put together could not reverse or cancel his destiny. God superintended over everything concerning Joseph until he brought him to what He destined for him. The idea of destiny is not a new one. There are certain facts about destiny that we can learn from the Scripture.

First, the very idea of destiny is not a human invention. It is taught in the Scripture. Jesus our Saviour was destined to suffer and to die the way He did (Matt. 26:24, 54; Lk. 2:34). Paul states that God destined His secret wisdom for His children (1 Cor. 2:7). Paul also told the believers in Thessalonica that they were destined for the trials they were going through (1 Thess. 3:3). Therefore, the idea that God made plans for his entire creation and will most certainly bring those plans to pass at their appointed time is based on the teaching of Scripture.

Second, these plans of God were made in eternity. For example, Jesus was chosen to be our Messiah before the creation of the world and revealed at the fullness of time (1 Pet. 1:20; Gal. 4:4). Another example concerns God's secret wisdom that Paul spoke of. According to Paul, this secret wisdom was destined for believers before time began (1 Cor. 2:7). One other example is with regard to the choice of believers. Paul taught that God made this choice before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4; Tit. 1:2-3). Since God is the eternal God (Gen. 21:33), all His plans are eternal (cf. Hab. 3:6).

The third thing to note about destiny is that God controls it. God is sovereign over all of His creation (Acts 4:24). As all of creation is subject to Him, all His plans are also set and determined by Him. God's plans are subject to no one except him.

Fourth, it is important to learn that whatever God has planned or destined will come to pass at His appointed time. Nothing that God destined or planned will fail to come to pass (see Jos. 21:45; Jos. 32:14). Having made the plan, He also set the time for it to come to pass. God's plan or destiny is not subject to human time table. ³⁷ God's plans are subject to His own time

table for them. And when the time is ripe for God's plan to be fulfilled, nothing whatever can hinder or prevent it (cf. Gal. 4:4-5).

The fifth thing to know about destiny from the scriptural point of view is that like our Salvation, it is not based on any foreseen merit. We are what we are by God's grace, not by our merit (1 Cor. 15:10). Whatever we may become is God's free unmerited gift (cf. Matt. 10:8). This calls for humility, gratitude, and faithfulness toward God who freely gives us all things.

Sixth, God's destiny for us is irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). As He is unchanging in His being, attributes, and activities, so is He in His plans. No one can prevent His plans from coming to pass. What he purposed for us in eternity will never fail to materialise at His appointed time. Let all the authorities and powers of darkness in the world get together and work together, they can never stop what God has destined for us (cf. Ps. 2:1-5). Let all the storms and obstacles in the world arise, they will not be able to stop or obstruct what God destined for us. The plans of the Lord stand firm forever (Ps. 33:11).

One other thing to know about destiny as taught us in the Scripture is that whatever God destined for us is good. God is good, and there is no evil in Him (Ps. 119:68). Since God is good, so is everything that He does (Ps. 119:68; Ps. 145:9; Ps. 100:5). There is no evil whatever in all His actions. On the contrary, God works everything for the good of His children (Rom. 8:28).

What lessons do we learn from what happened with regard to Joseph's destiny in particular and from what Scripture has taught us concerning destiny generally? We shall suggest and consider a number of lessons.

First, there is no need whatever to be anxious about our lives (Phil. 4:6; Matt. 6:25-34). We are all naturally anxious beings. We are all good when it comes to anxiety. But our anxiety cannot make any difference with regards to our destiny (see Matt. 6:27). Our destiny is irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). Nothing can change it. No circumstance whatever can stand in the way of our destiny (Rom. 8:31-39). What God destined for us will surely come to pass at its appointed time. God will do what He purposed for us. No one can close a door He has opened. No one can say no when God has said yes. God will do for us what He said He will do. The only thing we should worry about is sin. Sin is the only thing that can hinder or stop our destiny. Nothing else can stop our destiny, not even trials or principalities and rulers of the kingdoms of the air (see Rom. 8:31-39).

Second, instead of being anxious, the Scripture exhorts us to cast all our anxieties on God (1 Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:6). God is more concerned about our destiny than we are concerned about it. The responsibility to bring us to our destiny is wholly that of God, not our own. And He is able to bring us to our destiny without fail (cf. Heb. 7:25).

The third thing for us to do is to trust God for the fulfilment of our destiny. What we call our destiny is primary His destiny because He purposed it in eternity without any input or contribution from us. Therefore, it is His

responsibility to fulfil our destiny. Our responsibility is to trust Him to do so. To trust Him is not only to believe Him for our destiny but to depend on Him for it.

Fourth, we must be willing to remove every obstacle on the path to our destiny. We have stated repeatedly throughout this discussion that the greatest obstacle to our destiny is sin, not our trials or so called enemies. We must part with sin and turn away from it in order to get to our destiny. Remember that there can be no destiny in the state of sin (Deut. 28:15ff.; Ps. 1:4-6; Rom. 6:1).

Fifth, we must allow God to lead us to our destiny. Only God's leading will bring us to our destiny. We will never get to our destiny under anyone else's leading. We must let God go ahead of us while we follow behind Him. We must put our feet where He put His own.

Sixth, we must be obedient to God to get to our destiny. Obedience brought Jesus to His destiny (Phil. 2:5-11). A life of disobedience can only lead one away from his destiny than bring him to it (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Disobedience to God and destiny are world apart of each other. Only a life of obedience holds the key to one's destiny (Deut. 28:1-14).

Seventh, we must entrust ourselves to God to bring us to our destiny. We need His own enablement to get to our destiny. All our efforts put together are of no use or effect in attaining our destiny. Only God's enablement will suffice to get us to our destiny.

In the eighth place, we must be faithful to God when He brings us to our destiny. Our destiny is a trust. We are accountable and responsible to God for the way we function in our destiny (2 Cor. 5:10). Our destiny must serve God's purpose alone for bringing us into it. Anyone who is not faithful to God in handling his God-given destiny will lose it. God requires us to be faithful to Him in discharging the obligations of our destiny. It is God whom we fail and offend when we fail to be faithful in discharging the functions of our destiny. And it is to Him that we shall account for how we functioned in our destiny.

One other thing that we need to do in view of what Joseph's case as well as the Scripture have taught us about destiny is to wait patiently for it. Our destiny is God's as well as the timing of it. He will surely bring His plans to pass in our lives at His appointed time.

What God destined for Joseph came to pass at God's appointed time. No one was able to prevent it. Instead of preventing it, his trials even led to its fulfilment or realization. This is true not only for Joseph but all believers. Whatever God destined in eternity for His children will surely come to pass at His appointed time. Nothing whatever and no one whosoever can stand between us and God's eternal plan for His true children.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HIS FORGIVENESS

So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them (Gen. 50:21).

Joseph's brothers needed his forgiveness. They had offended him most deeply and painfully. They had hated him without reason (Gen. 37:8). They had stripped him of the richly ornamented robe that his father made for him (Gen. 37:23). They had thrown him into a cistern (Gen. 37:24). To add to it all, they had sold him to foreign merchants for as little as twenty shekels of silver (Gen. 37:28). Judging from what they did to Joseph, they did not deserve his forgiveness. But Joseph forgave them. His brothers had thought that Joseph was not going to forgive them (Gen. 50:15-17). But he did. He even re-assured them and spoke kindly to them (Gen. 50:19-21). He promised to provide for them and their children (Gen. 50:21). Joseph had the opportunity and authority to pay them back for all that they did to him. But he chose to forgive them. Therefore, Joseph did the only right thing that needed to be done. He forgave his brothers for all the evil they had done to him. If Joseph had not forgiven them, a major aspect of the purpose of his destiny would not have been achieved (Gen. 50:20).

It is important and useful to mention here that there are a few other individuals in the Scripture whose acts of forgiveness are also most outstanding.

One such individual is Moses. Twice during the journey to the promised

land, God wanted to destroy the Israelites and turn Moses into a nation, for turning away from Him to worship the golden calf and sacrifice to it, and for rebelling after they heard the report given by the people sent to explore the land (Exod. 32:1-14; Num. 14:1-25).

But Moses pleaded with the Lord to forgive them and He relented (Exod. 32:1-14; Num. 14:1-25). Many of us would have accepted the offer to become a nation and allowed the Lord to destroy the people. But Moses rejected the Lord's offer and pleaded for the people's forgiveness.

Another individual noted and famous for his forgiveness is Stephen, well known as the first Christian martyr. Stephen was stoned for his testimony for Jesus (Acts 6:8-7:58). Instead of calling down curses and fire and brimstone on those who stoned him, Stephen prayed for their forgiveness (Acts 7:59-60). If we were Stephen, we would have opted to curse those who committed the act against us.

Whenever we talk about individuals in the Scripture who excelled in the act of forgiveness, we cannot fail to mention our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was betrayed by one of His disciples for thirty silver coins (Matt. 26:14-16). He was deserted by all His disciples (Matt. 26:56). He was rejected by the religious leaders and the people (Matt. 27:20-23). He was stripped, mocked, spat on, slapped, and struck (Matt. 26:67-68; Matt. 27:27-31, 41-44). He was unjustly tried and sentenced (Matt. 26:57-68; Matt. 27:11-26). To crown it all, He was crucified (Matt. 27:32-40). Yet Jesus asked the father to forgive the people (Lk. 23:34). He deliberately refrained from calling down curses upon them.

There are several important lessons to learn about forgiveness from Joseph and these other biblical examples and the Scripture.

First, we must forgive everyone who hurts or offends us, including those we term or consider our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). Forgiveness is a debt we owe everyone who hurts or harms or offends us, regardless of the gravity of their hurt or harm or offence. Believers are not to forgive some and avenge others. We are not to choose whom to forgive and whom not to forgive. We are to forgive everyone who has hurt or harmed or offended us, no matter who they are. It is not only fellow believers that we are to forgive. We must forgive all men who hurt, harm, or offend us, whoever they may be.

Second, as believers, we have several reasons to forgive. One reason is the our God Himself is forgiving (Ps. 99:8; Ps. 103:3-5; Lk. 5:20-21; Eph. 1:7-8; Col. 1:14; 1 Jn. 1:9). It is God's attribute to forgive. The fact that our God is forgiving demands that we be like Him and forgive as He does. Since our God is forgiving, we who are His followers cannot be or do otherwise. It would be improper and unbecoming for believers not to be forgiving as their God.

Another reason that we have to forgive is that our own experience of forgiveness from Christ demand that we forgive others who hurt, harm, or offend us (Col. 3:13). We cannot refuse to forgive others who wrong us, having ourselves been forgiven by Jesus Christ (Col. 3:13). Having been forgiven by Christ, believers have no justification for not forgiving others who wrong them.

There is a third reason for forgiving others who wrong us. It is God's will to do so. It is God's will for His children not to revenge, but to forgive (Lev. 19:18). Believers must not repay evil with evil, but with good (Rom. 12:17-

21; Exod. 23:4-5; Prov. 25:21-22). Our duty is to forgive, while that of God is to avenge (Deut. 32:35). We are doing God's will when we forgive those who wrong us. On the other hand, we are disobeying God when we refuse to forgive those who happen to wrong us (cf. Matt. 5:43-48; cf. Lev. 19:17).

We also learn from the examples provided by Joseph, Moses, Stephen, and our Lord Jesus Christ and the Scripture that forgiveness has no measurement or limit (Matt. 18:21-22). Forgiveness is not limited by the frequency and regularity of the offence (Matt. 18:21-22). As long and as often as there is hurt, harm, offence or any form of wrong or injury, there must be forgiveness. Neither the magnitude of the offence nor the regularity of its occurrence must exhaust forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-22). Forgiveness must be given as long and as often as the offence persists. Forgiveness must exhaust the offence, not vice versa.

Forgiveness is not without its own gains or benefits. This brings us to the fourth and last lesson that we learn from the examples provided by the individuals discussed above and the Scripture. There are two outstanding gains or benefits to be derived from the act of forgiveness.

One, when we forgive others, it opens the way for our own forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15; Matt. 11:25; Lk. 6:37). We find forgiveness when we forgive others who wrong us (Matt. 6:14-15; Mk. 11:25; Lk. 6:37). The scripture makes it most apparent that we forfeit or forgo our own forgiveness by withholding forgiveness from those entitled to our forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15; Mk. 11:25; Lk. 6:37). Forgiveness is not an act that ruins us, but one that brings us gain.

It is not an act from which we suffer loss but from one which we make gain. Forgiveness can only bring loss us if we refuse to extend it to those who hurt, harm, or wrong us. We can gain from forgiveness by choosing to forgive others (Matt. 6:14-15; Mk. 11:25; Lk. 6:37). We must hold ourselves responsible for losing our own forgiveness because we choose not to forgive those who may have wronged us (Matt. 6:14-15; Mk. 11:25; Lk. 6:37).

Two, when we forgive those who offend or wrong us, it opens the way for their forgiveness before God (Jn. 20:23). When we refuse to forgive others, it closes the door against their forgiveness before God (Jn. 20:23). Imagine what would have happened to the people who campaigned for and supported Jesus' crucifixion if He did not forgive them (Lk. 23:34). Imagine also what would have happened to Saul of Tarsus who became Paul, the Apostle, had Stephen not forgiven the team that stoned him which was led by Saul (Acts 7:57-8:1). It really pays to forgive. Believers should be happy and quick to forgive those who wrong them in order to open the way for the forgiveness of the latter before God.

We conclude this discussion on forgiveness by stating that it is part of our destiny to forgive those who wrong us. As we saw in the case of Joseph, forgiveness serves the purpose of our destiny than undermine it. One who has received the forgiveness of Jesus Christ has no basis or justification for not forgiving those who wrong him. The forgiveness bestowed on us by our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ compels us to forgive all those who may wrong us. Our claim to be born again is always

called to question because we refuse to forgive those who hurt, harm, or wrong us (Col. 3:13). We stress again that it really pays to forgive. It opens the way not only for our own forgiveness but for the forgiveness of others (Matt. 6:14-15; Mk. 11:25; Lk. 6:37; Jn. 20:23). The Scripture attaches no conditions to forgiveness. Believers must forgive without pre-conditions. It is not enough to talk about forgiveness or even preach or teach it. We must forgive. It is easy and natural to man to avenge. But it is of Christ to forgive.

We must add that we do not gain anything from not forgiving those who wrong us. On the contrary, we forfeit our own forgiveness for not forgiving those who wrong us (Matt. 6:14-15; Mk. 11:25; Lk. 6:37). Forgiveness is not evil, but good, both for the one who forgives and for the one who is forgiven.

CONCLUSION

Joseph, the young Hebrew, attained his God-ordained destiny most successfully and most satisfactorily. Nothing whatever could prevent him from doing so.

A number of factors worked for him. We now know what these factors were. These factors are valid and applicable today, especially since they are based on the Scripture.

Like Joseph, we can be sure of our own destiny if we are ready to follow his secrets. Unscriptural methods will never ever bring us to our destiny.

A most successful and most satisfying destiny awaits all those who put the seven secrets of Joseph into practice in their quest for their destiny.

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