

Wealth Transfer - the Kingdom way

In Ecclesiastes 2:26 we read, *'To the man who pleases him [God, G.H.], God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. [...]*'

As the wise King Solomon was contemplating on the meaning of life based on his rich and extensive experiences, this was one of the remarkable statements he came up with. Admittedly, in reality we hardly see it happening that sinners hand their riches willingly over to Christians, and those who have sat in my seminars know that I like to expound on the reason for it.

The people of Israel are certainly a case in point of why the Lord has to abstain from allowing this to happen. When they left 400 years of slavery with all the wealth pagan Egypt willingly handed over to them, they soon afterwards fell into the trap of (literally) idolizing it and forgetting about their Creator (Exodus 32)!

The life story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) on the other hand provides us with an amazing account of why and how God can make Ecclesiastes 2:26 happen. Joseph suffered a lot for carrying the God-given dream and vision that would ultimately lead to the survival of Egypt and Israel. He suffered heavy persecution and hatred within his family resulting in a plot to murder him, yet finally being sold into slavery (Genesis 37) for more than a decade. He suffered false accusation of an allegedly attempted rape of a high government official's wife and the resulting unjust imprisonment for years (Genesis 39). He also suffered because of broken promises that kept him in prison for another two years (Genesis 40:14+23; 41:1).

Yet in all these often unbearable circumstances and injustices, Joseph did not become cynical, bitter, full of hatred and thoughts of vengeance. Instead, in all his despair and weaknesses he clung to God and allowed him to mould and shape his character, which ultimately enabled this Hebrew to become a God-fearing Prime Minister in a God-opposing nation.

It was Joseph's sensitivity towards the voice of God and his obedience towards God's instructions that made him to become the second in command in Egypt at just 30 years of age (Genesis 41:41-46). Its a remarkable way from slavery to the second highest office in a nation, from prisoner to Prime Minister.

- By the way, isn't it interesting that today we believe a proper education at schools and universities, the accumulation of various degrees and titles, the ruthless fight to the top, and the right connections to people in influential ranks and with affluence will makes us eligible for a position in authority? And yet, in the Kingdom of God it all accounts to nothing! What counts is obedience towards God and a teachable heart, in other words, the willingness to receive a godly character that defines how we operate especially in bad times when hardships, injustice, pressures and hopelessness tend to mount.

And Pharaoh began to shower Joseph with wealth and authority, a principle king Solomon described hundreds of years later in Ecclesiastes 2:26. Yet it didn't stop there. After becoming aware of the extraordinary story involving Joseph's family, Pharaoh invited his PM's dad Israel and his whole clan to come and live in Egypt (the only country that could now provide food amidst heavy years of drought), giving them property in the best part of the land and putting them in charge of his own livestock operations (Genesis 47:5-12).

- May we all learn to listen to the voice of the Lord and act in obedience to what he says, rather than trusting in worldly wisdom, which is foolishness in his eyes anyway (1 Corinthians 3:19). May we become like Joseph, looking for God's redemptive purposes in all the hardships, false accusations, betrayals, persecutions and whatever else we go through rather than harboring bitterness, hatred and plans of vengeance in our hearts.

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And who knows, perhaps we will find us qualifying for a Ecclesiastes 2:26 situation sooner than we believe, so that the Lord can bring life to multitudes when death and destruction seem inevitable?