# THE MESSENGER

"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15

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## How Can I Do This Great Wickedness?

*by Roger Shouse*

He was a single adult away from home. It could have been a person on a business trip. It could have been a college student living in a dorm or apartment. It could have been someone you knew. It could have been you. His name was Joseph. He is a Bible giant, a hero of faith. His name is listed among the "hall of fame" in Hebrews 11.

The name Joseph brings up so many valuable Bible lessons. Hated and sold by his brothers into slavery, Joseph illustrates forgiveness and grace toward his family. Falsely accused and suffering for things he did not do, Joseph demonstrates trust and patience. Joseph is a picture of the Christ who was to come.

Genesis 39 reveals a powerful lesson from the life of Joseph. The chapter shows how Joseph came to Egypt. While there he was successful, because the Lord was with him. His master, Potiphar, an officer in Pharaoh's mighty army, gave Joseph complete control of his household. This valuable position would allow Joseph to manage the day-to-day business of this wealthy soldier's estate. The text tells us that Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. In his 20's, Joseph had the world by the tail. He was doing well. There are many who have experienced the joy and the enthusiasm of life when they are doing what they like and things are going well. Joseph is in the position that many would like to be in.

What happens next reveals the true character of Joseph. Genesis 39:7-15 reveals the seduction by Potiphar's wife. We find in the text that "she looked with desire at Joseph" (Gen. 39:7) and said, "Lie with me." This was not a single incident. Verse 10 says that she spoke "day after day" to get him to lie with her. The situation heightens when she actually grabs Joseph. He flees, leaving his garment in her hands, which is used as evidence against Him. He is accused of attempting to rape this woman and is, as a result, imprisoned for more than two years.

During this daily temptation, two great statements are recorded. First, "He refused." Second, Joseph said to this loose woman, "How can I do this great evil and sin against God?"

Joseph's great faith in the Lord is what kept him from sinning. He could have found many reasons to have immoral relations with this woman. He could have thought, I'm a long way from home and no one really cares for me. But "he refused." He could have said, "No one will know." But "he refused." He could have said, "I'm going to do it just once so she will quit bothering me." But "he refused." Joseph did not seduce this woman; she tempted him.

What Joseph went through is repeated thousands of times every year. Young people out on a date, alone at night in a parked car, are tempted with the thoughts, "Come lie with me." Men and women who work together for long hours, often getting too intimate in their conversations, have the thoughts, "Come lie with me." Those in a marriage that is anything but bliss, often feel like they have been neglected and thus justify the "come lie with me" of pornography or an affair. Away at college, on a business trip, at home in a computer chat room, the "come lie with me" temptation is always there. The devil always provides the opportunity, the people, and the encouragement to do wrong. Yet, Joseph refused. I love him for that.

I am impressed with three lessons from Joseph's refusal.

**Refusing sexual temptation can be done.** Joseph refused. What simple words. How difficult it is to do it. We hear so many sad stories of people who crashed on the rocks of temptation and of their climb back to faith and purity. Joseph didn't crash. Do not think for a moment that this was easy. Lust has a way of burning long and deep in our hearts. So often it can be the last thoughts a man has at night and the first thoughts he has in the day. A culture that flaunts immodesty on magazine covers and glorifies "Sex in the City" TV shows is saturated with "eyes full of adultery" (II Pet. 2:14). We cannot for a moment think, "I can't help it." Yes, you can! The pure in heart shall see God some day (Matt. 5:8). Holiness and purity are the characteristics of God's people (I Pet. 1:16). So many have trashed their hearts, their vows, and their lives by letting lust consume every thought they have. Joseph refused. Young people, you can refuse! Joseph had his guard up. He wasn't caught without an answer. He didn't have to think about "what should I do?" He knew. He knew what was right. The mature have their senses trained to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14). His heart was committed and his faith strong. The weak will be swallowed up in such temptations. There are places that may bring this temptation to you more readily. Should you be in those places? There are things that can be done to help you avoid the temptation. But you must believe that you can refuse. You can! You must!

**Joseph was able to refuse because he saw the temptation for what it really was – Sin!** Joseph said, "How can I sin against God?" This was not sex. It was not a one-night stand. It was not an affair, fling, or any other term. It was sin. Sin is always ugly. Sin is always wrong. There is an old saying that goes: "Sin will take you farther than you wanted to go; sin will cost you more than you wanted to pay; and sin will keep you longer than you wanted to stay." This is true of all sin. Joseph was able to see past all the reasons, excuses, and pressures of Potiphar's wife. He saw it for what it really was – sin.

**Joseph was able to refuse because he saw the end of the matter – God.** This was not about Joseph or his feelings. It was not about loneliness. It was not about Potiphar's wife. This was about God. How can I do this to God? All sin slaps God in the face. We don't think about that. But God sees and hears all. Sin will find us out (Num. 32:23).

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## NOTES & NEWS:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with

ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

*"...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16*