

WORD OF LIFE STUDY GUIDES

By John Paul Miller



Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

WORD OF LIFE STUDY GUIDES



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Character Study on the Life of

JOSEPH

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The Story of Joseph

Genesis 37-50

Jacob had 12 sons; the twelve tribes of Israel stem from his offspring. Rachel, the wife he loved, gave Jacob a son in his old age named Joseph. Genesis is very clear on how Jacob felt about Joseph: "Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was a child of his old age..." (Gen.37: 3). In the tale of Joseph we get the first actual narration which seems to come from one unbroken source and is not a collection of oral traditions patched together.

Joseph's brothers were jealous of him because he was the favorite son. He also seemed to be a bit of a tattletale and a spoiled brat. Genesis 37 opens by relating that Joseph accompanied two of his brothers to go out and tend the flock. Joseph gave his father a bad report concerning the brothers. We aren't told exactly which brothers they were except that they were the sons of Billhah and Zilpah, the handmaids of Rachel and Leah.

Jacob made a beautiful coat for Joseph "a tunic of many colors" (Gen.37: 3 NKJV). When the brothers saw the coat "they hated him and could not say a kind word to him." (Gen.37: 4) So, in just three verses the picture is painted. Joseph is dad's favorite and all the other sons hate him for it. Some of the feelings are justified because Joseph is also portrayed as somewhat spoiled.

The way Joseph feels is revealed as he relates two of his dreams to his brothers. In the first dream he recounts how he and his brothers were binding sheaves of wheat and while Joseph's sheaf stood tall, the brothers' sheaves bowed down to it. In the other dream, the "sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me" (Gen.37: 9) These dreams were prophetic but no one knew it at the time. The brothers were insulted and Jacob was upset.

All of the brothers except Joseph are tending the flocks and Jacob sends Joseph out to find them and report back how they are doing. The eleven see Joseph coming and begin plotting how they might get rid of him, so deep is their hatred and jealousy. They plan to kill him and throw him into a pit and say that wild animals devoured him. Reuben, the firstborn, urges his brothers not to kill Joseph. Judah comes up with the idea of selling Joseph to a passing Ishmaelite caravan for twenty pieces of silver. Joseph is removed from the pit and sold. Reuben is distraught because he will have to explain this to his father.

The brothers keep Joseph's coat of many colors, kill a goat, and dip the coat in the goat's blood. They then explain to Jacob how they found the bloodied and torn coat and ask him if he recognizes it. Meanwhile, the Ishmaelites (or

Midianites) travel to Egypt and sell Joseph to the household of Potiphar “one of Pharaoh’s eunuchs, the captain of the guard.” (Gen.37: 36) The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered. (Gen.39: 2) Eventually, “thus Joseph found favor with his master, and he became his personal servant. Indeed, his master put him in charge of his household and entrusted him with all that he had.” (Gen. 39: 4)

Even though Potiphar was a Eunuch, he had a wife. The wife kept trying to lure Joseph to bed. Joseph was an honorable man and did not betray his master. Potiphar’s wife tries one last time to get Joseph to bed by grabbing his cloak; he runs away, leaving his cloak in her hands. She falsely accuses Joseph of trying to sleep with her and Joseph is thrown in prison. Even in prison “The Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in everything.” (Gen.39: 23) Joseph became a supervisor of other prisoners.

While in the prison, the pharaoh’s butler and baker offended the king and they were thrown in jail. Joseph was responsible for them and helped them to interpret their dreams. The baker was hanged and the butler got his job back, just as in the interpretation that Joseph had given them. The butler forgot all about Joseph until about two years later.

Pharaoh had dreamed and no one in his court could interpret the dream. Then the baker remembered Joseph’s interpretations in jail and informed the Pharaoh who summoned Joseph. Joseph interpreted the dream as a vision of the future where there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph recommended that Pharaoh put someone in charge of food management. Joseph got the job. Joseph became second only to Pharaoh as he began laying aside crops for the famine.

When the famine came “the whole world came to Egypt to buy corn from Joseph...” (Gen.41: 57) Eventually Joseph’s brothers come to buy corn too. They do not recognize Joseph and he makes them go back to Israel to get their brother Benjamin, Joseph’s closest brother, also born of Rachel. After an emotional meeting Joseph reveals his identity and there is a tearful reunion.

The sons return to Israel to get Jacob. After Jacob meets Pharaoh, the land in the area of Rameses is given to the Hebrews. Joseph continued to monitor the food during the famine. After the famine “Israel settled in Egypt, in Goshen; there they acquired land, and were fruitful and increased greatly.” (Gen.47: 27) This was how the Jews came to be in Egypt until Moses would lead them out hundreds of years later.

The New English Bible, British and Foreign Bible Society, 1972

Except: NKJV, New King James Bible, Thomas Nelson, 1982

Genesis 37:1-4 - "The Triumph of Faith"

INTRODUCTION:

We begin the story of one of the most important and wonderful characters in the entire Bible; his name is Joseph.

Joseph means – “May God add”

The story of his life takes us from the “pit to the palace” (Genesis 37-50 – 1/3rd of the book).

J. Oswald Sanders, “The fascinating tale of the slave-boy who rose to be premier of the most powerful nation of his day strikes every chord of human interest. It is a charming mosaic of divine providence. All the elements of a great story are present – youth and beauty, ambition and temptation, jealousy and hatred, suffering and sorrow, forgiveness and magnanimity (*Grace ness*). Joseph’s was a unique and almost flawless character. The alternating cycles of adversity and prosperity only served to augment the hidden strengths and excellences of his nature. He experienced the advantages of a superior home and the handicap of an indulgent father whose favouritism earned him the ill-will of his older brothers.”

I. Joseph’s Home

What about Joseph’s home?

What was his family background/home life like?

Genesis 37:1-4, “And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. “

Joseph’s great grandfather and grandmother were Abraham and Sarah.

Their lives illustrate the ‘obedience of faith’.

Joseph’s grandfather and grandmother were Isaac and Rebecca.

Their lives illustrate the 'power of faith'.

Joseph's father and mother were Jacob and Rachel.

Their lives illustrate the 'discipline of faith'.

You may think to yourself, 'wow, what a great family!'

Yes and No.

Not everything about Joseph's family and home were wonderful.

Study Note:

For more background, study the story of:

Abraham & Sarah (Hagar & Ishmael)
Isaac & Rebecca
Jacob, Leah & Rachel
Jacob's uncle Laban (Bilhah & Zilpah)

Joseph had ten half brothers and one full brother (Benjamin)

II. Joseph's Hardships

His mother Rachel died in his early teens.

His half brothers were wicked (vs. 2)

His half brothers hated him (vs. 4, 5, 8, 11)

They envied him!

Why did they hate him?

1. Joseph told his father what his brothers were doing (vs. 2)

Why?

He was concerned
He was a man of character

Sadly, his father did nothing.

2. Because Jacob loved Joseph more (vs. 3)

3. Because of his coat (vs. 3)

III. Why study the life of Joseph?

Will his life's story help me today?

Yes! Here's why:

1. Joseph's life was **Pivotal**

It's the link between Genesis and Exodus from Israel a family of 70 to Israel a great nation coming out of Egypt.

Genesis 46:27, "And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten."

Exodus 1:8-12, "And these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. And the sons of Reuben; Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi. And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman. And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul."

2. Joseph's life was **Prosperous**

Genesis 39:1-6, "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that 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. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand;

and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.”

Even in prison.

Genesis 39:20-23, “And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, *the LORD made it to prosper.*”

3. Joseph's life was **Pure**

He learned his lessons well.

He passed the test.

- a. The test of sexual enticement (Genesis 39)
- b. The test of self pity

We find not one word of self pity or grumbling

- c. The test of self revenge

4. Joseph's life was **Providential**

When President Roosevelt was in office, a madman once took a shot at him, wounding the president in the arm. A steel glass case, which the president kept in his breast pocket, deflected the bullet and saved his life. The funny thing is, President Roosevelt hated that glasses case. It was heavy and burdensome, and he had often complained about it. But in the process of God's providence, the thing he hated saved his life.

So too was Joseph's life.

Genesis 45:5-8, “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you

a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

Genesis 50:19-20, “And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”

5. Joseph’s life was a **Picture**

Joseph is one of the few biblical characters about whom nothing evil is reported.

David

Jonathan

His life is a perfect picture of Jesus.

J. Oswald Sanders, “Of all the people who come and go on the busy, crowded pages of the Word of God, where can we find a life that more beautifully portrays the life of Jesus than the life of Joseph? Touch the life of Joseph at any point, and instantly this or that aspect of the person or work of Christ will be revealed. It was that characteristic that gave Joseph the right to occupy such a prominent position in Genesis.”

1. Joseph’s life was **Pivotal**

So is ours.

Our lives touch others

Our lives affect others

Nobody makes a decision without it affecting others, so our obedience to God is pivotal.

2. Joseph’s life was **Prosperous**

Yours can be too!

No matter what happens: “pit or prison”

3. Joseph's life was **Pure**

We can be too!

Joseph's life puts to rest the idea you can't be a Christian in an ungodly culture.

Even as a teen he stood pure.

When in Egypt, he didn't do as the Egyptians do!

4. Joseph's life was **Providential**

Ours too!

Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

You may not see it now, but Joseph remained faithful and he triumphed!

5. Joseph's life was a **Picture**

Yours can be too!

Others can see Jesus in you.

Study Note:

Read the "*Hiding Place*" by Corrie ten Boom

The great goal of the Holy Spirit in the life of any person is to make him like Christ, and when he does at last exhibit the beauties of the Lord Jesus, he becomes a trophy of grace worthy of deathless display.

When relating her sufferings in the Ravensbruck concentration camp in World War II, Corrie ten Boom often (used to show) the reverse side of an embroidered bookmark which seems to be nothing but a senseless mass of tangled threads. Then she turns the bookmark to the front, where the threads spell out in a beautiful design, *God is Love*. Then she quotes,

My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me;
I cannot choose the colors

He worketh steadily.
Ofttimes He weaveth sorrow,
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper,
And I, the under side.

Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why
The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern he has planned.

Genesis 37:5-36 - "Behold The Dreamer"

INTRODUCTION:

Genesis 37:1-4, "And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

The brothers of Joseph " . . . hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." (vs. 4)

London held its breath in June 1987. While working on a building site, a construction foreman thought his workers had hit a cast iron pipe while using a pile driver. After picking up and then dropping the huge object, they realized the pipe strangely resembled a bomb.

It was --- a 2,200 pound World War II bomb, one of the largest the Germans dropped during the blitz which killed more than fifteen thousand Londoners. After evacuating the area, a ten-man bomb disposal unit worked eighteen hours before finally deactivating the seven-foot device.

Hatred is like an unexploded bomb. Unless it's deactivated it can detonate and cause great damage.

Why did his brothers hate him so?

His brothers saw ". . . that their father loved him more . . ." (vs. 4)

Joseph didn't exactly help matters:

1. Joseph – exposed their sin (vs. 2)
2. Joseph – wore his coat (vs. 3)
3. Joseph – dreamed dreams
Notice verse 19, ". . . Behold, this dreamer cometh."

Joseph's Dreams:

1. His own dreams (2 of them)
2. The Butler and Baker's (1 each)

3. Pharaoh's Dreams (2 of them)

I. Joseph's Special Dreams (vs. 5-11)

Genesis 37:5-11, "And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying."

Should Joseph have told his brothers his dreams?

Yes, his dreams helped him through difficult years.

Joseph is a picture of Jesus!

John Phillips, " Those dreams did not exhaust themselves in the personal history of Joseph. They go beyond Joseph to Christ. And has not God given His Son a position of absolute supremacy over this planet? In a coming day Jesus will be exalted and every knee will bow to him "of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth." Then all the *resources* and all the *rulers* of the planet will be His to command. Israel, too, will own Jesus as Lord, just as Joseph's brethren finally owned their hated brother."

II. Joseph Sent to his Brothers (vs. 12-17)

Genesis 37:12-17, "And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man

said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.”

A. Jacob’s Request (vs. 12-14a)

J. R. Miller, “The family would see him off, expecting him to fare well and return again in good time. Not one of them dreamed that it would be more than twenty years before they would see his face again.

We never know when we say goodbye at our door to the friends we love whether or not we shall ever meet them again. If Jacob and Joseph had foreseen the fact that for such a long time they could not look into each other’s face it would have been a most tender parting.”

So don’t part in anger!

B. Joseph’s Response (vs. 14b-17)

“So he sent him.”

It was:

1. Courageously obedient
2. Completely obedient

John Phillips, “Joseph was about eighteen years old. Probably he would have preferred to stay at home at Hebron - the word means “fellowship”, it suggests Joseph’s fellowship and communion with his father. The delights of home were at Hebron, but there was no hesitation, no word about difficulties about distance, about dangers. His father knew about those things as well as he. His father was willing to make the sacrifice and Joseph was willing to do those things that pleased his father. His immediate response was, “Here am I.” One can almost hear old Jacob saying to himself as his beloved Joseph responded so freely, *Surely they will reverence my son.*”

C. A Type or Picture – The Father sent the Son.

III. Joseph Sold by his Brothers (vs. 18-30)

Genesis 37:18-30, “And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one

to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?"

A. The Brothers Plot (vs. 18-20)

B. Reuben's Proposal (vs. 21-25a)

Notice Joseph's cry from the pit:

Genesis 42:21, "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

C. Judah's Plan (vs. 25b-28)

D. Reuben's Panic (vs. 29-30)

E. The Picture: a type of Jesus

John 1:11, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

IV. Jacob's Son's Deceive Him (vs. 31-33)

Genesis 37:31-33, "And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many

colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.”

A. One sin leads to another:

Hatred
Envy
Murder
Deceit

B. You reap what you sow!

Jacob deceived his father Isaac and brother Esau.

The sins of the fathers.

V. Jacob's Sorrow (vs. 34-36)

Genesis 37:34-36, “And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.”

Some say he deserved it!

Lessons from Jacob:

- The Danger of Passivity
- The Danger of Favoritism
- The Danger of Self-Protection

We put our children on a performance standard.

Jacob demonstrated more concern over his own reputation than he did over the fact that his sons had been involved in sinful and evil practices. When Simeon and Levi committed murder, he stated, “You have brought trouble on *me* by making *me* a stench to the people . . . people living in this land” (34:30).

- The Danger of Sowing and Reaping

Lessons from Joseph:

He put up with put-downs!

How to put up with put-downs:

1. Make sure you're suffering for Righteousness sake.

1 Peter 2:19-20, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. "

2. Respond like Jesus

1 Peter 2:21-23, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:"

- a. Don't render evil for evil – 'reviled not again'
- b. Commit yourself to God
- c. Be forgiving

3. Remember

- a. God loves You
- b. God is with You
- c. God is in Control

What if you don't know the father?

Lesson's from Joseph's Brothers:

- A. The Power of Envy

It's the inward pain we feel when we see others succeed.

Horace declared that, "tyrants never invented a greater torment."

It's been defined as:

"The most "corroding of the vices".

“A coat that comes hissing hot from Hell.”

Illustrations:

Cain killed his brother Abel

King Saul pursues David

Guard yourself from it!

B. The Pretence of Morality

It's substituting a lesser sin for a greater sin.

“Let's not kill him, let's sell him!”

Jesus said:

If you are angry --- murder

If you look lustfully --- adultery

C. The Penalty of Sin

The Bible tells us the wages of sin is death. There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it leads to death. Sin always hurts people, even when we can't see the hurt right away. The brothers' sin hurt Joseph, making him a slave and causing him to be separated from his brothers for twenty years. It also hurt Jacob, who thought his son was dead and grieved all those years. But most of all it hurt the brothers, as the memory of that wicked day replayed over and over in their minds. We shouldn't fool ourselves into thinking we can get away with sin. Everyone pays the penalty.

What can we do about a sinful past that produces a troubled conscience?

The Blood of Jesus Christ!

Genesis 39:1-6 - "Prospering in Potiphar's House"

INTRODUCTION:

Genesis 39:1-6, "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that 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. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. "

What a radical change has taken place in Joseph's life. In verse 1 we see Joseph was "brought down to Egypt."

He has gone from being the favoured son of his father to the slave of Potiphar, officer of pharaoh, captain of the guard.

Joseph went from riches to rags.

Have you ever found that the circumstances of your life can change so quickly?

J.R. Miller, said this about Joseph, "Everything about him is new and strange. The contrast between life in the home of Jacob in Canaan and the luxury of one of Egypt's homes was very great. But it was one of the marks of the noble character of Joseph that he was not dependent upon the conditions in which for the time he found himself. He had the fine art of living sweetly anywhere and of getting the best out of any circumstances."

It's not easy to live sweetly when our circumstances are bitter.

We want to run.

Yet we find that Joseph prospered in Potiphar's house (vs. 2).
What was the secret of his prosperity?

"The Lord was with Joseph (vs. 3; 21; 23).

What the Lord did for Joseph is what He also does for us.

When the Lord is with us.

I. The Lord Protected Joseph

It's easy to see the protecting hand of God in Joseph's life.

1. Protected from his brother's death plot.

How about you?

Joseph would have agreed with the Psalmist when he said in Psalms 46:1, ". . . God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

2. Protected from Damaging Emotions.

It is not overtly stated in the text, but from the picture we have of Joseph, I think we can say with confidence that God protected him from the silent killers of resentment, depression, self-pity, bitterness, and anger.

No doubt Joseph fought some fierce battles with these damaging emotions.

Us too!

Many of us say, "I can't", but in reality, "we won't!"

Ephesians 4:31-32, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

II. The Lord Prospered Joseph (vs. 2-3)

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

1. Joseph prospered because his character was intact.

F.B. Meyer, "Though stripped of his coat, he had not been stripped of his character."

Alistair Begg, “If all he had going for him was a fancy coat, then he would have been finished when the coat was torn from him. But there was character inside that coat – and God was going to refine and shape that character in the crucible of Egypt.”

You can lose a lot of things in life but don't lose your character. If you do it's hard, if not, impossible to replace.

2. Joseph prospered because he made a decision.

A decision to make the best of his circumstances and to do his best for the glory of God.

He could have sulked and felt sorry for himself and given up.

He could have protested.

Why should I serve Potiphar?

No!

Joseph was diligent.

3. Joseph prospered because the Lord prospered him (vs. 3)

In verse three notice his master “saw the Lord was with him”.

Joseph's life is a good example of a person who trusted in God in the midst of difficult circumstances and was a testimony to the true and living God.

How about you?

Joseph's character and conduct made him a blessing and brought glory to God.

You too!

1. Keep your character intact.
2. Make a decision to work as unto the Lord.

The sixteenth-century writer George Herbert composed the poem “The Elixir,” which deals with this subject so well that it became a hymn in Great Britain. Herbert wrote,

Teach me, my God and King,

In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything
To do it as for Thee.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

III. The Lord Promoted Joseph (vs. 4-6)

Genesis 39:4-6, “And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that 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. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.” Potiphar decided that if the Lord was favoring Joseph, then it was to his advantage to favor Joseph also (vs. 4).

Joseph is a picture of Jesus.

Luke 2:52, : And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

James Boice, “I notice that, as in the case of Jesus, this happened over a considerable period of time. The reference to Jesus states that he “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” In Genesis growth is skillfully indicated by the accumulating references to Joseph's success. The progression is something like this: (1) God prospered Joseph when he was just a menial slave; (2) Joseph moved to Potiphar's house, possibly being brought there from a different slave building when it was discovered that he did his work well; (3) Potiphar, the master, noted that God was with Joseph; (4) Potiphar promoted him to be his personal attendant and put him in charge of the entire household; (5) the estate now prospered under Joseph's hand, including matters that concerned both in the house and in the field. ; (6) Potiphar therefore withdrew from all management of his affairs and instead left everything to Joseph. How long did this process of recognition and advancement take? Well, Joseph was seventeen years old when he was sold into slavery. He was thirty years old when Pharaoh promoted him (Gen. 41:46), and he had been in prison two years before that (Gen. 41:1). Subtracting seventeen and two from thirty leaves eleven. It took eleven years for the full measure of the blessing of God upon Joseph to be recognized.”

You say, “what’s this got to do with me?”.

So many young people suppose that advancement and promotion flowing from the blessing of God must come quickly.

Sometimes this is the case, if we’re ready!

Normally promotion takes time.

We must learn some things first.

God’s timing is important.

We must learn:

1. Obedience – you can’t rule others if you will not be ruled.
2. Sympathy – Joseph was an oppressed slave.

A poet penned these well-known words, “I walked a mile with pleasure and she chattered all the way, but left me none the wiser for all she had to say. I walked a mile with sorrow and ne’er a word said she, but oh the things I learned from her, when sorrow walked with me.”

3. Diligence – Joseph worked hard. He wasn’t a clock watcher, he started at the bottom.

John Philips, “So young Joseph gave himself to the task of becoming the very best slave Potiphar ever had, and Potiphar noticed, for he was a shrewd judge of men accustomed to command. He soon saw in that Hebrew slave of his all the traits of a good manager. Joseph was loyal he could be trusted, he worked well with other people, he was a leader, he had creative talent, he had a knack for finding better ways to get things done. He was always willing to take on more responsibility. He did his own tasks well and was always on the lookout to advance his master’s cause. He never lost an opportunity to educate and improve himself. He asked an endless stream of questions. He was enthusiastic, and infected others with his zeal. Moreover, he planned ahead and was always looking to the future. Such men were rare.

4. Priorities – Joseph did not leave God out of his life.

Joseph put God first in his life.

Joseph was serving God not man!

The Lord was with Joseph because Joseph was with the Lord .

We need people like this today (vs. 5).

God's Part:

1. Protect us.
2. Prosper us.
3. Promote us.

Like Joseph, God is preparing us for His purposes.

Our Part:

1. Make a decision to put God first in our life.
2. Trust Him in every circumstance we find ourselves in.
3. Obey Him and Honor Him in all that we do (no matter what).

Joseph's prosperity was not due to his circumstances but to his character. And character in turn, depends upon faithfulness to God.

Psalms 1:1-6, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Genesis 39:7-12 - "Resisting Sexual Temptation"

INTRODUCTION:

Genesis 39:1-12, "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out."

Charles Durham, a pastor from Kansas, begins his book *Temptation: Help for Struggling Christians* with an interesting illustration.

Several hundred years ago on the island of Cape Hatteras, off the shore of North Carolina, there were men whose business it was to get ships to run aground on the shoals just off the island. These men were "wreckers" parts and cargo of such ships. With a lighted lantern fastened to the head of an old nag, a horse, these man of Nag's Head – for that was the name of their village – walked up and down and back and forth. Out at sea in the darkness of the mid-Atlantic night, ships that were searching for a passage past the islands would mistake that bobbing light for the stern light of a ship they supposed had found safe passage. They would turn inland and run aground on Diamond Shoals. In the morning the wreckers would come and gather the timber for new houses, utensils for their kitchens, and money for their purses. It was a thriving business. In fact, even now visitors to Nag's Head will be shown old houses built and furnished with the material taken from the more than twenty-three hundred ships that perished off this coast either by accident or treachery.

In our story Joseph in countered a "wrecker", a woman ho tried to shipwreck him on the shoals of illicit sex.

She was:

1. Covetous (vs. 7) – she "cast here eyes upon Joseph".
2. Shameless (vs. 7) – "Lie with me".
3. Persistent (vs. 10) – "she spoke to Joseph day by day".

Joseph had passed the test of prosperity, but can he now pass the test of purity?

The answer: Yes – Joseph did not succumb to sexual temptation (vs. 8, 10,12)

Some would say, “but it was easy for Joseph; it’s harder for us today!”

That’s not true, the woman in Egypt, historically, were considered the most liberated women of their time.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Sexual temptation is common and many Christians are falling to it!

Let’s look at Joseph’s example of how to resist sexual temptation:

I. The Power of Joseph’s Temptation

1. It was a surprise temptation

It came at a time when Joseph was prosperous; everything was going his way.

Notice the words “after these things” (vs. 7)

Joseph could have said, ‘you’ve earned it’.

After spiritual blessing often temptation comes.

Illustration:

David on his roof top (2 Samuel 11)

2 Corinthians 10:12, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Temptation often comes when we least expect it.

2. It was a sustained temptation (vs. 10)

It was no doubt more than verbal.

Many who resist temptation at first will succumb in the end.

Their resistance is broken down by persistence.

There is a danger in starting with emotional needs.

But not Joseph, notice verse 10, “And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.”

3. It was a secret temptation (vs. 11)

She perhaps reminded Joseph that nobody else needed to know.

Joseph was far away from Home.

The test of a person’s character is what they would do if they could be absolutely sure no one would find out.

Are you living a pure life only for fear of being caught?

Joseph knew there was little chance of getting caught, and he still resisted.

4. It was a sensible temptation

How could temptation be sensible?

Every sin offers some sort of rationality.

Sexual sin appeals to a natural desire.

Joseph was 27 years old, single and very good-looking.

People often point out that sex is a gift from God.

Satan wants us to misuse it.

Don’t be robbed of God’s best.

5. It was a striking temptation (vs. 12)

Joseph might have said, “I couldn’t help it”.

Yet remarkably, Joseph resisted!

Remember Joseph’s knowledge of God and His laws were vastly limited compared to ours today.

It would be four-hundred years before God would give Moses the ten commandments.

Exodus 20:14, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Gene Getz, "In spite of Joseph's limited knowledge of God's laws, in spite of the bad examples both in his family and in Egypt, in spite of his own natural desires and tendencies, and – perhaps most significant – in spite of the natural opportunity to cooperate in a relatively safe, secret setting, Joseph still resisted!"

How did he become victorious and not yield?

II. Joseph's Powerful Resistance

1. Joseph had a conviction before the temptation came.

"But he refused" (vs. 8).

Notice what he didn't do:

Let's pray about it!

Let's talk to the pastor!

The crisis didn't make Joseph a pure man. He was already a pure man; the temptation simply revealed it.

2. Joseph knew love involved loyalty.

He had a moral debt to honor Potiphar's trust (vs. 8-9).

Don't violate another's trust!

Sin always hurts others!

3. Joseph had the sense to avoid the source.

"or to be with her" (vs. 10).

No doubt Mrs. Potiphar was a beautiful woman yet Joseph got out of there!.

Get another job!

Romans 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

4. Joseph saw it as a sin against God (vs. 9)

He was still shocked by sexual sin.

Television, DVD/Video's, Movies break down our resistance.

Joseph had a "fear of God".

Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

The key: God sees, God knows!

Psalms 51:4, ". . . Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: . . ."

5. Joseph knew that retreat was better than defeat (vs. 12)

2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

It's the only things in the Bible we are told to run from.

Why?

James 1:13-15, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of **his own lust**, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

It's not a sin to be tempted!

What happened to Joseph?

Genesis 39:13-23, "And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his

garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.”

Joseph lost his position but not his purity

Principles to live by:

1. Remember when you are the most successful you are the most vulnerable to sexual temptation.
2. To resist temptation we must have firm moral and ethical convictions based on a Biblical value system.
3. When we resist temptation we may pay a price with people but ultimately never with God.

A sailor on the south coast of England told his chaplain, “Chaplain, you don’t understand. You’re telling us to walk the straight and narrow path. But you don’t realize the temptations we face, the way we’re blown and tossed about. We can’t really be blamed for what happens to us.”

The chaplain drew the sailor’s attention to the water, where two sailboats were moving along with their sails flapping in the wind. One was heading west, the other east. The chaplain said, “One boat goes east, one boat goes west, By the self-same winds that blow. It’s the set of their sails and not the gales, that determine which way they go.”

Do we have our sails set in the direction of obedience to God? If so, we can go the right way, even if the whole world is blown off course.”

Genesis 40:1-23 - "Misunderstood and Forgotten"

INTRODUCTION:

On November 27, 1965, Howard E. Rutledge parachuted into the hands of the North Vietnamese when his fighter plane exploded under heavy anti-aircraft fire. The story of his torture and seven-year captivity was popularized several years ago in the best-selling book and movie, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*. Within days of his capture, Rutledge was moved to the "heartbreak hotel," and infamous prison in Hanoi. As soon as the key turned in the rusty lock, he felt the utter aloneness that comes from being a prisoner of war. He lived in a six-by-six concrete cell, caked with filth, full of rats. There was nothing to read, nothing to look at, and no one to talk with --- just the man and his thoughts. Howard Rutledge began his stay wondering why God would allow something evil to happen to one of His children. When he was finally released, he understood that God had used that difficult time to make him a stronger man. There was a plan behind it, and it led to God's glory.

Like Howard Rutledge, Joseph was unfairly imprisoned, mistreated, and yes, forgotten.

Notice in verse 1, "And it came to pass after these things . . ."

What things?

Genesis 39:19-23, "And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper."

Have you ever been mistreated or forgotten?

We all have!

It's at this time we ask, "Where is God?" or say, "why bother to be good!"

We like Joseph are tempted to give up and throw in the towel.

Become bitter and hard towards God and His people.

Yet through it all Joseph keeps his faith in God and continues to help and serve others.

There's no record of Joseph ever complaining or compromising.

As we look at chapter 40, we find that there are advantages to adversity.

I. Joseph Working (vs. 1-4)

Genesis 40:1-4, "And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward."

Notice the "hand of God" in every circumstance of Joseph's life.

Joseph was faithful even in difficult circumstances.

Joseph was being tested.

Psalms 105:17-19, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him."

Joseph passed the test, will you?

II. Joseph Watching (vs. 5-19)

Genesis 40:5-19, "And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you. And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into

Pharaoh's hand. And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon. When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head: And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head. And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.”

III. Joseph Waiting (vs. 20-23)

Genesis 40:20-23, “And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.”

The Advantages of Adversity:

1. Provided Greater Opportunities

God often allows problems in our lives to provide greater opportunities.

Illustrations:

The Apostle Paul's Epistles
The Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation)
John Bunyan “*Pilgrims Progress*”

Leslie Flynn, *Joseph God's Man in Egypt* – “A missionary couple in India sent their six little children to a school in the hill country. One terrible night the monsoon rains caused a river to sweep away the hillside cottage where the children lived, burying all six in its ruins. The parents were crushed by the seemingly purposeless tragedy. But when the first wave of grief subsided, they said, “Our six children are gone, so we must establish a greater family of neglected little ones.” Gathering up abandoned children

from the streets of Calcutta, they made a home for them. For more than 30 years they were parents to as many as 300 little ones a year.”

It was in prison that God brought Joseph into contact with the man that would be his links to seeing his boyhood dreams become a reality.

Same for us, we never know – God’s ways are not our ways!

2. Promoted Spiritual Maturity

Problems can make us better if we refuse to let them make us bitter.

Apart from the Lord Jesus, I know of no one who experienced more unfair treatment than Joseph.

Yet he kept his faith in God (vs. 8) “ . . . Do not interpretations belong to God . . . ”

Joseph probably had a soft life as a child so God had to allow hardships in his life to use him to save a nation.

Illustration: A Butterfly coming out of a cocoon

Hebrews 12:11, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Problems are often God’s way of putting Him into our souls so we can face the challenges that lie ahead.

Illustration:

A Bar of steel worth \$5.00 changed into

- a horseshoe = \$10.00
- needles = \$350.00
- springs for watches = \$250,000.00

3. Prove Our Integrity

David Jeremiah, “Our character should never be altered by our circumstances. Joseph was a man of character, and his character was revealed through the difficulties he faced. Sometimes character is confused with reputation, but they are not the same thing. Reputation is what others think we are; character is what God knows we really are.

Reputation is chiseled on our tombstones, but character is what the angels say about us before the throne of God. Character never changes as circumstances change, because the circumstances give us an opportunity to prove our integrity.”

Don't blame your circumstances!

4. Prepare Us For Ministry

Notice Joseph's sensitivity to others even in his suffering (vs. 6-7)

Genesis 40:6-7, “And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?”

Problems in our lives should make us more sensitive to the needs and problems of others.

Illustration: 1 Corinthians 1

Helping others also helps heal our own hearts.

The need for volunteer helpers in air-raid shelters and hospitals during World War II in England motivated many invalids to leave their wheelchairs and render valuable service to community and country. In helping others, they forgot their own aches and pains.

A seminary professor, the late Dr. William L. Stidger, at one time suffered a deep depression. During that period he didn't care about anything, for all seemed hopeless. A friend challenged him to think of all the people who had been a major help in his life, selected one, then to write that person a note of gratitude.

Stidger thought hard. He recalled a school teacher who had given him a love of literature. So he penned her a letter, telling how she had inspired in him a love of great poetry and prose. Soon he received a reply in shaky handwriting. “Dear Willy, when I read your letter, I was blinded with tears, for I remember you as a little fellow in my class. You have warmed my old heart. I have taught school for 50 years. Yours is the first letter of thanks I ever received from a student, and I cherish it until I die.”

A sliver of sunshine wedged into Stidger's mind, encouraging him to write another thank-you note, then another, and another, till he had written over 500. Thinking of others provided the therapy to heal his dejected spirit.

Joseph would be the one giving out the bread to the needy.

5. Produced a Sense of Dependency

John Bunyan – “In times of affliction we most commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God.”

Man may forget us but God will never forget us (vs. 23)

We can depend upon Him!

No matter what happened to Joseph, God was with him.

Joseph had to learn to not trust in man but to trust in God.

I thank God for the bitter things;
They've been a "friend to grace";
They've driven me from the paths of ease
To storm the secret place.

I thank Him for the friends who've failed
To fill my heart's deep need;
They've driven me to the Saviour's feet,
Upon His love to feed.

I'm grateful too, through all life's way
No one could satisfy,
And so I have found In God alone
My rich, my full supply!

-- Florence White Willett.

When you pass through a time of suffering, sorrow, hardship, or disappointment remember three important things:

1. God's Way is Wisest

The prison was the place where Joseph was fitted for his life work.

God may be sending you to school right now so don't forget God's way is wisest!

"Pain's furnace heat within me quivers,
God's breath upon the flame doth blow,
And all my heart in anguish shivers
And trembles at the fiery glow.

And yet I whisper, 'As God will!'
And in His hottest fire hold still.

He comes and lays my heart, all heated,
On the hard anvil, minded so
Into His own fair shape to beat it
With his great hammer, blow on blow!
And yet I whisper, 'As God will!'
And at His heaviest blows hold still.

He takes my softened heart, and beats it;
The sparks fly off at every blow.
He turns it o'er and o'er, and heats it,
And lets it cool, and makes it glow.
And yet I whisper, 'As God will!'
And in His mighty hand hold still.

Why should I murmur? For the sorrow
Thus only long-lived would be;
Its end may come, and will, tomorrow,
When God has done His work in me.
So I say, trusting, 'As God Will!'
And, trusting to the end, hold still.

He kindles for my profit purely
Affliction's fiery, glowing brand;
And all His heaviest blows are surely
Inflicted by a Master-hand.
So I say, praying, 'As God will!'
And hope in Him, and suffer still."

2. God's Time is Best

Notice it took two more years for Joseph to be released from prison
(Genesis 41:1)

God is always right on time.

3. God's Grace is Sufficient

In a certain coal-mining neighborhood, where almost everything was covered with coal-dust, there was a beautiful white flower perfectly free from dust. When someone who was strange to the place remarked that the owner must take very great care of the flower to prevent it from being covered with coal-dust, another who was standing by threw over the flower some dust which at once fell off, leaving the whiteness and

beauty as exquisite as ever. The explanation was that the flower had on it what might be called an enamel which enabled it to receive the dust and throw it off without feeling anything of the effects. So it was with Joseph. His character was covered with the enamel of Divine grace, and all these sorrows and troubles came upon him and left him untouched except for the increased strength and power that came to him from God.

“Choose for us, Lord, nor let our weak preferring
Cheat us of good Thou hast for us designed:
Choose for us, Lord; Thy wisdom is unerring,
And we are fools and blind.

“Let us press on, in patient self-denial,
Accept the hardship, shrink not from the loss:
Our portion lies beyond the hour of trial,
Our crown beyond the cross.”

W. H. Burleigh

Genesis 41:1-57 - "From Prison to Palace"

INTRODUCTION:

If any chapter in Genesis reveals the sovereign hand of God its Genesis chapter 41.

We see God taking Joseph "from the prison to the palace.

Genesis 41 is an illustration of Roman's 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

God in His providence has prepared Joseph for a very important position. We would have sent him to Princeton; God sent him to prison!

Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."

In this chapter we see both God's sovereign hand, and Joseph's part.

I. Joseph in Prison (vs. 1-13)

Genesis 41:1-13, "And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fattleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to pass, as he

interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.”

As we see Joseph go from “rags to riches”, we first find him in prison.

Let’s follow the events God orchestrated to bring him to the palace.

1. The Kings Dreams (vs. 1-7)

Notice that it was, “. . . at the end of two full years, . . .” (vs. 1)

Why? – God had a plan for Joseph’s life.

Joseph held on because he had a ray of hope:

Genesis 40:14-15, “But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.”

The two years were good for Joseph.

Why?

God taught him:

- Faith – Habakkuk 2:4, “. . . the just shall live by his faith”
- Humility – When you come to the place where you know you are humble, you’ve lost it!
- Patience

If you value comfort more than character your troubles will upset you. If you value character more than comfort then you can learn to cooperate with what God is doing in your life.

God gave Pharaoh a Dream.

Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

2. The Magicians Failure (vs. 8)

There's an interesting contrast seen in Daniel 2 with King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams.

The natural man can't help.

1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

3. The Butlers Recollection (vs. 9-13)

God's in control!

God's hand was on the time of the butler's remembering Joseph.

If the butler had remembered sooner, Joseph could have complimented himself on his foresight in asking to be remembered.

But at the end of Joseph's long wait, God would get all the credit.

"Man's extremity Is God's opportunity."

-John Flavel (1630–1691)

It was God's plan that the butler forget Joseph.

Why?

Because He wanted Joseph to learn: faith, humility, patience.

It's true for us too!

Lesson: When we see no way out God has resources that we are unaware of!

William Cowper writing about God's sovereign plan said,

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs

And works His sovereign will.”

II. Joseph in the Palace (vs. 14-57)

Genesis 41:14-57, “Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself (Breards were an abomination to the Egyptians), and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow: And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me. And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine. And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants,

Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."

1. Joseph's (God's) Interpretation (vs. 14-36)

When all hope is gone the prison doors open!

Notice Joseph's response when Pharaoh asked him if he could interpret dreams?

Notice verse 16, “. . . *it is not in me*: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”

He could have been tempted to say “Yes, I’m your man!”

Instead Joseph was humble and dependent upon God.

His confidence was God centered.

The best place for you to be is to come to the end of yourself and realize you need God.

Joseph’s words remind us of Jesus words in John 15:5, “. . . without me ye can do nothing.”

Joseph was used by God because he was humble, dependant and confident in God’s ability to use him. ‘it is not in me’. He could have been self-confident; instead he was God confident, humble and dependent.

The interpretation (vs. 25-32)

Joseph’s advise to Pharaoh (vs. 33-36)

Joseph is not suggesting he’s the man!

2. Joseph’s Exaltation (vs. 37-46)

This is what God has been leading up to.

Joseph’s new name: Zaphnathpaaneah (vs. 45) - We don’t know what it means precisely, in fact, scholars are baffled. Their best guess is that it means, “Savior of the world”.

Joseph had 13 years of preparation for 80 years of ministry.

Notice the suddenness of his ascent – In the morning, when he woke up!

F.B. Meyer, “The hands that were hard with the toils of a slave are no longer tormented by fetters; a chain of gold is linked around his neck. The coat of many colors torn from him by violence and defiled by blood, and the garment left in the hand of the adulteress, are exchanged for vestures of fine linen drawn from the royal wardrobe. He was once trampled upon as the offscouring of all things; now all

Egypt is commanded to bow before him, as he rides forth in the second chariot, prime minister of Egypt, second only to the king.”

Will prosperity destroy Joseph spiritually?

Joseph is in grave danger

Will he continue to trust in God?

Many people who've been able to handle adversity have been ruined by prosperity.

If God has prospered your life, what should be your response?

Humbly thanking God for His many blessings; staying in prayer, in His word, in fellowship, and dependent upon God; lest you be lifted up with pride and destroyed.

But not Joseph – he was true to God.

Adversity strengthened him and prosperity humbled him. He let both draw him closer to the Lord.

How about you?

Has prosperity ruined you?

Have you become comfortable, complacent and carnal?

A ring was placed upon his finger and he was arrayed in a beautiful robe.

A Ring: All power

A Robe: The robes of Joseph

- The coat of many colors
- The robe he left at Potiphar's wives house
- The robe Pharaoh dressed him in (12 – 13 years to acquire it)

A Gold Chain

A Chariot

Someone has said that you could preach a sermon on the robes of Joseph.

- He lost his first robe his father had given him – it was torn and covered with goat’s blood.
- He lost his second robe in the hands of Mrs. Potiphar who accused him falsely.
- Now he gets his third robe which he will not lose – He’ll wear it for 80 years.

Can you imagine Mr. & Mrs. Potiphar’s reaction?

Perhaps now Joseph’s mind races back to his boyhood dreams. He probably begins to weep as he see’s the goodness of God.

A few hours prior he awoke in a prison and that afternoon found himself second to Pharaoh over all the land of Egypt.

I imagine he was humbled, broken and wept as he thought back to his childhood dream and his brothers reaction to it.

Joseph now began to think that God truly would fulfill those dreams. He cannot lie, He’ll keep His promises.

How wonderful it is to know that God cannot lie, that He will keep His word!

3. Joseph’s Administration (vs. 47-57)

God gave Joseph two sons (vs. 51-52)

Manasseh – which means, “God hath made me forget all my toil in my fathers house.”

Ephraim – which means, “God hath caused me to be fulfilled in the land of my affliction.”

God turns our darkness into dawn; He blows away the clouds and exalts us to the place he wants us to be. God enables us to forget the troubles, trials, afflictions, hurts, pains, mistreatments, and abuses of the past.

Paul said in Philippians 3:13, “. . . forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,”

Joseph was enabled by God to forget the pain on the past. He no longer allowed the past to control his life.

Biblically speaking, *forgetting* means, not letting the past control or

influence you.

How about you?

Remember that Joseph is a beautiful picture of Jesus!

Both were falsely accused. Joseph was in prison with two others; Christ suffered on the cross between two thieves. Joseph announced that one of his fellow prisoners would go free, while the other perished; Christ proclaimed salvation to the repentant thief, while the other continued unrepentant.

Just Joseph, after much injustice, was exalted to second ruler of Egypt, so Christ was brought from the grave after much insult and injury and placed at the Father's right hand. Like Joseph, Christ has also been given a bride, the Church, composed mainly of Gentile believers. Just as Pharaoh placed the whole business of the grain in Joseph's hands, so the Father has committed all things into the care of the Son. As Joseph dispensed bread to save the lives of his own nation and of other countries as well, so Christ is the Bread of Life who dispenses spiritual nourishment to all nations.

Just as the Egyptians had to bow before Joseph, so we should bow before Christ now.

Notice verse 55, "And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, **Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.**"

We need to go to Jesus (for the Bread of Life) and do what he says!

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

With Joseph we see a wise lesson: Storing up in the present to prepare for the future.

Time is short!

Usually, the younger you are, the more time you think you have to prepare for eternity. But I'm told the average life span is some 36.8 million minutes. Of these, you will sleep away 12.3 million minutes and eat your way through another 3 million minutes. You will work for 13 million minutes, leaving you with some 8.5 million minutes to use.

But necessary daily routines, such as bathing and getting dressed, will take 1.5 million minutes of that leftover time. And if you're at least eighteen years old, you've already used a quarter of your allocated years. So in terms of undesignated time, you really have probably only 5 million minutes.

III. Principles to Live By

1. Joseph had a Courageous Faith

Whether in the: pit , prison, or palace, Joseph's faith was courageous. He kept his confidence and trust in God.

He was cooperative with God's training process in:

Potiphar's house

Prison

The Palace

He was the same man, there was no duplicity.

What if Joseph had given in to temptation, anger, bitterness, hate, or said yes to Mrs. Potiphar?

We need to learn to wait upon God!

Trust in God!

I've always believed that God gives the best to those who leave the choice to Him.

Don't settle for second best, have a courageous faith.

2. Joseph was Committed to God's Glory

Notice the following verses in Genesis 41:

16, "And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

25, "And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do."

28, "This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh."

32, "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

When Pharaoh asked Joseph if he could interpret dreams he said, "No! But God can".

He gave God all the glory.

Be careful that you never touch the glory of God; that you never take credit for what God is doing in your life.

All of Joseph's life was focused on God and he gave God the glory!

God could use him.

3. Joseph was Controlled by the Holy Spirit

When Pharaoh heard Joseph's interpretation he said, "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"

A spirit-filled person is constant under pressure.

We sing:

Have Thine own way, Lord!

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me, Master, today!
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!
Power, all power, surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit 'till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.

Adelaide in 1907

This is the reason Joseph was so Christ like, he was filled with the Spirit.

The filling of the Spirit was for the pit, for the prison, just as it was for the palace.

We need God's Spirit to control and empower us in every circumstance that we face in life.

Genesis 42:1-28 - "Awakening a Sleeping Conscience"

INTRODUCTION:

A farmer was on his way home after picking up his new car. As he approached his farm, he decided to test the acceleration. He passed the side road that led to his house and drove on for a mile or so. Then, after making a sharp u-turn, he sped back toward the side road. A man driving a station wagon observed the U-turn and the farmer's fast rate of speed, and he thought the automobile was an unmarked police car.

Trying to avoid detection, he quickly headed down the road leading to the farm. Of course he was followed by the returning farmer who only wanted to go home. The second driver was alarmed and drove at high speed to escape, only to come to a dead end. He jumped out and ran, abandoning the station wagon. Later it was found to be filled with stolen coffee, cigarettes, and ammunition. His conscience had made him flee, even though no one was pursuing him.

We are all familiar with the line in Shakespeare's best-known play *Hamlet*, "conscience doth make cowards of us all"

What is this thing we call the conscience?

The word conscience comes from two words:

'to know'
'with' "to know with"

To know within my self.

It's the court within man's innermost being.

Conscience is not always the best guide.

Why?

We can have a seared conscience, a darkened conscience; or we can at least, put it very soundly to sleep.

This is no doubt what happened to the ten brothers of Joseph.

Let's look at the steps, which God used to melt their hardened hearts:

I. The Experience of Difficulty (vs. 1-5)

Genesis 42:1-5, "Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him. And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan."

A. (vs. 1) Notice that, "Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt"

Remember, there was a famine in the land.

Genesis 41:56-57, "And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."

Thus, Egypt became the soup kitchen for a starving world.

B. (vs. 1) Jacob said, "Why do ye look one upon another?"

Why?

The trip to Egypt was a dangerous 250-300 mile journey, which would take them six-weeks to travel.

Most likely the brothers memory of selling their brother to Egypt haunted their thoughts.

Conscience has a way of digging up the past and arousing doubts and fears within us.

C. (vs. 2) A word of direction, "get you down"

D. (vs. 4) All went except Benjamin

E. Lesson: God used a problem to move them toward repentance and reconciliation.

When we are away from the Lord, He brings difficulty into our lives to get our attention.

God makes good to come out of evil.

Saint Augustine said, “God rather than not to allow evil to exist chose to bring good out of evil”.

Illustration: The Prodigal Son (Luke 15)

When did he come to his senses?

Luke 15:17-19, “And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.”

Most of the miracles in the New Testament are the result of a problem.

II. The Expression of Harsh Treatment (vs. 6-16)

Genesis 42:6-16, “And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not. And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies.”

What is happening is the gradual unfolding of the brother's sin.

It was God's amazing providence that Joseph would be the one to deal with his brothers (vs. 6)

Why didn't Joseph's brothers recognize him?

1. His Age – he was 17 years old when they sold him into slavery; Now standing before them Joseph is 40 years old.
2. His Appearance – Clean-shaven, dressed as an Egyptian.
3. His Authority - If Joseph was still alive he was no doubt, still a slave.
4. His Acting – “made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them” (vs. 7)

“he spake unto them by an interpreter.” (vs. 23)

Why?

Was Joseph right in doing this?

Spies?

The answer is found in chapter 37 where Joseph is accused of spying on his brothers.

Sometimes when we are victims of the same treatment we have given to others, God allows it to create in us a sensitivity to our own sin.

F.B. Meyer, “In all this, I believe *he repeated exactly the scene at the pit's mouth*; and indeed we may perhaps see what really happened there, reflected in the mirror of this scene. It is not unlikely that when they saw him coming towards them, in his prince-like dress, they had rushed at him, accusing him of having come to spy out their corrupt behaviour, and take back an evil report to their father, as he had done before; if so, this will explain why he now suddenly accused them of being spies. No doubt the lad protested that he was no spy – that he had only come to inquire after their welfare; but they had met his protestations with rude violence in much the same way as the rough-speaking governor now treated them. It may be that they had even thrust him into the pit with the threat to keep him there until his statements could be verified, in much the same way as Joseph now dealt with them; and Simeon may have been the

ringleader. If this were the case – and it seems most credible – it is obvious that it was a powerful appeal to their conscience and memory, and one that could not fail to awaken both.”

Joseph’s harsh treatment was not vindictive or out of spite. It was loving and wise!

It must have been difficult for Joseph to control his emotions (vs. 8-9)

But Joseph’s brothers had to be forced to face their sins and come to a place of honest confession.

This is true for us too.

God’s word can be harsh to break our hard hearts to bring us to the place of confession and submission.

I heard the story of a Dad, who was in his living room reading the paper in the afternoon. Not having his watch on and wanting to know what time it was he, and after hearing his young son Timmy in the kitchen, called out to him and asked, “Timmy, what’s the big hand on?” To which he heard a timid voice reply, “a cookie!”

III. The Exile in Prison (vs. 17-20)

Genesis 42:17-20, “And he put them all together into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God: If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.”

God used solitary confinement to break their hard hearts (vs. 17).

In prison three days

People don’t like to be still and have time to think. But God can use it to awaken a sleeping conscience put to sleep by activity with other things.

IV. The Exposure of the Heart (vs. 21-24)

Genesis 42:21-24, “And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also

his blood is required. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.”

- A. Notice verse 21 – one of the first signs of a conscience awakening is the admission of personal guilt.

The word “we” used here in the Hebrew is emphatic.

We and we alone!

H.C. Leupold, “Whatever they may have said in prison, now at least they speak in terms of their guilt in the matter of Joseph. Their conscience has awakened mightily during these three days. They feel that a just retribution has come upon them, and are apparently all of one mind in regard to the matter. They admit guilt, the ‘only acknowledgment of sin in the book of Genesis’.”

- B. Ruben’s “I told you so!” (vs. 22)

Notice, “Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.”

- C. They didn’t know Joseph understood them (vs. 23)

God knows!

- D. Lesson: The contrast (vs. 24)

What we see – God angry with us

The truth – God loves us

Warren W. Wiersbe, “This is the first of six such experiences; for Joseph also wept when he saw his brother Benjamin (43:29-30), when he revealed himself to his brothers (45:2), when he met his father in Egypt (46:29), when his father died (50:1), and when he assured his brothers that they were truly forgiven (vs. 17). What makes a person weep is a good test of character.”

Someone put it in a poem:

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;

Beneath a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.”

V. The Expression of Kindness (vs. 25-28)

Genesis 42:25-28, “Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?”

A. What is God doing to us? (vs. 28)

Donald Gray Barnhouse – “In all the record, this was the first time that these brothers mentioned the Lord. Seemingly, God was not in all their thoughts through their early years. Violence, murder, envy, the selling of a brother into slavery, lying to their father – none of these things was modified by one word about God. They used the mark of the covenant as a subterfuge to perpetrate murder (34:15), but the God of the covenant was absent from their thoughts. Now, with conscience aroused, memory active, and fears large, they saw God in the actions of the unknown Joseph. The goodness of God used to lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4), and here it was taking effect. The money in the sacks of wheat turned their hearts to God. Lord, *may Thine unknown goodness break us down.*”

B. God often activates our seared, or sleeping conscience when we are the recipients of undeserved expressions of grace.

“. . . the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance .”
(Romans 2:4)

God’s goodness and grace often bring us to conviction and conversion.

The money reminded them of their sin.

We see here the difference between regret and repentance. At the point the brothers say, “surely we are guilty”, it’s only regret. But now, they’re beginning to come around to a consciousness of God.

God is somehow in this!

They would become a nation chosen and used by God to bring the scriptures and the Messiah into the world!

God had to prepare and reconcile them back to Him.

Someone said,

'Tis not enough to say
I'm sorry and repent

And then go on from day to day
Just living as we want.
Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before
And show that we did earnest grieve
By doing them no more."

Genesis 42:29-43:14 - "No One Loves Me This I Know"

INTRODUCTION:

If Jacob had known the popular children's song, "Jesus Loves Me", he no doubt, would have changed the words to, "no one loves me, this I know; my misfortunes tell me so".

Notice the words in verse 36, "all these things are against me".

Have you ever heard of Murphy's Law?

Murphy's Law says, "If anything can go wrong, it will." If you wash your car on Saturday morning, it will rain on Saturday afternoon. If you go to bed early, the phone will ring. If you drop a piece of bread you have just spread thick with peanut butter and jelly, it will always fall peanut-butter-and-jelly-side down. If you take your troubled car to the mechanic, it will run perfectly once you are at the shop.

When things are going well, something will go wrong – just wait. When things just can't get any worse, they will. Anytime things appear to be going better, it's just because you have overlooked something. No matter which way you ride your bicycle, it's always uphill and against the wind. If you fiddle with a thing long enough, it will break. The other line always moves faster.

Today I want to look, not at Joseph or his brothers, but Jacob his father.

In our text today, Jacob illustrates how not to react in life's trying circumstances.

We all have our share of days when Murphy's Law proves true, and because life often doesn't work out right (which being interpreted means, it doesn't work out our way).

We've developed three basic and natural tendencies in dealing with difficult circumstances:

1. We tend to respond negatively rather than positively. This is especially true when facing unexpected changes.
2. We tend to view problems horizontally rather than vertically.
 - * From a human point of view, rather than seeing our problems from the Divine side, we tend to leave God out of the picture.
 - * Only when our backs against the wall do we bring God into the picture.

3. We tend to resist what is new, especially if it seems too good to be true.

These tendencies seem to intensify, as we grow older.

Notice the contrast in verse 36, “all these things are against me”, with Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

If Jacob had known that Joseph was Prime Minister of Egypt and was working all things for his good, he would have been rejoicing instead of sulking.

The stages Jacob went through in response to his problems:

- I. He viewed his problems from only the Human Perspective (vs. 29-36)

Genesis 42:29-36, “And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land. And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.”

Notice Jacob’s eyes are on himself, “me”, (vs. 36) and his circumstances; so he over-reacts.

He’s forgotten God, particularly his past help and promises.

You say, “he didn’t have Romans 8:28.

True, but he did have Genesis 28: 12-15:

Genesis 28:11-15, “And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the

angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

We have Romans 8:28

Notice how it's divided:

1. Those who love God
2. Those who are called according to His purposes

Remember, Romans 8:31, “. . . If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Not the world, the flesh, or the devil!

Old Testament illustration: Elisha in Dotham:

2 Kings 6:8-17, “Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And **Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.** And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and

he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

II. He set his will and said, No! (vs. 37-38)

Genesis 42:37-38, “And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”

Notice Jacob’s sons counsel him.

Jacob was a grandfather, he should have said, “let’s pray and trust God; He knows what He’s doing!”

Father’s let’s take the lead, let’s trust God!

Jacob said, “my will”, not “Thy will!”

III. He became bitter and blaming (43:1-7)

Genesis 43:1-7, “And the famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food. And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?”

Jacob had no joy or peace.

In verse’s 8-13, God brings Jacob and his family to the place of faith and trust; a place of extreme necessity.

Genesis 43:8-13, “And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou

require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time. And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down to the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:”

Notice verse 11, “If it must be so now” – this speaks of tolerance and uncertainty.

God sometimes puts us between a rock and a hard place.

He uses:

1. Nature (vs. 1)
2. A Person (vs. 5)
3. Circumstances – just the way they were

Often we fight against them.

We try to work things out (vs. 12)

What should we do?

1. Admit you are wrong – get rid of your pride.

I heard the story about a guy from Mule Shoe, Texas, named Uncle Zeke who was famous for his hard stubborn pride; never would he admit he was wrong. One day while walking down the street, he stopped and turned into the blacksmith’s shop. The blacksmith had been beating on a horseshoe and he had it all red and heated up. He was trying to shape it and it wasn’t cooperating. He’s beating on it, and beating on it until it became black and finally threw it down in the sawdust and went about his work.

Meanwhile, Uncle Zeke walks in. Seeing the horseshoe on the ground he reaches down and picks it up. Immediately he drops it as fast as he had picked it up. The blacksmith looks down over his glasses and asks, “kind of hot aint it Zeke?” to which Uncle Zeke replies, “Nope! Just don’t take me long to look at a horseshoe”.

2. Focus your eyes on God (vs. 14)

Genesis 43:14, “And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”

He came to the end of himself.

Think how hard it must have been to let Benjamin go.

Robert Smith Candlish – “Let any one imagine the state of Jacob after he has thus sent all his sons away. It is the very triumph of that faith which is ‘the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ Weeks or months must elapse before tidings can reach him of the good or ill success of this expedition. The vessel that carries such a venture in its bosom may not be heard of till his grey hairs, through weary watching, have become greyer still. His fond eye, dimmed with the bitter tears of age, sees them – scarcely sees them – leaving him perhaps for ever on this earth. He may look on them, he may look on Benjamin, no more on this side of the grave. He has no express promise that he shall. What probable presumption is there that he shall? It is indeed a dark and doubtful prospect. But by God’s grace the very extremity of the emergency rouses the old believer to a new venture of faith. He has trusted God before; he will trust him still. ‘I will trust and not be afraid,’ is his language. ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.’ ”

Illustration – Jacob at the Brook Jabbok

James Boyce – “If you are fighting against the circumstances God has brought into your life, learn that it is useless to wrestle against the God of Jabbok. Allow yourself to be mastered by God and commit your way to him. Praise him, knowing that he will be with you and will bless you to the very end.”

Genesis 43:15-44:16 - "The Broken Brothers"

INTRODUCTION:

As we pick up our story of Joseph we find that God is seeking to bring his hardhearted brothers to the place of brokenness and confession of sin.

Why?

So there can be forgiveness and reconciliation.

The grain from Egypt has been depleted, their father Jacob, has finally consented to let them go with Benjamin.

But that's not all the brothers are going back to Egypt with. They are traveling with an awakened conscience and they are burdened with fears about the mission that lie ahead, and the intentions of the Egyptian Prime Minister.

- How will he react to the money we bring back found in our sacks?
- Will he release Simeon from prison?
- Can we get Benjamin back to father safe and sound?

Let's now follow the story and see how God, through Joseph, breaks them of self-confidence and brings them to confession.

I. The Problem of the Money (vs. 15-23a)

Genesis 43:15-23a, "And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses. And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food: And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and

the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money.”

II. The Problem of Simeon’s Release (vs. 23b)

Genesis 43:23b, “And he brought Simeon out unto them.”

III. The Problem of Benjamin’s Protection (vs. 24-34)

Genesis 43:24-34, “And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread. And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another. And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.”

In verses 29-30, we see Joseph weeping.

Six times in the story of Joseph’s life we find him weeping:

1. Genesis 42:24 - When he heard his brothers speaking of their guilt in selling his as a slave.
2. Genesis 43:30 - When he saw Benjamin.

3. Genesis 45:2 - When he reveals himself to his brothers.
4. Genesis 46:29 - When he met his father.
5. Genesis 50:1 - When his father died.
6. Genesis 50:7 - When he assured his brothers that they were truly forgiven.

What makes a person cry tells a lot about a person's character.

What makes you cry?

Warren W. Wiersbe, "Joseph's sensitive heart was a miracle of God's grace. For years dead Egyptian idols and the futile worship given to them had surrounded Joseph, yet he had maintained his faith in God and a heart tender toward his own people. He could have hardened his heart by nursing grudges, but he preferred to forgive and leave the past with God."

This was a time of transition as the brothers moved from fear to peace, for punishment because of the money was no longer an issue; from bondage to freedom, for Simeon had been released; and from anxiety to joy, for Benjamin was not in danger. So Joseph's brothers ate and drank as if there were no famine in the land, and they rejoiced at the generosity of the ruler at the head table.

However, this was a false and transient joy, because the brothers had not yet dealt with their sins. It's one thing to be relieved and quite something else to be forgiven and reconciled. They needed to ask Joseph's forgiveness for the way they had abused him, and owed their father an apology for deceiving him and grieving his heart.

To experience false joy and peace is a perilous thing, and to think that we're right with God because life is easier and problems less threatening is to court disaster. As it was in the days of Noah and the days of Lot, so shall it be in the day when Jesus returns (Luke 17:26-30). People will be self-confident as they carry on their daily activities and cultivate their sins, but judgment will fall; and there will be no escape.

Anything short of humble repentance and confession will not bring about reconciliation with God or with one another. 'There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death' (Prov. 14:12). Like the wealthy farmer in Christ's parable, people have false confidence because they think everything is secure for years to come, only to discover that they have left God out of their lives (Luke 12:16-21).

All their fears were now ungrounded:

1. Their 'word' was true (they were not spies)
2. Their 'money', they brought back
3. They had Benjamin and Simeon and were heading safely home

However, there was one more problem

IV. The Problem of their Unconfessed Sin (44:1-16)

Genesis 44:1-16, "And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing. And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye

have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?
And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we
speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the
iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we,
and he also with whom the cup is found.”

Joseph's brothers had admitted guilt, but they had not yet openly, humbly,
been broken of self-confidence and confessed and repented of their sin
against Joseph.

For twenty-two years Joseph's brothers had carefully covered their sins,
they hadn't told the truth and apparently had reaped no serious
consequences.

But the truth must come out if there is to be forgiveness and restoration.

Galatians 6:7, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever
a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Numbers 32:23, “. . . be sure your sin will find you out. “

Truth brings consequences. If we repent there is forgiveness and
restoration. If we cover our sins we will not prosper.

Joseph has a plan (vs. 1-3)

The same thing that happened to Joseph's brothers must happen to us.

What to do with Benjamin!

James Boice – “Apart from God's persistent probing of our consciences
we are like these brothers before the exposure of their sin. We are guilty
of a great sin against God and against our elder brother, Jesus Christ.
God is our Creator, and Jesus is our rightful master and Lord. But we have
despised their claims and have gone about our lives self-confidently,
priding ourselves in our supposed self-righteousness.”

1. Were the brothers ‘men of their word?’

“so are we”

“we do not lie!”

2. Were the brothers confident of their money?

“so are we” – we're not beggars in this life

We pay our way

We work hard

We go to church

We pray

3. Were the brothers confident of their integrity?

“so are we”

“we’re not thieves!”

Illustrations:

The Pharisee in Luke 18:12, “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”

I am not like other men!

Notice the cup in Benjamin’s sack.

Some are like Benjamin

But All have sinned!

F.B. Meyer has an illustration at this point to show that even Benjamin, the innocent one, needed to be purged of whatever self-confidence he may have had and that even the most ‘innocent’ of persons today likewise needs to be divested of it. “A preacher of the gospel was once speaking to an old Scotswoman, who was commonly regarded as one of the most devout and respectable people in that part of the country. He was impressing on her, her need of Christ. At last, with tears in her eyes, she said, “Oh, sir, I have never missed a Sabbath at the kirk; and I have read my Bible every day; and I have prayed and done good deeds to my neighbors; and I have done all I knew. I ought to do. And now do you mean to tell me that it must all go for nothing? He answered, ‘Well, you have to choose between trusting in these and trusting in the redemption which God offers you in Christ. You cannot have both. If you are content to part company with your own righteousness, the Lord will give you his; but if you cling to your Bible-reading and Sabbath-

keeping and good deeds, the Lord's righteousness cannot be yours.'

It was quite a spectacle, he said afterwards, to see that old woman's face. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack. For some time she sat in silence, her elbows on the table, her face buried in her hands; a great struggle was going on within. At length the tears began to stream from her eyes, and, lifting up her clasped hands to heaven, she cried out, 'Oh, my God, they shall all gang for naething!' In a moment more she cast herself on her knees and accepted the Lord Jesus as her Savior,' Says Meyer, "It is when the cup is found in Benjamin's sack that he, too, is brought to the feet of Jesus."

Has the cup been found in your sack?

God knows your sin - you can't hide it!

What Should You Do?

1. Don't linger - as Joseph's brothers did

In Psalms 32:3, David said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."

2. Abandon self-confidence
3. Make full confession of sin
4. Throw yourself on the mercy of Christ

Fall at His feet

His heart is merciful and kind.

Genesis 44:18-45:15 - "I Am Joseph"

INTRODUCTION:

Twenty-two long years have passed since Joseph was separated from his family by the jealousy and hostility of his brothers.

Joseph had been forced to follow a different path than that of his brothers, but today those paths are reunited; never again to be estranged.

The story of their reconciliation is one of the most moving in all of scripture.

Joseph has put his brothers to the test to see if they have repented; if they have learned to live together in peace; and to see if they loved their father.

Notice Judah's speech:

Genesis 44:18-34, "Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

Joseph saw that his brothers were changed.

They had repented.

Joseph could no longer restrain his emotions.

The time has come for his revelation.

There would be no retaliation, only forgiveness and reconciliation.

I. The Revelation (45:1-4)

Genesis 45:1-4, “Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.”

1. It was Private (vs. 1)

When Joseph saw that his brothers hearts were changed he could no longer “*refrain himself*”.

Notice God’s timing - Had he done it earlier they would have not been ready for the blessing he had for them; had he waited longer the men might have been in total despair.

“*Joseph made himself known*”

God known only by self-revelation

James Boice –

1. Joseph knew his brothers before they knew him.
2. Joseph loved his brothers before they loved him.
3. Joseph called his brothers when they would have preferred to run from him.

He called them in secret and by name!

2. It was Passionate (vs. 2)

The Egyptians didn't show their emotions.

Joseph's tears are part of his healing (Joy)

It's an emotional release

Big boy's do cry! (Jeremiah – Jesus)

Luke 15:7, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

3. It was Personal (vs. 3a)

"I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?"

How simple – "I am Joseph" - He speaks to them in their language (Hebrew) no longer using an interpreter.

Think of the confused thoughts that must have suddenly began to tumble about in their minds.

How did this Egyptian ruler know the name of their deceased brother?

Why is he claiming to be somebody they know is dead?

If it is truly Joseph, why has he been treating us this way?

What's he going to do to punish us?

Notice the depth of Joseph's heart: "doth my father yet live?"

4. It was Painful (vs. 3b-4)

II. The Reassurance (45:5-8)

Genesis 45:5-8, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to

Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

Joseph could see his brothers fear and bewilderment so he sought to comfort their troubled hearts.

How?

By having a right view of the Sovereignty of God in all the affairs of life.

The Key to Joseph’s successful life was that he looked past the secondary causes and saw the hand of God who is the first cause.

Because of this Joseph gained a stabilizing perspective on life, out of which he was able to forgive and be reconciled to his brothers.

How about you?

He’s not saying his brothers were not responsible for their sin, he’s Saying God overruled their sin and used it for His good purposes.

This proper view of God’s Providence brings some very practical benefits:

1. Comfort in Trouble

Ethel Waters use to sing the song,

His Eye Is On The Sparrow

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Refrain

*I sing because I’m happy,
I sing because I’m free,
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.*

“Let not your heart be troubled,” His tender word I hear,
And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;
Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Refrain

Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,
When songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Refrain

Words: Civilla D. Martin, 1905; Music: Charles H. Gabriel, 1905.

I can sleep at night

2. Humility in Success (vs. 8,9)
3. The Ability to Forgive

Donald Grey Barnhouse – “To see God in all things, both good and evil, enables us to forgive easily those who injure us. It does not incline us to condone their fault as if they were unconscious instruments impelled by him who made use of them, for they act as freely as if God had no part at all. But we can pity, forgive, and pray for them, as slaves to their own passions, enemies to their own welfare, and real, though unwitting, benefactors to our souls.”

Alistair Begg – “An awareness of providence enables us to treat others with humility --- even those who have injured or wronged us. When we recognize that God is ultimately in control of our circumstances, we can release others and their actions to Him and be free of the bitterness and resentment that rots the soul. Joseph’s profound understanding of providence was the key to his attitude toward his brothers and, indeed, toward life itself.”

John Phillips – “It was not only pardon he offered, but pardon couched in terms that made their very wickedness seem like a blessing. ‘You sold . . . God did send.’ Thus Joseph underlined the fact that God sovereignty overrules the actions of men and makes the wrath of man to praise Him. The greatest manifestation of that, of course, took place at Calvary. Calvary represents the greatest possible *tragedy* in man’s dealings with God and the greatest possible *triumph* in God’s dealings with man. Joseph’s dealings with his brethren illustrate God’s dealings with us.”

How about you?

Do you see God in everything?

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

III. The Relocation (45:9-13)

Genesis 45:9-13, “Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.”

“come down unto me,” (vs. 9)

Jesus call’s us to “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

1. A New Proximity (vs. 10) – *“near unto me,”*
2. Provision (vs. 11)
3. Praise (vs. 13)

IV. The Reconciliation (45:14-15)

Genesis 45:14-15, “And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.”

It was a time for honest expressions of love and forgiveness; not explanations or excuses.

Joseph embraced **all** his brothers and kissed them.

He possibly called them each by name – even Judah!

“his brethren talked with him.” (vs. 15)

Only after reconciliation!

Notice the contrast with Genesis 37:4 “And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, *they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.*”

As a teenager his brothers hated him and wouldn't even speak with him.

But now, what a change!

Peace

A Kiss

It's a day to remember!

This is a picture of:

1. When Jesus reveals Himself to us.

- It's Private
- It's Passionate
- It's Personal
- It's Painful

2. Oh the Reassurance!

Your sins are forgiven.

3. Relocation

He has “. . . delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:” (Colossians 1:13)

4. Reconciled to God

We have peace (a kiss!)

Prayer

Communication (They talked with him)

Warren W. Wiersbe, “. . . keep in mind that this reconciliation was possible only because Joseph had suffered and triumphed, and it's a beautiful picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ did for sinners in His death on the cross and His resurrection. Like Jesus, Joseph went from suffering to

glory, from the prison to the throne, and was able to share his wealth and glory with others.

Genesis 45:16-46:7 - "Understanding God's Plan"

Genesis 45:16-46:7, "And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die. And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt."

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most important and difficult questions that we face is, 'what is my purpose in life?'

If you're a Christian perhaps you're wondering does God have a purpose and a plan for me?

The answer is Yes!

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul says God's will for us is good, pleasing, and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

I believe understanding and doing God's will brings the greatest joy and blessing to our lives.

In our study of the life of Joseph today we will see some excellent principles for understanding and doing God's will for our lives.

We will see that God had a plan or blueprint for Jacob's family long before Joseph was born, and how God's purpose and plan was worked out in their lives.

What was God's plan?

Genesis 15:12-16, "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

God's plan to bring Jacobs family to Egypt is going to unfold just as God said it would.

The steps that God used are often the same He use's to lead us into his plan for our lives.

I. The Information Step

If God is going to get Jacob and his family from Canaan to Egypt they'll need the right information.

How's he going to get it to him?

Through Joseph – Genesis 45:9-13

Genesis 45:9-13, "9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither."

How does God get us the information we need to know His purposes and plans for our lives?

The Bible

The Bible is God's inerrant, infallible Word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Psalms 32:8, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

It's our responsibility to search the scriptures to discover God's will and then to apply it to our lives.

Psalms 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way."

Psalms 119:130, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

Alan Redpath – "The condition of an enlightened mind is a surrendered heart."

II. The Confirmation Step

God not only speaks through His word, He confirms it through various ways:

1. People (45:16-18)

Genesis 46:16-18, "And the sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli. And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister: and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel. These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter, and these she bare unto Jacob, even sixteen souls."

What kind of people does God use; or should we go to?

- a) A person that is a believer and has shown wisdom in managing their own affairs.
- b) A person that has no ulterior motives but genuinely cares about your growth and spiritual well-being.
- c) A person that is kind yet has the courage to be honest with us and tell us the truth.

Ephesians, "4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

- d) A person who lives by faith who will encourage you to follow God's will no matter what the cost.

2. Promise (Genesis 45:18)

Genesis 45:18, "And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land."

A promise from God's word.

Be sure to keep the conditions of the promise.

Ask yourself if the promise is applicable for me; is it universal?

3. Provision (Genesis 45:19-23)

Genesis 45:19-23, "Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes

of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.”

Chuck Smith, “When God guides, God provides.”

Psalms 34:10, “. . . they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.”

III. The Application Step (Genesis 45:21)

Genesis 45:21, “And the children of Israel did so: . . .”

Like the Nike commercial, ‘Just Do It!’

IV. The Confrontation Step (Genesis 45:24-46:4)

Genesis 45:24-46:4, “So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die. And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.”

We will always run into obstacles when seeking to do God’s will.

Like what?

1. Unbelief (vs. 26) – The boy’s lied before!

Illustrations:

Israel entering the Promised Land

The spies - “There are giants in the land!”

Matthew 13 – Jesus in Nazareth

Matthew 13:58, “And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

Pray for faith.

2. Suffering

When we desire to do God’s will we may suffer for it!

1 Peter 4:19, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

What does God do to help us when we are facing confrontation?

V. The Inspiration Step

1. Words (vs. 27a)
2. Wagons (vs. 27b)
3. Worship (Genesis 46:1-4)

Genesis 46:1-4, “And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.”

Jacob still had fears (vs. 3) ‘fear not’

Jacob was 130 years old (fear of change)

Yet he stopped and worshiped (vs. 1) – Praise & Prayer

God called them by name (vs. 2)

God renewed His covenant promise (vs. 3-4)

VI The Realization Step (Genesis 46:5-7)

Genesis 46:5-7, “And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.”

Wrap-Up

1. Information
2. Confirmation
3. Application
4. Confrontation
5. Inspiration – word, wagons, worship
6. Realization – I'm in the will of God!

Is God's plan for me really good, pleasing and perfect?

Why did God want Jacob's family in Egypt?

It was the perfect place for them.

1. Canaan was full of fierce tribes who would not have allowed any strange people to live and grow up amongst them (the sins of Jacob would have been blotted out from the earth).

Protected in the land of Goshen.

2. If Jacob and his family had stayed in Canaan they would have absorbed into the culture (they were so vile that 400 years later God called Israel to wipe them out).
3. In Goshen Jacobs family could grow into a mighty nation – 70 (Genesis 46:27) – 400 years later = over 2 million.
4. In Egypt they would be educated – Egypt was a great civilization.

What to you do?

1. Be sure you're saved.
2. Surrender your life completely to Jesus Christ.
3. Search the scriptures for God's will.
4. Spend time with God in prayer.
5. Surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
6. Look for God's guidance in the normal circumstances of life.

Genesis 46:26-47:10 - "A Pilgrims Progress"

I have titled this message 'A Pilgrims Progress' because we now focus in on Genesis 47:9 where we see Jacob mention that his life has been a pilgrimage.

In our text so far we've seen that Joseph has revealed himself to his brothers and he's sent them back to Canaan to retrieve his father and the rest of his family.

Upon hearing the news Jacob was:

1. Stunned by the news (Genesis 45:26)

The Words (vs. 27)

The Wagons (vs. 27)

2. Strengthened by God (Genesis 46:1-4)

- a. The attitude Jacob revealed

A worshiper (vs. 1)

- b. The assurance he received (vs. 2-4)

Today we see two more facts about Jacob:

1. Jacob was satisfied with life (Genesis 46:26-30)

Genesis 46:26-30, "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten. And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

Alistair Begg, "So the caravan rolled on toward Egypt, and with each turn of the carts' wheels the anticipation mounted. Jacob was on his way to see Joseph.

As fathers, we can surely identify with the feelings that must have been stirring within Jacob's heart. Having been gone for a while, we know the sensation of checking our watch again and again as we anticipate the end of our journey and the prospect of reunion.

Jacob must have been feeling those same stirrings when suddenly on the horizon appears a cloud of dust. Jacob strains his eyes to look into the distance and sees a chariot coming his way. As the entourage draws near, Jacob sees Joseph, and in an instant they are together. Eyes meeting, arms reaching, locked in an impassioned embrace, the tears of love dampening the shoulders of each man. There is little doubt that is the crowning moment of Jacob's earthly pilgrimage. Over twenty years of his life are squeezed into this hug. Past sorrows are forgotten, past evil deeds forgiven."

Jacob and Joseph together again!

Notice verse 30, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."

Jacob's words are not a death wish.

Jacob was saying, "I can die now for I am satisfied."

Satisfied with:

1. The puzzle of life
2. The prospect of death

Are you?

2. Jacob was settled in Goshen (Genesis 46:31-47:10)

Genesis 46:31-47, "And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians. Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy

servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

Footnote:

God brought great blessing upon the entire family through one individual's faithfulness to God (Joseph).

You may be the only Christian in your family and yet, your faithfulness and commitment to God can bring blessing to your family.

Never underestimate the blessing that one life can bring upon a family.

A. Picture the scene

Notice the contrast between the two men:

John Phillips, "We can picture the gnarled, weather-beaten old shepherd whose hard life on the hills had etched its lines on his face. We can picture him dressed in the best raiment Joseph could find for him and wearing it as uncomfortably as one might expect. In contrast, we see the immaculate, sophisticated, aristocratic courtiers standing in the audience chamber of the king. We picture the imperial guards in their splendid robes, the ministers of state in their impressive robes, and Joseph standing before Pharaoh wearing his court attire like a man of noble birth. And there stood old Jacob, all out of place, it would seem, amid the flaunted finery of the court.

We see him walking slowly down the long line of guards and officials, halting on his thigh and leaning on his staff. We see him making his way up to Pharaoh's throne and there, to the

astonishment of all the court, raising himself erect instead of falling prostrate on his face. We see him raise his sunburned hand in blessing, and we hear the benediction fall from his lips.”

Which of the two would you prefer to be?

Jacob was a prince with God, Pharaoh a prince with man.

Hebrews 7:7, “And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.”

Matthew 16:26, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Psalms 84:10, “. . . I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

B. Pharaoh asks Jacob a question (vs. 8)

“How old are you?”

We don't ask people, who are old, how old they are, especially women.

Lesson: Don't be ashamed of your age!

It's a good question.

How old are you?

I am young!
I am middle age!
I am old!

Teens
20's
30's
40's
50's
Older

In verse Genesis 47:9 Jacob reminds us of three (3) important facts about life:

1. Life is Short – “few”

- a. Like a shadow – 1 Chronicles 29:15, “For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. “
- b. Like a weaver’s shuttle – Job My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.” 7:6, “
- c. Like a vanishing vapor – James 4:14, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”
- d. Like a flower

We never know how long we have

Genesis 47:29, “And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:”

Psalms 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

What do you do with your time?

2. Life is Difficult – “evil”

Jacob is not complaining, he’s just stating a fact of life.

Jacob had lived in a sea of sorrow; wave after wave of trouble had gone over him.

- 1. After stealing his brother’s blessing he had to run for his life, never to see his mother again.
- 2. 20 years with Laban being cheated.

Genesis 31:40, “. . . in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.”

- 3. His crippled thigh.
- 4. The danger of his revengeful brother.
- 5. The sins of his sons.

6. The loss of his beloved Rachel.
7. The loss of his favored son Joseph.
8. The famine.

Even the Godly suffer!

Lesson: Trust God and live by Faith!

Notice Jacob's later words: Genesis 48:15-16, "And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, **the God which fed me all my life long unto this day**, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

3. Life is a Pilgrimage (vs. 9)

Hebrews 11:13-14, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."

As Christians we are all "strangers and pilgrims".

A Stranger is "away from home".

A Pilgrim is "on the way home".

We have been called out!

So:

1. Travel light

Matthew 6:19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal."

2. Travel looking – "We're not yet home (Heaven)"

3. Travel abstaining from fleshly lust.

1 Peter 2:11, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;"

If we live this way we will be a blessing to others.

Notice verse 10, Jacob blessed Pharaoh!

Three things that made Jacob royal (F.B. Meyer):

1. Prayer
2. Suffering
3. Contact with Christ

"O pilgrim, as you journey, do you ever gladly say,
In spite of heavy burdens and the roughness of the way,
That it does not surely matter – all the strange and bitter stress,
Heat and cold, and toil and sorrow – 'twill be healed with blessedness,
For the road leads home?"

Home! The safe and blissful shelter where is glad and full content,
And companionship of kindred; and the treasures early rent
From your holding shall be given back more precious than before.
Oh, you will not mind the journey with such blessedness in store,
When the road leads home.

Oh, you will not mind the roughness or the steepness of the way,
Nor the chill, unrested morning, nor the dreariness of the day;
And you will not take a turning to the left or to the right,
But go straight ahead, nor tremble at the coming of the night,
For the road leads home.

And often for your comfort you will read the guide and chart;
It has wisdom for the mind and sweet solace for the heart;
It will serve you as a mentor, it will guide you sure and straight
All the time that you will journey, be the ending soon or late –
And the road leads home."

1. Life is Short
2. Life is Difficult
3. Life is a Pilgrimage

Genesis 47:13-26 - "Crisis Management"

Genesis 47:13-26, "And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth. And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof. Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's."

INTRODUCTION:

As you study the life of Joseph it becomes clear that his life is one long story of crisis management.

From the time he was a teenager he was called to deal with one crisis after another.

At first his crisis were of a personal nature:

- The death of his mother

- The jealousy and hatred of his brothers,
- His slavery in Egypt.
- The seduction of Potiphar's wife
- His imprisonment.
- Being forgotten by the Butler.

But as we move towards the end of his life we find him managing the crisis in the lives of others.

The Egyptians and the Famine

Note: Genesis 42:1-47:12 is a parentheses.

As we pick up our story we discover that it's simply a recap of what we saw already in chapter 41:53-57.

This is a summary statement - Genesis 41:53-57, "And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; **what he saith to you, do**. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."

John 2:5, "His mother saith unto the servants, **Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it**."

Genesis 47:13 picks up the story in detail.

John Phillips – "The focus now turns to Joseph's dealings with the Egyptians. The famine having reached its height, the Egyptians realized that there was no hope apart from Joseph. The famine brought them to the place where they were willing to submit to him, at all costs and on any terms. They had come to an end of themselves. Egypt was bankrupt and its condition hopeless. There was no future except in Joseph."

Joseph's solution to Egypt's ills was to bring all things under the authority of the throne.

Remember to keep in mind that Joseph is a 'type' or 'picture' of Jesus Christ.
Joseph the savior of the world.

For us, everything in our lives must be brought under the authority of God.

I. Joseph took control of their Purses (vs. 13-14)

Genesis 47:13-14, "And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house."

II. Joseph took control of their Possessions (vs. 15-17)

Genesis 47:15-17, "And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth. And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year."

III. Joseph took control of their Property (vs. 18-20)

Genesis 47:18-20, "When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's."

IV. Joseph took control of their Persons (vs. 21-22)

Genesis 47:21-22, "And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof. Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands."

V. Joseph took control of their Production (vs. 23-26)

Genesis 47:23-26, "Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you,

and ye shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's."

Some have criticized Joseph for taking advantage of the people. But that is not the case.

Notice verse 25, "And they said, **Thou hast saved our lives**: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

Remember it was a time of famine; if the people (government) had given away the food it would have bankrupted the government.

Questions: Are your:

- Purses
- Possessions
- Property
- Persons
- Production

under the control of Jesus Christ?

The Egyptians were brought to the end of themselves. Their total and unquestioning trust was placed in Joseph. Wanting to end divided loyalties and human rivalries, Joseph created a beneficent, efficient, centralized rule. Little by little he brought everything under the control of one crown.

Let's now focus on some lessons and principles we can draw out of this section.

1. A crisis is no respecter of **Persons**.

They come to all of us.

2. A crisis causes us to re-examine our **Purpose** in life.

Pharaoh said, "Go unto Joseph; **what he saith to you, do.**" (Genesis 41:55)

We too must re-examine our lives:

Am I obeying Jesus?

Am I obeying his Word?

Keep obeying Him during the crisis and you will fulfill His purpose in your life.

It's all worth it.

3. A crisis causes us to re-evaluate our **Priorities**.

The people gave away everything for the most important thing, LIFE!

People will hang on to things that don't really matter and lose the things that really do.

Illustrations:

Marriage?

Family?

God?

Needs?

Wants?

4. A crisis causes us to re-establish our **Principles**.

We find out what we really believe.

A crisis doesn't make us, it reveals what's in us!

Illustration: The Wise and Foolish Man

Matthew 7:24-27, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain

descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

1. The work of Joseph’s life was to provide food for a perishing world.

So too Jesus!

“Go unto Joseph; **what he saith to you, do.**”
(Genesis 41:55)

John 2:5, “His mother saith unto the servants,
Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

2. Joseph alone dispensed the bread of life.

Jesus is the “Bread of Life”.

3. Joseph became a savior to all peoples.

Genesis 47:25, “And they said, **Thou hast saved our lives:** let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.”

4. There was one sole condition of blessing during the years of famine that was: unconditional submission to Joseph.

So too us!

Genesis 47:27-50:1 - "Lessons from a Deathbed"

Genesis 47:27-48:22 "And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years. And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head. And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. And thy issue, which thou begetttest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem. And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to

remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

“I heard a story of a Presbyterian student who went to college and joined a fraternity which was full of Baptist students. This young man was constantly telling the Baptist students of the glories of Presbyterianism: “we have the best worship; sound doctrine; great preachers . . .” You can imagine that it drove the Baptist students crazy. So one day they decided to get back at him. They invited him over to their dorm room for fellowship and coffee and unbeknownst to him, the coffee he was drinking contained a sedative, which made him go to sleep. Once he was asleep, they got a casket, laid him in it and placed it in a shallow grave they had dug at the local cemetery. They hid in the bushes waiting for the young man to awaken and discover he was in a casket. However the sedative was stronger than they expected and he slept through the night. The next morning, as the sun came up and it’s light trickled through the trees and fog. The students saw one hand come out of the casket, and then another, and then the young man sat up and looked around. Then, in excited speech, he proclaimed, “Hallelujah, it’s the resurrection and a Presbyterian is the first one to arise!”

How do we deal with death and tragedy says a lot about what kind of people we are.

Billy Graham, in his book “*Facing Death and the Life After*”, says, “All too often we glance at the newspaper and notice that another celebrity has died; a phone call or letter brings sad news about a friend’s death. We hurt for our loved ones and mourn our own losses, but how prepared are we to face death as a reality and deal with the difficult challenges it creates?”

How prepared are you to face death?

Let’s look at a man who was prepared to die

Jacob – it’s the longest deathbed scene described in the Bible

So it’s important!

Hebrews 11:21, "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

Notice that when Jacob died he worshiped

As we study this passage we see Joseph called to his fathers deathbed three different times:

I. Joseph's First Visit (47:27-31)

Genesis 47:27-31, "And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years. And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. And he said, Swear unto me. And he swore unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head."

1. Note is age – 147 years old (vs. 28)

World's oldest person turns 116

Associated Press

TOKYO - A Japanese woman believed to be the oldest person in the world turned 116 on Tuesday.

Born in 1887, when Japan was still in the throes of its conversion from samurai rule to modern democracy, Kamato Hongo was recognized as the world's oldest living person by the Guinness Book of Records after an American woman - Maude Farris-Luse - died last March at the age of 115.

Hongo, whose husband died when she was 77, is famous throughout Japan for her habit of sleeping for two days and then staying awake for two days.

She has seven children - three of whom have died - 27 grandchildren, 57 great-grandchildren and 11 great-great-grandchildren.

An internet homepage devoted to her lists her favorite snack as unrefined brown sugar and also reveals her secret to long life.

“Not moping around,” it says.

Hongo symbolizes the graying of Japan’s society. The world’s oldest documented man 114-year old Yukichi Chuganji, is Japanese. Japan’s life expectancy - 85.23 years for women and 78.32 for men in 2002 - is the longest in the world.

2. There’s a time we all must die (vs. 29)

The living knew that they must also die.

Hebrews 9:27, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”

During World War II, C.S. Lewis pointed out that war does not increase death; death is total in every generation. It takes every one of us. George Bernard Shaw wryly wrote, “The statistics on death are quite impressive. One out of one people die.”

What is death? - Separation!

3. Jacob – worshiped (vs. 29)

Notice his heart!

Faith, “don’t bury me in Egypt”.

II. Joseph’s Second Visit (48:1-22)

Genesis 48:1-22, “And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little

way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem. And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

God's Sovereignty is seen in verse's 17-20,

Genesis 48:17-20, "And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day,

saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.”

This passing over the firstborn is one of the most striking features of the book of Genesis. So it was with Seth instead of Cain; Shem instead of Japheth; Abraham instead of Haran; Isaac instead of Ishmael; Jacob instead of Esau. And now it was Ephraim instead of Manasseh. Thus did God display His sovereignty and prevent anyone imagining that His blessings necessarily follow the line of natural privilege. God has again and again chosen the weak things of the earth, and even those that are despised, to set at nought those that are mighty. Grace is sovereign, and by no means follows, but rather opposes the course of nature.

Ask most people about dying or heaven and you get amazing answers, especially from children:

- Alan, age 7 – “God doesn’t tell you when you are going to die because He wants it to be a big surprise.”
- Raymond, age 10 – “A good doctor can help you so you won’t die. A bad doctor sends you to heaven.”
- Stephanie, age 9 – “Doctors help you so you won’t die until you pay all their bills.”
- Marsha, age 9 – “When you die, you don’t have to do homework in heaven unless your teacher is there too.”
- Kevin, age 10, is very courageous – “I’m not afraid to die because I’m a Boy Scout.”

III. Joseph’s Third and Last Visit (49:1-50:1)

Genesis 49:1-2, “And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.”

Genesis 49:29-50:1, “And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the

ghost, and was gathered unto his people. And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.”

Notice verse 33, “And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon - “He who had journeyed with unwearied foot fully many a mile was now obliged to gather up his feet into the bed to die. His life had been eventful in the highest degree, but that dread event now came upon him which is common to us all. He had deceived his blind father in his youth, but no craftiness of Jacob could deceive the grave, He had fled from Esau, his angry brother, but a swifter and surer foot was now in pursuit, from which there is no escape. He had slept with a stone for his pillow and had seen heaven opened, but he was to find that it was only to be entered by the ordinary gate. He had wrestled with the angel at the brook Jabbok, and he had prevailed; at this time he was to wrestle with an angel against whom there was no prevalence.”

Notice Genesis 50:1, “And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others **which have no hope**. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Revelation 21:4, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Death for the Believer

- An Exodus
- A Home Going
- Sleep

- A Coronation

2 Timothy 4:6-8, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Four Lessons – How to grow old gracefully

1. Look Backward in Gratitude

- a) He remembered Bethel (48:3-4)
- b) He remembered Rachel (48:7)
- c) He remembered the Angel (48:15-16)

2. Look Upward in Faith

48:3 – God Almighty
 48:11 – God
 48:15 – God
 48:20 – God
 48:21 – God

D.L. Moody – “I see earth receding; heaven is opening. God is calling me.”

3. Look Outward in Love (48:8-11)

(vs. 11) – God gives more than we can imagine!

4. Look Forward in Hope (47:30)

Genesis 49:29, “And he charged them, and said unto them, ***I am to be gathered unto my people:*** bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,”

Proverbs 14:32, “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.”

Do you?

If you knew the moment and manner of your death in advance, would you order your life differently? If so, when would you do it . . . right now, or would you wait until the day before? And then what would you do to right the mistakes you made during your life?

Unfortunately, no one knows the day or the hour of his death, which is why it is best, in the words of the scout motto, to “be prepared.”

Are you?

How?

Peter Marshall, in his book “Joe Doe, Disciple: Sermons for the Young in Spirit” - An old legend tells of a merchant in Baghdad who one day sent his servant to the market. Before very long the servant came back, white and trembling, and in great agitation said to his master: “Down at the market place I was jostled by a woman in the crowd, and when I turned around I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture. Master, please lend me your horse, for I must hasten away to avoid her. I will ride to Samarra and there I will hide, and Death will not find me.”

The merchant lent him his horse and the servant galloped away in great haste. Later the merchant went down to the market place and saw Death standing in the crowd. He went over to her and asked, “Why did you frighten my servant this morning? Why did you make a threatening gesture?”

“That was not a threatening geture,” Death said, “It was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.”

Genesis 50:2-21 - "Dispelling Doubts About Forgiveness"

Genesis 50:2-21 "And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days. And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear. And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abelmizraim, which is beyond Jordan. And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father. And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

A letter to a religious question-and-answer column asked, "I made a decision to trust Christ for forgiveness over 30 years ago, but it doesn't seem real to me. I have prayed so often. Will you please tell me how I can be perfectly sure that I am saved?"

Assurance of forgiveness is a common problem.

Forgiveness and assurance of forgiveness are two different matters.

Joseph's brothers had forgiveness for nearly 20 years, but they didn't have assurance of that forgiveness.

In Genesis 50:1-15 we see that Joseph's father, Jacob, has died!

After the funeral . . .

Alistair Begg – “After years of dealing with grieving families, it is clear to me that usually it is not until after the funeral service that the true family issues, concerns, and conflicts come to the surface. Many times I discover that it was only custom or good manners that allowed a particular family to display unity during the mourning for a family member.

But soon after the funeral has been held and the daily routine has returned, family grievances that have been repressed, old wounds that have never been treated, and poisons that have never been purged begin to surface.”

Knowing Joseph's brother's it's not to surprising to see that the death of Jacob brought to the surface old fear.

Our sinful past doesn't die easy!

I. The fears of Joseph's brothers (vs. 15-18)

Genesis 50:15-18, “And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.”

Joseph's brother's doubted their forgiveness.

The same is true for many Christians today.

It's Satan's big rip-off!

A lack of assurance will paralyze you.

It robs you of enjoying your salvation, and it keeps you from effective service.

Illustration:

When the world famous San Francisco Golden gate Bridge was under construction some decades ago, several workmen lost their lives by falling from precariously high positions. Consequently, the work was proceeding much too slowly till someone hit upon the idea of building a net under the construction area. Then, any workman who fell would not tumble to his death, but be caught by the net.

So a giant safety net of stout cord was made and swung under the construction work, (the first time in the history of major construction that such a net was used). The cost was reportedly about \$100,000. The work then proceeded at a much faster rate because the workmen knew that if they did slip, their lives would be spared. They could work without the dread of uncertainty.

Joseph's brothers had become uncertain of their forgiveness, making them fearful and miserable.

How about you?

Why, after nearly two decades of Joseph's kind treatment did his brother's fear Joseph's judgment?

Why did they doubt his forgiveness?

1. Circumstances (vs. 15)

“ . . . when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, . . . ”

The may have reasoned, “Joseph didn't punish us when he revealed himself to us because he wanted to get Father down to Egypt. And he wouldn't hurt us as long as Father was alive. Nut now, with Father gone, he'll probably take some horrible retaliation which he has been dreaming up for years.”

It's the same today with many Christians.

They look at the circumstances and if things go wrong or bad they doubt God's love, or forgiveness.

When you question God's love and forgiveness you give up all hope for the future.

2. Feelings (vs. 15)

"Joseph will hate us – he will pay us back!"

The danger is that feelings fluctuate.

For feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the word of God,
Naught else is worth believing.

Though all my heart should feel condemned
For want of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart
Whose word cannot be broken.

- Martin Luther

3. The enormity of their sin (vs. 15, 17)

"the evil which we did" – (vs. 15)

"they did unto thee evil:" – (vs. 17)

1John 1:7, ". . . the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

4. Insufficient knowledge

After they sold Joseph at 17 years of age, they didn't see him for about 22 years and , even after the reunion, they mosr likely saw him very little.

They measured Joseph by themselves.

We often suspect in others what we'd do ourselves if we had the opportunity.

It's the normal way people act.

They really didn't know him (his grace and character).

So too with us and God

His grace is great!

His love is infinite

His forgiveness limitless

5. Unbelief

This is the real problem Joseph's brothers faced.

They didn't believe Joseph's word.

Us too!

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

II. How did Joseph dispel their doubts and fears? (vs. 19-21)

Genesis 50:19-21, "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

1. Notice how Joseph was affected:

". . . And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." (vs. 17)

Joseph suffered, surprise, shock, and sorrow.

So too did Jesus – we grieve Him

1 John 5:10-12, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

2. Joseph spoke to them

“ . . . Fear not: . . . ” (vs. 19)

“ . . . fear ye not: . . . ” (vs. 21)

God has spoken to us too:

The word of God the Father

The work of God the Son

The witness of God the Holy Spirit

This was contrary to what the brothers saw, thought, or felt, they found Joseph was entirely gracious and forgiving.

The brothers were like the Prodigal Son:

“ . . . Behold, we be thy servants.” (vs. 18)

“Just make us your hired servants”.

III. How could Joseph be so gracious and forgiving?

If it were me I would have been angry.

1. Joseph refused to replace God in their lives (vs. 19)
2. Joseph had a realistic view of God’s sovereignty (vs. 20)
3. Joseph remembered the goodness of God (vs. 20)

God is Sovereign and Good!

This passage is the Old Testament version of Romans 8:28.

Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

J. Oswald Sanders – “What ought to be a soft pillow for our hearts, we turn into a hard problem for our heads.”

Notice the condition of Romans 8:28, “love God” and “to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

God’s plan for us is:

1. Inclusive – “all things” (even evil!)
2. Beneficent – “good”

What is good?

Romans 8:29, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his *Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

A. Sanders – “Every adverse experience when rightly received can carry its quota of good. Bodily pain and weakness cause us to feel our frailty. Perplexity reveals our lack of wisdom. Financial reverses point up how limited are our resources. Mistakes and failure humble our pride. All these things can be included in the term “good”.”

J. R. Miller – “A photographer carries his picture into a darkened room, that he may bring out its features. He says the light of the sun would mar the impression on the sensitized plate. There are features of spiritual beauty which cannot be produced in a life in the glare of human joy and prosperity. God brings out in many a soul its loveliest qualities when the curtain is drawn and the light of human joy is shut out.”

Whate'er my God ordains is right;
My Light, my Life is He,
Who cannot will me ought but good;
I trust Him utterly:
For well I know
In joy or woe
We soon shall see, as sunlight clear,
How faithful was our Guardian here.

Genesis 49:22-26 - "Joseph, a Fruitful Branch"

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 50:22-26 "And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

The greatest single characteristic of Joseph's life was his absolute faithfulness to God under all circumstances.

Whether in the pit, the prison, or the palace.

And even when his body was placed in a coffin.

Joseph's coffin was a symbol of the provision of God in the past and the prospect of his glorious deliverance in the future.

Hebrews 11:22, "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."

Exodus 13:19, "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you."

Joshua 24:32, "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph."

I want to conclude this series on Joseph by surveying his life based upon Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49:22-26.

Genesis 49:22-26, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven

above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.”

I. Joseph’s Fruitfulness (vs. 22)

Genesis 49:22, “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:”

Jacob first compared Joseph to a fruitful vine or the branch of a fruit tree.

It pictures his depth of character and width of influence.

Like a fruit tree his life brought blessing to others.

How about you?

It’s the Old Testament version of John 15:1-8, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

Notice it’s:

1. His Depth – “by a well”

Psalms 1:1-3, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

It's the word of God, and the Holy Spirit

2. His width – “whose branches run over the wall”

God wants our lives to bless others.

What is fruit?

1. Soul Winning
2. Holy Living
3. Sharing What We Possess
4. Christ Like Character

Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

You might say, “you don't know how hard my life has been!”

Consider

II. Joseph's Foes (vs. 23)

Genesis 49:23, “The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:”

Joseph's life wasn't fruitful because everything went his way.

Jacob now in describing Joseph's suffering uses the image of the “archers”.

Who were the archers?

1. His own brothers – arrows of hatred and envy.
2. Mrs. Potiphar – arrows of temptation and slander.
3. The Butler – arrows of forgetfulness and ingratitude.

Satan wants to keep us from being fruitful.

Illustration: The sower and the seed

Luke 8:5-15, "A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

1. Birds take away seed
2. Stony ground – no root
3. Thorns – cares of this world; deceitfulness of riches; lust of other things

Our lives can bear fruit even though we face many foes.

III. Joseph's Faith (vs. 24-25a)

Genesis 49:24-25a, "But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty,"

The secret of Joseph's fruitful life was his faith and trust in God. Through it all Joseph kept his faith in God.

It's remarkable that Joseph had any faith at all.

His family, friends, and circumstances didn't help much.

Joseph also had a bow (vs. 24)

But his bow didn't shoot back.

His bow remained in strength.

Joseph didn't "render evil for evil".

1Thessalonians 5:15, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."

Joseph "was not overcome by evil, but overcame evil with good".

Romans 12:21, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

You say, "but I don't have that strength!"

Neither did Joseph!

Notice verse 24, "the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob"

The best way to picture this is that of a father teaching his son to shoot an arrow.

The condition of this strength is our consciousness of utter weakness. We are too strong for God. Our self-confidence shuts Him out of our lives. We require to be taken down to Gideon's brook, that we may be reduced to the minimum of our own energy, and be filled to the maximum of his.

John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Notice the names given for God:

1. The mighty God of Jacob – it's personal

If God can help Jacob He can help us!

2. The Shepherd

Sheep are wayward, stubborn, helpless, and stupid.

Psalms 23:1-6, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

Psalms 46:7, “. . . the God of Jacob is our refuge. . . “

3. The Stone of Israel

Or rock – representing firmness and solidarity

4. Your fathers God (vs. 25)

5. The Almighty

James Boice says this is, “based on the Hebrew noun “shad” which means the female breast.” Because of this Boice says he believes that it refers to God as one from whom His people draw nourishment.

Do you?

IV. Joseph’s Fullness (vs. 25b-26)

Genesis 49:25b-26, “who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.”

Notice that Jacob uses the words “bless”, or “blessing” six times.

In Genesis 49:26, Jacob says, “The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors (ancestors) . . .”

Imagine that! Jacob’s blessings given to Joseph were greater than Abraham or Isaac’s.

Joseph had all the wealth and treasures of Egypt yet he did not say, “bury me in a pyramid with my wealth”.

You can't take it with you.

Joseph's blessings were spiritual.

Hebrews 11:10, “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Only a life of faith brings fruitfulness and fullness.

“Joseph's life spanned the social-spectrum of the ancient world. Raised as the future heir of the wealthy Jewish patriarch, he fell into slavery in a far-off Gentile land but later rose to a position of prominence as second in command only to Pharaoh. He was loved and hated, favored and abused, tempted and trusted, exalted and abased. Yet at no point in the one-hundred-and-ten year life of Joseph did he ever seem to get his eyes off God or cease to trust him. Adversity did not harden his character. Prosperity did not ruin him. He was the same in private as in public. He was a truly great man.”

- James Boice