

JOSEPH: FROM THE PIT TO THE PALACE – PART I

Genesis 37-50

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The story of Joseph will go from his being thrown into a pit by his jealous brothers to being sold as a slave and living out those years at the bottom of life. When you think it can't get any worse, God allowed him to be cast into prison, a hole in the ground, for a crime he did not commit. Then he was left by God to rot till death by all human appearance... but with God nothing ever is the way things appear! Joseph has connections in high places; "The Lord was with Joseph".

To tell the story of Joseph we must see the end of the story and the attitude he had toward life's painful experiences to understand this man's greatness.

Genesis 45:4

"⁴ And Joseph said unto his brothers, I am Joseph, come near to me... and he said, I am Joseph your brother whom you sold unto Egypt. ⁵ Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me there, for God did send me before you to preserve life... ⁷ 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 here but God..."

Genesis 50:20

"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."

Joseph held no grudges but saw the bad things that people did to him only as a way to direct the feet of people in interaction with the world around them to accomplish the ultimate salvation of many.

The Evil Eye of Jealousy – Joseph Thrown Into a Pit

Genesis 37:2-4

² These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph being 17 years old... ³ Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age, and made him a coat of many colors ⁴ and when his brothers saw that their father loved him more... they hated him.”

“Jealousy is as cruel as the grave.” It was wrong for their father to play favorites and to see Joseph elevated above them; Joseph was caught in the cross-hairs for nothing he had done wrong.

I believe that jealousy is at the root of most of the problems that we see between people in the church and in the world. When someone sees you getting what they wanted and attacks you for it, it is out of jealousy. Jealousy is an act of hatred that we must be on guard against in others but not allow for it when we see it in our own hearts.

Genesis 37:5-10

⁵ And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him yet more ⁶ and he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed. ⁷ For behold we were binding wheat in the field and lo my sheaf arose, and also stood upright, and behold your sheaves stood around about and made obeisance to my sheaf. ⁸ And his brothers said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? ... And they hated him yet the more for his dreams ... ⁹ And he dreamed yet another dream... and said ... Behold the sun, the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me ¹⁰ and told it to his father ... And his father rebuked him and said unto him ... “Shall I (the sun) and thy mother (the moon) and thy brothers (the eleven stars) indeed bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?”

What is critical for us to understand is that God was giving Joseph in these dreams what the future held for him. A high position of honor would be given him some day and he knew it. The faith of Joseph in the promises of God; that God had a future for him, would give to him the hope and confidence to stay the course under the excruciating experiences he would be called upon by God to endure.

Our survival in God’s service, and to trust Him to use us, is in a firm knowledge that God sent us. It is only in knowing it for sure that we will ever have the courage to stand

up under pressure, and what mean-spirited people will do to us, “The devil does go to church!” It is knowing that God has us right here, in this very place, in this very spot, in these sufferings to bring good things out of it all!

Jacob sent Joseph to check on his 11 brothers that were tending to his flocks. When they saw him coming from a distance they plotted to kill him.

Jealousy knows no bounds, for it is blinded by rage and has no limitations to what it is capable of doing.

It is to destroy a man’s reputation merely for the sake of an evil man getting the attention he wanted for himself. Gossip and slander is jealousy out of control. It usually is very effective.

Genesis 37:23-24

“²³ ... They stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors ... ²⁴ And they took him and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, and there was no water in it.”

Being thrown into a pit, thrown away by his very brothers is where this man of God begins the long journey to where God will direct his feet. Have you found yourself thrown into a pit... a terrible place where you are left alone with no help but in God? Life is hard. All of us find ourselves being thrown away, being in a place where we are all alone, in a place where there is no help, no hope, but in God, Himself. What makes the difference in people is what we do in that pit.

It’s Only The Beginning – Joseph Sold Into Slavery

37: “²⁷ Judah said, Come and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites ... ²⁸ ... And they brought Joseph in to Egypt.”

What a perfect plan to get rid of this guy once and for all.

Once in slavery, man – in those days – would rot until death.

So much for his dreams; if God had not been in the picture. Joseph must have vowed in that pit that he was not going to live with hate in his heart. He was not going to live with revenge, but he was going to forgive.

God would bring good out of the evil intentions of others. Finding ourselves thrown into some “pit” to rot, gives us the opportunity to discover our own heart and whether we are going to go on with God. It is there in all those feelings of loneliness, betrayal and fear that we must rise up by faith and trust the Lord to be with us. He is our friend and will be faithful.

With God in a man’s life, nothing is ever the way things appear!

Out of all the people in the world who happen to buy him, God has him cross paths with the very people of his future.

Genesis 37:36

“³⁶ And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh’s, and Captain of the Guard.”

The invisible hand of God is guiding the feet of these men to interact with Joseph. It will bring him near Pharaoh, exactly where God will have him to be.

This is divine providence! God makes ALL the connections between us and other people; between what people plan to do, and what God will have them to do by the events that they run into.

Genesis 39:1

“And Joseph was brought down to Egypt, an Potiphar and officer of Pharaoh, Captain of the Guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites...”

Wow! What a coincidence. Joseph, though he is brought down, is in the very place God wants him. The chief officer of Pharaoh happens to buy him.

The Lord Is With Joseph In Slavery – It Is There God Will Prosper Him

39: “² And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man, and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.”

If you have to be in slavery; what a place to be. What is it people recognize about Joseph?

39: “² ...the Lord was with Joseph.” “³ And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.”

A common slave was bringing prosperity to the home of this Egyptian officer. Who ever heard of that happening?

What is it in this story we need to see? “The Lord was with Joseph”! What is the most valuable treasure a man could ever have in his life?

Is it not amazing how God can take very common, ordinary people (a common slave), and turn their lives into something extraordinary in His service? It is amazing how common people like you and me speak for God and watch to our amazement how God can use us! Joseph saw the Lord was with him in all that he did and so did others. There was no explanation for what Joseph was able to do other than it was God doing it all through him.

What makes all the difference? It is not in our cleverness, it is not in our superior intellectualism and refined human skills. What really makes all the difference?

39: “⁴ And Joseph found grace in his sight ... And he made him overseer over his house...⁵ ... The Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake...”

The Lord drew the attention of this Egyptian officer of Pharaoh toward Joseph.

Joseph gained his respect. This is where things are beginning to look like Joseph might get a break. He is given complete authority over all the household and to manage the financial affairs of this powerful man.

This may be a dress-rehearsal for things to come but Joseph has still got a long way to go before he sees God answer his prayers.

The devil does go to church. He is not going to just stand by and let God bless Joseph. The devil knows to defeat God’s purposes in the world. He has to bring down those who would serve the Lord. Every man seems to have his price, but not Joseph. What better way than temptation, and if that doesn’t work, then give the appearance of a man’s moral failure.

39: “⁷ And it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.⁸ But he refused... And Joseph

said,⁹ ... Because thou art his wife: how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?¹⁰ And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her...¹² And she caught him by the garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out”.

God’s opportunity will only knock at the door once, but temptation leans on the doorbell! What we see is how a person is to deal with temptation rather than give in to it and lose out on what God has for us. He gets out of there!

We would think, O.K. God, it’s time to reward Joseph, but what happens? This raging, offended woman frames Joseph and says he tried to take her by force (vs. 13-18). How often do people assume things are true just because someone makes a negative statement about an innocent man?

Joseph now finds himself in even deeper trouble for a crime he did not commit. He now finds himself thrown into prison.

39: “²⁰ And Joseph’s master took him and put him into prison...”

From the pit to the prison: Just when you think things are bad, sometimes God allows for them to even get worse before they get better. What would have become of Joseph if he had hit-the-wall, and had given up? What a lost opportunity. We would have never heard from Joseph ever again. There is not one word of complaint or resentment out of his mouth. He’s not bitter, angry, nor questions God.

Joseph doesn’t live beneath his circumstances, but on top of them.

We can know what was going through his mind, by how the story of his life ends. He will say to those who hurt him, “You meant it for evil but God meant it for good to save many people” (Gen. 50:20).

Joseph is a man of contentment. He chooses to see in the evil intentions of others, where God is at work to bring about that which is good in spite of them. God is moving in Joseph’s life to get him where He wants him to be to save his people when the time comes. God makes all things beautiful in His time. Unto those who wait and watch for it, they will see what God can do.

Thrown Into Prison – Joseph Chooses To Thrive

“²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²² And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison... ²³ The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.”

How is it that everybody who is in authority trusts Joseph completely? If he was guilty of a crime, nobody would be doing this, and everyone knew it. No matter where Joseph ends up he is given a lot of authority. We have seen this picture before and I am sure that Joseph sees it too. He knows that in spite of the suffering, God is up to something wonderful in his life.

Joseph has connections in high places. The Lord is with Joseph and connecting Joseph up with those he is to be with, in time. Though he is in prison, he is getting closer to Pharaoh’s palace all the time.

When we look back over time and see how the Lord has made those connections in our life with other people to get us where we are, we realize our life has been so much more about God and His eternal purposes for us.

This is how Joseph was able to stay positive and make the best out of every adversity he faced. It was in a jail cell where the Lord was developing Joseph’s skills of leadership and building his character. Even when we don’t see it, God is always directing our feet to where He has us going when we remain faithful to Him. The story of Joseph is about a man who had connections with God who would end up walking right into the place God had for him because he allowed God to direct his steps.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn was a rebel and was thrown into a prison in Communist Russia. It was there that he found God and was transformed. He wrote “Bless you, prison, because it was there God became real to me.”

“You (Joseph’s brothers) meant it for evil but God meant it for good.”