

HOW WILL YOU FINISH?

JOSEPH...Seeing God In The Midst Of Trials Genesis 37-50

Joseph, son of **Jacob (Israel)** and **Rachel**, lived in the land of **Canaan** with *eleven brothers* and *one sister*. He was **Rachel's firstborn** and **Israel's eleventh son**. Of all the sons, **Joseph** was *loved* by his father the *most*.

Jacob's favoritism toward **Joseph** caused his half-brothers to *hate* him, and when **Joseph** was *seventeen years old* he had *two dreams* that made his brothers *plot his demise*. In the *first dream*, **Joseph** and his brothers *gathered bundles of grain*. Then, *all of the grain bundles* that had been *prepared by the brothers* gathered around **Joseph's bundle** and *bowed down* to it. In the *second dream*, the *sun (father)*, the *moon (mother)* and *eleven stars (brothers)* *bowed down* to **Joseph** himself. When he told these *two dreams* to his *brothers*, they *despised him* for the implications that the *family* would be *bowing down* to him...especially considering that he was next to the youngest. They became *resentful* that their *father* would even *consider*...much less *ponder* over **Joseph's words** concerning these *dreams* (**Genesis 37:1-11**).

One day they *saw their chance* to deal with *their brother* when they were *feeding the flocks*. They saw **Joseph** from afar and *plotted to kill him*. They *turned on him* and *stripped him of the coat* his father had made for him, and *threw him into a pit*. As they pondered what to do with **Joseph**, the brothers saw a *camel caravan* of *Ishmaelites (descendants of Abraham by Hagar)* coming out of **Gilead**, carrying spices and perfumes to **Egypt** for trade. **Judah** had *second thoughts* about *killing Joseph* and proposed that *he be sold*. The traders paid *twenty shekels of silver* for **Joseph**. The brothers then *took Joseph's coat* back to **Jacob**, and *lied* to him, telling him that **Joseph had been killed** by wild animals.

I. HIS PAST: (**Genesis 37**) *A time of refining.*

Joseph went through *trials*...not because of any *failure*, but because of an *incredible calling: to ultimately save and provide for an entire nation*. God had to prepare this man with *13 years of brokenness* and *humble circumstances* in order to *break every ounce* of *pride* and *self-will*. God would not allow any possibility of a *30-year-old* steeped in *arrogance* and *pride* running an entire nation.

Notice the *progression* that leads to the action of **Joseph's brothers'**...

- Favoritism...*Hurt* (**vs. 3-4**).

- Hate...*Jealousy* (**vs. 4, 5, 8, 11**).

"But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

~I John 2:11

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

~Luke 6:27

- Rejection...*Bitterness* (**vs. 18, 27**).

"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."

~Hebrews 12:15

Joseph's past gave him every reason to become *bitter*.

II. HIS PREPARATION: (**Genesis 37; Genesis 39-40**) *A process...not quick or over-night.*

When God begins *to prepare us to be used* for His *purpose* ...He many times will use *suffering* to *refine* and *change* our *character*...or at least to *test* our *character*...so that He can be *exalted*.

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

~James 1:2-5

Remember what I shared last week. Every person that I know that *has or is being used of God* has *gone through* a season of *refinement*...a period of *brokenness*. I can almost guarantee that the people who know what it is *to be broken and bruised*...and who have the *scars* to prove it... would say...

- *That they would have never chosen to go through what they have gone through.*
- *That they would never hope that others would have to go through what they went through.*
- *That they hope that they never have to go through it again.*
- *...But that they wouldn't change what they learned by going through what they had been through.*

“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

~II Timothy 3:12

“...We exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

~Romans 5:3b-5

The *process* that *prepared Joseph* took him from the...

- *Pit...rejection (Genesis 37).*
- *To Potiphar's House...(Genesis 37:36; Genesis 39).*
Notice when *God's hand* is *on someone's life*...even those around them are *blessed (Genesis 39:3, 5).*

Tempted...(Genesis 39:7-12)

“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”

~I Corinthians 6:18

“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.”

~Ephesians 5:3

Falsely accused...(Genesis 39:13-19)

“Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.”

~I Peter 3:16

Falsely judged...(Genesis 39:20)

Notice that even in the midst of being *falsely accused* and *falsely judged*, God is *present*. *Four (4) times* in *chapter 39* it says, *“The Lord was with Joseph...The Lord was with him.” (Verses 2-3, 21, 23).*

- *To the Prison...persecution (Genesis 39-41).*

The *chief jailer* put *Joseph in charge of the other prisoners*, and soon afterward *Pharaoh's chief cup bearer* and *chief baker*, who had *offended the Pharaoh*, were *thrown into the prison*. They *both* had *dreams*, and they asked *Joseph* to help *interpret* them (*Genesis 40*).

The *chief cup bearer* had held a vine in his hand, with *three branches that brought forth grapes*; he took them to **Pharaoh** and put them in his cup. The *chief baker* had *three baskets of bread* on his head, intended for **Pharaoh**, but some birds came along and ate the bread.

Joseph told them that *within three days the chief cup bearer would be reinstated* but the *chief baker would be hanged*. **Joseph** requested the *cup bearer* to mention him to **Pharaoh** and *secure his release from prison*, but the *cup bearer*, reinstated in office, *forgot Joseph*.

After **Joseph** was in prison for *two more years*, **Pharaoh** had *two dreams* which disturbed him. He dreamt of *seven lean cows* which rose out of the river and *devoured seven fat cows*; and, of *seven withered ears of grain* which *devoured seven fat ears*.

Pharaoh's wise men were *unable to interpret* these dreams, but the *chief cup bearer* remembered **Joseph** and spoke of his skill to **Pharaoh**. **Joseph** was called for (**Genesis 41**), and *interpreted the dreams* as *foretelling* that *seven years of abundance* would be followed by *seven years of famine*, and advised **Pharaoh** to *store surplus grain during the years of abundance*.

- To the **Palace...restoration** (**Genesis 41:39-57**).

When the *famine came*, it was *so severe* that people from *surrounding nations*...

“The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.”

~Genesis 41:57

Egypt was the *only nation...the only kingdom...prepared* for the *seven-year drought...the seven-year famine*.

III. GOD'S PROVIDENCE: (**Genesis 39-50**)

- **God's Presence...God was at work through Joseph** (**Genesis 39**).

“The Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand” (**vs. 3**).

“The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph...The Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned” (**vs. 5**).

“The Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer” (**vs. 21**).

“The Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper” (**vs. 23**).

Joseph was a person who *understood* that he was *simply a manager* of all that God has *entrusted* to him ...a person who had *humility* and a *broken* and *contrite heart* before God. Notice he *never failed* to give God the *glory* (**Genesis 41:16, 28**).

- **God's Provision...God used Joseph to provide for his family during the famine** (**Genesis 42-44**).

In the *second year of famine*, **Joseph's half-brothers** were sent to **Egypt**, by **Jacob** their father, to *buy goods*. When they came to **Egypt**, they stood before **Pharaoh's second in command**, but they did not recognize him to be their brother **Joseph**. However, **Joseph did recognize** them and *did not receive them kindly*. He *disguised* himself and *spoke to them* in the **Egyptian language** using an interpreter. He *did not speak at all to them* in his *native tongue*, **Hebrew**. After questioning them as to where they came from, he *accused them* of being *spies*. They *pleaded with him* that their only purpose was to *buy grain* for their family in the land of **Canaan**.

After they mentioned that they had left *a younger brother* at home, **Joseph demanded** that *he be brought to Egypt* as a demonstration of their *genuineness*. This brother was **Joseph's blood brother, Benjamin**. He then placed his brothers *in prison for three days*. On the *third day*, he brought them out of prison to reiterate that he wanted their *youngest brother* brought to **Egypt** to demonstrate their *truthfulness*. The brothers conferred amongst themselves speaking in **Hebrew**, reflecting on the *wrong* they had previously done to **Joseph**. **Joseph understood what they were saying** and *removed himself* from their presence because he became *emotional*.

Joseph sent the brothers back *with food* keeping *one brother*, while the *remaining* brothers *returned* to their father in **Canaan**, and told him all that had transpired in **Egypt**. They also discovered that *all of their money sacks* still had money in them, and they were dismayed. Then they *informed their father* that **Pharaoh's second in command demanded** that **Benjamin** be *brought before him* to *demonstrate* that they were *honest men*.

After they *had consumed all of the grain* that they brought back from **Egypt**, **Jacob** told his sons to *go back to Egypt for more grain*. With **Reuben** and **Judah's persistence**, they *persuaded* their father to let **Benjamin join them** for fear of **Egyptian retribution**. Upon their return to **Egypt**, the brothers *were afraid* because of the *returned money* in their *money sacks*. Then when they arrived **Joseph reveals to them** that he is in fact *their brother, Joseph*. Then he has their father **Jacob** brought...so they are all *reunited* in **Egypt**.

- **God's Purposed Plan...God was at work!** (**Genesis 45-50**)

Joseph understood the *providence* of God in His *purposed plans*. Even though the brothers had *sold Joseph*...he knew that God had *sent* him!

"...he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. '...God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay"'."

~Genesis 45:4b-5,7-9

"But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive'."

~Genesis 50:19-20

CONCLUSION:

It takes *years of preparation* and *testing* to be a **Joseph**... one *used by* God. It takes what the *psalmist* says in **Psalm 105**.

"And He called for a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. They afflicted his feet with fetters, he himself was laid in irons; until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him."

~Psalm 105:16-19

Modern-day Josephs are *usually prepared* through *brokenness*...their own versions of *bruised* and *fettered feet*, with *shackles* and *necks* put *in irons*. It is often through the *adversity of failures*...*failed finances*, *failed relationships*, and *broken dreams*. These are the things that *try* men the most. These are the things *God uses* to allow the **Josephs** of our day *to be proven* by the *Word of God*. Once *proven*, God *brings them out* of their *pits* and *prisons* and *uses them* mightily for His *purposes*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- There is no situation or circumstance that God cannot use for His GLORY and our ultimate JOY.
- Regardless of how we have been wronged...FORGIVENESS and RECONCILIATION are possible. *Getting forgiveness...giving forgiveness.*
- Even when we are wronged...God can and will turn that situation to His PURPOSED GOOD (**Romans 8:28**).

“For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”

~II Corinthians 4:15