

JOSEPH-Part 2
FROM PRIVILEGE TO PIT TO PALACE
 Genesis 44-45 Selected Scripture

Well, this week we continue with the story of Joseph.
 In twenty years he has moved
 from a position of privilege to a pit to Pharaoh's palace.
 He is now the prime minister of Egypt,
 the most powerful nation in the world.
 And he is second in command only to Pharaoh.

We're going to zip through thirteen chapters of the Bible
 but first, let's rewind and review a few scenes from Joseph's life.

We know he was his father's Jacob's long awaited favorite son
 birth from Jacob's much favorite wife, Rachael. (G37.3)

That favoritism spawned a household, actually tent-full
 of anger and anguish, hate and hostility, and resentment and rivalry
 of Joseph's brothers towards Joseph.

*⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them,
 they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.*

Joseph continued to pour fuel on the fire
 by tattle-tailing on his brothers (G37.2)
 and sharing his dreams, his GOD-GIVEN dreams.

*⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers,
 they hated him all the more.*

*⁶ He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had:
 when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright,
 while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."
 ...And they hated him all the more because of what he had said.*

The Bible tells us they hated Joseph so much they planned to kill him.
 They settled for selling him to the Midianite slave traders. (G37.28)

They were headed for Egypt and there sold him to Potiphar,
 one of Pharaoh's officials and captain of the guard. (G37.36)

Things weren't looking so good for Joseph except,
"The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered." (G39.2)

That was obvious to Potiphar so Potiphar
 put Joseph in charge of his household and guess what,
 "the Lord blessed Potiphar's household." (G39.5)

So, things are looking up for Joseph except
 Mrs. Potiphar is looking, too, looking to seduce Joseph.

Joseph continues to fight off her advance.
 His strongest defense is recorded in G39.9,

"How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

Mrs. Potaphar persists, Joseph resists, and runs.
She grabs his coat, he escapes,
and she makes the case to Mr. Potaphar,
Joseph had his way with of her.

Potiphar burned with anger and Joseph got his burned.
Potiphar put him in prison and notice which prison, G39.20a,
*"Joseph's master took him and put him in prison,
the place where the kings' prisoners were confined."*

"where the King's prisoners were confined." That's important.

Things aren't looking so good for Joseph, EXCEPT, (G39.20b)
*"...while Joseph was there in prison, the Lord was with him,
And granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden."*

So, the prison warden trusted Joseph and put him in charge of the prisoners(G39.23)
"because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did."

The cupbearer and the baker, also prisoners, had dreams.
Joseph says *"Do not interpretations belong to God?"* (G40.8b)
And with God's help, he interprets their dreams.

That's a good thing.
Things are looking up, BUT,
"The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph, he forgot him." (G40.23)

The cupbearer forgot about Joseph for two years.
He finally remembered Joseph when Pharaoh himself had a dream.

Pharaoh sent for Joseph and asked him to interpret the dream.
Joseph responded, (G41.16),
"I cannot do it...God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."
Joseph always gave god the credit.

Then things look up again as Joseph interprets Pharaoh's God-given dream.
He tells the Pharaoh there will be seven years of feast and seven years of famine.
He gets it right and he also offers a plan.

Here is Pharaoh's response, G41.37-38,
*"The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.
So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man,
one in whom is the spirit of God?"*

Did you catch that, *"the one in whom is the spirit of God."*

Think about it.
How did Joseph refuse to fall prey to the favoritism of his father?
How did he refuse to be a victim of the violence of his brothers?
How was he able not to seek revenge?
Why was he not intimidated by being a slave in a foreign land?

How did he avoid being seduced by Potiphar's wife?
 Why was he able to accept the unfair and unjust punishment of prison?
 And how was he able to endure the forgetfulness of the baker?

Pharaoh figures it out and tells us, the
"one in whom is the spirit of God."

And Joseph was open to that spirit,
 Joseph allowed the Spirit to work in him.

Paul by the way has that same spirit working in him, Galatians 2.20,
"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

And by the way, we have that same spirit at work in us.
 Jesus offers that to all who believe in him.
*"All this time I have spoken to you while still with you.
 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name,
 will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you."*

Well, Pharaoh knows good help when he sees it,
 speaking to Joseph, he states the obvious, G41.39-41,
*"...Since God has made all this known to you,
 there is no one so discerning and wise to you.
 You shall be in charge of my palace,
 and all my people are to submit to your orders..."*

Things are really looking up for Joseph.
 Pharaoh makes Joseph prime minister,
 then gives him the Pharaoh's ring,
 gives him a new name which means, "the one who reveals secrets,"
 and he gives him a new wife.
 Joseph and his wife have two children.

Their names tell us something about Joseph's faith. (G41.51-52)
*"The first he names Manasseh which means,
 'It is because God has made me forget
 all my troubles and all my father's household.'*

*The second son he named Ephraim and said,
 'It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.'"*

Things are definitely looking up for Joseph.
 He has moved from that privileged position in his family
 to a pit, and now into the palace as Pharaoh's prime minister.

His plan to store up grain works
 and God's plan to create a nation is working.
 Joseph life and the lives of his brothers will intersect again.

Here is how it happens.
 Jacob, Joseph's father, who has been renamed Israel,
 and his family are experiencing the famine as well.
 Guess where they have to go to get food.

That's right Egypt.

They will be given prime farm land to grow crops, fruit and produce.
More importantly they will have the space and the sanctuary
to grow as a people, to grow as a nation,
and to grow as a community of faith.

God will shape and mold them,
first with prosperity and then in poverty.

Eventually the community of faith will become slaves of the Egyptians,
and God will raise up Moses to exit Egypt.

Pastor Eldon will get that part of the story started next week.

Now we turn our attention to today's episode
And we'll talk about the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers.

You might be thinking, how is that even thinkable let alone possible?
Remember all the hate and hostility between Joseph and his brothers.

It does happen in real life.
I've seen it happen in my family with a couple of my brothers.

Here is some of how it happened to Joseph and his brothers.

Pharaoh's dreams did indeed come true.
There was seven years of feast and seven years of famine.

The famine was widespread.
Jacob's cupboards were bare.
So, Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to find food.

They come face to face with Joseph.
They fail to recognize him but he recognizes them.

Chapter 42 tells us he treats them harshly, questions their character,
and accuses them of being spies.

They deny that, so to further tests them, he keeps one of brothers,
sends them home, and tells them to return with the youngest brother, Benjamin.

They are understandably upset.
We like Joseph, eavesdrop on part of their conversation, G42.21-23,
They don't realize that Joseph can understand them,
*²¹ They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother.
We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life,
but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us."*

*²² Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?
But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."*

This is huge. They have been convicted and now acknowledge their sin.
That is a big step towards a changed heart.

They go home and try to convince father Jacob that they need to go back.

True to form, Jacob says no because, *“You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.”* (G42.36)

He continues to say no until his stomach once again says yes.
The famine got worse, so Jacob had to send the boys back to Egypt,
but with this parting shot, *“Israel asked, ‘Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling this man you had another brother?’”* (G43.6)
“Take you brother also and go...As for me, I am bereaved, I am bereaved.” (G43.13-14)

You know it’s ok to grieve terrible losses after twenty years,
but couldn’t Jacob have moved pass the blame game?

And after all blaming the boys for something he also had a part in.
It seems it’s always about Jacob-poor Jacob.

Think about how different Jacob and Joseph handle all these difficult situations.
Jacob looks at it from his perspective, Joseph from God’s.

Anyway, the boys and Benjamin are back in Egypt.
Joseph is overwhelmed as he sees Benjamin
and pleased to see how well the brothers treat Benjamin.
That again indicates they have changed, changed for the better.

They get their grain and leave.
As they head home Joseph devises another test.
You saw part of that on the first part of the video.

Joseph sends his servants to catch up to the brothers,
to find the planted cup in Benjamin’s saddle, and to say to them,
“Why have you repaid good with evil.” (G44.4)

To see if they really have changed, Joseph tests them.
He is going to keep Benjamin as a slave.

We find the brothers have changed.
They pass with flying colors.
They are thinking more about their father and about Benjamin
than themselves and protecting themselves.

Judah, believe it or not, Judah, the one who wanted to kill Joseph,
steps up and tells Joseph the whole story.
He also offers to exchange his life for that of Benjamin.

Wow. Talk about a changed heart.

It took over twenty years...but *"with God,"* remember, *"nothing is impossible."*

Joseph is so moved as Judah pours out his heart, Joseph does the same. He tells them that he is Joseph.

His brothers are naturally afraid.

But in 45.5-8 he tells them,

*"And now, do not be distressed
and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here,
because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you."*

*⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land,
and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping.*

*⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you
a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance."*

Did you catch that..."God sent me ahead of you..."

Joseph is a prototype of Jesus but Joseph is also Joseph.

Charles Swindoll writes, "he wasn't superhuman.

He was merely a man. He never walked on water.

He never performed a miracle. He certainly wasn't free from trouble.

With God's help and by his own admission, he interpreted some dreams, but made no awesome prophecies, and never wrote any holy Scripture.

Why was he great? His faith.

At all times he trusted that God's was at work in his life.

His faith spawned a positive attitude toward others and toward troubles.

Troubles were challenges to face and not reasons to blame, reasons to quit, nor reasons for revenge."

Joseph stays true to form, even after his father dies.

Chapter 50, verse 18+.

¹⁸ His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him.

"We are your slaves," they said.

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them,

"Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?"

²⁰ You intended to harm me,

*but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done,
the saving of many lives."*

Why do we read his story, Romans 15.4,

*"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction,
that through perseverance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*

Let's stand and sing, "My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less"

