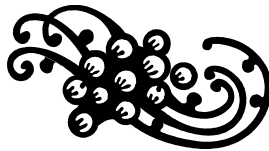


FRUITFUL  
in the  
LAND  
of  
AFFLICTION



Lessons from the Life of Joseph

By Dr. James Rasbeary

## *Fruitful in the Land of Affliction*

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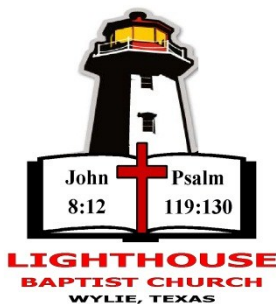
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from it like a well.”

Dr. J. Frank Norris

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“For whatsoever is born of  
God overcometh the world:  
and this is the victory that  
overcometh the world, *even*  
our faith.”

1 John 5:4

CHAPTER ONE  
BORN INTO  
THE LAND OF AFFLICTION



***Genesis 41:50-51 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. (51) 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.***

Ideally, our “father’s house” should bring fond memories to mind of a happy childhood and remembrances of wholesome family experiences. Such was not the case with Joseph. In his middle age, after his many trials and hardships were behind him, Joseph wanted nothing more than to “forget all [his] toil, and all [his] father’s house.” Joseph’s memories of his childhood at home were neither sweet nor happy. Joseph was born into the land of affliction.

Joseph’s childhood and youth was adversely affected by the decisions of his parents and grandparents – decisions made long before he was born. His grandparents, Isaac and Rebekah, had a dysfunctional home. Isaac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Isaac. Esau was a worldly and carnal man, a man who operated completely according to

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his fleshly desires. Because of this, he was rejected by God in favor of Jacob. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup, but Isaac was determined to give Esau the blessing anyway. To thwart this, Rebekah and Jacob plotted to deceive Isaac into giving the blessing to "her son," Jacob. Through trickery, Jacob received the blessing and the birthright – but because of his trickery, he had to run away to Haran to escape the hatred of Esau.

God never intended for Jacob to go to Haran. Abraham knew better. When he sent his servant back to that land to find a wife for Isaac, he told his servant that *under no circumstances* was Isaac to leave the Promised Land (Gen. 24:6). Yet Isaac sent his son back, and it began what I call *The Soap Opera of the Bible*.

In the house of Uncle Laban, Jacob fell in love with beautiful Rachel. Unfortunately, on his wedding night he was given plain Leah instead

(this may be why the grooms ever since have lifted the veil at the wedding to kiss the bride – to make sure that he has the right one). He served another seven years to have Rachel also. He

ended up taking their handmaidens as wives and having children by all four women. God never condoned this family situation. Jacob was out of God's will.

*Joseph's childhood was adversely affected by the decisions of others – made long before he was even born.*



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Jacob's home was worldly. His wives and children practiced idolatry and the ways of the heathen. His wives feuded with each other. His children grew up to be worldly, wicked, whoremongering young men.

After more than twenty years, God called Jacob back to Bethel, the "house of God" – but Jacob stopped short in Shechem, where his daughter was seduced by a handsome young man, and his sons took murderous vengeance on all the men of the town.

Joseph was born into the land of affliction. It was a wicked family. Moreover, if you take your family out of the will of God, your family might end up just as wicked before God. It matters where and how we raise our kids. It matters what influences we allow in their lives. Joseph suffered from the effects of the decisions that his grandparents, parents and brethren made.

Something tremendous, however, happened when Joseph was a teenager. When he was fourteen years old, his Daddy got right with God:

☞ *Genesis 35:1-4* **And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.** (2) *Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: (3) And let us arise, and go up to Bethel;*

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***and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. (4) And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.***

⊗ ***Genesis 35:9-15 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. (10) And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. (11) And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; (12) And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. (13) And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. (14) And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. (15) And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.***

Dad got right with God! It's never too late to get right with God – but doing so doesn't miraculously change all the consequences from

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years of bad decisions. Jacob got right with God – but ten of his sons did not. They were grown and set in their evil ways. They **conformed** somewhat to his new rules, even giving up their worldly clothes, earrings and idols, but they were not transformed from the heart.

Unfortunately, not long after that, Rachel died giving birth to Joseph's little brother, Benjamin. The greatest tragedy in Joseph's life followed the greatest spiritual victory in his life. Certainly, we can see that young Joseph was born into the land of adversity. No wonder he wanted to forget all his toil, and his father's house!

*The greatest tragedy in Joseph's life followed the greatest spiritual victory in his life.*

Everyone does not get to grow up with the Cleavers, with June Cleaver preparing dinner in her high heels and pearls, and Dad reading the paper in his suit coat and tie while big brother Wally tosses you a baseball and helps you get out of trouble. Not everyone gets to grow up in Mayberry, or in a Little House on the Prairie. The fact is that many people are born into the land of affliction. They are born into sad, hard, painful situations, caused by the decisions of others, often made before they were even born.

This, however, does not mean that such cannot be fruitful. The decisions of others may make your life more difficult, but they cannot cancel out the providential plan of God for your life. God had a purpose

for Joseph's life – and He has a purpose for your life. No matter what our home situation, past, or circumstances, God wants us to be overcomers. He wants us to be fruitful in the land of our affliction.

The difficulty of Joseph's situation grew worse as he grew older, because of the hatred of his brothers. There were three basic reasons that the older brothers hated Joseph, even to the point of wanting him dead:

## **I. JOSEPH WAS HATED BECAUSE OF HIS FAVOR.**

✞ *Gen 37:1 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.*

After years of being out of the will of God, Jacob is finally where he is supposed to be. He is in Canaan, at Bethel, the "house of God." There can be no underestimating the importance of this in the life of Joseph. The most formidable years in his life were spent in the Promised Land. From age fourteen to seventeen, Joseph was at the house of God.

This preacher was saved at age fifteen, having been raised in an unsaved secular home. Though it would have been better to have been raised in church and saved at an early age, I am thankful that I was saved and grounded in a church during those most formative years leading into adulthood. I have no doubt that Joseph's life was transformed during these years.

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It is very sad to see Christian parents making the wrong decision during that vital time in their child's life. I have seen many parents back off or change their convictions, sometimes even changing churches to a more liberal or contemporary-style of church, in a misguided attempt to help their children. When their children were small, these parents stood for a strong church, a strong preacher, a strong youth group with high standards, and strong discipline. They said "Amen!" when the preacher came down hard on certain issues. It was easy to stand for modest dress with their four-year-old in her frilly church dress. It became harder when she turned fourteen. Many parents make the foolish decision to back off on the Word of God and Biblical standards when their children hit the teenage years. Parents, that is when your child needs you to stand strong and steer a straight path!

*The decisions of others  
may make your life  
more difficult – but  
they cannot cancel  
out the  
providential plan  
of God for your life.*

Jacob messed up when his children were small, and it cost him his older children – but he got it right in time to save his two youngest children. You can see the difference. Same home. Same parents. Different place. Different environment. In Haran, they were far from God and were not blessed. In Canaan, they were close to God, and some

## *Fruitful in the Land of Affliction*

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were blessed. It matters where we raise our children, and where we raise our teenagers.

✞ *Gen 37:2 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.*

Joseph was seventeen when he was reintroduced to the scriptural record. He was feeding the flocks of his father. He was a worker who could be given responsibility. He was working with Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher – Jacob’s four sons by his concubines. Joseph saw their evil deeds and reported them to his father (vs. 2).

Joseph was the only son that Jacob could trust. He was the only son that wanted to do right, as Jacob did. When his elder brothers, all grown men, were involved in evil activities, Joseph reported it to his father. This was not tattling, which ought to be discouraged in any home. This was reporting on “evil” behavior. Certainly, I want my children to tell me if one of their siblings is involved in “evil” behavior. We know enough from the scriptural account of Simeon and Levi’s murders, Rueben’s incest, the conspiracy to murder Joseph, then selling him into slavery, and Judah’s wickedness in chapter 38, to know that Jacob’s sons truly were a wicked group.

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✞ *Genesis 37:3-4 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. (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.*

Jacob loved Joseph more than the rest of his children, because Joseph was the son of his old age, the son of his beloved wife Rachel, and because he was, by far, the best of the bunch. When Jacob decided to follow God, Joseph followed his father. The rest of the brothers followed the way of the world. Joseph was pleasing to his father; his brothers were a grief of mind.

As a sign of his pleasure and blessing upon Joseph, Jacob gave him a beautiful coat of many colors. This coat represented the father's favor and blessing. However, it made the evil brothers see red. They envied Joseph, then hated him because of the father's blessing. They could not speak peaceably to him. Hatred filled their hearts and minds every time they saw the blessing of their father, represented by that colorful coat on Joseph's back!

These brethren picture the hatred of the unsaved towards the Christian who is blessed by God. They can also picture the saved but disobedient Christian who wants God's blessing on his life, but is not willing to live in obedience to receive such a blessing. Jacob's sons

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wanted the father's blessing without earning the father's pleasure. Therefore, they hated the one who had the favor – Joseph.

✞ *John 3:19-21 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. (21) But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

It is easier to hate the light than to give up the darkness. This is exactly why some people hate Christianity and hate Christians and preachers. This is why so many of us have trouble with family members who are either unsaved or not living for the Lord. They hate the favor of God they see in our lives. They want it but they do not have it. Rather than change their ways, giving up the darkness, they attack the light.

People will see the blessing of God in your life. Some will recognize it and may even repent. Others will hate the favor that they see. That is why they will call us names, mock us and call us self-righteous, “holier than thou” or “hypocrites.” It is not necessarily YOU. It is the coat of many colors, the favor of the Father.

If you have faced trouble in your family because of your faith in Christ or your obedience to His Word, then take a lesson from Joseph.



Learn to overcome affliction in your family. Stay faithful to God. One day, God will show everyone who was right and who was wrong.

## **II. JOSEPH WAS HATED FOR HIS FAITH.**

✞ *Genesis 37:5-11 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.*

Joseph's two dreams involved his family bowing down before him. Telling his dream to his family caused his brother to envy him and hate him even more.

Joseph's dreams were more than just mere dreams or wishful thinking. In the Old Testament, God sometimes communicated His will to man through dreams. Joseph's dreams were prophetic, revealing the will of God for his life in the future. By faith, Joseph accepted what God had revealed to him.

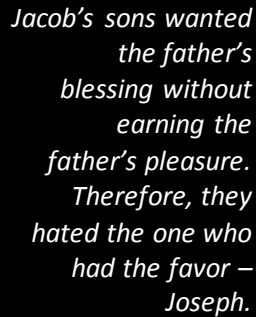
I accept this Bible as God's Word. I believe what God says about life, godliness, right, wrong, and eternity. By faith, I have received Jesus Christ as my Saviour for the forgiveness of my sins. This faith separates me from those who believe that they must earn their own righteousness through their religion or good works. I accept Ephesians 2:8-9 which states that I am saved by grace through faith, not of works. By faith, I know that I am saved forever, that I am a child of God by new birth, and that heaven is my eternal home.

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Some people hate my faith. They say, “I am as good as you, and you say that I am going to hell when I die.” I must agree that they ARE as good as I am, because we are all sinners - but none of us is good enough without Jesus Christ. I accept by faith what God has revealed about the future. By faith, I believe that the saved will spend eternity in heaven. By the same faith in the revealed Word of God, I believe that the lost will spend eternity in hell.

I also accept by faith what the Bible teaches about how I am supposed to live and what is right or wrong. It’s not a matter of being “holier than thou.” It is a matter of faith in the revealed Word of God and a desire to magnify Him in my life.



*Jacob’s sons wanted  
the father’s  
blessing without  
earning the  
father’s pleasure.  
Therefore, they  
hated the one who  
had the favor –  
Joseph.*

Noah believed God when God said He was going to flood the world. Noah warned the people, but they hated him for his faith. Noah believed God and acted accordingly. I believe God and act accordingly. That will cause some who do not like what the Bible teaches to hate me because I believe it.

When you find the will of God for your life by faith, be prepared to be mocked or even hated by those who do not care about the will of

God. Even your own family may try to crush your dreams. Joseph was hated for his faith.

### **III. JOSEPH WAS HATED FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS.**

Joseph's brethren could not and would not accept him as he was. They did not have the attitude towards Joseph that they expected for themselves – "live and let live." No, they envied and hated Joseph because of his favor and faith.

The world tells us, "Leave us alone. Live and let live." Yet they cannot stand us because of our faith. Christianity has always been ridiculed by the ungodly. Wicked men have always tried to break through the faithfulness of Godly Christians to show them to be "hypocrites."

Joseph's brethren tried to intimidate him. He knew they hated him. They envied him. They could not even speak peaceably to him. Every word had a sharp edge or a hook, to afflict Joseph's mind and emotions. No doubt, they mocked him and found little ways to persecute him. Perhaps they tried to tempt him into participating in some of their activities.

However, they could not get Joseph off track. They could not corrupt him. They couldn't bring him down to their level. They could not cause him to be unfaithful, so they hated him even more for his faithfulness.

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Hatred is only a step away from murder. Just as there is an adultery of the heart, there is a murder of the heart. Hatred finally led them into a conspiracy to murder Joseph. Rueben delivered him out of their hands, convincing them to throw him in a pit instead. Joseph was then stripped of his coat of many colors. They killed a goat and dipped his coat in the blood in order to deceive their father into believing that Joseph was dead.

Joseph pleaded with them, but they ignored his cries. Instead, they ate bread. It was Judah that had the idea of selling Joseph into a perpetual death - as a slave to a group of Midianites passing by. He was sold for 20 pieces of silver, and taken down to Egypt. He was hated for his favor, his faith, and his faithfulness.

Can you picture young Joseph, plodding along across the hot rocky ground towards Egypt, each step taking him further from his father? What he could not know was that every painful step was taking him one step closer to God's destiny for his life.

Chapter Two

# INTEGRITY IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION



**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. (2) And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. (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. (4) 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. (5) 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. (6) 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.

**W**e last saw Joseph being pulled out of a pit, sold to some passing Midianites, and being led off across the desert in chains – sold into slavery. Every step took him away from his father and his beloved baby brother, Benjamin. Every step across the desert took him further and further from the life that he had known,

into an unknown and terrifying future. What Joseph could *not* know was that he had actually begun a journey that would end at the throne of Egypt and the salvation of the Hebrew race. But first he had to go through thirteen years in the ***University of Adversity.***

In this lesson, we are going to study the character of young Joseph. It was Joseph's character that made him a "vessel unto honour, meet for the master's use" (2 Tim. 2:21). The Bible word

*Integrity is keeping my commitments even if the circumstances under which I made the commitment have changed.*

for character is **INTEGRITY**. Joseph, though young, had stainless steel integrity. Character is essential if we are to become fruitful in the land of our adversity.

## **I. CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE, BUT INTEGRITY MUST NOT CHANGE.**

Joseph's circumstances kept changing, from bad to worse, and worse to worst, and yet his integrity never changed. He was the same in Potiphar's house as he had been in his father's, and the same in Pharaoh's house as he had been in prison.

Faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. The same can be said of our character. Our faith will be tested, and our integrity will be

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tested. Character has to be proven through the fires of adversity. The circumstances in Joseph's life were incredibly difficult. Yet God expected him to overcome. And he did. And so can we.

Some has defined integrity in this way: **“Keeping my commitments even if the circumstances under which I made the commitment have changed.”** A man of integrity keeps his commitments. He keeps his charge. He keeps his word and his vows. A man or woman of integrity does what is right, no matter what the circumstances have become.

Integrity does not change when circumstances change. If a person changes with their circumstances, they are showing a lack of character. Integrity is like an anchor that keeps us from drifting with the winds and waves of life. Integrity holds us in place.

Some have made commitments to God, and then economies fell, or jobs were lost, or promotions came, and their commitments to God were forgotten or abandoned. I've seen couples go through disease and disaster together because they had integrity and a commitment to keep. They made a commitment when they were young and healthy, and when they were older and the circumstances were different they kept their commitments. I've seen others leave each other when circumstances changed. She wasn't as trim or young any more. He wasn't making the same money as before. One became sick and needed care that the other spouse was not willing to provide.

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Look at Job. His integrity was sorely tried, but found to be stainless steel. All of his circumstances changed for the absolute worst. How could they have changed more drastically? In one day, he lost all of his children and all of his wealth. Yet the Lord Himself said that Job held fast to his integrity:

✞ *Job 2:3 And the LORD said unto Satan... Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.*

What will it take to get you to go back on your commitments, or to go back from the faith? The Bible tells us to be unmovable:

✞ *1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

*Faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. The same can be said of our character. Our faith will be tested, and our integrity will be tested. Character has to be proven through the fires of adversity.*

How much can your integrity take? How much will it take to break you away from your principles and commitments to God? It doesn't take much for a lot of people. If you are going to be fruitful in the land of affliction, you have to have solid, stainless steel integrity.



## **II. YOU WILL ALWAYS RISE TO YOUR INTEGRITY LEVEL.**

In Joseph's house, he was the favored son because of his character. Yet Joseph was not divorced from his character when he ended up in Potiphar's house. Too many young people behave well enough at home, and yet stumble from their faith and from good principles when they leave home and enter the world. Integrity is not conforming to someone else's rules. Integrity is having principles in one's own heart. Joseph was characterized to the bone. He was not living on borrowed convictions. His integrity was built in – it was who he was.

It wasn't long before he was the top man in Potiphar's house. Later, he was promoted over the prison. Finally, he was promoted to second-in-command over Egypt. Joseph was promoted everywhere he went because he had the character worthy of promotion. He had the character needed to keep his father's sheep; he had the character to run Potiphar's house; he later had the character to run the prison; he finally had the character to run the nation of Egypt!

It is not talents or education that matters the most – it is personal character. **Talent may open doors, and personality may draw a crowd, but in the long run nothing can replace personal integrity.**

Joseph's character impressed people everywhere he went. People with character appreciate others with character. Potiphar was a man of character, as was the prison keeper and Pharaoh. They were quick to

appreciate Joseph's character. If you want to impress people, do it with solid character.

You will always rise to your character level. If you do not like your place in life – do not complain about it or blame others. Improve your personal character!

As we study the life of Joseph, it is easy to see the character traits that made up his personal integrity. These traits included:

### **1. Contentment.**

Joseph made peace with circumstances that he could not change. He refused to become bitter about the unjust circumstances of his life. He was a young man, only 17, and it seemed that in one day all his dreams had gone up in smoke. He went from being the beloved son to a slave in a foreign land. Yet he refused to be angry with God, or to hold bitterness against his brethren. His faith in God's providence allowed him to make peace with the difficult circumstances he suddenly found himself in.

Contentment takes character, and it is a key to joy and happiness in life:

✞ *1 Tim 6:6-8 "But godliness with contentment is great gain. {7} For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. {8} And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."*

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↳ *Heb 13:5-6 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. {6} So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."*

There are some circumstances in life that can be changed to make life better. A person can get a better job, increase his education, apply for a promotion, buy a nicer house, lose weight, etc. But there are many circumstances in life that CANNOT be changed. Contentment means making peace with those things and making the best of it.

Joseph was not changed by his prison. He changed his prison. Contentment doesn't take us out of the prison, but it does make the prison bearable. If Joseph had turned bitter and evil, he would have still been in prison. He would have hated every day of his life. Contentment is a key to enjoying happiness and joy in adversity.

If you cannot change it, why make life worse by being miserable about it? If you have to serve Potiphar, why not be the head servant? If you have to be in prison, why not be in charge? Contentment does not change the overall circumstances of life, but it allows me to make the very best of bad circumstances.

### **2. Submission to authority.**

Joseph submitted to his father. Later, he submitted to Potiphar as his master. He submitted to the keeper of the prison. Submission to

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authority is a key to one day being the authority. The man who can't submit to a boss never becomes the boss. He is too busy looking for a new job.

A Christian with integrity submits to "submit." "Submit" is a military term and it means to yield to the authority of another. Submission is not agreement. A private may disagree with the general but he must submit and follow the orders of the general.

Do you have difficulty submitting to those that God has commanded submission to? He commands the child to obey the parent (Eph 6:1); the wife to submit to the husband (Eph. 5:22); the citizen to submit to the laws of government (1 Peter 2:13); the church member to submit to the pastor (Heb. 13:17); the younger to submit to the elder (1 Peter 5:5). Perhaps the reason we have a rebellious streak to our character is because we are not submitted to the ultimate Authority - "Submit yourselves therefore to God" (Jas 4:7). Remember that He is the

*Integrity is not conforming to someone else's rules. Integrity is having principles in one's own heart.*

*Joseph was characterized to the bone. He was not living on borrowed convictions. His integrity was built in – it was who he was.*

One who issued the other commandments concerning submission – obedience to those commands is obedience to God, and disobedience

to those commands is disobedience to God and His authority in our lives.

### **3. A diligent work ethic.**

Joseph was a worker. The Bible says, “he served him.” He had a work ethic. Christians with character work hard and do the job right. Those who don’t do a good job are always complaining that they don’t get promoted or recognized.

Joseph served so well that he was promoted to overseer. Diligent Christians do a job quickly but also pay attention to detail. They care about what they do. Those who do their job and a little more are the most quickly promoted. Diligence leads to honor and promotion. “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men” (Pro 22:29).

Be a great worker. Work hard at what you do. Be on time. Be neat. Live by a schedule. Be efficient and productive.

### **4. Responsibility and trustworthiness.**

Joseph could be trusted with everything Potiphar had. He made him his business manager. Joseph was given the responsibility of everything in the great house, and he did a great job with it. Where did he learn responsibility? Keeping his father’s sheep (37:2). Are you responsible? Can you be trusted to take care of those responsibilities put into your care?

### **5. Consistency.**

Throughout these chapters, no matter what happened, Joseph stayed the same. He was consistent because he lived by convictions. Principled Christians are consistent Christians. Learn to live by a set of principles. Don't live an up and down, in and out, roller coaster kind of life. Get inside a set of principles. Be consistent.

**6. Gratitude.**

Joseph was not bitter against Potiphar, but was grateful for the opportunities he had given him in his house. If he had been bitter, he would have jumped at the opportunity for revenge by taking his master's wife. Instead, gratitude kept him from sin! He was actually thankful for the opportunities and treatment that Potiphar had given him.

**7. Moral purity.** This aspect of his integrity will be clearly seen in the next part of this chapter.

**III. INTEGRITY WILL BE TESTED.**

↳ *Gen 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.*

Potiphar's wife was a lewd, wicked woman. She began looking and lusting over this teenager, this college aged young man in her husband's house. She started looking and then she began lusting. People are foolish to think that lust is a male problem. It is a human problem.

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After lusting over Joseph, she then propositioned him. “Lie with me.” Hollywood has done everything it can to make this sort of thing acceptable, thrilling and exciting, but it’s nothing but filthy, wicked sin against God and against marriage. And it’s no more right for an older married woman to proposition a young man than for an older married man to proposition some young girl. We have wicked women today that are loose and immoral, who are what Solomon called “whorish women.” They are not whores, but they look and act like them. Proverbs warns us to beware of their advances, their flattery, and their immoral behavior. Solomon said not to go near the door of her house. Only recently, a female schoolteacher, whose husband was serving in the military, was arrested for carrying on affairs with several teenage students. The world has a double standard in this regard – but God does not. All young women need to be warned of evil men – and all young men need to be warned about evil, adulterous women.

The point is that his integrity was tested - and it was tried at a point of natural weakness for young men. But Joseph’s integrity stood the test.

☞ *Gen 39:10 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.*

She was persistent, but Joseph refused to waver. She spoke to him every day, trying to wear down his resistance and get him to feel more

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comfortable. That's a danger. Evil people often talk their way past the natural reserves of people they wish to seduce. Joseph would not hearken to her. He would not get close to her. He would not be with her. He would not be alone with her.

His integrity was tested. One day, she decided to just throw herself at Joseph. No doubt, she did so in the most appealing, seductive way possible. Yet Joseph did not give in – he ran away!

✠ *Genesis 39:11-12 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. (12) 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.*

The devil, the world, and people are going to test our integrity. People are going to try our convictions and commitments, often at our weak points or our weakest times. If we want to be fruitful in the land of affliction, we are going to have to stand strong and not give in. If Joseph had gone the route of Reuben or Judah, he would have forfeited the plan of God for his life.

## **IV. IT IS ALWAYS RIGHT TO DO RIGHT, NO MATTER THE OUTCOME.**

Joseph's right decision seemed to have a bad outcome. As Shakespeare so eloquently stated, "Hell hath no fury like a woman



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scorned.” After being spurned for the last time, her “love” turned to a bitter, vindictive hatred. She used his coat as proof that he had tried to rape her. Her lie was believed by her husband, who immediately had Joseph thrown in prison, without a trial.

“But it’s not fair!” cries the Christian who has done right, and yet suffered a bad outcome because of the right decision. Life in this sin-cursed world is not always fair – but it is always right to do right.

When I make decisions, I am to be concerned about doing what is right and Biblical. I do not know how things are going to turn out, but I do know that the Bible is right. Things may actually get worse if I make the right decision, but I am to do right anyway, and trust in God’s providence.

At the end of the last chapter, we left Joseph in a pit. Now, we are leaving him in a prison. But we aren’t leaving him without God. Joseph was fruitful in the land of affliction because he had stainless steel integrity. He was characterized to the bone. Do you have the kind of character that will cause you to be fruitful in the land of affliction?

“For a just *man* falleth seven times,  
and riseth up again: but the  
wicked shall fall into mischief.”

**Proverbs 24:16**

Chapter Three

FAITHFULNESS  
IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION



**Genesis 39:21-23** But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour 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; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. (23) 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.

**J**oseph was just seventeen when his brothers sold him into slavery and thirty when he was promoted by Pharaoh. Our time frame in this study is thirteen years. We do not know how long he was in each place. We know that the last two years were in prison. When chapter 40 begins, Joseph was twenty-eight years old.

Joseph has completed the undergraduate work in the University of Adversity. Many of life's tests are concerning our reaction to circumstances. Will we respond with faith and faithfulness, or will we

abandon our faith and walk away from the Lord? How will Joseph respond to the false accusation of Potiphar's wife, his unjust imprisonment, the years of serving in prison, and then the disappointment of being forgotten by the chief butler?

## **I. DESPITE THE CIRCUMSTANCES, GOD WAS FAITHFUL TO JOSEPH.**

God is always working behind the scenes to bring about His will and purpose for the believer's life. His Providence was moving men into position to help His child, Joseph. Even Pharaoh was not beyond the workings of God's providence. *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will"* (Prov 21:1).

God brought about the imprisonment of Pharaoh's chief butler and his chief baker, bringing them into the care of Joseph. The providence of God is amazing! He can work in circumstances that seem totally separate from our own, in order to help us. It would seem that the lives of Pharaoh, a butler, and a baker would have nothing to do with Joseph in prison; yet at this time, their lives become connected together through God's providence. The imprisonment of the baker and the butler was a "divine appointment" in the life of Joseph – one that Joseph was ready to keep!

God was faithful to Joseph. Life was not fair, but God was fair.

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He was with Joseph, and blessed him. Joseph did not understand God's plan, but he trusted that God had a plan.

God is always faithful:

⌘ *Psa 36:5 "Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds."*

⌘ *Psa 89:33-34 "Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. {34} My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."*

⌘ *Lam 3:22-23 "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. {23} They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."*

Despite the circumstances, God was faithful to Joseph. You may think that, because of your circumstances, God has been unfaithful to you. However, just because you do not know God's endgame or just because you cannot see the end of the path you now tread does not mean that God has been unfaithful to you. In fact, God cannot be unfaithful. He must keep His promises to His children. It is vital that we respond properly, in faith and faithfulness, when circumstances seem to be against us.

## **II. DESPITE THE CIRCUMSTANCES, MEN WERE UNFAITHFUL TO JOSEPH.**

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↳ *Genesis 40:5-8 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. (6) And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. (7) 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? (8) 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.*

The most interesting thing about this part of the story is that Joseph actually cared about the welfare of these two prisoners. Why should he care if they were sad? Why should he seek to be a comfort or encouragement to these strangers? Why should he offer to help with their problem? Yet he did. He quickly interpreted their dreams: the butler would be restored to office within three days, while the baker would be executed within the same time frame.

After giving the encouraging interpretation to the butler, Joseph then made an appeal to be remembered, in hopes of being released from the prison.

↳ *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*

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*mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: (15) 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.*

Please note that Joseph's great opportunity for release came during his everyday obligations and faithful service. It was through a "random act of kindness" that Joseph's prison door was eventually opened. By helping the butler, Joseph was in fact helping himself.

It is a fact that we have a fleshly tendency to turn inward when we are going through times of adversity. In doing so, we become blind to the needs of others. However, the spiritual Christian continues to put others ahead of self, and in doing so may stumble across a great, life-changing opportunity!

✞ *Gal 6:9-10 "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. {10} As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."*

In a time of adversity, put others first. Help everyone you can. Win as many souls as you can. Sow as much good as you can in the lives of others. Cast your bread on the water. Be faithful and serve God. The opportunity you need will come because of faithful service and sowing.

Unfortunately, the butler was unfaithful to his commitment to Joseph:

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☞ *Genesis 40:21-23 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: (22) But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. (23) Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.*

The chief butler was guilty of ingratitude. He forgot the one who was there when he needed him, who helped him and comforted him, and made only one request in return. He probably meant to, but he procrastinated until it was well out of mind.

Ingratitude is a terrible sin that shows gross selfishness on our part. Christians need to learn to remember what God and others have done for us, and to SHOW gratitude. Gratitude is worthless if it is not given.

God was faithful to Joseph, but people were not. In this, we learn to put total confidence in God – but never total confidence in men. God is perfect. Men are imperfect. God is never unfaithful, but “a faithful man who can find?”

*Many of life's tests are concerning our reaction to circumstances. Will we respond with faith and faithfulness, or will we abandon our faith and walk away from the Lord?*



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✞ *Psalms 118:8-9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. (9) It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.*

This does not mean that we should never trust anyone. Certainly, all relationships require a measure of trust – particularly in our closest relationships. However, we must remember that any confidence in man carries with it the risk of disappointment, because any man is capable of failure. We should not expect all men to fail us – but we should be shocked if any man does. Put complete confidence in the Lord – He never fails.

People are not always faithful to us, despite the goodness we show towards them. Still, let us do all the good that we can, whether we are thanked for it or not, if only because God is pleased and can use those good works to do great things in our own lives.

### **III. DESPITE THE CIRCUMSTANCES, JOSEPH WAS FAITHFUL TO GOD.**

Joseph had to deal now with the disappointment of being forgotten by the butler. For two more years (41:1), he went back to serving in the prison. By the time two years have passed, you can pretty well give up on being remembered – except that God wasn't done yet!

How well do you deal with disappointment? Will you change the prison, or will the prison change you? Integrity is keeping your

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commitments even when circumstances change for the worse. Joseph could have said, “That’s the straw that broke the camel’s back! I’ve been faithful this far, and where has it gotten me? I’ve had enough!” Instead, year after year, Joseph remained faithful to God. And he had no hope of parole.

Joseph changed the prison, but the prison couldn’t change Joseph. He made the best of every situation and stayed faithful to God. He was promoted to the supervisor of the entire prison house. Others were blessed because of Joseph’s presence (39:23).

How long will you be faithful to the Lord? Will you allow disappointments or the unfaithfulness of men to cause you to become unfaithful to the Lord? Will you respond in such a way that we can accept our adversities and still be a blessing to those around us?

Chapter Four

# PROVIDENCE IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION



**Genesis 41:9-14** Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: (10) 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: (11) And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. (12) 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. (13) And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. (14) Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

**A**fter lesson one, we left Joseph in a pit. After lesson two, we left him in prison. After lesson three, we left him forgotten in prison. However, we have never left Joseph outside of God's providence! Now, let's see what GOD is going to do in the life of Joseph.

What is meant by the providence of God? God's providence is the means by which God, in His sovereignty, brings about His will and

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purpose in this world. God's providence includes His great, overarching plan for the whole world, and it includes the detailed will of God for each person's life.

The Providence of God is nearly infinite in its scope and detail. God has a plan for all of human history, including eternity to come for the saved and the unsaved. God has a plan for nations, particularly those that are singled out in prophesy, and most particularly for the little nation of Israel. God has a plan for families and individuals. God has a plan for every one of the seven billion people on earth today, though most of them will never fulfill that perfect will for their lives.

God's providence covers millennia and minutes. It determines when we are born and when we die. It applies to all, rich and poor, small and great, saved and unsaved – so that every one of us may, despite the circumstances in our lives, look to the providence of a wise and benevolent God for comfort, correction, or consolation.

The most beloved promise concerning God's providential care in the lives of His people is Romans 8:28:

✞ *Rom 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."*

We do not know how God works these things together for good, but He does. My responsibility it to make sure that I love God despite the circumstances, and trust "his purpose" for my life.

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How would you take a Hebrew teenager and get him into a position so that he could become vice-Pharaoh over all Egypt? Where would you turn in your application? We could not come up with a way to do what God did in Joseph's life – despite the fact that it took the evil of his brethren and Potiphar's wife to help bring it to pass.

“We know that all things work together for good.” It does not say, “for the best.” I cannot say that someone's parents getting divorced is for the best. I would not say that someone being abused is for the best. It is not. I would not say that what people often do to each other is for the best. Romans 8:28 is saying that God can take all of those things and somehow bring good out of it, though I do not know how He does it.

✞ *Rom 11:33-36 "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! {34} For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? {35} Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? {36} For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."*

We may not know why. It must sometimes be enough that God knows why. God is sovereign. He answers to no one unless He chooses to, and sometimes He chooses not to give a reason in this lifetime. It may be that we cannot understand why God does things or does not do

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things, why God seems to allow things or why God does not answer a certain prayer. It is very encouraging just to know that God's providence is working out a plan in my life. Nothing that anyone else does can alter God's providential plan.

*We may not know  
why. It must  
sometimes be  
enough that God  
knows why.*

God's providence is beyond human understanding, until He reveals the results of His providence to us. We can read on and easily see God's providence in Joseph's life; he could not see God's purpose clearly at the time, though he must have been sure of God's Providential care. At such times, *"Clouds and darkness are round about him..." (Psa 97:2)*. Trusting God means trusting Him with the "secret things" of His providence (Deu 29:29).

Two full years have passed since the butler was released from prison. There is no mention of any events in the life of Joseph from the time that he interpreted the dreams of the baker and the butler, to his promotion by Pharaoh. We can imagine that there were "two full years" of dull monotony, as Joseph continued serving in the prison house. All that marked the time were 730 scratches on his cell wall. No doubt, he had given up any hope of the butler remembering his request.

This two-year wait was yet another test of Joseph's patience and faith. Many lack the patience to wait "two full years" for God to work on

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their behalf. Like Sarah, they resort to their own plans to bring about their desire. Faith must sometimes wait. We often have more trouble waiting by faith than we do walking by faith!

⌘ *Heb 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

⌘ *Hebrews 10:35-39 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. (36) For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (37) For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. (38) Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (39) But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

There are times when the temptation is to cast away our confidence, to draw back from a walk of faith. Rather, we draw back from a WAIT OF FAITH. We want God to work NOW, and God only works on His own timetable.

What if Joseph had given up on God's timing and determined to "break out" of jail? What if he had managed to escape all the way to the house of Israel? He would have missed God's appointment with Pharaoh and the subsequent events which led to the salvation of his family – and the entire will and purpose of God for Joseph's life.

What if God made you wait “two full years” before He granted you the desire of your heart?

After the two-year interval, we find Joseph just as we left him in chapter 40. He is still faithful. He still loves God. His heart is still tender. The circumstances could not change Joseph for worse – they only made him better.

Little did Joseph know when he went to bed that night, that the Providence of God was about to bring everything to pass at

*Waiting by faith is part  
of walking by faith.*

lightning speed! Before the day was over, he would be promoted to the palace of Pharaoh!

## **I. GOD’S PROVIDENCE UPSET PHARAOH (41:1-8).**

The Pharaohs of this world are not beyond the reach of God’s providence. Though the Egyptians worshipped Pharaoh as a god, the true and living God saw him for what he was – just a man. Just 6 feet and 190 pounds of recycled dirt. It would do us well to see men as just men – and never to revere them as gods, or to allow a fear of men to override our fear of the Lord!

God disturbed his sleep with two nightmares, both centered around the Nile River. In the first dream, seven fat cows came out of the river and began grazing in a meadow. Then, seven extremely famished cows



came out of the river and ate up the seven fat cows. In the second dream, seven perfect ears of corn came out of the ground. Then, seven sun-blasted, thin ears grew up with them.

Pharaoh awoke, too disturbed to sleep. Little did he know that his dreams had been touched by the hand of God!

Again, God was working on Joseph's behalf, though Joseph had no idea at the time. You have NO IDEA what God might be doing right NOW that might change your life for the better. God's blessings often come at the least expected time and from the most unexpected places.

## **II. GOD'S PROVIDENCE UPLIFTED JOSEPH (41:9-45).**

After Pharaoh's wise men failed, as the world's wise men always do when trying to understand the things of God, the chief butler suddenly remembered Joseph! By human understanding, he was two years late – but when we consider the providence of God, we can see that he was right on time. For if Joseph had been remembered and released two years earlier, he would probably have gone home – and missed the whole purpose for his years of affliction! This should teach us to trust God's timing!

The desperate Pharaoh quickly called for Joseph, who was brought out of prison, cleaned up, and presented to the king. The king said, "I have heard tell of thee." Joseph's testimony opened doors for God to

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use. Would your testimony bring honor to the Lord, or close the ears of the world to what you would have to say about your God?

After turning the glory to the Lord (vs. 16), Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams. And though Pharaoh did not ask for any advice, Joseph seized his opportunity and gave it anyway:

✠ *Genesis 41:33-37 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. (34) 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. (35) 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. (36) 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. (37) And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.*

Joseph's plan was very wise, and quickly accepted by Pharaoh. A Christian who walks with God will have greater wisdom than the wise men of this world:

✠ *Psalms 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.*

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The problem is that so many Christians are living by the philosophies of the world, that they have no influence with the world. We need to show this world the superiority of God's plan for life, happiness, the home, child-rearing, marriage, and business.

What an amazing turn around took place in Joseph's life! He went to bed the night before on a cot in a forgotten corner of a prison. He was about as close to "no hope" as a child of God could be. Yet he was never outside the providence of God! And in one night's time, Joseph was taken out of prison, promoted to Vice Pharaoh, moved into a mansion, and got married! Isn't it amazing how fast things can happen when God's timing is ready!

✞ *Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us...*

I wonder if Joseph, when he lay down in his new, soft, comfortable bed that night, would have felt like singing what the Psalmist would write many years later:

✞ *Psa 126:1-3 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. {2} Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. {3} The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.*

### **III. GOD’S PROVIDENCE UPHELD EGYPT (41:46-57).**

Just as Joseph had predicted by the word of the Lord, Egypt began to enjoy seven years of tremendous plenty. Joseph showed his faith and industry by immediately beginning to lay up a tremendous amount of corn in warehouses and silos for the coming famine. By the way, it is always wise to live within your means and set aside something for tough times, because no boom or time of exceptional prosperity lasts forever. Life is always a cycle of feasts and famines, and the wise men, like the ant, know to lay up for the winters of life.

During this time, God gave Joseph two sons. He named his first Manasseh, which means, “forgetting.” The second son was named Ephraim, meaning, “fruitful.”

Because of God’s providence and Joseph’s character, when all lands were suffering famine, “in all the land of Egypt there was bread.” Joseph then began selling the corn, both to the Egyptians and to foreign nations. He made Pharaoh extremely wealthy by his wise management – and saved countless people from starvation.

Through it all, we can see God’s providence at work. And it will continue to work in the following chapters, because there are still some loose strings that need tying. Joseph may have forgotten his dreams from twenty years ago, but God has not! Everything will come to pass – in God’s providential timing!

Chapter Five

# TESTED IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION



**Genesis 42:6-9** 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. (7) 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. (8) And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. (9) And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them...

**W**e last left Joseph promoted from the prison to the throne room, exalted over all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. He had graduated with honors from the University of Adversity. During the seven years of plenty, Joseph led the government in accumulating great stores of grain to be used during the ensuing seven years of famine. The same character that oversaw his father's business, and Potiphar's business, and the prison keeper's business, now led in the business of an entire nation. Through Joseph's work and

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wisdom, the nation was prepared when the seven terrible years of famine began to destroy the people of the ancient Middle East.

This famine also touched the family of Jacob (42:1-5). We need to remember that it has been more than twenty years since Joseph's brethren sold him into slavery. He had been seventeen at the time, and thirty when promoted by Pharaoh, for a total of thirteen years. Then there were seven years of plenty, taking the time to twenty years before the famine began.

Joseph is now almost forty years old. His father Jacob has wasted away into a bitter old man, still grieving the loss of Joseph. He does not trust his other sons, and would not even let Benjamin go with them to Egypt, "lest peradventure mischief befall him." Joseph's brethren were twenty years older, and the way of transgressors has been hard on them.

The remainder of the Book of Genesis explains how Israel came into Egypt, setting the stage for the Book of Exodus. It also reveals how God began to tie up all the loose strings in Joseph's life. All loose strings will be tied up sooner or later. We may have to wait awhile. It may take years and years. It may take until the Judgment Seat of Christ. It may take until the Great White Throne Judgment. In the next several chapters, we are going to see the sin of Joseph's brethren find them out.

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✞ 1Ti 5:24 *Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.*

This lesson will cover some tests in the Land of Affliction. First, God is going to test Joseph. He is going to test Joseph's heart. He is going to put Joseph in a position of power and see if he uses that power for good or abuses it for evil. Secondly, we will see how Joseph delivered some tests of his own. He tested his brothers. He tested their hearts. And through all of this, in the next lesson, we will see how this worked together for forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation in the land of affliction.

*What would you do to those who have wronged you, if you had unlimited power to do as you wished?*

### **I. JOSEPH IS TESTED BY GOD (42:1-9).**

The famine caused Jacob to send his sons to Egypt for corn. In this brief passage, we can see that the relationship between Israel and his older sons is strained at best. Jacob has become surly, miserable, and hard to live with, mostly because he did not grieve the loss of his son properly (see Genesis 37:35). He refused to send Benjamin with the ten brothers. Benjamin at this time was about twenty-four years old. Jacob's statement, "lest peradventure mischief befall him," tells us that he had his suspicions about Joseph's death.

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Jacob's ten oldest sons traveled down to Egypt, not knowing that the providence of God was about to catch up with them! "Be sure your sin will find you out," even if it takes twenty years to do so!

In Egypt, the brethren approached Joseph's throne to request bread. They did not recognize Joseph, but he recognized them. As they bowed before him, he remembered his dreams.

This was the last of **Joseph's Seven Tests**:

1. How would he respond to his brothers' hatred for his dreams?
2. How would he respond to being sold as a slave?
3. How would he respond to being tempted by Potiphar's wife?
4. How would he respond to being falsely accused and thrown in prison?
5. How would he respond to being forgotten by the chief butler?
6. How would he respond to a two-year wait after the butler was gone?
7. How would he respond to seeing his brothers again after over twenty years?

What is in Joseph's heart concerning his brethren, that hated him, plotted to murder him, and then sold him into thirteen years of hardship and heartache? Will Joseph, in a fit of rage, order them thrown into prison to rot their lives away? Will he tell them to leave and never come back? Will he have them killed on the spot? Will he welcome them with open arms as though nothing happened?



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Joseph has power – will he use it or abuse it? John Locke said, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Joseph has opportunity to take vengeance. Will he? Has his power corrupted his stainless steel character? The answer is NO.

What we would do in such situations says a lot about what is in our hearts. Many of us, especially those of us in the Lord’s work, have enemies. Perhaps not people who would try to kill us or destroy us, but people who hate us and would rejoice if we were to suffer harm. It is sad that some Christians would be happy if a preacher they hated were to quit the ministry! They can even “justify” their hatred! Yet the Christian who has been wronged or who has enemies is under strict rules for the treatment of those enemies.

⌘ *Proverbs 24:17-18 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: (18) Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.*

⌘ *Proverbs 25:21-22 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: (22) For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.*

In both of these scriptural passages, I have the power to do good or to do evil towards my enemy. He is hungry, and I have bread. He is thirsty, and I have water. What will I do? Will I laugh at his misfortune

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and send him away hungry because I have the power to do so? God says that if I have power to do him good, I am to do so, and that God would use that to heap coals of conviction on his conscience. However, regardless of whether my enemy changes or not, I am to do him good and not evil if I have the opportunity.

Now, let's talk for a moment about forgiveness from the heart.

✠ *Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: (15) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

✠ *Matthew 18:21-22 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? (22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

Now, I must have opportunity to make that forgiveness official, as we will see, but it's first got to be in my heart. Forgiveness is not fully official without repentance by the offender, but it can exist in the heart of the offended at any time. If we are going to be fruitful in the land of affliction, forgiveness MUST find a place in our hearts for those who have caused us affliction.

What is in Joseph's heart concerning his brethren, that hated him, plotted to murder him, and then sold him into thirteen years of hardship and heartache? The scripture reveals only goodness in the

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heart of Joseph. He was too forgiving and full of the Spirit of Christ to be hateful or bitter towards his brethren. At the same time, he could not act as though nothing happened. His brothers had done a horrible thing and needed to repent before a proper relationship could be restored. Joseph passed the test, as we will see in the following chapters.

His rough behavior was not in a spirit of bitterness or vengeance. Joseph had no bitterness in his heart towards his brethren despite what they had done. Joseph was “ready to forgive” when they were ready to get right, just as God is forgiving but doesn’t forgive until there is repentance. He is ready to forgive.

✞ *Psalm 86:5 "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."*

We cannot do what God Himself cannot do! The Christian who has been grievously sinned against cannot completely and officially forgive until there has been repentance, but they should have forgiveness and mercy in their hearts, not hatred, vengeance, and anger.

✞ *Luke 17:3-4 "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. {4} And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."*

Notice that complete forgiveness requires the offender to “*turn again to thee, saying, I repent.*” However, the Christian who, when the offender is trying to repent, will not extend instant forgiveness, is not Christlike. He is not ready to forgive from the heart. In fact, he may be bound by bitterness.

How would you have responded in Joseph’s position? Not everyone has been sinned against to a degree that Joseph was, but many Christians are harboring bitterness, anger and even hatred over things in the past. How would you respond if you were suddenly brought face to face with those who hated you and wronged you so severely?

*The Christian who has been grievously sinned against cannot completely and officially forgive until there has been repentance, but they should have forgiveness and mercy in their hearts, not hatred, vengeance, and anger.*

## **II. JACOB’S SONS ARE TESTED BY JOSEPH (42:10-38).**

Joseph accused his brethren of being spies! Can you imagine the shock and dismay of the ten men as they stood before the frowning face of the second most powerful man in Egypt? They denied the charge, stating that they were all brethren, representing just a small family, and not an enemy nation. Joseph declared that the only way they could

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prove their honesty was to return with Benjamin. Until then, he was going to keep Simeon as a captive!

Why did Joseph go through this elaborate ruse? The answer is found in his words in verse 16: “that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you.” Joseph wanted to see what twenty years had done in the hearts of his brothers. He locked them up in jail for three days, and then released them to return home to get Benjamin.

This was what we call “tough love.” Some people respond well to a gentle or even a firm reproof. Others are so hardened in their sin, so used to deceitful and dishonest behavior, that they have to be frightened towards the “place of repentance.”

Forgiveness does not necessarily mean that full confidence is returned to the person that committed the sin. Certainly, some sins are of such a magnitude, or are repeated so frequently, as to destroy confidence in a person’s character – even if they are genuinely sorry for what they have done. Others are very good at making a good apology to get out of a bad situation – but a good apology does not always indicate true repentance from the heart.

God was using Joseph is going to bring these men to a place of repentance. There is a Biblical ***“place of repentance.”*** Esau could not find this place after selling his birthright. There was nothing he could do to undo his decision.

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⌘ *Hebrews 12:16-17 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. (17) For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

Esau passed the point of finding that place. He couldn't undo what had been done. He never got right with God. It would be good for us to remember that some things cannot be taken back, they cannot be undone. Some can even pass a point of forgiveness by God, if they reach the point of being "given up" or "given over to a reprobate mind" (Romans 1:28). Esau was sold out to a carnal way of life. He wanted to repent in order to get back the benefits of the birthright – but he had lost those rights through a carnal, foolish decision that could not be reversed.

The Prodigal Son came to that place of repentance. It took awhile. He had to run out of money. He had to run out of friends. His "place of repentance" was in a hog pen; he would never have gotten right from the hotel suite.

⌘ *Luk 15:17 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!*

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Some are only repentant because they got caught. If they hadn't gotten caught, they would have never stopped, or they would not have been sorry for their actions. Some are only repentant because they are afraid they will get caught. Repentance is seeing sin as sin – with no excuses attached, no satisfaction in it, and no happy memory about it. It is sin and we should only grieve over it because it was sin against God.

We have studied the life of Joseph through his adversities and trials. It would be good for us to consider the long lasting effects of the brethren's sin. How have they fared for the last twenty years? Their lives prove that *"the way of transgressors is hard"* (Prov. 13:15). The load of guilt upon their minds and consciences has been heavy. It has haunted them night and day. They have watched their father waste away in unrelenting sorrow. Their words at hearing the decree of Joseph reveals a great deal about their hearts:

⌘ *Genesis 42:21-22 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. (22) And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not*

Friend, sin does not have a statute of limitations. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). Sin has its wages and its payday!

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After Joseph's rough treatment, three fearful days in jail, and the work of the Holy Spirit, their hearts were becoming more tender.

Joseph overheard them speaking in Hebrew, not knowing that he understood; his tender heart broke and he turned and wept (vs. 23-24). His weeping represents the tender mercies of God. God wants to forgive! God wants to save! If only our hard hearts would turn to Christ!

Joseph sent them back to get Benjamin, but Jacob refused to let him go. He cannot trust his sons. And so the chapter ends with Joseph and Simeon in Egypt, and Jacob and the other ten sons in Canaan. Yet, God's providence was still at work in all of their lives.



Chapter Six

# FORGIVENESS IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION



**Genesis 43:29-34** 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. (30) 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. (31) And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread. (32) 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. (33) 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. (34) 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.

**T**he purpose of God through these chapters was to bring Joseph's brethren to a place of repentance so that there could be reconciliation and restoration in Joseph's family. It is easy to see what was in Joseph's heart. His heart was full of compassion and a

willingness to forgive. It is harder to see what was in the dark and often evil hearts of his brothers. These events, orchestrated by God through Joseph, were necessary for the restoration of Jacob's family and their preservation in Egypt.

Too many Christians have unconfessed and unforgiven sin in their lives – sins against people that have never been made right. Too many other Christians are harboring old grudges where forgiveness and restoration would be possible if their hearts were more Christlike. Too many families are divided because of unforgiveness on one side or a lack of repentance on the other.

If anyone had a right to hold a grudge or take vengeance, Joseph did. Instead, he revealed a Christlike spirit and perhaps the Bible's greatest example of forgiveness and reconciliation – picturing perfectly the reconciliation of salvation. This lesson will follow four steps in the restoration of a broken set of relationships.

## **I. RIGHTEOUSNESS LED TO REPENTANCE.**

Righteousness led to repentance, but it certainly was not the righteousness of the older brothers. They had been hiding their sin for *twenty years*. With apparent indifference, they watched their father wither away before their eyes. They still lived in the same household – but there was no trust between father and sons.

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It wasn't the righteousness of the brethren that brought reconciliation and restoration. It was the righteousness of Joseph. Joseph was the key to the reconciliation of this family and the redemption of his brethren. Without Joseph, there would not have been any repentance, forgiveness or reconciliation.

In this, he is a perfect type or picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. We had sinned against God, and yet God loved us. The goodness of God led us to repentance, just as the goodness of Joseph led his brethren to repentance. The love and sacrifice of Christ made it possible for us to be reconciled to God through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

✠ *2 Corinthians 5:18-21 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

We were the sinners, the offenders, and God was the authority against whom we sinned. Yet God in His righteousness and love reached out to us, made possible for us to be reconciled through Jesus Christ,

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drew us through the Holy Spirit and the gospel, and received us by grace when we received Jesus Christ as Saviour.

✧ *Rom 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

In this process of reconciliation and restoration, the key is the righteousness of the one who has been sinned against. Without righteousness and Christlikeness in the heart of the one who was harmed, there will never be reconciliation or forgiveness or restoration.

What do we see in the heart of Joseph? We see genuine compassion.

✧ *Gen 42:24 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.*

✧ *Genesis 43:26-31 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. (27) And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? (28) And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance. (29) And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his*

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*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. (30) 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. (31) And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.*

When his brethren stood before him, he exercised mercy. When they returned with Benjamin, he showered them with grace. He threw them a banquet in his own house. They were shocked by his kindness and his gracious treatment. All of this goodness would eventually lead to repentance, reconciliation and restoration. It started with Joseph.

There are several ways that our righteousness can be used of God to bring others to a place of repentance:

### **1. Unmerited love and blessing from the offended.**

✠ *Matthew 5:44-45 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

### **2. Prayer.**

℣ *Matthew 5:44 ...and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

**3. Rebuke or reproof from a position of righteousness and in the spirit of meekness.**

℣ *Luke 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.*

℣ *Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

I heard the story of a woman who had been abused growing up as a child by her older brother. (Sadly, our churches are full of grown women who were sexually abused growing up, not by church members, but family members). In my opinion, there is nothing lower or more perverted than a child abuser. This woman got saved as an adult. She began to grow in grace, but she was not willing to forgive her brother for his sin. In the flesh, I cannot blame her. In the flesh, I would say that he does not deserve forgiveness. But then I remember that NO ONE ever deserves forgiveness. Mercy is never deserved – it is always *given*.

This woman went to her brother, whom she had not seen for many years. He was shocked to see her again. She looked him right in the eye and said, “You abused me as a child; you stole my innocence. You messed up my life, and all these years I’ve hated you for it. But God has

saved me, and for Christ's sake I forgive you for what you did, and I hope that you will seek God's forgiveness for what you did."

She told her pastor that her brother turned pale as a sheet, and as soon as she was finished with her words, he fell down at her feet as though he'd been hit with a baseball bat. He wept uncontrollably. For all those years, he had been tormented with guilt because of what he had done. Her forgiveness brought that guilt out and resulted in repentance. This is an extreme case, but it illustrates the fact that there is power in forgiveness.

**4. Sometimes, taking the righteous position means separating from a brother or even separating him from the church, so that he will be ashamed of his actions.**

Sometimes, we have to take strong measures, even separating from someone's company, so that they will be ashamed and repent of their ways:

✠ *2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 (14) And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. (15) Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

Many Christians never repent because they are soon surrounded by people who facilitate their sin, instead of using their influence to bring them to repentance. Even pastors can sometimes be guilty of accepting disgruntled members from other churches for their own gain, instead of

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leading those members to repent and get right with their previous pastor. Such often reap what they sow.

In some rare cases, it might even be necessary for the church to remove someone from their membership and fellowship, in order to “wake them up” and bring them to a place of repentance. Such was the case of the adulterous young man in Corinth, who was living in sin with his stepmother. The church was not dealing with the situation, but was turning the other way, while their testimony and reputation with the world was being destroyed. Paul told the Corinthian Church that they needed to remove this young fornicator from their church, delivering him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh:

✞ *1Co 5:13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

If this young man had lived in our modern culture with twenty churches in every town (in much of our country), he would have simply transferred his membership to the next church down the road. However, in Corinth there was not another church to join. This young man had to either get right with God or be destroyed by Satan. Because this man was forced to face the **consequences** of his actions, in the face of the whole church, he repented. 2 Corinthians 7 describes his repentance and return to the church. He was reconciled and restored. It started with righteousness. The church had to take the righteous position.



The key to this family being restored was the righteousness of Joseph. He was willing to forgive. He held no hatred, no bitterness. He was used of God to bring his brothers to a place of repentance.

## **II. REPENTANCE LED TO RECONCILIATION.**

We looked into the heart of Joseph and found a clear conscience and a ready forgiveness. Now, let's look in the hearts of his brethren as revealed by their own words:

⌘ *Gen 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.*

⌘ *Gen 44:16 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 righteousness led to a revelation – there was guilt in the hearts of his brethren. Twenty years of unforgiven, unrelenting guilt. “We are verily guilty concerning our brother.” It had been festering in their hearts; it took a crisis situation to bring it to the surface.

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Psychiatrists have tried to outlaw feelings of guilt – but guilt is an uncomfortable but important emotion designed to lead us to repentance and away from the sins that make us feel guilty. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, using the emotion of guilt. Our conscience uses guilt to warn us about sin or to provoke us to repent about it. A seared conscience feels no guilt.

In order for forgiveness to be official it must have two sides: repentance from the offender, and forgiveness from the offended. Even if the offender is not repentant, I can have forgiveness in my heart, but it

*Guilt is an uncomfortable but important emotion designed to lead us to repentance and away from the sins that make us feel guilty.*

cannot be official. There will not be full reconciliation until the offender gets right about his action.

Now, before we go any further, let us stop and understand that we are talking about MAJOR OFFENSES. Too many Christians major on MINOR offenses. They are holding grudges over things that do not amount to a hill of beans. “He did not say hello to me at church,” says Sister Sourpuss. “He said hello to everyone else, and ignored me.” People get offended over the simplest misunderstandings or the silliest things imaginable. Six months later, they are telling the pastor, “We’re

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leaving. Six months ago..." Well, if it was that important, you should have said something *six months ago!*

Some Christians carry a chip on their shoulder and dare someone to knock it off. If no one does, they will knock it off themselves, and blame whoever is standing nearby! Those who take themselves too seriously, or have pride problems, are going to be easily offended, and those who are easily offended are the most likely to hold grudges. As someone has said, **"We need to build a bridge and get over ourselves."**

Minor offenses, misunderstandings, unintentional acts, and even the occasional act of rudeness fall under FORBEARANCE.

✞ *Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

**Big people pass over little transgressions.** Proverbs 19:11 says, *"The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression."* Some things should just bounce off of us. We should simply brush them off and forget about them, because they are not worth getting upset about. Demanding repentance over things that should just be ignored is not the point of this lesson. If God struck us down every time we did some little thing that offended Him, we would

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not last very long. The fact is that very few, if anyone, actually confess EVERY SIN of deed or thought in a day's time. God is merciful to us, and we should be merciful to others, and pass over minor transgressions.

Joseph wasn't nursing hurt feelings because he didn't get a birthday card, or because someone else's kid received a trophy at church. He wasn't upset over a joke, or a misunderstood facial expression, or because he wasn't asked to play a wise man in the Christmas cantata. He had been SOLD AS A SLAVE only after they decided NOT TO KILL HIM. He had spent thirteen years as a slave or a prisoner because of the direct actions of his brothers. This was not something that Joseph could simply ignore or sweep under the rug. Before there could be real reconciliation and real restoration, there had to be real repentance and real forgiveness.

We can see repentance on one side. They've been found out. They know it. Years of hidden guilt are coming to the surface. We can also see real forgiveness.

✞ *Genesis 45:4-5 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. (5) Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*

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Joseph was “ready to forgive.” He forgave instantly. He did not “chew them out.” He did not “get some things off his chest.” He did not make them grovel or beg. He did not say, “You sorry heathen, I’ll think about forgiving you – one day, if you deserve it!” No, he was READY TO FORGIVE when they were ready to repent.

✞ *Luke 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.*

If you have forgiveness in your heart, you won’t need a month to do it; you won’t make people grovel and beg and prove that they deserve it. Instant forgiveness is evidence of a godly, clean heart.

Notice that when the forgiveness was made official, it brought great joy to both parties. At first, they were afraid. But after Joseph made his forgiveness clear, they all had peace and joy. Forgiveness and reconciliation can wash away a lot of really bad, ugly feelings on both sides. It will make you wonder why you ever held on and refused to get it settled in the first place.

Righteousness led to repentance. Repentance led to Reconciliation. It has to start with the spiritual Christian, just as it had to start with Joseph.

“The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. (18) The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (19) Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”  
Psalms 34:17-19

Chapter Seven

**RESTORATION  
IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION**



**Genesis 45:4-11** 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. (5) Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. (6) 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. (7) And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (8) 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. (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: (10) 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: (11) 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.**

In the last chapter, we saw how the righteousness of Joseph led to the repentance of his brethren, and their repentance led to reconciliation. What an amazing scene that must have been, as Joseph revealed himself to his brothers – not as an angry and vengeful judge, but as a merciful and forgiving brother!

To continue the previous lesson, righteousness led to repentance, and repentance led to reconciliation..

## **I. RECONCILIATION LED TO RESTORATION.**

We can imagine the fear that suddenly coursed through the hearts of Joseph's brothers, as they suddenly found themselves at the mercy of the one that they had so grievously sinned against! But Joseph, in his forgiveness, was quick to alleviate their fears (45:7-8). He commanded them to go and retrieve Jacob and the rest of their family members and possessions, so that he could nurture and care for them in Egypt (45:9-15). The beautiful scene ends with Joseph embracing his brethren, giving them a brotherly kiss of reconciliation, and weeping upon the neck of his younger brother Benjamin.



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

Joseph's forgiveness brought restoration to their family. There are some marriages that are hurting that could be restored if there was repentance and forgiveness. There are some estranged parents and children who could be restored if there was repentance and forgiveness.

There are some estranged relationships and friendships that could be restored if there was Biblical repentance and forgiveness. That which is broken can be repaired again. It may never be "the same," but it can be restored. It need not stay broken forever. Some relationship is better than no relationship.

## **II. RESTORATION LEADS TO REVIVED RELATIONSHIPS.**

When Jacob learned that Joseph was alive and well, and that he would see him again, he "revived:"

⌘ *Genesis 45:24-28 So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. (25) And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, (26) 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*

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*believed them not. (27) 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:** (28) And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

The old man, so long crippled by grief, sorrow, and perhaps his own unforgiveness and bitterness, revived. The shoulders that had been slumped for twenty years straightened. The heart that had been wallowing in self pity and infected with bitter grief was lifted with hope and joy. He gathered his family and went down into Egypt, where we can imagine the tremendous joy as he was reunited with the son so long believed to have been dead:

✞ *Genesis 46:29-30 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. (30) And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.*

Joseph placed his family in the best land of Egypt, in Goshen, where he nurtured and cared for them through the long, lean years of famine.

Who would have thought this possible, years before, as Joseph was being led away in chains towards Egypt – betrayed, hated, and sold by

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his brethren? Forgiveness is an amazing thing! It is a powerful thing. It brought about restored relationships, especially with his father. In Genesis 48, we read of how Joseph's sons were blessed by Grandpa Jacob. That would have never happened if the relationship had remained severed. I encourage young people to make peace with their parents and to give some sort of grandparent relationship to their children. I thank God for the blessing that my parents and in-laws have been to my children. I believe that, though there may be some extreme situations where it is better to stay separate, that broken relationships result in lost blessings.

*There are some estranged relationships and friendships that could be restored if there was Biblical repentance and forgiveness. That which is broken can be repaired again. It may never be "the same," but it can be restored. It need not stay broken forever.*

Joseph's forgiveness also led to a revived relationship with his brothers, which did not fade with time. When, years later, Jacob died, the older brethren still feared retribution. But there was nothing to fear. Joseph's forgiveness had been total and for life:

✠ *Genesis 50:14-21 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. (15) And when*

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*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. (16) And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, (17) 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. (18) And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. (19) And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? (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. (21) Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.*

Forgiveness can lead to restored and revived relationships of various degrees. It may be that things can never “be the same.” But that does not mean that there cannot be some revival or restoration to the relationship. Unwillingness to allow any restoration is evidence of unforgiveness, no matter what we say. Often, it is a crutch, because restoring a relationship takes self-denial and work, which the

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unforgiving person does not want to undertake. It is easier to hate and hold unforgiveness over the past transgression.

When my mother was a little girl, her father abandoned the family, devastating her little heart. Her mother remarried, and my mother really loved her new stepfather. Then, he abandoned the family as well. This crushed my mother as a teenager and caused her life to spin into foolish decisions, leading her to marry too soon, to an abusive man (not my father; she later divorced the abusive husband and married my father). Now, I have no use for deadbeat dads or fathers who abandon their families. There are few things lower than abandoning a wife or children. Few things are as devastating to a child's mind, heart, emotions, or future. I have no respect for such male creatures, whom I cannot call "men."

Many years later, my family got saved. God did a work in my mother's heart concerning the old bitterness towards her father. She began to search for him over the Internet, and found him living in California. She reached out to him, even flying to California to meet with him after more than forty years of separation. There was repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration.

This does not mean that everything was suddenly as it should have been. It did not erase forty years of hurt. It was not the same relationship they would have had if he had stayed with his family, raised her, and loved her all those years. But it was better than nothing. There

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was some restoration. They had a few happy days together. There was closure in my mother's heart. It freed her from bitterness and unforgiveness. A few months later, he died of cancer.

Too many Christians are not overcoming because they are holding on to things in their past. Do you want to overcome? Do you want freedom and closure and peace? Be the reconciler. If reconciliation is not possible or advisable, forgive from the heart. Do not let something in the past ruin your life in the present, or your future.

Are there situations where restoration or reconciliation are not advisable? I would say that in the increasingly frequent cases of sexual abuse that forgiveness should be at a distance. If your father or brother or uncle or grandfather abused you as a child, do not let them anywhere near your children. There is no reason that you should put yourself or your children in any position that could be dangerous.

But there are many strained and broken relationships that would not pose a danger. There could be some restoration. Ask God to help you to have, or make, an opportunity for reconciliation and restoration.

Chapter Eight

# SEPARATION IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION



**Gen 49:26** 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.

**O**ne of the secrets to Joseph's success can be found in the last words of Jacob, as he blessed his son. He described Joseph as *"him that was separate from his brethren."*

Many years before, the family of Jacob came to a spiritual crossroads. Jacob got right with God and returned to Bethel, the House of God. His older sons conformed somewhat but did not repent towards God. They continued on their evil way. They did not follow their father as he followed God. Young Joseph, just fourteen years old, stood at that crossroad. His father went off one direction towards God. His older brothers went the other way, pursuing the world, the flesh and the devil. It would have been easy for Joseph to follow the majority; it

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would have been an easy choice to follow his big brothers. Instead, Joseph followed his father and the God of his father. This decision was the most important in his life. This decision also separated him from his brethren.

Separation is a Bible doctrine taught throughout the Word of God, from beginning to end. It can easily be seen in the lives of the Patriarchs. God separated Abraham from the paganism of Ur of the Chaldeans. Abraham separated himself from wickedness of the Canaanites of the land. Lot was not separated and ended up in Sodom with a destroyed life. Isaac was separated but he sent his son back to the world to get a wife (Abraham gave strict orders that his son was never to leave the Promised Land). Jacob was not separated, and he ended up practicing the way of the heathen, taking four wives and raising a worldly, wicked family.

It does matter where we stand in relation to God and in relation to the wickedness of this world. We cannot stand on both sides of two opposite positions:

- ✧ *Jas 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*
- ✧ *1 John 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world, the lust*



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*of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (17) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Either we are separated from God unto the world, or we are separated from the world unto God. We are either walking in the light or walking in darkness. We cannot do both. God calls us to separate FROM the world, and separate ourselves TO Himself:

✠ *2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (15) And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (16) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, (18) And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

When we practice either version of separation, we will separate from:

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1. Certain people.
2. Certain places.
3. Certain practices.

The person who is separated *from God unto the world* is separated from:

1. Certain people. They don't want to hang around with preachers, for example. The last person they want to see is a man of God. They don't want to hang around spiritual Christians. They don't want to hang around with those whose lives are a standing rebuke to their own decisions. They prefer lukewarm and carnal churches if they attend a church at all.
2. Certain places. They will avoid going to church. Why? Because they are separated from God. They'll hate the thought of going to church. They'll make up reasons why they shouldn't go.
3. Certain practices. Bible reading, prayer, and serving the Lord are foreign concepts to those that are separated from God unto the world.

On the other hand, the person who is separated *from the world unto God* is separated from:

1. Certain people. We just don't hang out with the wrong crowd. We like to hang out with God's people. By the way, if you are *with* the wrong crowd, you *are* the wrong crowd!

2. Certain places. We don't go to the places of darkness. We don't go to the bars, the clubs and honkey-tonks and places where sinful living is exalted.
3. Certain practices. There are things that I will not do or engage in because I am a Christian.

We are all separated, one way or the other. The question is this: Which direction are you separated toward? From God to the world, or from the world to God? Spiritual overcomers have separated in the right direction.

## **I. JOSEPH WAS SEPARATE FROM HIS BRETHREN.**

When Joseph, as a teenager, came to the spiritual fork in the road, he chose the straight and narrow way over the broad way of his brethren. This decision changed his destiny, but it also separated him from his brothers. They could not longer walk in agreement. His brethren began to hate him for his righteousness and his favor. This, of course, led to persecution.

✞ *Gal 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.*

When they engaged in their evil acts, Joseph did not. He did not go where they went. He did not do what they did. His righteousness

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separated him from their ways. Because of this, they separated him from their company altogether.

✞ *Luke 6:22-23 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. (23) Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.*

*Joseph, as a teenager, came to a spiritual fork in the road. He chose the straight and narrow way, and that decision changed his destiny.*

Christ told us that if we are

living right, some people are going to separate us from their company. They will reproach us, and cast out our name as evil. The reason is simple: the righteousness of a godly Christian is a standing reproach to unrighteousness – just as Joseph's coat was a reproach to his brethren. You won't even have to say anything. You just have to stand with the Father, and those who are not right with the Father will hate you for it.

✞ *John 3:19-21 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest*

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*his deeds should be reproved. (21) But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

✞ *John 15:18-20 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. (19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (20) Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

Joseph was separate from his brethren. He was separated from them by his righteousness. Then, they separated themselves from him because of his righteousness.

## **II. JOSEPH SEPARATED HIMSELF FROM AREAS OF TEMPTATION.**

We have already discussed the temptation of Potiphar's wife. She was a strong temptation, a wicked woman with an adulterous heart and a wicked mind. She was alluring, and persistent. But Joseph rejected her advance, and rejected all subsequent advances. He refused to even get into a place of temptation. He would not hearken to her. He would not

give in to her subtle suggestions. He would not lie by her. He would not be with her. And when she threw out all the stops, he ran away.

Smart Christians separate from areas of temptation:

- ⌘ *1Co 6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*
- ⌘ *1Ti 6:11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*
- ⌘ *2Ti 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

Too many Christians want to cuddle up with temptation. They want to flirt with it. They like to cuddle up with Mrs. Potiphar – but they aren't going to *do* anything! That is not the mark of an overcomer. Overcomers like Joseph separate themselves from the presence of temptation.

### **III. JOSEPH SEPARATED HIS FAMILY FROM WORLDLY CULTURES, PLACING THEM IN GOSHEN.**

**First, Joseph separated his family from the *Canaanite culture*, bringing them into Egypt.** This was vital for the preservation of the Jewish race. They were mingling with the Canaanites, learning their

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ways, and intermarrying with their people. They were being assimilated into the heathen cultures around them. God put them in the “iron furnace” (Deut. 4:20) to purge them of the worldliness of their ways.

**Then, Joseph separated his family from the Egyptian culture.** With Pharaoh’s permission, he separated them from the majority of the Egyptians into their own corner of the land, **Goshen**, which means “well watered” or “cultivated land.”

✠ *Genesis 47:5-6 And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: (6) 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.*

Egypt pictures the world. Joseph put them in Goshen, a separate place *within* Egypt. They were in Egypt, and yet they were separated from Egypt. They had their own island within the sea of Egypt, where they were separated from the idolatry, separated to worship the true and living God, separated from the corruption of the Egyptian systems of worship and education.

**The home and the church home are our Goshens in this Egypt.** My home is in the world, but the world doesn’t have to be in my home. There is too much Egyptian influence in our homes. Your home ought to be a spiritually safe zone. Your home ought to glorify God. Children are

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not confused by high standards at church. They are confused by double standards at home.

My church home is in the world, but the world doesn't have to be in my church. I want a church that is spiritual and righteous, not carnal and worldly. I think it is a shame that so many churches have turned to Egypt for their programs and service style and music styles. This is my Goshen. This is where my children are taught the Bible and influenced for Jesus Christ. We leave the world and come here. I do not want to be reminded of the world in this place, part of my Goshen!

Joseph separated his family from the Canaanite culture and the Egyptian culture for their protection and purity. In doing so, he saved his people from more than mere starvation. He saved them from a lost identity and a faithless future!

Separation is a key to becoming fruitful in the land of affliction. Overcomers choose sides. You are either separated from God to the world, or separated from the world to God. Joseph made that decision early, and it helped to make him fruitful in the land of his affliction.



Chapter Nine

FRUITFUL  
IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION



**Gen 49:22** Joseph *is* a fruitful bough, *even* a fruitful bough by a well;  
*whose* branches run over the wall:

**T**he scripture above was part of Israel's departing blessing on Joseph. He described him as a fruitful vine. In fact, the symbol associated with the Tribe of Joseph, even to this day in Israel, is a cluster of grapes or a grapevine. Joseph was fruitful, despite the adversities of his life.

**I. GOD'S DESIRE IS FOR US TO BE FRUITFUL, EVEN IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION.**

Over the years, our lives will bear fruit. The only question is of what quality and quantity. Jacob's life bore much bitter fruit from his years out of the Promised Land – but also some good fruit in the life of Joseph, brought about by his decision to return to Bethel. Joseph's life bore a great deal of good fruit, which benefited countless people – and

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continues to benefit people even today. His brethren's lives bore much bitter fruit – fruit that even Jacob and Joseph were forced to eat. This reminds us of the importance of sowing good seed if we would desire a good harvest – and much good seed if we would see a great, bountiful harvest.

God desires for us to be fruitful. In John 15, we find the fruit bearing chapter of the Bible. The entire chapter deals with the Christian and the fruitfulness that God expects to find in his life. In this chapter, we can find five levels of fruit bearing:

1. **No fruit** - *Joh 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away...*
2. **Some fruit** - *Joh 15:2 ...and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it...*
3. **More fruit** - *Joh 15:2 ...and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*
4. **Much fruit** - *Joh 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.*
5. **Fruit that remains** - *Joh 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...*

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What kinds of fruit does God desire to see produced in my life? ***First and foremost, God wants the fruit of soulwinning.*** The fruit of a Christian is another Christian.

✞ *Pro 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*

It is another person getting saved, baptized, taught, and producing fruit for God. That ought to be our goal. It is God's goal. He doesn't just save us so we'll be saved. He would save us for just our sake, but he wants us to be fruitful and multiply – winning people to Christ, seeing them baptized and disciplined into fruitful Christians themselves.

***Secondly, there is the fruit of the Spirit.*** God wants us to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

✞ *Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

The fruit of the Spirit is the image of Jesus Christ being produced through my transformed life. Sadly, many Christians evidence more of the fruit of the flesh than the fruit of the Spirit.

***Thirdly, there is the fruit of investment in the souls of men.***

✞ *Php 4:17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*

When you invest your time, talent, or treasures into the soulwinning work of the church, such as through Faith Promise Missions, you are

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making an investment in eternity. When our missionaries win souls, baptize converts, and establish churches, fruit abounds to our accounts! Are you fruitful in heavenly investments?

***Fourthly, there is the fruit of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.***

⌘ *Heb\_13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*

Yes, God desires for us to be fruitful in praise, no matter our circumstances. Joseph was fruitful, despite the dry and arid surroundings of his situation. We can be fruitful also.

## **II. THE KEY TO FRUITFULNESS IS ABIDING IN THE VINE.**

⌘ *Gen 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:*

It is important to note that Joseph was not the VINE. He was a bough or a branch off the main vine. The main vine is planted by a well, where there is a constant supply of water. Without the Vine, Joseph would not have had the source of supply needed to be fruitful in the land of affliction.

The key to fruitfulness is simply abiding in the vine.

⌘ *Joh 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

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✞ *John 15:4-7 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. (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. (6) 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. (7) If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Christ, as the Vine, provides:

1. Our nourishment.
2. Our strength.
3. Our stability. We are *rooted* in Him.
4. The power to produce the fruit.

A Christian is always “in Christ” positionally; he is eternally secure in Christ, forever! Yet in practice, a Christian can become “disconnected” from the Vine. In other words, a Christian can be saved forever and yet not live daily in fellowship and service to the Lord Jesus. Just because you are saved does not mean that you can be fruitful for the Lord if you are not reading the Word of God, spending time in prayer, or living in obedience to the Lord. If we are not abiding in the vine, then we are cut

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off from the power and nourishment that our spiritual lives need to bring forth spiritual fruit.

What does it mean to abide in Christ? The branch abides in the vine by staying connected to the vine. As long as it is connected properly to the vine, it gets the nourishment needed to produce fruit. If disconnected from the vine, it withers and dies.

Abiding in Christ then means to continue in a connected relationship with Christ. We are told to abide:

1. In Him. We do not have a religion, but a relationship with a Person.
2. In His love. *Joh 15:9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*
3. In His words. *Joh 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*
4. In His commandments (obedience). *Joh 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

When we get away from Christ, we begin to wither. We are cut off from the water in that well of everlasting life. We are not getting the nourishment that we need. This is why it is important to maintain our spiritual exercises and devotions. It's part of maintaining our fellowship with the Lord.

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℣ *Psalms 1:2-3 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (3) 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.*

You could put Joseph in a pit or a prison but you couldn't change his love for God. He loved God despite everything. He was faithful to God despite the circumstances of his life. He abided. Because of that, he was fruitful.

It may seem like a trite thing to read the Bible every morning and spend some time in prayer, and go to church, and obey God. Some say that's just religion. No, it's abiding. I suppose kissing your wife goodbye every day or saying I love you seems unimportant to some, but it goes a long way towards *abiding* in your marriage relationship. Abide in Christ if you would be fruitful in the land of affliction.

Now, when we are abiding in the vine and begin to produce fruit, God is going to start purging us, that we might bring forth more fruit. Purging is necessary to go from some fruit to more fruit and much fruit.

℣ *John 15:1-2 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. (2) 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.*

In Joseph's life, the purging was painful and it took a long time. The greater the work God has for us to do, the more purging and pruning is necessary. No one likes the pruning process, but it is needed. Unpruned branches lead to inferior fruit, and will eventually break under their own weight. This is exactly what happens to unpruned Christians. Our lives bear stunted fruit, or, through pride, we are broken under the weight of our apparent "successes." Pruning is necessary for quality and quantity.

### III. THE EFFECT OF FRUITFULNESS IS A WIDE-RANGING INFLUENCE.

℣ *Gen 49:22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:*

There is a family blessing here: "**whose branches run over the wall.**" My children, my branches, are my greatest opportunity to make a difference for Jesus Christ. I want my children to be fruitful for God.

I see a wide-ranging influence – "*whose branches run **over the wall.***" Joseph's life impacted his children, his father, his brothers and their families, the entire land of Egypt, and the nations around Egypt – AND future generations of people. If you will be an overcomer, you may influence far more people than you can ever imagine!



Chapter Ten

**PERSPECTIVE  
IN THE LAND OF AFFLICTION**



**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. (6) 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. (7) And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (8) 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.**

**P**erspective, or how we look at things, is very important. When Goliath came against the Israelites, the soldiers, to a man, thought, "He's too big to kill." David looked at the same giant and thought, "He's too big to miss!" David saw the same giant that everyone else saw – but he was looking from the perspective of faith.

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A shoe manufacturer who decided to open the Congo market sent two salesmen to the undeveloped territory. One salesman cabled back: "There are no prospects here. No one wears shoes. Bring me home." The other salesman saw things from a different perspective. He reported enthusiastically, "Send me all the shoes you've got! No one here has any shoes! Unlimited potential!"

A man read an ad in the newspaper, "Hunting dog for sale, \$2,500.00, but well worth it." He called the number and the man told him that he had to see the dog in action. The next morning they met and went hunting. The dog flushed two birds from a clump of bushes and when they fell into the water, he walked on top of the water, grabbed the birds, and walked back on top of the water. The man was amazed, and bought the dog on the spot. The next day he persuaded his brother to go hunting with him. They flushed a couple of birds and the dog again walked on top of the water, retrieved the birds, and walked back to their boat on top of the water. He asked his brother what he thought of the dog and the brother replied, "Dummy, you bought a dog who can't swim."

How we look at the circumstances and situations of life is going to determine a lot of things about how we live, how we view our problems, the level of our joy, and the strength of our faith. It will determine how we face situations, and how we learn from those situations.

When Major General Oliver Smith was asked if he was retreating during a battle in Korea, he responded, “Retreat? No, we’re just attacking in another direction.”

Another famous Marine, Chesty Puller, was told that they were surrounded. He replied something along these lines: “We’re surrounded? That simplifies the problem. Now we can fire in any direction. They won’t get away from us this time!”

The difference between success and failure, between succumbing or overcoming, is often a mere difference in perspective. Joseph was a man who understood perspective. His statements in Genesis 45 to his brothers revealed that he saw beyond their evil actions to the overruling providence of an Almighty God.

Consider some perspectives from the life of Joseph:

## **I. THE PERSPECTIVE FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT.**

⌘ *Genesis 37:23-24* And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; (24) And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

Joseph, as a teenager, was doing the right things. He was separated from his brethren and their unrighteous ways. He was beloved and blessed by his father. Suddenly, he was stripped of his blessing and

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tossed into a dry pit. While he cried out from the depths of that pit, his brethren sat down and ate their lunch, laughing at Joseph in his anguish. I can picture Joseph at the bottom of the pit, in the dark, listening to the raucous laughter of his evil brethren, looking up from the pitch dark of the bottom of that cistern to a small opening of light, and wondering what was going to happen. It is hard to get much lower than the bottom of a pit.

Ever had a ***“bottom of the pit perspective?”*** Have you been in that dark place that seemed impossible to escape - where it didn't seem like things could ever get worse? Have you ever just had to sit down in the dirt and

*The difference between success and failure, between succumbing or overcoming, is often a mere difference in perspective.*

look up at a little piece of sky? It's not a very pleasant perspective.

Then, Joseph found himself being transferred from a literal pit to a metaphorical one. They sold him as a slave to some passing Midianites.

Can you imagine as Joseph was put in chains and perhaps tied into a line of slaves, or behind a camel caravan? How's that perspective? Can you imagine Joseph as he walked across the desert sands of the Sinai Peninsula, every mile taking him further and further from his father's house and into the dark and ugly Unknown? What hope did Joseph have of ever seeing his father again?

For thirteen long years, Joseph's life went from one pit to another – finally ending in prison. You may say, “Preacher, I can handle short term trials of my faith, but this seems to go on forever. It has been six months!” It was thirteen years for Joseph. I would like to say that all trials are over in a few days, weeks, or months. But there is no Biblical guarantee that years will not pass before the trial is ended.

The perspective from the bottom of the pit is never very encouraging. Neither was the perspective from Potiphar's house or the prison house. And if that is the only perspective you have, you are not going to be an overcomer like Joseph was. You **MUST** see beyond the pit to the throne of an Almighty God!

## **II. THE PERSPECTIVE OF FAITH.**

In our text verses, Joseph revealed the perspective of faith that kept him going and helped him to overcome all of the obstacles in his life:

- ⌘ *Gen 45:5* Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: **for God did send me before you to preserve life.**
- ⌘ *Genesis 45:7-8* And **God sent me** before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (8) **So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God:** and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and

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

Joseph overcame the pit perspective with **a faith perspective**. He saw God at work in all the situations of his life. He knew that these events had not come as a direct result of foolish decisions on his part, and therefore they must be a part of a providential plan of God for his life.

Do you have the perspective of faith? Faith means that you cannot see the end result but you trust that God is in control. Do you believe this precious promise:

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

Job described both the pit perspective and the faith perspective:

✠ *Job 23:8-10 Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: (9) On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: (10) But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

God sometimes covers His throne with thick clouds.

✠ *Job 26:9 He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.*

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☞ *Psa 97:2 Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*

We want to see God on His throne; we want to see and understand what God is doing in our lives. But God's thoughts are as far above our thoughts as the heaven is above the earth (Is. 55:9). Sometimes, God in His providence shrouds His throne in dark clouds, and will not allow us to see or understand what He is doing. That is when we must walk by faith, trusting that, though we cannot see the throne through the dark clouds of providence, God is still on His throne, executing righteousness.

Joseph did not *know* how things would turn out. He did not have the Book of Genesis like we do, where he could read forward and see that God was going to promote him to Vice-Pharaoh and use him to save his family. Wouldn't it be nice if God let us see how everything was going to turn out BEFORE we went through it? Joseph did not KNOW. He had to go through every day of all thirteen years – all 4745 days – before he could SEE what God had been doing all along.

Joseph didn't know WHY. But he knew that God knew WHY. That was enough for Joseph. Is that enough for you?

The perspective of faith helped Joseph to take a lot of abuse without becoming bitter. It allowed him to suffer greatly without becoming embittered towards God or others. There is no evidence that he ever hated his brothers for bringing this sorrow into his life. His faith

kept him tenderhearted, content, growing, and useful. It allowed him to grow through his adversity. It allowed him to learn lessons that made him a better person and a more usable vessel for the Lord. He continued to love his family, and it was through his righteousness that the family was eventually restored and reconciled.

Do you have the perspective of faith? Do you trust God when you are in the pit? Do you trust Him despite tremendous setbacks and hurtful adversity? Do you trust His promises and His providence in your life?

### **III. THE PERSPECTIVE OF TIME.**

One helpful fact about our texts is that they both occurred many years after Joseph was cast into the pit by his brothers. Our first text verses in Genesis 45 occurred about 22 years after Joseph had been sold as a slave. The second passage in Genesis 50 took place about 40 years later.

Time often gives a good perspective on situations that we just can't have when we are sitting at the bottom of a pit. Sometimes you just have to see how things are going to play themselves out. What looks like a major thing today that you will never overcome may seem like an insignificant event twenty years from now.

When I was a teenager, some things seemed very big and important. Time – and the maturity it brings - has shown that they were



not very important after all. Some things that I thought unimportant at age fifteen were actually very important. Time brings new perspective.

Time's perspective can be very revealing. It will reveal the fruit of our ways, both good and bad. When Lot left Abraham and pitched his tent towards Sodom, everything seemed fine for quite a number of years. He had worldly success, a family, and acceptance in society. But from time's perspective, when one sees the plain of Sodom smoking like a furnace under God's judgment, and witnesses the debauched end of Lot's life in a cave, we can see the true fruit of his ways.

Some of Joseph's decisions seemed to "turn out wrong." He did right as a lad, but ended up hated and sold by his brothers. He did the right thing concerning Potiphar's wife, and yet ended up in prison. His decisions seemed to bring forth bad consequences – but time's perspective vindicated those decisions.

Joseph said, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. You just wanted to get rid of me in your hatred, but God is actually the one Who sent me here, to preserve this nation and our family. God meant it for God. God had a purpose." This was easy to see from the throne of the Pharaoh. It could not be seen from the bottom of the pit. Time's perspective is reserved for those who live by faith when they don't have the benefit of being able to see from time's perspective.

#### **IV. THE PERSPECTIVE OF ETERNITY.**

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This is the best perspective of all, but it is part of the perspective of faith. Paul lived with this perspective.

✧ *2 Corinthians 4:16-18 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; (18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

✧ *Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Paul had his eyes on eternity. He knew that no amount of suffering or hardships in the will of God would be greater than the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory awaiting him in heaven. We need to learn to look at the things which are eternal, and not lose our faith over the things that are temporal. Temporal things are temporary. Eternal things are eternal.

### ***A million years from now, what will matter?***

I read about a pitcher in the golden days of baseball who was known for his calm composure, even when facing some of the best batters in the League, or when facing big situations, such as bases

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loaded with the game on the line. When asked, he told them about his Ball of Ice principle. He said, “When the pressure is on, I just tell myself, ‘In a million years, this earth will just be a giant ball of ice spinning through space, and no one is going to care what happens when I throw this ball.’”

We need an eternal perspective. What is going to matter is that I am saved and my family is saved. What is going to matter is that I am a good servant of God and a good steward for God, so that I can have a good standing at the Judgment Seat. What matters is that I finish my course and do the work that God has for me to do.

One day, those of us who are saved are going to look back from the golden shores of heaven. It will be a different perspective then! So many things that we think are so important will not matter then. And many things that we deemed unimportant in this lifetime will take on eternal significance.

Until then, we may find ourselves at the bottom of some pits. Sometimes from our own decisions. Sometimes because of the decisions of others. Sometimes because God’s providence puts us there. We have to see beyond the pit. We have to live by faith and have faith’s perspective. Then, we will earn the right to enjoy time’s perspective, and eternity’s perspective.

*“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: (23) The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: (24) 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:) (25) 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: (26) 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.”*

*Genesis 49:22-26*

## JOSEPH AS A TYPE OF CHRIST



**A**s we study the life of Joseph, we are reminded of One greater than Joseph – the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, Joseph is a tremendous Old Testament “type” or picture of the Lord Jesus in at least twenty major ways:

1. Both were the beloved sons of their fathers (Gen. 37:3; Matthew 3:17; John 10:17).
2. Both were shepherds (Gen. 37:2; Psalm 23; Heb. 13:20).
3. Both were hated by their brethren (Gen. 37:4-8; John 5:18; 6:42; 10:30-31).
4. Both were sent on a mission by their father concerning their brethren (Gen. 37:12-14; 1 John 4:10).
5. Both continued seeking that which was lost (Gen. 37:17; Luke 19:10).
6. Both were conspired against (Gen. 37:18; Matthew 12:14).
7. Both were stripped of their garments (Gen. 37:23; John 19:23).
8. Both were betrayed and sold (Gen. 37:28; Matt. 26:14).
9. Both were taken to Egypt (Gen. 37:26; Matthew 2:14-15).

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10. Both became servants (Gen. 39:1; Philippians 2:6-7).
11. Both were sinless in temptation (Gen. 39:7-12; Heb. 4:15) – though only Christ was perfectly sinless.
12. Both were falsely accused (Gen. 39:7-20; Matt. 26:59-60).
13. Both were unjustly convicted (Gen. 39:19-20; Matt. 26:66).
14. Both were numbered with transgressors, of which one was saved, and the other lost (Gen. 40:2-3; Luke 23:32).
15. Both were about 30 years old when they began their ministries (Gen. 41:46; Luke 3:23).
16. Joseph's brethren did not recognize him; the Jews did not recognize Jesus (Gen. 42:8; Acts 13:27).
17. Joseph was publicly exalted; Jesus will be at His return (Gen. 41:41; Philippians 2:9).
18. Every knee bowed to Joseph; every knee will bow before Christ (Gen 41:43; Philippians 2:10-11).
19. Both were saviors of the Jews and Gentiles (Gen. 41:57; 42:1-2; Matthew 1:21).
20. Both were merciful and forgiving to those that sinned against them (Gen. 50:20-21; Luke 23:34).

## JOSEPH'S RECONCILIATION – A PICTURE OF SALVATION



***(Rom 5:10) "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."***

1. His great desire to be reconciled with them, but requiring their repentance first (vs. 2; Matthew 9:36; Luke 15:20).
2. His efforts to bring them to a place of repentance (Luke 19:10; Romans 2:4).
3. His willingness to forgive *instantly* when they repented. (*Psa 86:5*)  
*"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."*
4. Their instant admission to his throne and into his presence – vs. 4.  
(*Heb 4:16*) *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*
5. His words of comfort and forgiveness to replace their fear. (*Mat 9:22*) *"But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."*

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6. His revelation of his status as their brother – vs. 4. (*Mat 12:50*) *"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."* (*Mat 28:10*) *"Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."*
7. His revelation of the plan of God for their salvation – vs. 5-8. (*Eph 3:11*) *"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:"*
8. The kiss and embrace of reconciliation – vs. 14-15. (*Luke 15:20*) *"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."*
9. They fellowshiped together – vs. 15. (*1 John 1:3*) *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."*
10. He immediately sent them on a mission – vs. 9-13. (*Mark 16:15*) *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*



*“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. (7) He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”*

*Revelation 21:6-7*