

Lessons From the Life of Joseph

by William MacDonald

The sermon teaches us about the importance of faith, trust, and forgiveness, and how these qualities can lead to a deeper relationship with God and a greater commitment to serving Him.

Duration: 29:14

Scripture: Genesis 39:1

Topics: "Life Of Joseph"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Joseph from the Bible. He emphasizes the lessons that Joseph's brothers had to learn, such as the consequences of their transgressions and the fact that sin will eventually be revealed. The preacher highlights how Joseph's brothers thought they had committed the perfect crime by throwing Joseph into a pit and deceiving their father with a bloodied coat. However, they eventually faced the consequences of their actions and had to acknowledge their sins. The preacher also emphasizes that God works out his purposes in all circumstances and that for those who walk with God, nothing happens by chance.

Transcript

Last week we were thinking about some lessons from the life of Job. Today I'd like to take up some lessons from the life of Joseph. Perhaps you'd turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 39, and we'll read the first six verses.

Genesis 39, verses 1 through 6. Now, Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man, and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.

So Joseph found favor in his sight and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put in his hand. So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake.

The blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field. So he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

In studying the life of Joseph, you have to believe in the sovereignty of God. God is above all, and God moves the characters on his stage. The secret of Joseph's life was that he walked with the Lord.

And I'm sure you noticed that refrain in these verses that we read, The Lord was with Joseph. This is an impregnable position, to walk with God and to have the Lord with you. There were many dark hours in Joseph's history.

There were hours when he could have asked, Why did this happen to me? Here I've been faithful to the Lord, I've trusted the Lord, and now look what happened. But there's never even a suggestion of that in the life of Joseph. His trust was in the Lord, and he knew that God was over all.

Joseph was not appreciated. Certainly was not appreciated at home, was he? His brothers were filled with envy and jealousy because of him. And that's often true of a person who walks with God.

He's not appreciated. But a person in that situation is in good company because the Lord Jesus wasn't appreciated when he was here on earth. We saw no beauty that we should desire him, Isaiah says.

Rather sad, the only truly beautiful character who ever lived, and men could see no beauty in him that they should desire him. This was the case with Joseph as well. But the Lord Jesus triumphed in spite of that, and so did Joseph.

We see in the life of Joseph that sometimes bad things happen to good people. First his brothers tried to kill him, then they compromised by throwing him in a pit. The next scene, you find him in prison in Egypt, and it seemed to be reverse after reverse.

Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, seemed to be the story of Joseph's life. Yet behind the dim unknown stands God amid the shadows, keeping watch above his own. And that's the thrill of the life of Joseph, to know that God was working out his purposes through all of these changing scenes in life.

Joseph teaches us distinctly that though man may have his wickedness, God has his way, and no chapter is the entire story of a man's life. That's a wonderful thing. No chapter is the entire story of a man's life.

And God brought Joseph out of the darkness and out of the gloom into a wonderfully bright place. Joseph teaches us that for the man who walks with God, for the person who walks with God, nothing happens by chance. Really wonderful.

This is what gives peace and poise to the Christian life. Just put yourself in a position this morning where you don't know God, and there's no control over anything. Sort of a fatalism.

What's going to happen is going to happen. I mean, you could really develop quite a set of nerves under those circumstances. To think there is no control, and that you are just the victim of chance.

Not so with the child of God. No matter what happens, what comes into our life, we can know God is above it all. God is working out His purposes.

As we found out last week in the case of Job, God is always working out His purposes and keeping His promises. And not one promise of the Lord will ever fall to the ground. I'm so glad this morning that nothing happens by chance.

Things just don't happen. They're planned. We had a lovely experience two days ago.

We were on the other side of the Sierras, and we were down in a place called Lone Pine. We were going to drive north a couple of hours to come over the Tioga Pass Road. And we were eating in a restaurant, and as we were paying the bill, I said to the waitress, I suppose you folks are waiting for the snow and for all the ski business.

She said, snow? She said, I just heard over the radio that Tioga Pass is closed for the season. She said, it's snowing there. That simple remark saved us four hours of fruitless driving.

We were going to drive up there two hours from Lone Pine. If we had left the restaurant five minutes sooner, we would have been on our way to Tioga Pass. We didn't.

We saw the hand of God in that. It's wonderful to see His hand in all the circumstances of life. She said, not only Tioga Pass is closed for the season, Sonora Pass is closed, and all the other passes up north.

You have to have chains. We didn't have chains. So we came down by Bakersfield, and we were home in good time.

We wouldn't have been home in good time if she hadn't made that remark. Just heard over the radio, Tioga Pass is closed. You leave God guides in those little details in life.

I want to tell you, He really does. Nothing happens by chance. Joseph's brothers had some lessons to learn.

They had to learn that the way of the transgressor is hard. They had to learn, be sure that your sin will find you out. They thought they had committed the perfect crime.

They had thrown their brother into a pit. They had taken his coat of many colors, and they had dipped it in the blood of a goat, taken it to the father to prove that Joseph was dead. I mean, circumstantial evidence.

There's the evidence that is death, the perfect crime. And it seemed to be for a number of years, seemed to be that they got away with it. But they had to learn, you reap in life what you sow.

And things have a very unsettling way of coming to the surface, don't they? For all of those years, they had muffled the voice of conscience. But the sin was still there, and the purposes of God, it had to come out. And in order for it to come out, Joseph had to be elevated to second in command in Egypt, and had to put his brothers through a period of tribulation before they came to the place where they acknowledged their sin and were freely forgiven.

Wonderful, really. That's what's going to happen between the Lord Jesus and the Jewish people in Akabite. He's going to put them through that period of great tribulation.

At the end of that time, they'll look on him whom they pierced and mourn for him as one mourns for an only son. Joseph makes us think of Jesus. If Joseph doesn't teach us any other lesson, he certainly teaches us this, those who honor God will be honored by God.

It doesn't always happen immediately, does it? God often has lessons to teach us by way of patience, and Joseph had to learn those lessons. But eventually, God honored him and made every knee devout to him. Joseph was tempted.

Remember how that woman came and tried to seduce him? We're all tempted. The sin is not in being tempted, the sin is in yielding to the temptation. Joseph resisted temptation, lost his coat, saved his character, and he gained the crown.

God has special rewards for those who resist temptation. We often think of the dangers of falling into sin, but there's the other side of the picture. Those who resist temptation are greatly rewarded by God.

Joseph teaches us that we don't have to sin. The temptation came, he left. As I say, he put a few healthy miles between himself and the temptation, and God honored him for it.

Joseph suffered for doing what was right. He was thrown into prison for what? He hadn't done anything wrong, but there was the circumstantial evidence, and he suffered for doing good. There's no reward when we suffer for things that we do wrong, for sins that we commit.

But there's great reward when we suffer for righteousness' sake, and that's what Joseph did. And I think it's beautiful to think of Joseph there in prison. I put myself in his position.

Here I am in prison. I shouldn't really be there. You know, if God is God, and if his promises are true, what am I doing here in prison? He didn't say that.

And he didn't say, well, I'm just going to wait until my sentence is up, and then I'll serve God at the end of that time. We're all tempted to do that. We're all tempted to wait until circumstances change, and then we'll serve the Lord.

Joseph didn't do that. He went right to work for the Lord there in prison. Say how? Well, by his diligence, he was soon made the manager of the prison.

And the next thing you know, he's interpreting the dreams of the butler and the baker. He's the right man in the right place at the right time. So if there's someone here today, and you think, someday, manana, I'll serve the Lord, when circumstances change.

Don't wait for circumstances to change. Be God's man or woman at the very time, and God will reward you for it. We mentioned that God is working out his purposes in all the circumstances of life.

Joseph, I want to go back to Joseph there in the pit, and he cries out to God. Months ago, a Midianite caravan had started out from a distant place. These men were not believers.

They were heathen, and they had their schedule all set out before them. They were traders, and they were going to stop at fairs and markets along the way. They knew the speed at which the camels would travel, and they had it all mapped out where they would be at a certain time.

And the only thing that guided them in their deliberations was their own profit and convenience. Joseph is in the pit praying, and what do you know? A Midianite caravan comes along. All God's trains run on time.

They came to him at exactly the right time. F.B. Meyer wrote in this connection, Everything in life is directed and controlled by a divine forethought. Let us live in constant recognition of this.

You may be in a pit of dark misery just now, but God knows that you're there, and he times the moment. Only continue to trust and do not be afraid. Blessed are they who believe.

To them there shall be a performance. Months ago a caravan started, which will arrive at the precise hour when intervention will best serve you. But it's true.

Maybe you're waiting for some revelation of the will of God, and everything seems dark at the moment. God has set a caravan in motion, and at the very time when it will best suit his purposes and best suit you, that caravan will reach you. Joseph teaches us that when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

You can imagine how infuriated his brothers were when they were told that someday they would bow down to him. His dream spirit. We bow down to you, our kid brother.

But Joseph went on steadfastly for the Lord, and before the story is finished his brothers are bowing down and acknowledging themselves as his servants. Pretty remarkable, isn't it? Joseph reminds us that we should not be weary in well-doing. We shall reap if we faint not.

It's so hard to wait, isn't it? Waiting is one of the things that we as Christians do least well. But God is never in a hurry. Haste is seldom used of God in a good sense in the Bible.

God moves deliberately, carefully, and thoughtfully, and always wisely. Joseph's brothers teach us a very great lesson, and that is the way of blessing is to acknowledge our sins, not to hide them. I wonder if some of them developed ulcers over the years, you know? During those intervening years.

When they were trying to suppress it, they had committed terrible sins, you know? Sold their brother for 20 pieces of silver. Now he was gone, and where was he? And they were trying to drown out the voice of conscience all those years. They wouldn't confess.

Finally, after Joseph puts them through this period of trial and reveals himself to them, then they break and confess that they had done wrong. And then what was it? It was nothing but joy, and peace, and happiness. And that's the way it is with us in life.

We try to sweep things under the carpet. We try to hide our sins. We think, well, time heals all things, but it doesn't.

And it's when we come and make confession of our sins that the joy, the joy bells begin to ring. Joseph teaches us how we should behave when we've been wronged. Maybe somebody has been very unkind to you.

Maybe in some business dealing you have been treated very unjustly. How do you react? I don't think any of us has probably suffered what poor Joseph suffered. Well, first of all, when we've been wronged, the first thing we should do is forgive in our hearts.

That's what Joseph did. He didn't carry a grudge. His heart was right toward God and toward his fellow men.

He had already forgiven in his heart, and that could enable him to live happily. Then, when the offender repents, we should tell him he is forgiven. When he repents.

You don't administer forgiveness until there is repentance. That would be unrighteous. God doesn't do that.

But his brothers finally came, they confessed their sin to him, and he freely forgave them. He said, All right. God sent me before you to preserve life.

You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. Then the scripture tells us that we should do this indefinitely. That's amazing, isn't it? Scripture tells us that we've been forgiven millions, and we should be willing to forgive a few pennies.

In Joseph's day, there was only one way of deliverance. The famine was grievous upon the land. Supplies were short.

There was only one way of deliverance. The word was, Go to Joseph. If you're hungry, go to Joseph.

If you're starving, go to Joseph. That was the official edict. And isn't that the case today? There's only one way of salvation.

His name is Jesus. If you're burdened with the load of sin, go to Jesus. Go to the foot of the cross and find pardon and forgiveness there.

I love to see in this story that whenever Joseph was given his proper place, there was blessing. Whenever he wasn't given his proper place, the gears didn't mesh. I wonder if somebody's having that problem, or everything seems sour in your life.

The gears don't mesh. Life doesn't sparkle. The zest is gone.

Listen. For the Lord Jesus has given his proper place in our life. Gears do mesh.

Service sparkles with the supernatural. Things happen that wouldn't ordinarily happen by chance or probability. Life goes on smoothly.

Notice in the case of Joseph that every knee was commanded to bow to him. Boy, you can't help thinking of Philippians 2 when you read that. God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name, that is the name of Jesus.

Every knee should bow. Things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, the glory of God the Father.

You know, the world goes on swaggering today. God shakes this area with an earthquake and men could care less. I was reading in Ironside yesterday and he has a footnote on Amos 4 telling how he lived at the time of the 1906 earthquake here in San Francisco.

And he said the thing that grieved him most was that the ministers of many of the churches were telling the people, it isn't God, it's just an act of nature, that's all. Instead of turning people to the Lord, these men were turning them to nature. Wherever Joseph was given his right place there was blessing and every knee was required to bow to him.

It's wonderful how Joseph showed grace to his brothers. You know, they thought that he was going to wreak vengeance on them, especially after the father died. They thought, oh, now he'll really take it out on us.

But he showed nothing but grace to them. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, you through his poverty might be rich. Genesis 47-25 teaches us a lovely lesson and that is this, that gratitude for salvation should lead to total consecration.

Genesis 47-25, they said, you have saved our lives. Let us find favor in the sight of my Lord and we will be Pharaoh's servants. Get it? You have saved our lives.

Let us find favor in the sight of my Lord and we will be Pharaoh's servants. Gratitude for salvation should lead to total consecration. We sing it all the time.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. O Christ, thy bleeding hands and feet, thy sacrifice for me, each wound, each tear demands my life, a sacrifice for thee. How can I do less than give him my best and live for him completely after all he's done for me? How can I make a lesser sacrifice than Jesus gave his all? Every person who has ever made history for God has had one thing in common.

There came a time in that person's life when he abandoned his own ambitions and unconditionally accepted the will of God for his life. You can go down through the history of the Christian church, interview them one by one. William Booth of the Salvation Army, Spurgeon, William Borden, Betty Stamp, all of them.

They came to that position where they just abandoned their own small ambitions and accepted the will of God for their lives. That's what gratitude for salvation should do for us. Reason demands it.

Common sense requires it. The love of Christ constrains it. Simple gratitude demands it.

May the Lord bless these little lessons to our hearts today from the life of Joseph. I think Joseph is one of the most beautiful characters in the whole Bible. He's one of two men in the Old Testament about whom nothing negative is ever said.

And there are over 100 correspondences between the life of Joseph and the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Over 100 ways in which they are similar. If you want to find them, you could look in Pink's book, Gleanings in Genesis.

Or I think Dieterschein has them, too. Shall we look to the Lord in prayer? Father, we thank you for your precious word, how full of practical instruction it is for our lives. We think of the life of Joseph from prison to the throne.

Father, we thank you how you did honor him, his faithfulness to you. We thank you that you're still the same God, looking for men and women who will walk with you, steadfastly with you, trust in you throughout all the adverse circumstances of life, knowing that you will bring them out to a broad place in the end. We thank you for being the wonderful God you are, and we give our thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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