

## Joseph, Sermon #2

Genesis 37 – Last week we began our summer series on the Life of Joseph.

Beginning in Genesis 37 and going through chapter 40, we will see Joseph's years of toil and affliction.

What was the cause of Joseph's toil and afflictions? – His brothers

God gave us three reasons why his brothers hated him:

#1 – Joseph's character

#2 – his daddy's favoritism toward him

#3 – his dreams

I've entitled today's message "From the Pit to Potiphar"

Genesis 37:12

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Genesis 37:12-36

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

## From the Pit to Potiphar

Vs. 12-36 – this portion of Scripture has two ropes running through it.

### The first rope is the actions of the wicked against the righteous.

Notice they are conspiring (planning) against him to slay him

- Sometimes wicked actions go so far as to include murder—the ultimate expression of man’s hatred toward man
- As they saw him coming, they said sarcastically to each other: “Here comes the ‘Dreamer” (vs. 19).

The sarcastic remarks reveal the sin in our hearts—between husband and wife; children and parents; employees and employers.

Cutting remarks point out a deeper problem!

### **Vs. 20** – “We will say”

The actions of the wicked include lying, sarcastic remarks and plotting – conspiring!

They would have killed Joseph right then and there if Reuben had not intervened (vs. 21).

Reuben, of all the brothers, would seem to have the most cause to resent and hate Joseph:

- Reuben was the oldest; he was the firstborn, and he had been replaced by Joseph.

Reuben was already in his father’s bad graces:

- Reuben had committed a terrible sin when he had an immoral relationship with one of his father’s concubines (Bilhah).
- Maybe Reuben saw this as an opportunity to redeem himself.

**Vs. 22**

It was Reuben's purpose to take him out of the pit and take him home to his father.

**Vs. 23**

That coat was like waving a red flag in front of a bull—they hated it because it set him apart from them.

The brothers laid hands on Joseph. The first thing they did was to strip off the resented coat of many colors and threw him into the pit (vs. 24).

The pit was a cistern—an empty cistern which was deep and had a small opening at the top.

**Vs. 25** is the callous absence of mercy in the wicked

It's difficult to understand how these men could sit down and calmly eat a meal while their brother was suffering and begging them to set him free.

How could they be so cruel?

**Genesis 42:21** – Joseph had been pleading with his brothers in anguish of soul from the bottom of the pit.

- Hearts that have been hardened by hatred and poisoned by thoughts of murder aren't likely to pay much attention to the cries of their victim.

The men spied a Midianite merchant train moving across the plain.

- Judah had an idea—they could sell their brother as a slave and at the same time get rid of him.
- However they forgot that God was watching.

Numbers 32:23, “. . . and be sure your sin will find you out.”

**Genesis 42:21e**

Proverbs 28:13, *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”*

**Genesis 37 – vs. 26-27**

Instead of killing Joseph, they sold him into slavery—like that was a better thing to do. Oftentimes it was better to die than to be a slave.

**Vs. 28**

They settled on a price of twenty pieces of silver.

Benjamin was not in the bunch, so how many pieces of silver for each brother? (2)

How convenient!

- They sold Joseph—treacherous disloyalty—selling your own brother.

In Acts 7:9, Stephen referred to this incident: *“The patriarchs, moved with envy [jealousy], sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.”*

Envy is one of the works of the flesh that comes out of the sinful heart of man  
(Galatians 5:21).

The combination of hatred and envy is lethal.

It simmers in the heart and waits for the spark that will set off the explosion.

Even today, jealousy and envy are at work.

- People envy others because of prosperity, their position in life, or the recognition they receive.
- Envy destroys peace and causes dissatisfaction.
- The Word of God says, *“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work”* (James 3:16).

The men in the caravan are called both Ismaelites (vs. 25) and Midianites (vs. 28).

- The Ishmaelites were the descendants of Ishmael.
- The Midianites were the descendants of Midian.
- Both were sons of Abraham.
  
- The two names were used interchangeably (Judges 8:24, 26).
- Both groups were present in the caravan.

Reuben was absent when his brothers sold Joseph.

- When Reuben returned to the pit, he found it empty.
- His attitude and actions make it clear to us that his sympathies were with Joseph, for he tore his clothes like a man in mourning (vs. 29).

### **Vs. 30e**

*“Whither shall I go?”*

- Reuben was concerned that he would be blamed.
- Even in this he was more concerned for himself than about what had actually happened to Joseph.

### **In vs. 31 – they devised a plan**

They killed a kid of the goats and used that blood on the coat.

Does this matter of deceiving Jacob with a goat remind us of something we’ve heard before?

- Jacob was reaping what he himself had sown. Years before, he had killed a goat in order to deceive his father and now his own sons were following in his footsteps.

*“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7)

It is God's unchanging law, but people still think they can defy it and escape the consequences.

When we sow corn, we reap corn. We get exactly what we sow.

- This is true in any realm we wish to move in today.
- It is true in the physical realm, in the moral, in the financial, and in the spiritual realm.
- If we think we can get by with sin—we are deceived—there are no exceptions.

One sin led to another as the men fabricated the evidence that would deceive their father.

- Jacob accepted the evidence, believed the story, and concluded that Joseph indeed was dead.
- He went into deep mourning, and twenty years later was still grieving over the death of Joseph (42:36).

If he would have remembered Joseph's dreams—

- If Jacob had grasped the significance of the dreams, he might have had the faith to believe that Joseph was still alive and that he would see him again.

Jacob "rent his garments"—that was how they expressed grief in those days.

- Donned sackcloth (coarse garments something like a gunnysack)
- He had lost Rachel only a few years before; and now he had lost his favorite son, Joseph.
- He said that he would continue to mourn until he died.
- So deep was Jacob's grief over the apparent death of Joseph, that he refused to be comforted.

### **The rope of the wicked continues.**

It is possible to lie by giving the wrong impression or purposely letting a person draw the wrong conclusion.

Consider also their terrible sin of hiding the truth all those years.

- The guilt of their sin was always with them.
- Though haunted by their guilt, they would not confess their sin to God nor to their father.

Conscience follows a person all his life—even into hell, where it will, forever haunt the unbeliever.

Luke 16:27-28 reveals that even after the unbeliever has passed from this life he will be able to remember the things of earth.

### **Vs. 35**

All his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him.

Think of the hypocrisy of those sons.

### **Vs. 36**

The caravan had arrived in Egypt. There they sold Joseph to a prominent Egyptian official named Potiphar.

We have gone from the pit to Potiphar.

Our God is so great that He can work out His purposes even when people are doing their worst.

Daniel 4:35, “. . . and [God] doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, ‘What doest thou?’”

The actions of the wicked include schemes, lying, murder, callous absence of mercy.

- Self-centeredness, profiteering, rationalization of wicked actions, treacherous disloyalty and utter hypocrisy and this on the part of brothers.

How can this be? How can people be this cruel?

- Those actions are a direct result of attitudes that showed up in the first 11 verses.
- They hated him (three times); they envied him (vs. 11 – one time).

Attitudes will eventually burst forth into actions.

There is something deeper than attitudes, and it is called character.

- ★People do what they do because they are what they are.★
- When a man has wicked character, he will act in any wicked way that furthers his purpose.
- And behind all this is the great father, Satan—he is the father of all evil character.

I can not describe to you how cruel, vicious, and malicious Satan is.

- The devil is not moved by the maimed, hopeless, tears, crying children, harmed, hurt, famines, war, strangulation and suffocation of unborn millions.
- The devil is not moved by these things.
- The devil has plotted these things and the devil uses people, like we would use a roll of towels—pulls them off one by one or rips them off in whole families or nations and grinds them to his self-serving purpose and then discards them into the trash can of life.
- And I haven't told the half of him.

The actions of the wicked, of the evil character that's in the world, is because Satan has control of this world.

This is the bad side of the picture!

II Timothy—all who live Godly, all who partake in the character of God, shall suffer persecution.

I wonder what Joseph thought, how he felt, how his faith worked—struggle internally, when he fell into evil hands.

Turn over to Psalm 105—hundreds of years later, God gave us His view of Genesis 37:12-36.

**Vs. 1** – what deeds?

**Vs. 17** – who sold him? The wicked

Who sent him? God sent him

**Vs. 18** – laid irons on him

**Vs. 19** – Until Joseph's dreams came to pass—hold on to truth.

Where is God? God has forsaken me.

Joseph did not allow the wicked deeds to overcome the Word that was give Him by  
God.

**The other rope that runs through this passage are the deeds of the Lord—the  
Providential control of God.**

The name of God does not occur once in Genesis 37. But we can see God at work.

Four incidents in Genesis 37—that we did not comment about—the Providential control  
of God:

- In our lives, what does God's Providence include?
- How much of our circumstances are in the control of God?
- How many of our circumstances does God work together for good?

In vs. 12-14 talk between Jacob and Joseph—the Providential control of God includes  
free decisions/free will.

- Sometimes we say, if I would have known what would happen, I would have not  
done that, bought this. If only I hadn't married him or her.
- Hindsight is 20/20.

Second incident, vs. 15-17 interchange between a stranger and Joseph

- Joseph would have never found his brothers without human help.
- The Providential control of God includes human help

- God brings people along and uses them to further His purposes.

Third incident, vs. 21-22—Reuben wanted to help Joseph, but Reuben wasn't to deliver Joseph.

- The Providential control of God includes the failure of good intentions.
- Reuben had it all planned to deliver him, but God did not allow him deliverance.

Fourth incident—the caravan just happened along!

- The Providential control of God involves apparent coincidence. They just happened to come by.
- Joseph could have been delayed. So, the Providential control of God includes freewill decisions, human help, failure of good intentions, apparent coincidences.
- But there is something else in this chapter.

The Providential control of God—includes the actions of the wicked!

- Who sent Joseph into Egypt? God did.
- How did God send Joseph into Egypt? The actions of the wicked.
- The Providential control of God includes the actions of the wicked.

God takes my free decisions, human help, failure of good intentions, apparent coincidences and the actions of the wicked and moves them together for my good—and His glory.

What we need is faith!

- Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.
- Trust God—Joseph trusted God.

The theme of Genesis 37:12-36 is God's Providential employment of the actions of the wicked to further His own sovereign purposes.

God not only permits the actions of the wicked—He employs the actions to further His own purpose.

Is God the author of sin? Oh, no! But God can work out even the sin of man.

Now, whatever circumstances we have, we can trust our God—He will work it out for our good.

Let us stand for closing invitation

The actions of the wicked against the righteous—we see this throughout the Bible and throughout life.

We saw this in Jesus' life—the working of the wicked and God brought it out for our good.

Yet, God uses all these things.

Cannot get much worse than the abandonment of family