

It's The Pit's Man

...How to Become Boss

By

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PREFACE

I stand before a Sunday school class and see faces, and I'm sure hearts, that are tired and discouraged. They're really wondering if God is in control. They're really wondering if there is any sense - rhyme or reason to all of this. They are people who have heard God's promises, have been taught to pray and believe on Him, but still, day after day, more problems come. Satan gets the victory. As we go to the Word, we know there is strength and encouragement, yea all that we need, found in its pages, if we come to it in the right spirit.

We read about the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Paul and all of the famous patriarchs. We read the stories over and over and tell the stories to our children. And yet, there is still a lacking therein. The people don't seem real. They are figures in a Bible story. They are a grown-up version of the Bible storybooks that we have read for so many years. As children, we think them to be fantasy.

We never consider that these patriarchs, these famous Bible characters, were real flesh and blood people whom we're going to meet some day in Glory. Yet, unless we take a different look at the Word of God and the accounts of their lives, we're not going to recognize them in heaven because we'll still think they are characters in a fairy tale.

This book is meant to put flesh and blood on a man by the name of Joseph, the little fellow with the coat of many colors. The intent is that we recognize that Joseph was a real flesh and blood man, just like you and I. He had a tough time at work. He had a tough time with his family. He had a tough time with his children. He had a tough time getting the bills paid, just like you and I.

Somehow or other we get the impression that God gave special preparation, special favor, pampered if you will, these famous Bible characters, such as Joseph. We think God gave them an edge on becoming famous and powerful leaders, valiant soldiers in God's army. And for that reason we don't really have any hope of reaching the heights these mighty men of God have attained. We think we can't be like them because God favored them with special handling.

We are going to find in the following pages that that wasn't true. They were dedicated to God Who doesn't favor any one person over another, but wants all of us to draw close to Him. He desires that we correct things in our lives, confess our shortcomings to Him and just cling to Him as we would to a loving parent whom we know would die for us to provide for our needs.

DEDICATED TO:

Jesus Christ the Creator
and Sustainer of All

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Chapter 1 – Who’s Mom are You ?

"I have an apple tree that I've just picked some pears off of." Have you ever heard anyone say that? Well, certainly not. The law of stability in nature, if you want to call it that, is one of the laws enacted back in Genesis, when God created the heavens and the earth. Not only is it true in nature that you get apples off an apple tree and pears off a pear tree, but it's also true: you raise children most often to be just like their parents. So in learning about Joseph we'll see what kind of family he had.



Your statement could certainly be, "Well, Joseph became a mighty man of God because God favored him with a special mom and dad. His mom was a missionary. His dad was a preacher. They carried around big Bibles all the time and went to church four times a week." Let's see just what kind of a family this man Joseph really came from. Let's see how he was "favored" (or not) in becoming the mighty man that we would like to be.

The story of Joseph really begins in Genesis 29:1-2 where we read:

"Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth."

And we see in verses 9-11 as Jacob has been talking with some of the men at the well:

"And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept."

In verse 13 we read:

"And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things."

After Jacob worked for Laban about a month in verses 15-20, God's Word says:

"And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be? And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and

well favoured. And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her."

What a love there must have been there. Working seven years for his bride-to-be and it seemed but a few days. My, wouldn't it be something if our children were as concerned about the spouse they were to take, and if we were to see them have the dedication and love for that spouse to serve seven years? Boy, I think the marriages would certainly be different, wouldn't they? Verses 21-25 says:

"And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"

Joseph is saying to Laban, "What have you done to me? You've switched women on me. You switched daughters! I served seven years for my beautiful Rachel, but you've put Leah in her place." Jacob wanted to know why he had been beguiled. Verse 26 says:

"And Laban said, "It must not be so done in our country..."

"Leah needs to be married before Rachel. That's why I did that." My, my, the excuses we can use for breaking a vow; breaking a vow to a friend; breaking a vow to our children; breaking a vow to God. Isn't it something how we can twist rules and use half truths. It's happened here. In verse 27:

"Fulfill her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years."

It was a sneaky trick of Laban, Rachel's father, to get an extra seven years of free labor from this man, Jacob. In verse 28:

"And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also."

[Note: It takes careful study to understand the very special circumstances that God allowed multiple wives in those days. Those rules that spoke harshly against adultery could result in death for the transgressor. It's this author's opinion that the marriage arrangement begun in the Garden of Eden is God's all-time preference – especially in these days and land in which we live.]

Look at that word "also" –ALSO.

Already we see Joseph's family tree headed for problems.

Read in Genesis 29:29-31:

"Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren."

One small fact that we need to bring out here, that we are going to see repeated later on, is found in verse 30:

"...and he loved also Rachel more than he loved Leah."

Remember our trees - getting apples off apple trees and pears off pear trees? We're going to see this favoritism repeated. Already the family is headed for trouble. Why? Because we have two wives in the same house. As if that isn't bad enough, we have two handmaids. So, we have four women helping around the house, supposedly working in unity in doing all the things that are needed in the house, plus raising children who will be coming shortly. I can see trouble on the way. In verses 32-35 we read:

"And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the Lord hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the Lord hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing."

Now remember, we have four women in the same house. One of the wives of Jacob just bore four children; four sons. Now look at chapter 30, verses 1-2:

"And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?"

First we had Jacob showing favoritism toward Rachel; then we have Rachel's envy in verse 1, followed in verse 2 by her anger. Well, nevertheless, we have Rachel, Jacob's second wife, jealous because she can't bear any children, especially when her competitor, Leah, just bore four sons. So the only thing Rachel can think to do in this situation is to get a pinch-hitter for herself. So in verses 3-4 we read:

"And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her."

What a family situation. Now we've got Jacob, the man of the house, the one who should be responsible for the spiritual stability, the spiritual maturity of the family, going to bed with a third woman that's not even his wife. How can God ever expect to build strong families when we circumvent His laws in our families, the very first association that God ever made for man, the family. Verses 5-7 states:

"And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son."

She named him Naphtali. Well, we've got two wives in this family and each have a handmaid. Since they already experienced some favoritism and the envying that brought on anger, then why not continue it? I believe Leah looked at Rachel and said, "Well, Rachel has given her handmaid, Bilhah, to Jacob to go to bed with and have children with, so if it's good enough for her, it ought to be good enough for me."

So Leah gave her handmaid, Zilpah, to Jacob to conceive and bear children. That's just what she did in verse 11. She called this son Gad. And the event was duplicated. Another son was born to Zilpah and his name was Asher.

Don't you wonder what these brothers, these sons born to Jacob, thought about a marriage like this? What kind of a family structure are you going to have? One woman, Leah, has four sons. That's no problem. But, then a maid in the family, Bilhah, has two children - Dan and Naphtali. Are those two fellows brothers? Not really, other than that they have the same dad. Are they half brothers? Well, not really because Bilhah isn't married to anyone. What a horrible family structure to finally bring Joseph from, this mighty man who was used of God. Well, let's continue. It gets worse, believe me!

I think that Leah might have become a little bit jealous, or at least concerned that her handmaid, Zilpah, has been able to bear two children to Jacob. Maybe to prove she still had the ability or that she still had what it takes, Leah went in unto Jacob and had three more children - Issachar, Zebulon and the only daughter in this whole - I was going to say marriage. Do you call it a marriage or a mess? Whatever, Dinah was born to Leah, the last child that Leah was to have.

Now look at verse 22. Isn't it precious in the midst of problems, in the midst of trouble, in the midst of this crazy mixed-up world and some of the messes we get ourselves into, that something happens, as verse 22 explains - *"and God remembered"*. If we could only be the kind of parent that God is. *"And God remembered."* And the verse says:

"And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: And she called his name Joseph."

We're going to be hearing that name a lot, in times of prosperity and excitement, in joy, in times of grief, desperation, and discouragement. Don't you kind of get the feeling as we read words like "God remembered" that He really is in control? He's never let loose of those He loves, or of the exciting opportunities that He has put into our futures.

But, one other thing that needs to be remembered is that Joseph was born when Jacob and Rachel were very old. You might even consider that they were past the normal age of childbearing. So, out of all the sons who were born between Jacob and Leah; Jacob and Zilpah; Jacob and Rachel; and Jacob and Bilhah, this Joseph was special above all the rest. Special because he was born with the aid of a miracle. Jacob and Rachel were past the age of bearing children. Don't you suppose he was special above all of the other children? This is the first child who was born to Jacob through the woman that he had chosen first to be his wife, Rachel.

Remember, we read a little earlier that one was favored over the other? Let's continue. Let's see how this favoritism works out again. To complete the family tree and get all the rest of the brothers and sister together, we have to skip over to chapter 35, verses 16-19:

"And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem."

The Bible gives many references to honoring one's own mother. The most well known was written in stone twice by the finger of God. A special distinction of honoring parents was the first of the ten commandments to contain a promise as referenced in Ephesians 6. It seems so much more difficult to honor your parents in Joseph's family and the dysfunctional families of today. From all this two principles take deeper root in my mind:

1. As I look around me the more reasons I see to search out God's written promises for me and share them with others.
2. God doesn't choose and use polished and perfect people and families for His Will. He does, however, require faithful servants to keep their sights on the Lighthouse of Truth that shines across the centuries.

Chapter 2 – Dinah’s Dilemma

So we have twelve brothers and one sister. There are rather interesting relationships between these brothers since there were so many different mothers in the same family, with the same father. Did God really bless Joseph; pamper him in his background or in his home situation so that he would become the powerful, spiritual giant? No, He certainly didn't. They were amid circumstances like you and I and those to whom we need to witness.



Well, let's continue to find out a little bit more of this family tree involving these brothers. There is something we need to note at this point. In turning to Genesis 32, we read in verses 24-25:

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him."

Some other events happened. The point we want to make is in verse 28:

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

This word "Israel" is used several different ways in the Bible, and we need to set some guidelines so we don't become confused. First of all we see the name Israel used here as the name of the father of these 12 brothers and sister. We also need, whenever we refer to Jacob by calling him Israel, to call him Mr. Israel so that we will always know that we are really talking about Jacob as the father of all these boys. Now, later on we'll be considering the nation that these 12 boys inhabited, that being Israel. The land was divided up into 12 tribes. We will call that Israel 12. So now we have Mr. Israel and Israel 12. The third designation that we will make is when there was a disagreement between two factions.

There were two factions in the nation of Israel 12 that split. They split between the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom was called Israel. We're going to call it Israel 10 because now in that nation there are only 10 tribes. The other 2 tribes became what we think of and refer to as the land of Judah. So we have Mr. Israel, Israel 12, and Israel 10.

Now we need to get back to taking a look at Joseph's family tree and the 'wonderful' (??) background God blessed this man with! At least we thought He did to make him into the spiritual giant that we know him to be. Well, we need to go to chapter 34. We're going to read about the only sister to all of these 12 brothers. In chapter 34, verses 1-2, we read:

“And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.”

I might say that the Bible says nothing about Shechem considering any marriage arrangements or anything at all in that direction. We don't get any indication that it was her choice at all. If you want to call it rape, you can. I do. Now we have a situation where twelve brothers have a sister who has just been raped. In verses 4-5 of chapter 34 we read:

“And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they came.”

Now, we are going to find in the following verses that Shechem now tries everything he can to make amends, to straighten out this situation between this woman he has gone to bed with and her parents. The twelve brothers all explain some requirements that Shechem is to abide by. In verses 10 and 11 of chapter 34 we read:

“And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give.”

In verses 19-21 we see:

“And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honorable than all the house of his father. And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters.”

Shechem and his relatives were told what they would have to do, as dictated by the 12 brothers. This they agreed to do. But in verses 25-26 it says:

“And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.”

That's a wonderful way to treat someone isn't it? First of all, Shechem had trespassed in going to bed with Dinah, but he confessed his sin and willingly followed through with the requirements to amend the situation. But, still they were destroyed. Isn't it wonderful that our God doesn't treat us that way? Would to God we could learn the patience, the passion and the understanding of a sinful man,

realizing there is no hope or good thing in him; and he reaches out to the only One who has the ability to cleanse every stain, our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Well, how does Jacob feel about all of this? In chapter 34 and verses 30-31 it says:

"And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?"

Mr. Israel is in a real fix isn't he? Do you think any of this could have been traced back to the permissiveness of Jacob and Rachel? Good chance isn't there? God reminds Jacob again in verses 10-12:

"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. 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; 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."

My goodness, the powerful position that God has put the father of Joseph into. Isn't it interesting that even though Mr. Israel defied God's law of one wife for one man for one lifetime, God still blessed him? Even though he played favorites between wives, God still blessed him.

One other thing that we need to add here is that even though God loves Mr. Israel mightily in spite of his sin or his multiple marriages, we still have to add in one little point found in chapter 35, verse 22:

"And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve."

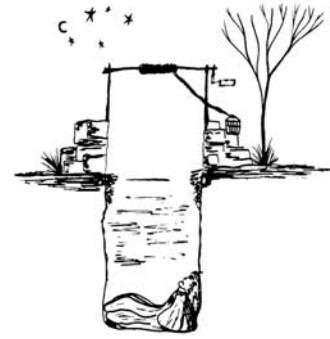
The oldest son, Reuben, goes to bed sexually without any consideration for marriage or anything like that, with the mother of one of his brothers. That must have made for an interesting arrangement. If something doesn't come to pass shortly, it looks like everybody is going to bed with everyone else. We read that God still blessed Jacob.

How about your family and your background? I think we can say now that regardless of how our family situation presents itself, whether our parents or brothers and sisters are faithful, diligent Christians, or whether they are badly in need of a Savior's saving power and repentance in their lives, it really doesn't make any difference as far as our having an excuse for transgressing against God in His laws. We are each held accountable regardless of what our background is or what our family tree looks like. We are each individually responsible to God, to His saving power, and His moving in our lives.

Chapter 3 – Stones or Stars

The following events begin the most unusual mystery I have ever heard in all my life. We see our star character, Joseph, entering from stage-right. In chapter 37 of Genesis, verse 2 we read:

"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."



Oh no, we have a tattletale! One of the 12 brothers is a tattletale. I can see trouble coming already. Now verse 3:

"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."

How sad! Here we go with the favoring of one of the family over the other again. Not only did he favor him, but also, he made a big show of it. "He made him a coat of many colors." It was like a badge. Anyone who saw this coat of many colors realized that this young fellow was favored above any other child in the family and was given special privileges; and not only special privileges, but also special authority. Sometimes that needs to be done, but is done with great tact and in a way that the rest of the family is made to feel very important too. Verse 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."

Remember, in chapter 1, we saw the favoritism that Jacob had for one wife, Rachel, over Leah. Then it turned into envy and then into anger. It's happening again. Verse 5:

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more."

God was revealing His plan - this fantastic, exciting sequence of events that you couldn't put together if you were the most qualified mystery writer of all times. These dreams that God revealed to Joseph brought about a truth, a future truth that the 11 brothers would be ruled over by their brother, 17-year-old Joseph, who had this special coat his father had given to him.

In the family of God, more specifically, in the local church family, we are reminded in God's Word that we're to treat each person equally, to make each person feel the importance of his involvement. No matter how capable or incapable he thinks he is, God has given him a talent and he needs to be faithful with it. Certainly the pastor is not to single out any one person and play favorites with him.

Well, the brothers at this point in time are tending their flock of sheep in Shechem. Remember about Shechem? He was the fellow who got into an interesting arrangement with the only sister of these 12 brothers. Worse than that, in trying to straighten out the situation, two of the brothers, Simeon and Levi, dealt treacherously with Shechem. Remember Mr. Israel considered his reputation to stink in this land. Now we find that these 11 brothers are in this land feeding their sheep. In chapter 37, verses 13-17:

"And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan."

Oh my goodness! First, we have a son who is favored above the other brothers by the father. Next, we find this favorite brother has been given some enlightenment as to God's plan for the future and that continues to anger the brothers. Thirdly, the brothers have been given the task of feeding and caring for the flock in Shechem. But when the favorite brother is sent to check on the other 11 brothers, they run off. They are goofing off. They were to be in Shechem, but are now in Dothan. I can see this brotherly relationship getting worse and worse. Verse 18 says:

"And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him."

Remember the sequence: favoritism, then envy, and then anger. Isn't it interesting how that theme keeps surfacing all the time! Verses 19-22:

"And they said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again."

There's an interesting thing here. "Cast him into a pit." Certainly, that's sin. Verse 20 says:

"...we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him..."

Isn't it interesting those sinful acts come in pairs? As we yield to sin and contemplate sin once, if it's not dealt with and taken before God, the second sin will follow right behind it. Verse 23 says:

"And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him."

This was the coat that threw his position up into his brothers' faces every time they saw it. Hey, this brother is favored. Daddy loves him more than he loves us. Verse 24:

"And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it."

Now, if we consider the effort that God has gone to, to preserve His Word through all the ages up to this point and He left in these words: "and the pit was empty, there was no water in it", that must be important. Well, it is important. The pit was a well pit. Ordinarily, there would have been water in it. This became Joseph's prison. Wait a minute! We're talking about Joseph being in a prison.

But God had revealed to Joseph, through dreams, that he would be a ruler. It's interesting that he was going to be a ruler over his own brothers. But, God has lost control of this thing, hasn't He? He has deemed this man Joseph, the 17-year-old boy, to be a ruler, and here he is in a pit, about to die. God has lost control! Doesn't it look that way to you?

Let me ask you - Can you look around and see situations that really look like God has lost control? Pick up your newspaper. Read through the headlines. This war, this skirmish is going on in this country. These rebels are rioting over here. This company is going defunct because of unrealistic demands by the Union. This father has gone to bed with his 12-year-old daughter. Doesn't it look like God has lost control? Sure it does.

Pick up any newspaper you want to. Turn your radio to any news station. Turn the television to any program. In fact, many of what we deem typical television programs have the insinuations, the sexual overtones, and the nudity. God's lost control! What happens if God loses control? Could He have lost control of nature? In Noah's day, mankind was almost totally destroyed by a flood. Had God lost control? Maybe the planets are going to collide. Let's see if He's lost control in Joseph's life. In verses 25-27 we read:

"And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content."

Isn't that nice of those brothers? They're going to sell him as a slave to a bunch of foreigners so they won't be killing their brother. Isn't that something to be proud of' they're not going to kill their brother, but sell him into slavery. I'm so proud of those brothers!

Isn't it something how we justify some of our actions? We begin by pondering a deep heavy sin. Then we contemplate yielding to this gross temptation. Yet, we begin to feel that is wrong. And then

what we do is yield to a lesser temptation and wind up being proud of ourselves. Well, doesn't it say in Genesis that he (Satan) was subtler than any other creature? That's true! Verses 28-29:

"Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes."

Isn't it something that when we yield to sin and don't treat our brother as we should, it backfires on us. Verses 30-35:

"And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

Before we continue with Joseph, let's look at the first few verses in chapter 38 and we'll see another interesting situation involving one of Joseph's brothers. In verses 1-3 we read:

"And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er."

Shuah's family was not Jewish. Without any arrangements of marriage, without any consideration, planning or following in obedience to the law that we have seen disobeyed, Judah goes to bed with this Canaanite, this non-Jewish woman. Verses 3-7:

"And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him."

Wouldn't you wonder why he did this? How patient can God be with the ones He created to be in fellowship with Him and yet who, generation after generation, rebel against the guidelines of one man for one woman for one lifetime. In Numbers 23 we read, "be sure your sins will find you out." I just wonder if part of that revealing isn't done through our children. If Mr. Israel were still alive, I think he'd see that God hadn't forgotten the transgressions that he'd made between Leah, Rachel and the two handmaids.

We need to go back for just a moment and take a little bit closer look at this pit that our star character, Joseph, was put in. We said it was a well pit, certainly deep, with sides smooth enough so he couldn't get out. But, put yourself in Joseph's place. You are 17 or 18 years old, and are down in this pit, cold, hungry and thirsty. But worse than that, you have time to think. Sometimes that thinking time is the most painful, the most difficult and sometimes the most rewarding.

If you were Joseph and down in that pit, what would you be thinking right now? "Why am I down in this pit? God's lost control of this situation. I tell you, if my mom and dad had acted like they should have, this wouldn't have happened. It's my parents fault I'm in this fix." Ever hear yourself say that before?

Then, there is Reuben. Wonderful Reuben, the oldest of the brothers. The older brother and sister are supposed to keep control of the family situation when mom and dad aren't around. We can always depend on them to keep things under control. In verse 22 Reuben had said:

"...shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him..."

Is that what he should have said? Certainly not. He should have called sin, sin. He should have told the brothers they needed to go before God and ask forgiveness for even contemplating this thing, let alone trying to carry it out. But he didn't. He settled for half-action if you want to call it that; just doing half what he should have done to right a wrong. If there's anybody in the entire world who should watch over you and me it should be our brothers and sisters. Who put Joseph in the pit? It was his brothers.

How about in your local assembly, those you worship with, those that you sing hymns with? They should be the ones to love you the most, protect and watch over you, encourage you to draw close to the Lord, confess sins and be right with Him. Is that the way it usually is? It certainly wasn't the situation with Joseph.

Had we been able to look in on him in the pit, this is what we may have seen and heard: "It's mom and dad's fault that I'm down here" and he'd slam his fist into the side of that well pit because he was mad. Maybe he threw some rocks from one side to the other saying, "It's mom and dad's fault. It's also my brother's and sister's fault! They should have stopped this." He probably slammed his fist against the wall again; angry because he felt it was someone else's fault.

It had probably been a very long day or several days that he was down in the pit. He was tired, frustrated and discouraged as he lay in the bottom of the pit. He looked from left to right, from front to back and all he saw were rocks and dirt. The walls of his prison. Then he looked up and saw the clouds going across the sky. That's whose fault it is. It's God's fault. God has the power to make and to destroy. He has the power to change people's minds and hearts. "It's God's fault I'm down in this pit."

God's lost control again! Have you ever said that? God doesn't really have the power to maintain His program or His plan. I believe there was a lot of learning achieved in the bottom of that pit. I think Joseph named all the people he could blame for the situation he was in and got all this blaming and hurt out of his system. Its quite possible some other memories came back. He had memories of some stories he'd heard while sitting on the floor with his chin on his mother, Rachel's knee about what God had done with people before. While he's in the pit I think he's remembering some of those stories.

I think one story is about his Grandpa Isaac as he remembers her telling it. Grandpa Isaac is lying on a flat surface, looking up at the sky, just like Joseph is doing. It looks like all is coming to an end. God has lost control. Why is Grandpa Isaac lying flat looking up at the sky? He's on an altar. Who put him on an altar? The very person who should have loved him more than anyone on the face of the earth, his daddy Abraham.

God's lost control! God had promised to bless the whole world and each person on it, thru the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren of Abraham. God's lost control. It's not going to happen. Isaac is about to die because his own father Abraham is standing over him with a knife to destroy him.

I believe that Joseph, down in that pit, looking up at the sky, realized that he was in the same kind of fix as others before him. In that impossible situation, Joseph remembered his Grandpa Isaac, whom God had truly blessed. God showed His people that He is a God of provision, He can provide and protect, and that His plan will not be stopped by anyone.

As Joseph laid down in that pit, at first, angry at the world and blaming everyone around him, including God, his hands were made bloody by banging his fists against those stones. I believe that in the clouds and stars of the lowly night, Joseph realized that God never, never, never loses control. Nor does He have to change His plan for the creatures He has created to have dominion over the stones - over the well pits - over the animals and over all of His creation.

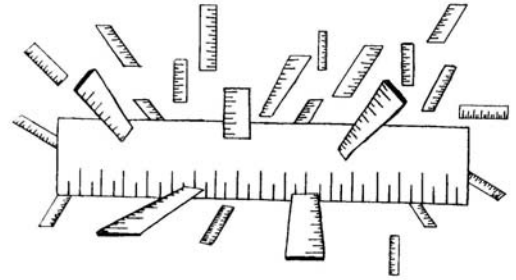
God never loses control! I believe there were Bible lessons learned in the bottom of that pit that Joseph couldn't, in a lifetime, have learned at the knee of his mother nor at the side of his father. Sometimes the only way we can learn special, important lessons is at the bottom of a pit. If that's true, let's think about our own lives and the pits in which we have found ourselves.

Sure we have shaken our fists at our moms and dads and blamed them. We have blamed our brothers and sisters, the friends around us, and certainly we have shaken our fists in the face of God and blamed Him for losing control. Having lost control, we find ourselves in this prison, this pit of despair. Is it possible that by remembering what God has done for His people in the past that we would be given courage, hope and determination to want to do our best within the hands of God to carry out His plan.

Chapter 4 – Big Rulers from Little Rulers

In chapter 39 of Genesis we read further about our main character, Joseph. Verse 1:

"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."



We need to realize that this captain of the guard, Potiphar, was also in charge of the executioners, if he was not an executioner himself. It's an interesting situation for this young fellow who had been promised by God in dreams that he'd be a ruler and that he'd also rule over his brothers. But, the next verse gives us a clue. Chapter 39, verse 2 says:

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian."

The Lord was with Joseph. Isn't that a comfort? We have first aid kits, emergency evacuation plans and all sorts of remedies, materials and techniques in dealing with unexpected situations. Wouldn't it be something to put a card in our first aid kits that said "AND THE LORD IS WITH YOU"? Wouldn't that be a comfort? Well that's what we have in verse in the verse we just read.

Joseph lived in the house of Potiphar. Now, that is usually customary because the prisons back then were part of the jailor's house. Verse 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."

Isn't that interesting? Maybe God hasn't lost control of this whole situation. Sure Joseph is in Egypt and he didn't want to be down there. Sure he's in jail and doesn't want to be there. But verse 2 says that the Lord was with Joseph. What happens when the Lord is with us? Wherever we are on the face of the earth, whether in the jungle or maybe a jungle of a metropolitan city and the Lord is with us, can we expect that God would do the same with us as He did with Joseph? Verse 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."

Joseph is already learning how to be a ruler down in Egypt. Is it possible that God really does have control of all this? Maybe this is just some kind of training ground. Maybe Joseph really is going to be a ruler some day. He needs to learn how to be a ruler; how to be faithful in small things first. That's only logical. Don't we give our children a small tool or toy first so we can see that they use it

and take care of it properly and then move on to larger things? Maybe God does have control of this. Verse 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."

God is blessing Joseph so much it's running over and spilling onto the people around him.

I'd love to be in Joseph's position, faithful to the Lord and serving Him where I am; being faithful with each and every thing He has given me; talent or tool and blessing me so much that it spills over to the people around me. Now that is blessing! In verse 6 we read:

"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 favored."

That means that Potiphar, the captain of the guard, trusted this prisoner so much that he gave control and rule over all that he had. Potiphar didn't even know what he owned - didn't even know what belonged to him or what went on except for the food that was on his table at that moment to eat.

Now, here comes an important truth that we all need to learn. Joseph has been in prison and supposedly was to have learned some things down in the bottom of that pit. Of course he is thrown into another prison in Egypt. He has become ruler over that prison, at least over the captain's house. The truth is this - wherever we have a prison situation and God tries to teach us something, God then puts us in a crucible - in an opportunity to show our self, Him, and others what we have learned.

Now, a crucible is a very shallow dish, almost like a lens out of a flashlight that scientists put little pieces of ore, dirt, or minerals in. They hold this crucible over a flame and heat it extremely hot. The different parts of the minerals separate and can then be examined under a microscope. Determination can be made as to the quality, the purity, and what kind of materials make up that specimen. Well, Joseph is about to be put in a crucible starting in verse 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."

Don't forget about the kind of background Joseph came from. Remember that he had a father that shared a bed with four women. His oldest brother went to bed sexually with one of the handmaids. His own sister was raped. Look at the crucible God puts Joseph into. His master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said lie with me. In verses 8-9 it says:

"But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house

than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

He doesn't say 'against Potiphar'. That's interesting. Instead he really says 'against God'. What do you suppose this young fellow learned down in that pit? Is it that all the arrangements and all the circumstances he finds himself in are relationships between only him and other human beings?

Remember he started off blaming his parents and his brothers. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God". Down in that pit Joseph realized Who he was working for, in Whose hands he was placed, and Whose plan he was following. That's why, when he was placed in this crucible - in this examining dish by Potiphar's wife - he had the right reference when he said, "*How can I do this great wickedness against God?*"

Now, sometimes it's kind of easy to say no to temptation and sin. Look at verse 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."

Sin must be a real dog because it hounds us, doesn't it? God wants to see if we really mean business with Him or if it's some kind of reflex action or quick determination to yield to sin or not. He allows Satan to bug us day by day. I wonder if it's possible when we realize that we can't stop yielding to temptation without His strength and help, if that's meant to drive us to Him day by day? God is quite a parent, isn't He? Verses 10-12:

"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. 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. 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."

Sounds like a good time to get out. Verses 13-18:

"And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out."

God's lost control again, right? Just when we thought things were going to work out, God lost control! Let's continue. Verse 19:

"And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled."

It says Potiphar's wrath was kindled. Who was Potiphar mad at? Was he mad at Joseph? I don't think so. Joseph had already proved himself to be faithful to his own God to the extent that when God looked at his heart and the reasons he did these things, that He blessed Joseph and Potiphar's house, also. So, who is he mad at? I think maybe his wife. Verse 20:

"And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison."

First, he's in prison in his own country in a well pit. Then, he's in prison in Potiphar's jail. Now, he's in prison again. What is God trying to teach Joseph? What is He trying to do with him? He's put in a prison, then given authority and rulership as he had in Potiphar's house. Could it be that being put in prison again he may be learning something as he did in the well pit - that he is being prepared for a greater work? Is it possible, that even though he's in prison he has enough insight to see that God really is in control - that God really is preparing this man to be ruler over a great and mighty land?

Chapter 5 – Make a Spectacle of Yourself

We find that Joseph is in prison – again. We also find a statement we've seen a couple of times before, just at the right time. Verses 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. 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. 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."



When Joseph was a teenager, he was given dreams that revealed he would become a ruler; exactly over what he didn't know. But, he knew that he'd rule at least over his brothers. What do we have then?

- We have a teenager that has been keeping watch over sheep in chapter 37, verse 2.
- And then we have this young fellow who is given rulership, in charge of everything in Potiphar's house, chapter 39, verse 6.
- And now we see Joseph as the ruler over and in charge of every single event and person in this dungeon, chapter 39, verse 23.

Is it very hard to see a plan worked out, an increase in the responsibility of Joseph? Maybe God really is in control and this man. Joseph is being taught lessons he can't be taught anywhere else except in a prison, in a dungeon, in a pit.

Is it possible that some of the lessons we have to learn can't be learned in a Sunday school class, we can't learn from listening to mother and dad, or to a husband or wife? The only way we can learn the lesson and learn it well is in a prison, in a dungeon, in a pit. In chapter 40 verse 1:

"And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt."

You don't want to do that! Verse 3:

"And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound."

Now, isn't that a coincidence? Verse 4:

"And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward."

Remember, this is a mystery. There is death involved; there is cunning and craftiness; there is jealousy and hatred involved. Let's see how Joseph handles himself with these two men, the butcher and the baker. Verses 5-7:

"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. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. 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?"

They were only in prison, put in there by the king. Joseph evidently thinks you aren't supposed to look sad in prison. But he's had more training. He's learned how to conduct himself in prison. He's been in enough different ones, hasn't he? Isn't it unusual that a man can find peace and joy while in prison? Joseph can because he's faithful and steadfast in serving God. Verse 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."

How about that! He's had dreams before and has been in some very important positions. Joseph could polish his fingernails on his collar and be able to say, "I can handle that. God's blessed me and given me some ability. I can interpret your dreams." No, he learned in the bottom of that pit and gave example of it to Potiphar's wife that his relationship for the events and the things that he did were not toward man but toward God. That's why he said:

"Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me then I pray you."

Verse 9 says:

"And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph and said unto him..."

The chief butler explained his dream and told about Pharaoh's cup to Joseph. Verses 12-15:

"And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. But think on me when it shall be well with thee and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: 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."

Joseph wanted out of prison, too. Verse 16:

"When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head."

The chief baker goes on and tells his dream. Joseph then gives him the interpretation in verses 18-23:

"And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee. And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."

Why do you suppose Pharaoh hung the chief baker but restored the chief butler to his previous post? There really aren't any reasons given in God's Word. Have you ever found some people that are in positions of authority and rulership that make decisions and carry out different acts without any rhyme or reason?

You just wonder if maybe they did these acts for no other reason than to prove to themselves and to the people watching them, that they had the authority and the power to do it. When man raises himself to places of authority by his own power and his own efforts, there is still no confidence, no security there. He continues to prove to himself that he hasn't lost the power he's had.

What a comparison between these two men: Pharaoh who has to destroy a man's life for no other reason than just to prove he has the power to, and this man in prison by the name of Joseph, whom God remembers. God blesses and remembers him and God puts him in places of power and authority. What a contrast!

There is however one other aspect to consider here - revenge. Someone has hurt your feelings. It's almost a reflex action to think of a way to hurt them back. Your character has been defamed. You begin to think of a plan to wreck their reputation, too. What would happen if I were a god for a day or if you were a god for a day? I'm glad I'm not. I think there are people I would burn to a crisp because of the hurt they've done to me.

Now remember our main character, Joseph. Look at the hurt that's been done to him by his brothers, by Potiphar's wife. Yet, he has at other times been put in places of authority, full authority. He's been made god for a day, at least in the lives of some of the people around him. Did he act like I would - like you would?

Would our response be, "Man, I'm going to burn that person to a crisp"? He could hang these people, destroy them, and send them off to years of hard labor. Yet, no mention of it. I wonder if that isn't one reason why God kept blessing him because of the lessons Joseph had learned down in that pit. All of the events and all the action are part of God's plan and my responsibility to those who do those things is in His hands. He didn't take revenge.

We see another person whom Joseph could have certainly been mad at if he'd made the assumption that God would put him in charge of something again. He could have said, "I'll get even with them, then." Well in chapter 40, verse 23:

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."

In chapter 41, verse 1 we read:

"And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and behold, he stood by the river."

He explained this entire dream. And in verses 8-9:

"And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day."

Verses 10-13 say that the chief butler explained how he had met this man, Joseph. Verses 14-15 state:

"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. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."

Here is the chance of a lifetime. You are standing before a king and he hears you have ability - some talent over and above what somebody else has. What an opportunity to make a spectacle of yourself, to really be able to have the whole world at your feet. "Oh yes, I can do this, I have the ability to do that. Aren't I wonderful?" What an opportunity, especially before a king. The king needs something and only you have the ability to deliver it. But be careful! What does Joseph do? Verse 16 says:

"And Joseph answered Pharaoh saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Every time there's a pit or a prison, there is a crucible. Remember our rule - they always come in pairs. God trains us in a prison or in a pit and then gives us an opportunity to perform. He gives us a chance to prove and show others and Himself that we really learned our lesson. Joseph had an opportunity to make a "spectacle" of himself, to be a show off, like I do and like you sometimes.

But "spectacles" are used for something else, too. There are the ones I wear to read the small print - glasses. Certainly we know that all glasses are used to make things clearer, to make things

intelligible, more understandable, to make clear the way that's ahead. Well, that's the spectacle that Joseph made of himself; not a show off or someone that wants to be king for a day or god for a day. He wanted to make truth clear to those that God had brought him in contact with. That's the kind of "spectacle" we ought to be. That's the kind that Joseph was.

In verse 17 we read:

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold I stood upon the bank of the river."

Pharaoh goes on to explain his dream in the following verses. Then in verse 25:

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do."

Joseph said "God" had showed Pharaoh. He didn't even mention himself. He mentioned two people: God and Pharaoh. That's almost like a picture of the Holy Spirit isn't it? The Holy Spirit is meant to be a helpmeet, to make things clearer. He's not to make a spectacle of Himself but to be a lens, to be glasses, to clear up the vision, the understanding of some truth that God is trying to get across to man. The Holy Spirit is rarely mentioned by name. That seems to be the position that Joseph is in at the moment. Joseph speaks not of himself but of God.

Then Joseph goes on to explain to Pharaoh the meanings of the dreams. Let's skip down to verse 28:

"This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh."

Joseph didn't even give himself credit for interpreting the dream. He just made reference to his God and to Pharaoh, the person in need. I hope that I can be in a position like Joseph; not to stand before a king, not being in charge of a prison, not in charge of a jailor's house, but just to be a lens, a spectacle in God's hands; a magnifying lens that would make His Word clearer to those that He loves. The dream Pharaoh had that was interpreted by Joseph was actually a prophecy of coming events that was to be very important in this mystery that we have begun.

The explanation of the dream is this - verses 29-32:

"Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

Before Pharaoh himself, Joseph, then says in verses 33-35:

"Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 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. 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."

So Joseph has not only been given the interpretation by God but also the plan by which they can live through this seven plenteous years and seven years of famine. The plan is simply to take out one of every five ears of corn or shovels of grain and store it away with a guard to protect it. In verse 37:

"And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants."

Remember we were talking about spectacles being able to give visions of truth, make clear the truth to those that God wants to bless. That's exactly what he did. Verses 37-38 states:

"And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"

How would you like to have someone who knows you intimately, who has been around you a long time, be able to say of you: "The spirit of God lives in you." It can happen and we can set a course for our lives to make it happen. But, we have to recognize there will be pits and prisons and also crucibles in our lives. How can we handle them? Are we going to learn from them? Verse 39:

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this..."

Isn't that fantastic? Joseph's testimony is so strong. He has such convictions as to what God can do. He even has Pharaoh giving glory to God - "forasmuch as God." I wish I could get the people around me to look at life's circumstances and say "forasmuch as God hath." Let's go on in verses 40-44,46:

"Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. ...And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt."

God really did make Joseph a king and a ruler in the way that we think, on a level that we think a ruler to be. Look what has happened. Look what it took. It took a well pit and a crucible - another man's wife. Look at the heartache. All the different events, each one of them were just at the right time, just the right size, just at the right place to move Joseph another step up toward the privilege of being a ruler over all of Egypt.

There is one thing we need to look at here in verse 55 of chapter 41:

"And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharoah for bread: and Pharoah said unto all the Egyptians, Co unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do."

Here's something interesting in verse 56:

"And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt."

Do you see what's happening? We have a man trained in different levels of authority and look what he's responsible for now. He's responsible for ALL of Egypt. However, a famine is over all the earth. That means that everyone on the face of the earth who knows of Egypt and knows of Joseph, is to bring his or her sacks to him. If they don't, they will starve to death because the famine was over all the earth. It's clear to see that Joseph is the savior of the entire world, from a physical sense.

But, that is only part of this whole story. It's a small part in fact, because God has a plan. He's always had a plan. AND He's never had to deviate from that plan. We see clearly now from the Word of God that Joseph has a vital part in this plan. We see this because these events happened a long time ago and God has written down these truths for us to look at and internalize.

But, I wonder if we might be a part of that plan? I wonder if the hands that are holding this book right now are a part of that plan. I wonder if the person we loan this book to, the person we work with, could they be part of that plan, too? Wouldn't it be exciting to get them involved and find out? In verse 57 we read:

"And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."

Now it really is correct to realize that corn is not a good term to use right here because it was grain that was being stored and used. But, we see where God has had a plan through all these diversities, through all these problems in Joseph's life. God's had this plan that has been working itself out. The plan continues. Now, the plan uses famine. Let's see if God truly is working out His plan again.

Chapter 6 – Easy Street

If there was ever anyone who was on Easy Street, it certainly had to be Joseph. The man lacked for absolutely nothing. No one in all of Egypt did anything without his permission. Everyone obeyed him. He had all the riches, all the pleasures, all the possessions, anything he would want. That's Easy Street.



Have you ever dreamed about living on Easy Street? No more car payments, no more insurance premiums, no more worrying about hospital bills or paying taxes. Wouldn't it be great to be on Easy Street? What happens to Joseph when he's on Easy Street? We read in chapter 42, verses 1-3:

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt Jacob said to his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence! that we may live, and not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt."

Remember that Joseph, one of the twelve brothers is now the supreme ruler of all the land of Egypt. That leaves eleven brothers back in Israel. Verses 3-4:

"And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him."

Remember now that the father, Mr. Israel, still believes that a mountain lion or some fierce animal had killed his precious, favorite son Joseph, whom he'd given a coat of many colors. He's concerned that nothing happens to Benjamin, his youngest son. Verse 5:

"And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan."

Now, look what happens. You must picture this in your mind. Verses 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. 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. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them..."

Remember those dreams where his brothers were going to serve him, to be ruled by him? Look how all of this has worked out. God really is in control. The dreams He had given to Joseph so many

years ago, so many heartaches ago, so much suffering ago; it's really coming to be. His brothers are bowing to him, even though they don't know it's their brother. What Joseph does is continue with this mystery story. He accuses them of being spies. Verses 9-10:

"...Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come."

Now, we need to look at the statements that these brothers make. Here is the first in verse 11:

"We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies."

Step number one is they say we are great, we are doing what we ought to do, and we are where we ought to be. There is no sin in our camp. Verse 12:

"And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come."

The second statement they make, see if it's like the first. Verse 13:

"And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

Get those last four words. First they are saying they are true men. Now they are saying there is something wrong. One of them is gone. And Joseph kept accusing them of being spies. Verses 14-17:

"And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, You are spies: Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. And he put them all together into ward three days."

Remember Joseph's past. The man was an authority on prisons. He not only was jailed in them, but he knew what God could do with a man's heart in a prison. He knew that truth is sought and truth is found, if that's desired in a prison. What a logical thing for Joseph to do, to put these men in prison. Verse 18:

"And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live, for I fear God."

How about that! Even though Joseph is on Easy Street, even though he has everything and anything he wants for as long as he wants it, even though his dreams that God gave him as a teenager have come true, that his brothers are subject to him, he has placed them in jail. All these things are happening. He's not only on Easy Street but he's King of the Hill. He's whatever position we've desired for our lives. He has arrived, hasn't he? Look at the statement he made in verse 18:

"...This do, and live: for I fear God."

He hasn't lost his standard for living, has he? Even though he's on Easy Street and King of the Hill, he still references all his relationships and interactions with other men, to God. Verses 19-20:

"If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses. But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so."

Now, what did it say in verse 19? - *"let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison."* He's treating these brothers in the same way, in many instances, the way he was treated. He's not using revenge because if he truly wanted revenge, he wouldn't involve his brother Benjamin. He would just go ahead and deal with those brothers right then and there. But, he wanted to see his younger brother. What were the statements the brothers had made? First of all, we are true men. Then they changed the story a little and said we are part of 12 brothers and one is not. Watch the third statement. They are in prison now. Verse 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."

First they said they were true men. Then they let out a little bit of truth that something was wrong and one is not. The third thing, after they were put in the prison ward and had time to think, time to contemplate what was going on, they confessed to each other that they were sinners, they were guilty. They also recognized, because they were guilty, this problem had come up. Verses 23-24:

"And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. And he turned himself about from them, and wept..."

Why did he weep? He's on Easy Street. He has anything he wants. He's King of the Hill. He can throw people in jail, which he did, his own brothers. He could have them hung if he wanted to. Anything he wants, he can do.

Remember the account in John, chapter 11, where there were two sisters, Mary and Martha? Their brother, Lazarus, was very sick. In fact, he died. They buried him. All the people were assembled around the grave mourning the death of Lazarus. Jesus had already been given news of Lazarus' sickness. In His own good time and according to His plan, He finally arrived to find Lazarus dead and buried. All the people were standing around. In verses 32-35 we read:

"Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping,

and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept."

Why did He weep? Understand, this is the man that made the heavens and the earth. Nothing was made that He didn't do. He had all the angels at His command. He had anything He wanted almost without lifting a finger. Yet, we find Him in a situation where He wept. Verses 36-40 says:

"Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

The people were all weeping because their dear friend Lazarus was dead. A couple of sisters were unhappy with Jesus because they knew He had the power to have prevented Lazarus' death. Yes, the same Jesus that had all this power was weeping. I believe the key to all of this is in verse 40:

"Jesus saith unto her, If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

The One Who made the heavens and the earth, the One to whom the Holy Spirit encourages us to worship and to seek salvation in, was in tears. There were tears because the people weren't seeing the lesson, weren't seeing the truth, but only looking upon physical happenings and events. Jesus was weeping because He loved Lazarus dearly. But He also loved all these people. He realized the only way for them to see the meaning of life, cherish it, and use it for His glory was to believe in Who and what Jesus Christ is, and what He can do. Jesus wept. He wept because the people hadn't seen the truth, because He wanted them so desperately to come to know Him in a personal way and trust in the Maker of heaven and earth. Jesus wept.

It might be well to include at this point two other verses about weeping and tears. They are found in Psalms 126, verses 5-6:

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

There is something about weeping, especially in a man. We are taught at a young age to be masculine, to be macho. We don't cry. Tears are a sign of being a baby, of immaturity. I really think God has given us tears as an expression of deep emotion, to be an outward sign that we have been touched right down to our very being. If there are true tears, tears of joy and tears of sorrow, our emotions have been stirred right down to the very base.

We find Joseph here. We can almost call him King of Egypt, King of the Hill. He's on Easy Street.

Anything and all that he wants he gets. But, he's weeping. Verse 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."

Why was he weeping? I believe he was weeping for the same reason that Jesus wept. He loved these men in front of him. Yes, they were his brothers. Yes, they had sinned greatly in trying to destroy him. In God's providence and in His plan not to be thwarted, God put Joseph in a position, faithful to Him that he would help his brothers to find the truth, find the truth about themselves, those around them, and about God. Certainly one truth is that "be sure your sins will find you out" as Numbers 32 says.

I wonder what went through Joseph's mind as he was wrapping the cords around his brother Simeon, especially when his brother Simeon didn't even know it was Joseph doing it. What a story! Won't it be exciting when we get to glory and can walk up to Joseph and ask him what went through his mind? How did Simeon look when he was being bound? So many questions I can think of to ask in heaven.

Chapter 7 – It's In The Bag

If you had to sum up Christianity and Christian living, how would you do it in just a few words? Try this: Hold out your fingers in front of you. Hopefully, you have four fingers and a thumb. Point at one finger and state the truth God is righteous. Point at another finger - God demands righteousness. If God is righteous and God demands righteousness, only He then can provide righteousness. So the third finger would be designated God provides righteousness.



Why? Who cares? Why doesn't He just make us robots? We are certainly going to do just what He wants, when and how He wants us to. Wouldn't we be able to serve Him better being robots? The reason is because our God has put in us a trait He has. He is a social God. He doesn't want to live alone. He likes fellowship. There's an interesting aspect of fellowship.

Have you ever looked at couples that have been married for a number of years? It seems like they can communicate their feelings and needs without having to say any words whatsoever. Whenever there are words spoken, the one person understands clearly what the other person means. How is that?

That couple together has experienced much heartache, hardships and many joys. Together they have sought goals, been discouraged and experienced all the things like you and I have experienced, but they've experienced them together. So that whenever one uses a word like love or joy, the other person understands clearly what they mean. It's because they've been taught by the same experiences of life.

As we have trusted in Christ as our own personal Saviour, we believe He died on the cross and shed His blood for our own personal sins. All we have to do is accept that shed blood and that act on the cross as being just for me or just for you. We confess our sins, the ones we know about. At least we confess we are a sinner and there is nothing good in us, and that the only thing we can do is turn to Him for any kind of provision for eternity. He comes into our hearts like He promised He would. Now, we have two spirits.

We have our old spirit, the old nature that we were born with. Then we also have God's spirit, the Holy Spirit within us. As we listen to the Holy Spirit, as we go through life's experiences, we begin to understand the meanings of these trials and tribulations, these opportunities to experience joy. So we have a fellowship within this old body right here on earth. Then, when the Lord takes us home to be with Him, to spend an eternity with Him, we have real fellowship with Him.

We have fellowship because we have experienced the same heartaches and trials. When He uses the word forgiveness, we really know what He means by forgiveness. There is forgiveness in a time when we have every right to take revenge, to carry out our anger against someone. Instead, we

forgive them. That is what He did for me and what He did for you. So, while we are in glory and He uses words like love and forgiveness, we know just what He means and then we can have sweet fellowship. Why is it important that we have fellowship, apart from the fact that we have a God that is pleased to have those around Him who love Him?

Another aspect of why we need to have fellowship and why we need to be trained to be in harmony with God is because He has given us the high privilege in eternity future to be able to rule with Him. We are going to rule with Him. Why are we given responsibilities here on earth to watch over children and guide them, protect and love them, and exhort them to do right? Why are we given responsibilities at work to guide and uplift in trying to make that metal part or do this particular service?

We are being trained to rule. Since God is righteous, God demands righteousness. Therefore, God provides righteousness if we accept it so we may be able to fellowship and rule with Him in sweet harmony and unity.

We have seen in chapter 42 of Genesis that the King of Egypt, set in that place by Pharaoh, is Joseph. He has just bound one of his brothers, Simeon, and has told the other brothers to take some corn and go back to Canaan to get their other brother, Benjamin. So, it's part of God's magnificent plan in all of this to reveal to Joseph that he's to give each of the men the money back they have paid for the corn. As they take the corn back to their father and relatives in Canaan, God is blessing these men already through Joseph, even though their hearts aren't where they ought to be, because there is still sin in their lives.

Isn't that something! Even though we don't deserve it, God still blesses us - beautiful sunshine and all the things of nature. He blesses us with meaning to our needs, meaning to our problems, why this is happening, why that is happening. Even when we haven't sought true and complete fellowship with Him, He still blesses us. It's kind of interesting in this situation that Joseph blesses his brothers with the money they have paid for the corn (remember the material is not corn but wheat or grain). Nevertheless, he blesses them by giving them their money back for their food. He puts it back into their sacks.

Remember, these brothers have unconfessed sin in their hearts. Isn't it interesting whenever we have sin in our hearts and aren't walking as close to the Lord as we ought to, that when God does bless us in some fashion, we think it's some kind of trick. That is exactly what the brothers thought. In verses 27-28:

"And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?"

I see there is hope. I see that God's plan is working. The efforts and events that Joseph is setting about are already bringing fruit. The brothers are beginning to understand that their relationship is not based just primarily between themselves and other humans, but between them and God. The last part of verse 28 says:

"...What is this that God hath done unto us?"

Do you suppose it would help us any if we were to look at life and things that have happened to us, that we might consider if this is a blessing from God or something that He's given us to draw us closer to Him? "What is this that God hath done to us?" Verses 29-35:

"And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies...And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid."

Isn't that something; Joseph blessed the men by giving them their money back. They got free food. But it struck fear in their hearts. Genesis 42 verse 36:

"And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me."

It looked in Jacob's eyes, Mr. Israel's eyes, that things were getting worse all the time. He's lost one son, then another son, and now the third son is to be taken away. Verses 37-38:

"And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Look what these boys are learning. First they recognized that the relationships they built here on earth are not really their first priority. The first is to God, not to just each other. Look what Reuben said: "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again." Reuben is in effect saying: "I understand what a sacrifice is. I will sacrifice that which I love for the salvation and safety of another." There's hope for these boys, isn't there? I think that not only Reuben is learning this sacrifice, this substitute for another, kind of thing, but I also believe Judah has, too. In Genesis chapter 43, verses :8-9 it says:

"And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever."

I think the brothers are learning the truth of love and substitution that God wants them to see. Verses 11-12:

"And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight."

The money that you fellows paid for the grain the first time, take back again in case it's a trap or a mistake of some sort. Take also that amount again to pay for new grain. Verses 13-14:

"Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Now the next intriguing step of this mystery comes about when Joseph saw Benjamin as they came back down to Egypt. Verses 16-18:

"And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in..."

He's going to do something to us. You see, according to recorded history, there is a truth that the Egyptians would never eat with Hebrews - with the Jews. It was some form of separation. Here these Jewish brothers who now have Benjamin with them, are brought right into the King of Egypt's house. Remember, they still don't know it's their brother, Joseph.

They explained about the money they found in their sacks the first time they were going back from Egypt to Canaan. They explained to the man of the house how they brought back this money and more to buy more corn. The brothers are brought before Joseph in his house. Simeon has been released from his bonds and is returned to the fellowship of his brothers. Then Joseph says in verses 29-30:

"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. 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."

The love that Joseph had at seeing his brother, Benjamin! What love and compassion he had! How he wanted to throw his arms around him, just to confess everything to him and share with him everything God had done. He wanted to tell about the prisons that he had spent time in, the places that he was in charge of. How he wanted fellowship with that brother Benjamin. But it wasn't God's timing yet and he couldn't.

I wonder how much time Jesus spends in heaven weeping for us; weeping because He wants fellowship with us and we've sought not to set our hearts toward Him. There's an interesting aspect in this fellowship in Joseph's house. Remember that none of the brothers know who Joseph is. They had no idea it was their brother who stood before them, whom they thought was dead and gone.

When they sit down to eat, the seating arrangement that was laid out by Joseph, had each one of these men sitting in an order from the youngest to the oldest. How could anyone in Egypt know how old they were? The brothers really became frightened then. How could anyone down in Egypt know what is going on? The brothers were worried. More than that, the brothers saw that the servants, as they brought food to the tables, set much more food in front of Benjamin. The servants, according to the orders of Joseph, seemed to play favorites, showing special attention to one of their brothers.

Remember how all of this started - by the father Jacob showing special attention to just one brother. You remember also that when we are in a pit and we have that prison type experience, what always comes next? We have a crucible, the examination, the opportunity to show ourselves, others and God what we really learned in the prison or in the pit. Well, here were the brothers' crucibles. They have been involved in a famine situation. People were going hungry. That's why they are back down in Egypt.

All of a sudden they find themselves in a special seating arrangement. Somebody knows exactly how old each one of the brothers are, at least in relation to each other. Worse than that, one of the brothers is getting special treatment. What has gone wrong? What are the brothers going to do! Have they learned their lesson? How are they going to act in their crucible? Are they going to become jealous and angry because one brother is getting far more food than what the rest of them are? Are they going to get angry with Benjamin?

Well, Joseph is watching all of this. He wants to see if the brothers have learned their lesson. We now see that the brothers have their sacks of grain filled, as much as they can carry. Further, without them knowing it, the steward, who filled their sacks by instructions from Joseph, was told to put the men's money back in their sacks again. More than that, an intriguing event also happens. Joseph says in chapter 44, in verses 2-4:

"And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent

away, they and their asses. And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?"

Joseph is tricking them in a special way. Genesis 44 verses 5-6:

"Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing. And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words."

So they're caught again with some things in their bags that certainly shouldn't be in there. In verse 9:

"With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen."

It's been well recognized by Bible scholars that the prayer, the begging if you will, of Judah for the life of his brother in chapter 44, verse 18 is a wonderful piece of literature.

You might want to accuse Joseph of sinning in that he wrongly accused his brothers of being spies. It sounds like he is sinning to me, doesn't it to you? Again without his brothers knowing it, he put the money they had bought the corn with in their sacks so that when they got back up to Canaan and opened them up, they found the money they had paid Joseph for the corn. That's a trick.

The next time they left to take corn back to Canaan he hid his cup in one of the sacks, Benjamin's sack. That is trickery. Isn't that sin? One thing we see that Joseph was very careful about was not to pass any judgment. He accused for a purpose, but with the accusation he didn't follow through with any punishment or anything like that. The only statement that is made concerning those things is in chapter 44, verses 8-9:

"Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen."

That is the only revenge or out and out punishment that is mentioned regarding the money or the cup. Those statements were made by the brothers, not by Joseph or his servants.

Now in desperation the brothers don't know what to do or where to turn. They supposedly have been caught twice with goods and property that didn't belong to them. With nothing else to do, Judah begins a beautiful confession, a beautiful piece of literature in verse 18

"Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh."

He begins to explain all the circumstances and things that have happened, how old his father is, how much love their father has for the sons. He explains that because Jacob is very old, if he doesn't bring his brother back up to Canaan, the father will die. Something interesting the brothers have learned about security and about others is in verse 32:

"For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever."

Now what is happening is that the brothers are recognizing and understanding what it means to substitute one life for another, to make one life a guarantee for another. That is the goal that Joseph wanted the brothers to reach - understanding.

Chapter 8 – Tears

Chapter 45, verses 1- 5 and 7 says:

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him! and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. 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. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life... And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."



Great deliverance! Isn't that fantastic? In verses 9-11 we read:

"...Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 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: 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."

Let's real quickly sum up what has happened. Pharaoh has put Joseph in charge of everything that he has and all the things that are made. Everything that is done is done by the hand of Joseph. Also, Joseph has been wronged, has been treated terrible by his loved ones. The ones that he loved most in the world, his brothers, have tried to destroy him. Through all these events involving the famine and everything, they again unite and each knows who the other is. Joseph reveals himself.

I picture this as a scene in heaven where God the Father is Pharaoh, the supreme authority, yet Joseph is in the position of Jesus and is responsible for all the things that have happened. Joseph is crying. He's in tears because those that he has loved have now come to the truth, have now come to him. What joy, what excitement, what a relief to a heavy heart! At the same time he's saying to those whom he loves dearly, those who have wronged him in verse 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."

That is what Jesus has done for us. He's given us new life, even while we are here on this earth. He's given the promise that He will rapture us up out of this cursed land where there are still more terrors and curses yet to come which would be comparable to verse 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."

So the curse is still going to be here, yet the brothers have been saved out of this terrible time. They are now with the one they have loved, the one they have wronged. I believe that Joseph understood and believed the principle that would be included in the Canon, in God's Word, many years after he was gone. It's found in Psalms 126:5-6:

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

I believe that some of us don't witness like we ought to because we are afraid of failure. I don't like failure. I have difficulty coping with it. Maybe you do, too. You think if you go out and visit this person, they're going to slam the door in your face. If you talk to this fellow on the job and just mention a word or two each day at lunchtime, you'll get socked in the nose or reported to the boss. We don't like failure, do we? Look at that verse again. It doesn't even hint of failure. In fact just the opposite is true:

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, will doubtless..."

We all know what that means - no reservation, no hesitancy, it's going to happen.

"Will doubtless come again bringing his sheaves with him."

I believe that Joseph understood that. I believe in chapter 42, verse 24 it says: "that Joseph wept." I believe it was because his brothers were coming to the knowledge of truth as they exposed themselves and their sin more and more. I believe that just as his brothers came closer and closer to full repentance, it just thrilled Joseph, giving him more joy each moment. In verse 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."

I've often wondered if Jesus doesn't have a chamber in heaven where He goes to be by Himself. He sees us reject Him, be independent and go our own way. We do our own things, be our own person and shun Him. Oh the heartbreak - knowing full well, as He comes out of His chamber, Satan will be right there before Him, accusing day and night the brethren. I believe there will be a day when there will be many tears in heaven, tears of joy, tears of rejoicing. When we go to heaven, when He takes us to be with Him, He's going to have saved us out of the holocaust, the continuation of the curse of the earth. But, it will be tears of joy because those who love Him will be with Him forever.

Isn't it thrilling to see that when Joseph first saw his brothers in chapter 42, verse 24 that he wept? A little later when his youngest brother Benjamin was brought before him, in chapter 43, verse 30:

"...he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there."

In chapter 46, verses 28-29 we see weeping as Joseph and his father, Mr. Israel, are united again:

"...and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while."

I believe this also to be a picture of heaven. With all the heartache, planning and preparation to draw us to Him and bring us to heaven there are tears of joy. There is joy over each one of us who have come to repentance and inherited eternal life with Him in glory. Now I believe there is certainly going to be a lot of tears in heaven. Many of them will be tears of joy. But, I believe there will also be tears of another nature in heaven, tears of repentance, tears of shame. I think we begin to see a little bit of this in chapter 45 as Joseph sends his brothers back up to get their father, Mr. Israel in verses 25-26:

"And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, 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 believed them not."

I think there's a lot behind those two verses. Why is Joseph still alive? How did the brothers know about it? It was the brothers who brought this special coat of many colors that had blood on it, and let the father believe that Joseph had been eaten by a fierce animal.

And so, as the brothers are relating to and wanting to get to the point of telling their dad that Joseph is the lord over all of Egypt, they also have to bring to light the rotten deeds that they've done. They had to bring to light the shame that they had to bear, that they had been jealous and tried to destroy their own brother when they should have been the ones in the whole world to love him most. I believe there were some tough times in those two verses as each of those brothers related to their dad what part they had played in trying to do away with their own brother.

But that out of the way, and certainly of utmost importance to us, is that if we are to come to the knowledge of truth, if we are going to come to a point of full fellowship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are going to have to bring sin to the surface, confess it to the one we should confess it to, and then ask forgiveness for it. In verse 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 believed them not."

That would be tough for him to believe. But, can you imagine as more thought was given to all that the brothers had said, what an exciting place that was? Up in the land of Canaan we first had the brothers explaining to their dad that Joseph is alive. He's alive! What a miraculous thing that God must have done. "The one that we have wronged is alive!" Can you imagine the other relatives as they listen to all the events and things that have happened? Can you see them turning around and

telling another relative next to them HE'S ALIVE? The one whom we thought was dead, is alive! Not only is he alive, but also he's in control. He's in charge of things. Not only is he alive and in control of things, but he's going to save us. HE IS GOING TO SAVE US! Not only is he alive, in control of things and going to save us, but also he's going to save us to be with him. And then you see another relative turn around and tell the one next to him, HE'S ALIVE. He's going to take us with him. He has been in control all along. Can you see that happening all over the countryside? He's alive! He's alive!

I'm looking forward to going to heaven. Why? Because I know He's alive. I know He's in control. And I know He has some wonderful things in store, things planned for me to enjoy while spending eternity with Him. Now you say, nothing could be better. This is fantastic! But let's put the frosting on the cake. Let's turn to chapter 47, verses 5-6 and read:

"And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: 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."

How about that! They have been brought to this land. But they won't just sit. They'll be busy. They'll be given the best, just like Pharaoh gave to Joseph. The best of the land will be theirs. Further, they would be made rulers. **THEY WOULD BE MADE RULERS!**

I think each one of us likes the feeling of control, of being able to influence, to be in charge of, especially when it can be done without Satan's intervention and we don't do it for selfish motives. But here, Joseph's loved ones will be put in charge of, made rulers over Pharaoh's property, the things that belong to Pharaoh. That is a perfect example I think of what we are saved for, why we are going to heaven, why the fellowship. We certainly can't be rulers with Jesus if we don't have fellowship with Him. And we certainly can't rule with Him unless we've been found righteous and honorable in ruling, in being good stewards of what God has given us down here on earth.

We are born in a pit of sin without our own choice that is true. But through all the circumstances of life, as we trust in God, lean on Him, read His word, seek His love and guidance and peace, we can see why all of this is happening. It's so we'll be able to rule with Him forevermore.

Would you like to be a ruler? It all starts by recognizing what Jesus Christ did on the cross, that He died there, shed His blood there willingly and that He fulfilled the law that says *"for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins!"* He shed His blood, the perfect Lamb, the perfect sacrifice; once and forevermore, just for me. His blood was shed for all of my sins, all that I've ever committed and all that I ever will commit. He shed His blood that my sins be forgiven, that I be able to be in fellowship spiritually, and then physically with Him in glory.

If you haven't trusted Jesus to be your personal Saviour, maybe you think that Christianity is for weaklings and sissies. No, it's for people who want to be rulers.

Why don't you right now, bow your head and confess your sins. That just means you say the same things about those sins that God does. Then, as God's Word directs you, confess your sins and recognize who He is. We tell Jesus we believe He is our personal Saviour and that He is the divine Son of God. As you invite Him into your heart, believe the Bible to be true in that He will do what He has promised. God is not a liar. Once He comes in, He comes in forevermore. So now you are saved because of what Jesus did, not for what you have done. You are saved eternally.

So why not do that right now!

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