

Genesis 37:1-11 Created for Glory 9/2/18

Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

² These are the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. ⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: ⁷ Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸ His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

⁹ Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰ But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" ¹¹ And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

(Pastor prays)

Chapter 37 begins the last section of Genesis, and it's 14 chapters of literary genius. Here we meet the last, and arguably the greatest, patriarch named Joseph. I say greatest because, although Abraham is more well-known, there's a whole lot more written about Joseph than Abraham, and he's the only patriarch who doesn't have anything bad written about him.

We will see a lot happen to Joseph between now and December. There are terrible hardships, he was treated unfairly, and wrongly accused. Joseph will be lied about, mistreated, sold as a slave, seduced by a bored noblewoman, thrown in a dungeon and forgotten. He will also be God's man for saving his family, his people and an entire nation. He will live to be 110 years old and yet, through it all, at no point during his long

lifetime did he ever seem to get his eyes off the Lord. Abused and exalted, abashed and tempted, loved and hated. Adversity didn't harden him and prosperity didn't ruin him. Joseph truly is one of the great men of the Bible.

Even still, the account of Joseph's life and the dreams he has and the odyssey he goes on, they are written here not to show us that Joseph is the hero but that *God* is the hero. This is not a story of human trials or success; this is a story of divine sovereignty and a reminder that you can trust the living God regardless of what you are in.

And there is more than that. This is an encouragement to each of us that God is actually in control. He has a perfect plan for His people, and, if so, that plan means hope and future. On top of every bit of that, Joseph's life will remind us of the true and better Joseph, Jesus, who didn't just love and suffer for His family, He died on the cross to deliver us and rose again to save us and will do so today for any who believe. All of that is in the future. Today we meet a loquacious 17-year-old that God has marked out to use for His own glory and these 11 verses remind us:

God is Using Every Second of Every Circumstance for His Glory

You are not a Victim of Circumstances, You are an Agent of God's Glory

We are introduced to Joseph here in verses 1-3, and there we are reminded of the dysfunction he comes from. You think *your* family is messed up? Yours is a nursery rhyme compared to his. His father's name is Jacob which means "trickster." Jacob has sons and other children by four women. Rachel had two. Leah had six. And two servant women had four. Can you imagine Thanksgiving at *their* house?

When we meet Joseph in verse 2, he is 17 years old. His mother Rachel was his dad's favorite, and she died giving birth to his baby brother Benjamin. His older sister was terribly abused and will never marry; his older brothers are extremely violent; his uncle Esau is a wild man; and his grandfather Laban is a manipulative cheat. You want dysfunction, *there's* dysfunction! Later on in the chapter his own brothers sell him into slavery and tell his father he's dead. And yet we never hear Joseph complain and we never see him compromised. Why? Because he wasn't a victim of circumstance but an agent of giving God glory. Brothers and sisters, as God's children purchased by the blood of Jesus, the Bible says we are not our own but were bought at a price that means we

belong to one who mercifully has the right to get glory out of us however He chooses to do so. So, God might get glory through your sickness. He might get glory through your mistreatment at work or at school. We must never chafe against the circumstances God brings to us. Have you been hurt? Mistreated? Broken hearted? Have a terrible family? Victims lay *down*. Jesus got *up*. I'm not asking you to try harder, I'm asking you to trust in the power of the resurrection of Jesus. He doesn't purchase *victims*. he purchases *vessels*. Not for destruction but vessels of mercy which He has prepared beforehand for glory. In Christ, you are not a victim of circumstances but an agent of God's glory.

The Love of God in Christ is the One Real Hope.

There are a lot of things that could be said here about Joseph, but I want to walk you through some of what Joseph was up against in life. Let's just go through the passage and let me point out a few things. In verse 2 there is a little phrase, *these are the generations of Jacob*.

That's a significant phrase. It is also the last time we see it in Genesis. It signifies a new day and it reminds us of the next time we see it in the Gospels. Matthew uses it to introduce us to Jesus. It reminds us that the whole Bible points to Christ. You'll notice in verse 2 that key phrase *these are the generations of Jacob* and then it's Joseph telling us that he has tremendous family and Gospel responsibilities.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and now Joseph. This is the hope of the coming Messiah. This is the hope of the Gospel of Christ that points us ultimately to his cross. In verse 2, look how young he is. He is with the older sons who are ungodly and he tells his father in verse 2 he is more truthful than he is wise.

In fact, I want you to see how bad his home life was. First look at how his father Jacob loved him. Jacob loved Rachel, and Joseph was his favorite, so he had a coat made especially for him. And that creates a problem. In fact, the author is telling us how bad it was. In verse 4 he was hated by his brothers and they couldn't even be cordial. In verse 5, they hated him even more and in verse 8 his brothers hated him even more. In verses 9 - 11 Joseph has another dream and his brothers are jealous. Now he's having to live in an environment where everyone hates him.

Now granted, he needed to learn a valuable lesson about being young and a believer. It's OK to stop talking - even if it's in mid-sentence, even if you are right, stop talking. My wife's favorite Proverb is Proverbs 17:28: *Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.*

Joseph needed to learn some things before he could actually be useful, and the rest of his story is God taking Joseph through one hard lesson after another, chipping away his pride and sanding down his smart-aleck tone, teaching him discernment and patience and deepening his theology to take him past judgment into grace.

I mean when we first meet him here in verse 2, he's giving a bad report on some infraction his older brothers had done. A bad report, that's what the spies gave when they saw giants in the land and came back and gave a bad report. Joseph had the issue that many of us have or have had when you were young and close to God and love theology. Judgment is calling out sin.

Joseph at 17, is calling out his brothers' sin. But our sovereign God takes His chosen vessels and uses our lives and the dumb things we do and the tragic things we go through, the sins we commit and the sins committed against us, and they are like coarse sandpaper slowly but genuinely smoothing us out.

So at the end of the story, after all that happens and the terrible things Joseph had done to him by his brothers, he's not giving a bad report, he's giving grace. What you meant for evil God meant for good. There is one other thing in the passage. God speaks to Joseph in a dream. There were two dreams with the same message that essentially let him know that, after you go through the slavery and the abuse and the lies told about you, I'm going to use you for glory.

And the message of the dreams was not some new revelation. It was setting Joseph up as a reminder in a picture of the greater deliver to come. God's chosen people are in exile on earth, slaves to sin and dead in rebellion with no way out and no hope for tomorrow. And God has sent one better than Joseph who suffered mistreatment and hatred even from His brothers. even to the point of death on the cross, but that death wasn't in vain or as an example of love. The kind of deliverer that Jesus is that He delivers through His death and saves through His resurrection so that any one of you who turn from your sin

and turn to Christ today, you will be saved. And if you do, you are no longer a victim of circumstances; you have become an agent for God's glory, and you find out that the love of God in Christ is the *one real* hope.

(Pastor prays)