

Genesis 39:14-23 Hope in the Dungeon 9/30/18

she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. ¹⁵And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house." ¹⁶Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, ¹⁷and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. ¹⁸But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house."

¹⁹As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. ²⁰And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. ²¹But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²²And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. ²³The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

(Pastor prays)

Don't you imagine Joseph had to ask the question, "Is it any use being good?" He was faithful to God, resisted a desperate housewife, and look what it got him!

Just think about it. Some of you know what this feels like. He's in a place of hopelessness. Think with me, Joseph is in a foreign land, his brothers hate him, his father thinks he's dead, and the only people who know him are the ones who have thrown him in jail. There's no one to turn to to get help. The only thread of consolation he has is in verse 21 where it says the Lord was with Joseph, and brothers and sisters, that's enough.

Even still, Joseph's imprisonment is the exact opposite of what it should have been. He was faithful to his master, he stayed away from his master's supercharged wife, he should have been rewarded or at least thanked.

For Joseph, it had to have been maddeningly frustrating. Joseph felt the injustice from his master Potiphar. He couldn't help but think, "After all I've done for you?" But you know he also had to feel a certain injustice from God. We've felt it. You have probably even said it. "What did I *ever* do to deserve this?" Joseph had been serving God, and it was God who let him be put in prison. Psalm 105 says that God had sent him there. Was it any use, then, even trying? If you've sown the seeds of trying to do right and reap nothing but disappointment and pain, then you know something of what Joseph felt in that wretched place. How, then, do we live to fight another day? I would like to suggest that...

A Good God Will Get You Through Some Really Bad Times

Let's walk through the story and I'll amplify it a bit. And then we can come back and make some application.

Learn to Trust the Hidden Hand of God

In the story, Potiphar's wife casts Joseph in as bad a light as possible. And in verse 13, as soon as he ran, she knew she had to make up a story. First, she tells it to the other servants in the house. Notice the "us" and "them" reference in verse 14. "A Hebrew to mock us." Now it's turned racial. She does it again down in verse 17, when she is telling her husband, except this time she adds the word "slave." Hebrew slave. She tells her husband in verse 18, he was undressing and when I started screaming, he ran. Now look at verse 17 through 19, and how she just rubs this supposed betrayal in Potiphar's face. *and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house."*

¹⁹ As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled.

The Hebrew slave you brought here and trusted. In verse 19 it says that Potiphar, an Egyptian general, is completely infuriated. Now let's pause here. How did Potiphar not kill him on the spot? He certainly had a right and cause, too. Not only that, look where he put him in verse 20. *And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.* The King's prison. In chapter 40 he will meet the cupbearer. and the baker, and that meeting will

lead to him meeting the Pharaoh, which will lead him to getting authority and to saving God's people. There is a *plan*. You and I must, in big and small ways, learn to trust the hidden hand of God. You know, the Psalmists wrote about this event. Let me show it to you. It's over in Psalm 105:16-19.

*When he summoned a famine on the land
and broke all supply of bread,
17 he had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters;
his neck was put in a collar of iron;
19 until what he had said came to pass,
the word of the LORD tested him.*

The Lord sent him and the Lord tested him. So take what we learn from Psalm 105 and go back to the story in Genesis 39. What do we learn about the hidden hand of God?

God protects us. Why didn't Potiphar kill Joseph? God protected him and wasn't done with him.

God sends us where we don't want to be sent. Joseph was sent ahead to a painful, frustrating and disappointing place. But it was 'God's plan. There are gospel implications here. God sent His son Jesus to save.

God tests us. He refines and purifies us. The Lord says in Isaiah 48:10: *Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.* Do you ever wonder why it's been so hard for you? Why the Lord has taken you through all you've been through? Do you ever wonder why He's protected and restored and loved and been patient with you?

Hebrews 12:6 says, *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.*"

His love is a pursuing love, calling you to the cross of Christ, calling you to come and fully and finally surrender your life to the Lord Jesus.

Here's what I mean by that. God has been lovingly pursuing you, hemming you in, to show you your needs, your need for Christ. He will take your sin and give you His righteousness at the cross. Learn to trust the hidden hand of God that is bringing you

home, home to the arms of Jesus. Just as God sent Joseph, He sent Jesus. I'd like for you to consider a second point.

Learn That If God is in You, Very Little Else Matters

Go with me back to the story and think about the context and the beauty of verses 20 - 21. *And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. ²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And gave him steadfast love, merciful love.*

Think about it. Joseph had not only been lied about, wrongly accused and unjustly treated; he was accused of what was the exact *opposite* of what he was actually doing. He had to live with an unjust system and with undeserved punishment.

And I've been thinking this week about Joseph and about how to apply this passage. How do we flourish in an unjust world? How do you not only trust that God is with you, how can you right now live in a way that demonstrates God's witness in your life?

As I had this sermon rolling around in my head, I woke up yesterday and part of my devotional reading was Psalm 37, and I realized that verses 3 through 7 would be worth preaching sometime. The psalmist is like Joseph, in the midst of evildoers, and here's how he is making it through. And I want to close the sermon with these last few suggestions.

Psalm 37:3 - *Trust in the LORD, and do good;
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.*

Trust that God is with you, loves you and protects you. And in Christ, when you don't understand why this is happening to you, trust and do. Do those things you know will honor the name of Jesus.

Psalm 37:4 - *Delight yourself in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

Start to find joy in the Lord, in His kindness, in His forgiveness in Christ and in His provision. When you have a happy and thankful view of Christ, your heart then becomes changed to desire God-honoring things.

*Psalm 37:5 - Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.*

Commit. That's what this is about. Turning in your heart and mind, turning from your sin and the junk you've been into and turning to the Lord. Believe that the cross of Christ is sufficient to save and restore you. Trust. Delight. Commit.

*Psalm 37:7 - Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!*

Still, so you can hear your own heartbeat. Still, so you can think about where you have been and where you are going. Be still and know that He is God. Wait on the Lord and He will renew your strength. Our good God is going to get you through some really bad times. Learn to trust the hidden hand of God. Learn that if God is with you, very little else matters. He is with you when you are in Christ.

(Pastor prays)