

## The Greatest Story (Part 3):

The Good God of Providence & Pain

*Genesis 37-50*

*Memory Verse: Genesis 50:20a*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

The past two weeks we have been looking at the Book of Genesis and we've seen two major characteristics of God. God is glorious and God is gracious.

His glory is seen through his creation and his plan of redemption which he planned before the foundation of the world. He has created the world to reflect his glory, and he has created man in his image to magnify his glory. His predominant will and over arching goal is that he receive glory from his creation.

His grace is seen through his covenant of unmerited blessing. We have not done anything to deserve his love and kindness, yet he bestows it upon us anyway. No greater love has he shown us than to impart upon us his righteousness through faith in the work in Christ. **Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us; "for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."** Abraham's faith was in looking forward to Christ, our faith is in looking back at Christ... but all faith is in the promise of God's Christ.

And... through his grace he has chosen us to be his people and to be a part of his redemptive story; the greatest story ever told.

Today we will finish out our time in Genesis, but of course we cannot do all 50 chapters the justice it deserves in 3 messages. That is why I encourage you to tune in each weekday at 11am to Facebook live where I will be doing a devotion each day to recap the daily reading and to hit the main stories and principles that we can't hit on Sundays.

The past two weeks, today and next week all fit a similar theme... the key attributes of God. Again the first week was his glory, the second week was his grace, and today is his goodness. Next week we will talk about his greatness or holiness. But today, lets look at his goodness. And we will be looking at it through the lens of Joseph.

Joseph is a key figure in the story of the patriarchs of Israel. God Blessed Abraham as the father of many nations and more specifically with Isaac. Isaac had faith in the covenants of God just as his father before him and had Jacob. Jacob, who was renamed Israel, also had faith in God, even wrestled with him a little, and had 12 sons who would become known as the twelve tribes of Israel. One of those sons was

Joseph was sold into slavery by his other brothers.

That's right, we will read in just a few minutes that Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. And I know what you are thinking... I thought you were going to talk about the goodness of God... how can we see the goodness of God in a story where a man is sold into slavery by his brothers? It doesn't make any sense does it?

Well today I want us to see the goodness of God through his providence and our pain. Just as God had a providential plan to use Joseph's pain for his glory, God has a providential plan to use our pain for his glory and for our ultimate good.

We tend to see that pain, suffering, trials, and tribulations are all solely bad things. It is very hard for us to see anything good coming from our struggles... especially when our struggles include tears, frustration, stress, and fear. In the midst of the hardest times we've ever had to endure... we say, "where is God now?"

I've been there before. We all have. I've been pretty honest with you guys about my past. Why did God allow my father to divorce my mother and leave my family? Why did God allow my stepfather to take his own life? Why did God allow my mother to go into a deep depression which further separated our family? All of those circumstances seemed evil to me... how could a loving and good God allow these things to happen to me? But years later, looking back after having had time to process it, I recognize this: If God hadn't allowed those things to happen, then I most likely wouldn't have become a Christian, I most certainly wouldn't be in the ministry, and I wouldn't be the man that I am today, a man that is greatly blessed. Is he a good God? Absolutely. Has he allowed me to go through very hard times? Yes. But if God deems it necessary for me to go through pain to experience his blessing, I would do it again every time. In our pain he is good!

This morning I want you to know that your pain is temporary. And that temporary pain is a necessary step in leading you to where God wants to use you and bless you the most. This morning I want you to see, through the story of Joseph, a principal that could be life changing for you. It could be a game changer! This morning I want you to realize that God is in control and even though you can't always understand it... the pain and suffering you go through in this life, God is using it to advance his story of redemption and bring you greater blessings. Today I want you to see that **Your Pain is Part of God's Plan**

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

So turn with me in the book of Genesis to chapter 37 and lets begin reading about Joseph. The first thing we see here is that ... **Sometimes**

**Our Problems Are Our Problem (Gen. 37:1-11).** Meaning, that not everything that happens to you in this life is someone else's fault. Sometimes we bring the pain on ourselves. So, instead of instinctively blaming others or even God for your pain, perhaps we should take some time to look at ourselves and see how we have contributed to our situation. We can't always play the victim when we are part of the problem. Look at **Genesis 37:1-11** and see that Joseph wasn't completely innocent.

In verse 2 we see that Joseph was a tattler. Considering that Joseph's teen years are summed up in three small paragraphs we can surmise that Joseph didn't just tattle this once... but perhaps it was a continuing thing. One of the phrases we use in our house all the time is a Bible verse that says, "a brother is born for adversity;" meaning, brothers shouldn't make life harder on one another, rather they should look out for each other. Often we apply this to tattling. Not only do we get sick of the tattling but we want our sons to get along and not be at odds with each other all the time. Joseph was obviously at odds with his brothers and he could have brought peace if he'd just stopped tattling.

In verses 3-4 we see that Joseph was obviously favored by his father and that brought division as well. Even though this wasn't something Joseph could control; it is a lesson to parents not to favor their children.

And then in verses 5-11 Joseph makes his biggest mistake. He tells his brothers his dreams of ruling over them. It wasn't a mistake that God gave Joseph the dreams, but it was most definitely a mistake to tell them... rubbing it in their face to a degree.

The point here is simple... though Joseph didn't necessarily sin, he didn't act wisely either. He didn't show the love for his brothers that he should have, and he didn't try to bring about family peace. All of this contributed to his future pain and Joseph could have done some things differently and saved himself some pain. **Even though God's providence is sure, we must understand that our actions will always have consequences**

Even if our pain is not all of our fault, sometimes we contribute. So in every painful trial we should be willing to ask... what did I do wrong? We must be willing to ask... what could I have done differently? Instead of starting to point fingers at others or God, take a step back, evaluate everything you could have done, meditate on it, and ask God to help you handle the situation better next time.

Another thing to mention here is... even though we do some things wrong... sinfulness on the part of others is never justified. Two wrongs don't make a right.

And lastly... **No matter how much wrong we've done or how much we've been wronged, Christ is always more merciful than we**

**deserve.** We deserve hell and the wrath of God and in Christ we are forgiven and redeemed. So no matter the pain you are going through... Jesus is to be worshiped and seen as good, because he has saved you from ultimate pain.

The second thing to notice is this... **Our Pain Can Disciple Us Or Defeat Us (Gen. 37:12-41:57).** Look at Joseph's trials. First, in verses **37:18-36** his brothers sell him into slavery. They hated him so much and were jealous of him so much that they had in mind to kill him, but settled on selling him into slavery. They took his coat put goats blood on it and told their father that he had been eaten by a wild animal.

Being sold into slavery is one thing, but being sold into slavery and betrayed by your family is next level. Can you imagine the emotional pain that Joseph endured knowing that he been betrayed by his brothers?

He is sold into the house of an Egyptian officer named Potiphar and in **39:2-6** we see that Joseph became very successful. Even as a slave, Joseph was able to rise to a level of success that was unprecedented, even to the point that he was put in charge of Potiphar's house.

And we see this... Potiphar saw that the Lord was with him. Even though Joseph had been done very wrong and was not in the place he would choose for himself, his attitude reflected his love for God. Instead of blaming God he was close to God. He walked with God to the point that everyone knew of his faith. His attitude showed that he had faith in the providence of God, that God would make something good out of his pain. And as Joseph grew in the Lord, God blessed him and blessed others through him. I think we see here a very important principle. **Your hurt often reveals your heart.** The pain Joseph went through could have revealed a lack of faith in God and a victim like mentality that would have caused him to be depressed and defeated... but his hurt revealed that his faith in God was strong and unrelenting.

But just as Joseph is blessed and rises to a level of success he once again is brought low with another trial. Joseph in verses **39:6-23**, after rejecting Potiphar's wife's sexual advances is falsely convicted of rape and thrown into prison. Once again... we see no defense from Joseph. It's almost like Christ who did not defend himself when he went to the cross. He is non-defensive. He is not worried about this trial either because he is trusting in the Lord to work through it. It shows a trust in the providence of God and his goodness. Joseph trusts in the goodness of God in the midst of his pain. And once again the Lord uses Joseph and blesses him. Look at **39:21-23** and see how God places him in charge of the entire prison because the keeper saw that the Lord was with Joseph. His attitude was glorifying to God. He felt the steadfast love of God. How did Joseph feel God's love in prison? He should've been upset, defeated, and depressed right? Not this man... he knew God had a plan for his pain. He knew that

God was using his pain to grow him and make him a better person.

**God's goodness is revealed, not in the absence of pain, but in the spiritual growth that can only occur in pain.**

But again, just as Joseph is brought high he hits another trial. In **40:1-23** He does a huge favor for the cupbearer and baker of Pharaoh; one which results in the cupbearers life being saved. The cupbearer says he will remember Joseph before Pharaoh but forgets him. He is forgotten in prison for another 2 years. So... you've been sold out by your brothers, enslaved in Egypt, falsely convicted of rape, and not forgotten in prison and betrayed again. At this point shouldn't Joseph just give up on God's goodness. Obviously God isn't looking out for him right? Wrong again. Because we are about to see that everything that God has brought into Joseph's life that has caused him pain, has been for a huge purpose.

In **41:1-46** we see this story. Pharaoh has a dream which he can't find anyone to interpret. At that point the cupbearer remembers Joseph can interpret dreams and calls for him to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Joseph tells Pharaoh that his dream means 7 years of plentiful crops and prosperity followed by 7 years of famine in the land. Because of his interpretation of the dream... get this... Pharaoh makes Joseph his 2<sup>nd</sup> in command. Look at **Gen 41:38-44**. Joseph... thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, left to rot in prison, is made the second highest in Egypt... which was the world power at that time.... 2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful man in the entire world. Look at what Pharaoh says.... who can we find that has the Spirit of God in them like Joseph? Through all these years and all these trials and pains, Joseph has remained faithful to God and it still shows. His love for God has not diminished and his outlook on life has remained positive. He has never played the victim... and now his faithfulness pays off. After all the pain... God blesses him greatly. So... **perhaps the key to blessings in our life is being faithful in the trials of life.** Maybe you are missing God's blessings because you refuse to bless him in the hard times. Most of us would have been defeated, deflated, or destroyed by these circumstances, but get this... Joseph actually grew in his love for God, desire for God, knowledge of God, and reflection of God. Instead of asking why; Joseph asked God what; what do you want to teach me, God? And he grew in his pain and was blessed greatly. Get this... **Your Pain is Part of God's Plan**

The last thing God is trying to show us this morning is simple... In **His Providence God Is Using Your Pain to Produce The Greatest Good (Gen. 41:53-50:26)** Long story made short... Joseph, in his wisdom, saves a lot of food during the years of plenty. When the famine hits all people must come to Joseph for food. Joseph's brothers must also come from Canaan to buy food in Egypt. Joseph recognizes the and

puts a plan in place to bring whole family together. After all the brothers are back together he reveals himself to them and blesses them abundantly. Later Jacob, their father dies and the brothers feel that now Joseph will enact his revenge and we get this awesome verse... our memory verse for this week; **Gen 50:20**, which says... **"as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."** God used the pain of Joseph to bless him abundantly, but also to save Israel and the lineage of Christ. Remember... everything points to Christ. Do you get this... God had a plan to bring forth the blessing and covenant promise to Abraham through the pain of Joseph. God is working his plan and telling his story through your pain. Remember **Romans 8:23** - all things work together for the good of those who are called. God is working his glory and our good through our trials and suffering. That's how we endure... that's how we press on. In his providence, a wisdom we cannot understand, God is making something amazing through our pain. And so we trust him. We, like Joseph place our trust in his providence. And we find comfort. **Our greatest comfort in our pain is knowing that God is using it to make something good. Your Pain is Part of God's Plan**

### Application (Resolution, You)

So, how have you contributed to your trials? Remember Joseph didn't do everything right in the beginning. Ask God to show you how you can better yourself and see how to make corrections. Always ask God to give you greater self-control and wisdom to make better decisions which have greater outcome

But most importantly, how are you growing in the Lord in your trials and pain? Have you rejected God because of the pain he has allowed? Are you a victim? Or are you learning what God is trying to teach you? Are you allowing this pain to produce victory and blessing? Are you persevering or giving up? Don't let your pain be for nothing... let it make you stronger in the Lord and a better person.

And lastly, Do you have faith that God is using your pain for Good? Keep your faith in the promise that he is working all things for your good. If God is good all the time... then God is good in your pain and trials! What Satan, this world means for evil, God means for Good.

### Conclusion

Let's pray that God would allow us to have faith in his providence through our pain.