



DATE: January 25, 2009

TEXT: Genesis 39:11-23

TITLE: "Genesis XXIII: The Working of God II"

We continue in the story of Joseph. The primary point I am making is this... Joseph is like each and every one of us. A person with skills and faith that need to be shaped by the Lord. We are seeing how the Lord shapes Joseph. Over a course of a life time Joseph is turned from a immature man... in both age and faith... into a mighty man of God.

Truthfully, I believe this is the primary message of Genesis. The only true hero of Genesis is God. We have seen that the Patriarchs were men who again and again choose a path of sin.

- Adam and Eve choose to disobey God
- Cain killed his brother
- Ham the son of Noah committed a great sin against his father
- Abraham refuses to trust God and then bears the son named Ishmael. He then fails to protect this young boy and his mother.
- Abraham lied to protect himself telling men of power that Sarah was his sister putting her in a position to be abused by these men.
- Lot offers his daughters to the crowds surrounding his house
- Isaac showed great favor to his son Esau and failed to love Jacob
- Jacob deceived and manipulated his father in law for financial gain
- Jacob failed to love his family causing them to harm Joseph
- The sons of Jacob, who were destined to be the leaders of the nation of Israel, committed murder of an entire village, incest with a step mother, and selling of their brother as a slave
- Judah, the man who was the leader of the line of Jesus, married a Canaanite woman and then ended up having relationships with his daughter in law.

The Bible does not paint a false picture of these men. The bible is truth. The only hero in the Bible is God Himself. The story of Genesis is God taking very imperfect men and women and molding them into His servants. The culmination of this lesson is found in the story of Joseph. We are looking at 4 seasons of life that every person faces that God uses to mold a person. Last week we looked at the first two... this morning I will look at the other 2. First, a brief review.

**Lesson # 1** God works in the lives of believers by providing blessings. We saw that one of the hardest times for us to grow in our faith is when life is smooth sailing. It is easy to get spiritually lazy and not retain the habits of growth. We saw the need to continue to listen to God on a daily basis..... we listen by expectantly reading the written Word of God. We listen expectantly as The Holy Spirit speaks to us in prayer. We are to grow in faith in the good times of life.

**Lesson # 2** The Lord gives us times of Temptation for us to grow in our faith. Joseph was tempted daily for months and possibly years by Potiphar's wife. Joseph resisted by refusing to

hurt other people and refusing to hurt his Lord God. We saw that we too live in a time of great temptation. We live in a time of lust, of greed, of anger, of selfishness, of self-centeredness. We too must allow the Lord to empower us and guide us in these times of temptation.

**Lesson # 3** The Lord allow trial to come into our lives in order to allow us to grow into mature Christians. Earlier I read the story of Joseph resisting the temptation of Potiphar's wife. How was he rewarded for his obedience? He was arrested and thrown in prison. He could have been put to death. We too, face times of trials. We too face very difficult times in life. Bad things do indeed happen to good people. Christians face cancer. Christians have loved ones die. Christians are in the path of natural disasters. Christians are often treated unjustly by a non-Christian society.

Preparing this sermon made me think of some of the greatest times of Christian growth in my life. Truthfully I thought of many good, good times. The greatest time of Christian growth I had were during my college years. They were, for the most part, wonderful years. I did not grow up in an active Christian family. I remember reading the Bible for the first time in my life

as a Senior in High School. I did not take it for granted... I was amazed at the Word of God.... it touched my soul in ways that are still with me. I remember going to my first bible study. Again I was amazed by the truth I heard and the sharing that was taking place. I was disciplined by a man who was an incredible man of God who challenged me to read C.S. Lewis and Watchman Nee and other great authors. I was being stretched. I was being challenged daily. I was going to college full time... I was working full time in two jobs.... but it was a wonderful time in my life.

But my college years were also a time of struggle. My parents battled everyday in my college years. I commuted to college. My two older brothers had gone away to college... I was home alone. My parents had separated in my Senior year in High School but then got back together for financial reasons. It was horrible. I was at home a seldom as possible.

During my Senior year of college I got engaged to a girl I had been dating for 4 years. I loved her. We had been righteous in our relationship, we were making plans for our future.... I was going to seminary she was graduating from nursing school. Then she found another man.... mailed me the ring in the mail... and I never saw her again. Emotionally devastated. For the first

time questioned the wisdom of God in my life. And God just said.... relax... let me heal you...

I've got a better plan for you life.

I also reflected on the past 30 years of my life since college. Again, for the most part blessed years. The joy of parenting. The joy of service to the Lord. The joy now of grand parenting. But of course it has been interspersed with times of struggle.

- The struggles of parenting.
- The illness of loved ones.
- The death of parents.
- The death of grandchildren,
- the job struggles,
- the shared struggles with so very many people over the years,
- the death of so many close friends in churches,
- the times of discouragement.

But through them all... the Lord is with me. I truly have learned the truth of *James 1*

**2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.**

I would love to take the time to allow you to share this journey I took this week in preparing for this sermon. As a matter of fact something happened to me that has never happened to me before. I dreamed of preparing this sermon... and in the dream I thought of

points to make. I actually woke up... remembered the dream and thought of some of the points I am now making. I wish I could have you all reflect back on your life and remember the times of Christians growth. I pray that many come to your mind. I am sure many will be linked to struggles in our life. You see we are like the Patriarchs. God molds us by using trials in our life.

**Lesson # 4** We grow in our faith by having a constant awareness of God's presence and purpose for our lives. Allow me to read *Genesis 39:21*

**Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, 21 the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.**

For the 6<sup>th</sup> time in this chapter we read these words "The LORD was with him." Again the personal name of God was used. The truth is this... during the difficult times the Lord was with Joseph... and Joseph was aware that the Lord was with him.

Allow me to share a quote from the study of the Patriarchs done by Beth Moore.

**Beloved, we tend to be convinced that God has abandoned us in our abasement and joined us in our abundance. God is never closer to us than when we've been kicked down by life. Dear One, god is loyal to you.... even when no one else is. He present with you no matter what your estate. You can not enter a single place– not even a prison– where God cannot**

**ultimately make you successful.**

Joseph was in prison... but once again his skills and his faith were evident to all. Prison was a necessary step to meeting Pharaoh.

Joseph trusted God. Specifically Joseph trusted three aspects of God. He trusted his sovereignty... his providence..... and his love. In other words God is in control and god loves us as individuals. REPEAT. One of the most famous verses in the bible is *Romans 8:27*

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.**

When this text is read people often concentrate on the first verse. Or people get hung up on the words foreknew or predestined. I have preached on these words before... let me just say they mean God is in control. No.... I want to look at the final words of this verse. We are to be **“conformed to the likeness of his Son”** Wow. There is God’s purpose in our life. Everything we go through.. The good... the bad... the ugly are to conform us to the likeness of God. We are to be like God. We were created in the Garden of Eden in the “image of God.” Our life is moving forward so that we can regain the image of God. Not that we look like God... that we

have the qualities of God.

- The ability to love
- the ability to be unselfish
- the peace that passes all understanding
- the purpose in life that makes life worthwhile.

And finally, look at the final stanza of this verse. All this takes place so that we may be

**“that he might be the firstborn among many brothers”** We are conformed to the likeness of

God... so that we can be the firstborn. Do you remember the feeling you had the very first time

you gave birth or your wife gave birth. Do you remember holding that new life in your arms.

The amazement... the unbelievable love. That is what we are achieving. And remember the

firstborn in the receiver of the inheritance. We are the firstborn of God. Each and every one of

us. We are the recipients of the inheritance. The wonderful eternity awaiting us. Praise be to

God. The Lord is with us. Yes, in times of joy and blessings, and yes in times of struggle and

pain. If we allow, we are being transformed into the likeness of God. Grow in faith. Grow in

times of blessings..... grow in times of temptations.... grow in times of struggle and trials and

grow with a awareness of God’s presence and purpose for our lives.

AMEN