

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

GENESIS 48-50

A poor old man owned a beautiful and powerful white stallion. The king offered this poor man a small fortune to purchase the horse, but the old guy declined...

That particular winter was brutal. The man and his family almost starved to death. The townspeople came to the old man and said, "Why don't you sell your stallion and you'll be rich. You'll no longer have to worry about money. To not sell, is to play the fool." The poor, old man responded, "*Well, it's too early to tell.*"

A few months later the old fellow woke up and found that the white stallion had ran away. When the townsfolk heard the news they came to the old man and scoffed, "See, if you had sold that horse to the king you'd be rich. But now you have nothing. You are a fool." The poor, old man replied, "*It's too early to tell.*"

Two weeks later the stallion returned with three more stallions. The townspeople apologized, "We're the fools now. You can sell your white stallion to the king and still own three beautiful stallions." The old man told them, "*Yes, but it's too early to tell if that would be wise.*"

The following week the old man's son, his only son, was breaking in one of the stallions, when it threw him. The fall crushed his legs. The townsfolk rebuked him, "Old man, if you'd sold that stallion to the king you'd be rich and your son would not be crippled. You are a fool." The man told them, "*No, it's too early to tell.*"

The following month a war broke out. All the town's young men were drafted, and sent into battle, except the old man's crippled son. Sadly, the rest of the town's sons died on the battlefield. The grieving town confided in the old man, "We've lost our sons. Your boy is the only one alive. If you had sold your stallion to the king he too would've died in the war. You're a smart man." The old man answered... "*It's just too early to tell...*"

And at any point in the story of Joseph someone could've commented on the good or bad fortune that had befallen him, and drawn a conclusion, *but it would've been "too early to tell."* For life is full of ups and downs, and God has purposes for both. It's always "*too early to tell,*" until the whole story has been written.

*The rollercoaster ride known as Joseph's life is an amazing story. But the overarching lesson it teaches, is the overarching providence of God in our lives. **God does make all things beautiful in His time.** The problem though, is *His time* is not always *our time*.*

There were times when Joseph's situation seemed cruel and unfair. It didn't make sense. He was a good man snake bit by bad circumstances. How many days was he tempted to doubt God's faithfulness and question God's love? How often did he stare into the darkness of despair and beg God to shine His light?

Yet all that happened to Joseph turned out to have a grand purpose. The twists and turns God engineered not only fulfilled God's **plan**, but along the way fashioned Joseph into the **man** God needed him to be.

As Joseph will say to his brothers in Genesis 50, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good." *The welfare of Egypt and it's neighboring nations, the survival of Israel's family, reconciliation with his brothers, the growth of the Hebrew people, the preservation of the Messianic line, ultimately the salvation of the world hung on how his life unfolded. Who would've think it, as Joseph went through it.* At any point, ***it would've been too early to tell!***

Chapter 48 begins, "Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, "Indeed your father is sick"; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim." Joseph wants his dad to bless his sons.

And Jacob was told, "Look, your son Joseph is coming to you"; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed." Then Jacob said to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz (or Bethel) in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.'

Jacob or *Israel*, as God renamed him, is recalling the Abrahamic Covenant. Remember Genesis 12 God promised Abram and his heirs: **sod, seed, and salvation.** *A tract of land, offspring or a great nation, and a blessing that would come through that nation.*

This is covenant that defines the Middle East to this day. It was first made to Abraham; then confirmed to Isaac; then to Jacob or Israel; then to his twelve sons.

Here Israel is dying and Joseph brings his two boys to their grandfather for a blessing. In a patriarchal society *the paternal blessing* was a big deal. The father or senior family member was poised to pass on a sense of vision and legacy to younger family members. It helped children and grandchildren see the bigger picture - a generational purpose for their offspring.

I think modern people and families have lost a lot by not structuring for and valuing *this paternal blessing*.

Jacob says to Joseph, "And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben

and Simeon, they shall be mine. Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours, and will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.” I’m sure this was unexpected. It went past just *giving a blessing*. Jacob officially adopts Manasseh and Ephraim - now giving his family thirteen tribes.

Joseph is replaced by his two sons. But it’s fascinating, when the Bible lists the tribes of Israel, and it often does, there’re always twelve, never thirteen. It’s like a shell game. *Different lists leave out different tribes for different reasons*, but there’s always twelve!

Israel continues, “But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).” Rachel was Joseph’s mom. Isaac is thinking of her as he speaks to Joseph.

Verse 8, “Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who are these?" Apparently, the old man is nearly blind. “And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place." And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them.”

Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!" *I didn't think I'd ever see you again, but God has allowed me to see you and your two sons, what a blessing!* “So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.” Joseph knows his dad is as blind as a bat, so he lines up his sons according to the anticipated blessing. The older son, Manasseh, is positioned in front of Jacob’s right hand (the hand of preference), and the younger son, Ephraim, is in front of dad’s left hand. Joseph is complying with the customary birthright - the law of primogeniture. Remember, in antiquity family preeminence went to the older over the younger son. *Joseph didn't realize his family doesn't follow custom.*

Verse 14, “Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, **guiding his hands knowingly**, for Manasseh was the firstborn.” Note, the wise, old man knows exactly what he’s doing, when he swaps his hands and exalts the younger son.

And he blessed Joseph, and said: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the

name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.” This blessing is going to shape their lives and their offspring forever.

Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.” Joseph values order and custom, especially with this important blessing. “But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He (that is the firstborn, Manasseh) also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”

So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!' Notice how Israel lists the brothers. He places the younger Ephraim first; then the older Manasseh. “Thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.”

And note, this was not small matter in God's eyes. What Israel does here earns him a place *God's Hall of Faith*. Hebrews 11:21 sums up Genesis 48, “By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.”

Jacob crossed his hands to bless the boys - and blessed the younger son over the older. And in so doing the writer of Hebrews says *he worshiped God*. I'm sure in his mind Jacob was recalling God's grace toward him. For he too, was the younger son, yet he had been blessed above his older brother, Esau.

One of the peculiarities of all three Hebrew patriarchs is that the law of the firstborn was violated in their families... *Abraham honored Isaac, above Ishmael. Isaac blessed Jacob over Esau. And now Jacob or Israel blessed Ephraim over Manasseh.* This was God's way of saying His favor is not awarded according to natural advantage, or social endowment, or earthly custom and tradition, *but by grace through faith!* God upsets human power structures and expectations, and bestows favor on the unexpected.

This means if you're *the runt of the litter*... if you feel unwanted, or passed over, or unqualified... take heart! For God crosses his hands at the cross of Jesus, and through the sacrifice of His Son, He has chosen to bestow the greatest blessings on the least deserving!

Verse 21, “Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.” *The question becomes when did Jacob got to war with the Amorites?*

We don't know. Genesis does not say. But it's not unreasonable to think he had a skirmish or two.

Yet here Israel points out that this blessing on his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, doubles Joseph's family share. It's another coat of many colors - one last special gift from Jacob to his favorite son, Joseph.

In Chapter 49 Jacob blesses all twelve sons. He's in the Spirit now, peering into the future, prophesying over each son and his tribe. Some of his words serve as more curse than blessing. As we'll see, Jacob doles out a few prophecies that are hard pills to swallow...

Verse 1, "And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days: "Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father." Jacob is on his deathbed and all his sons have gathered to him. His *bedroom* is about to become a *courtroom*...

He begins with the oldest, "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power." But "Unstable as water, you shall not excel..." Water flows to the lowest point, and this was Reuben's history. Over and over, rather than rise up spiritually Reuben tended to gravitate to the lowest point morally.

And here's the most horrible example, "Because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it - He went up to my couch." Genesis 35:22 recounts the story of Reuben committing incest with Bilhah, his father's concubine - *a sin that cost Reuben dearly*. His lust and indiscretion cost him his potential. Reuben forfeits his rights as the firstborn. He will "*not excel*."

Reuben's future descendants end up not even entering the Promised Land. When General Joshua leads Israel back to the land of Canaan, the tribe of Reuben settles for a spot east of the Jordan River. Still later, they become the first tribe scattered by Assyria.

Verse 5, "Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place." Recall Genesis 34, these brothers led a brutal slaughter of the men of Shechem. And they teach a lesson of how uncontrolled anger can cost us greatly. Jacob says, "Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel."

This becomes prophetic. Levi ends up the priestly tribe. And rather than be given a portion of land like his brothers, he's scattered in cities throughout the nation... Simeon

blends in with the southernmost tribe of Judah... Thus, both Levi and Simeon are ultimately *“divided”* and *“scattered”* just as Jacob predicts.

Verse 8, *“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise...”* Recall the word *“Judah”* means *praise*. *“Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you.”* Judah will ultimately receive his father, Israel's birthright. Judah will be given the status of firstborn and preeminence among his brothers. His tribe will bear the royal line.

He says, *“Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him?”* Israel depicts Judah as a lion. And from this idiom Messiah gets His nickname, *“the lion of the tribe of Judah.”* Our Lord Jesus did descend from the tribe of Judah.

And verse 10 records a fascinating prophecy. *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.”* This word *“Shiloh”* can be interpreted *“He whose right it is.”* Since the ultimate right to the throne of God's kingdom belongs to the Messiah of the tribe of Judah, the rabbis always took *“Shiloh”* to be another name for Messiah.

This prophecy says the *“scepter”* - a symbol of the right to self-rule - which was commonly associated with the practice of capital punishment - would not pass from the kingdom of Judah until Messiah had come.

Yet the Romans stripped the Jews of this right in 7 AD when Judea became a Roman province. Twenty-five years later, in 32 AD, when the Sanhedrin sought to have Jesus executed they had to get Pilate's approval. They no longer had the right to execution.

And when this right of self-governance was taken the Babylonian Talmud records the Jews' response. The rabbis cried, *“Woe unto us, for the scepter has been taken from Judah and the Messiah has not appeared.”* In Israeli minds Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49 had failed. *The scepter had passed, and there was no Messiah.* But what the rabbis didn't realize was Shiloh had come! At that moment Jesus the Messiah was 12 years old working in his father's carpenter's shop in Nazareth. He might've already visited the Temple.

This prophecy concerning Judah continues, *“Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.”*

This prophesy also concerns Messiah's coming - but not His first, His second coming. The Bible's prophetic passages, Isaiah 63, as well as, Revelation 14 and 19, picture Jesus treading the winepress, or judging the nations, and coming up from

Bozrah with a robe splattered in the blood of the rebels He slayed in battle.

In Genesis' earlier chapters Judah failed miserably, *but thankfully people can change!* At one time, Judah was lust-filled and self-absorbed, but his willingness to sacrifice himself for Benjamin showed his repentance. *God forgave Judah.* And according to Genesis 49 God will use him to bring about Messiah and His kingdom.

Verse 13, "**Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall adjoin Sidon.**" In the OT the territory of Zebulun was land-locked. This must be speaking of end times. In the Kingdom Age, Zebulun will be a commercial port and a trading partner with its northern neighbors.

And Jacob foresees the future of the tribe of Issachar in verse 14, "**Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens; He saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant; he bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, and became a band of slaves.**" You've heard of the Georgia *Bulldogs* and Georgia Tech *Yellow Jackets*, well, here are the *Issachar Strong Donkeys*. This tribe was mighty - they were endowed with numbers and resources. They had great potential.

When the nation returned to the land it should've been easy for Issachar to drive out the Canaanites. But in the end they became "**a band of slaves.**" *The Strong Donkeys had a problem, a weakness. They were lazy. Jacob sees them lying by the load, rather than lifting it.*

One of the potential problems every Christian faces is **laziness**. It's been said, "**We can't do God's part, but God won't do our part.**" The stories of Genesis about the patriarchs of God's family teach us that our part in our covenant with God is faith. But faith is not passive, it's aggressive. It requires effort and diligence.

To grow in faith you have to apply yourself to God's Word, and apply God's Word to your life. Renewing our mind requires a concentrated effort to replace old assumptions with new truth. It takes some *brain drain* to rethink unbiblical ideas, and change the way we approach situations. The Christian life takes effort.

And lazy believers end up like the *Issachar Strong Donkeys*, "**a band of slaves.**" You become a slave to sin, or a slave to the flesh. It's said, "**Laziness grows on people; it begins in cobwebs and ends in iron chains.**" If you don't work at shaking it off... it ensnares you.

The prophecies continue in verse 16 "**Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider shall fall backward. I have waited for your salvation, O LORD!**"

The tribe of Dan is like a poisonous snake. He bites Israel and injects the venom of idolatry. One of the two golden calves that later contaminated the northern kingdom of

Israel was set up within the borders of Dan.

"Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last." Gad was an army that experienced both defeat and victory. Ultimately, he prevailed. Later, this was the tribe that supplied troops for King David.

"Bread from Asher shall be rich..." Asher was the land below Mount Carmel in the north. Even today it's fertile farmland... And, "he shall yield royal dainties" or literally, "he will dip his foot in oil." Today, the port of Haifa is in the borders of Asher. Haifa is the terminal point for the pipelines that bring petroleum to Israel.

"Naphtali is a deer let loose..." Like a wild deer, this tribe liked its isolation and independence. Naphtali bordered on the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus did most of His teaching. Thus, Naphtali "uses beautiful words."

Verse 22, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall." Joseph will be a bulging cluster of grapes, or prosperous. Ephraim and Manasseh end up the two most populace tribes.

Then Jacob says of Joseph, "The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him." For the first thirty years that was the story of Joseph's life.

"But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob..." I love this... I pray it for myself, that my hands will be made strong by God's hands. (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the God of your father who will help you..." Jesus is the Shepherd and Stone of Israel. Shepherd speaks of His first coming, and Stone epitomizes His second coming.

"And by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb." In other words, all of life's blessings will come upon Joseph! "The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers." As Jacob's blessing exceeded his ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, Joseph's blessing will exceed the blessings of Jacob. Joseph will be fruitful, and strong, and blessed by God!

Verse 27, "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil." If you have a daughter here's some good advice, "Don't dare let her date a Benjamite."

Benjamin was Joseph's brother, the son of Rachel, but he's ancestors became like wolves. The cruelty of the Benjamites is well documented in Judges 19-20.

Jacob wraps up his paternal and prophetic insights, “All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.”

“Then he charged them and said to them: “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that is there were purchased from the sons of Heth.”

This is a marvelous statement. Rather than be buried next to his beloved wife, Rachel, in Bethlehem, Jacob desires to be buried in Mamre next to Leah. Recall, in the beginning he resented lying next to ugly Leah. He felt double-crossed by his father-in-law. But over the years he grew attached to Leah. They formed a bond. Jacob ended up loving Leah every bit as much as he’d formerly love Rachel. For love grows when you honor your vows, and learn to love your spouse the way God wants you to love them. *We all need to love our Leah!*

“And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.” Here’s a way of saying *Jacob died*. And note a reference to the afterlife. He was “*gathered to his people.*” Obviously, his people were still alive, *they just on the grave’s other side.*

Chapter 50, “Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel.” Realize, the Egyptians were famous for inventing an embalming process called *mummification*. *Here’s how it worked...*

First, the brains were removed by a crooked wire inserted through the nose... **Second**, an incision in the fanny flank allowed for the removal of the vital organs... **Third**, the body was washed outside with water and inside with palm wine... **Fourth**, the head and the person’s abdominal cavities were stuffed with myrrh, cinnamon, and other aromatic spices... **Fifth**, the body was soaked for forty days in a solution of saltwater... **Sixth**, the body was wrapped with strips of cloth, as long as 700 feet. The strips were smeared with gum and cooked onto the body with extreme heat... **Seventh**, cloth layers plastered on the inside with lime were wrapped around the body, forming a hard encasement. A mask was made to resemble the face... I suppose you could say, like all Egyptian fathers, Jacob was a *daddy* who became a *mummy*.

And let me throw in a few mummy jokes. *There’s only one thing better than a dad joke, and that’s a mummy joke... Name a holiday in Egypt? How about Mummy’s Day... Why do mummies have trouble making friends? They’re too wrapped up in*

themselves... What kind of music do mummies like? Wrap music or Ragtime... What kind of briefs does a mummy wear? Fruit of the Tomb... Why don't mummies take vacations? They're afraid to relax and unwind... If a mummy gives you two dimes for a quarter, what just happened? He E-gypted you... And finally, where do mummies swim? The Dead Sea...

And to all the fathers here today, dad when you die you won't be a *mummy*, but you will be a *memory*. You won't be *mummified*, but you'll be *memorialized*. Your memory will be preserved. *What kind of impression are you making now? What kind of legacy will you leave?*

Verse 3, "Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days."

They mourned for Jacob seventy days - that's a two month funeral! I think it's cruel that modern society mourns two or three days for a loved one, then expects everybody to just go back to work and resume life as if nothing major had happened... *Well, life goes on!*

But I don't think God designed the human heart to heal from a loss in two or three days. Yes, *life goes on, but at times we can't...* until we take time to mourn and purge ourselves of grief. We need to give ourselves time to turn loose of the person we loved. Here, it's interesting, they mourn for Jacob seven long weeks.

Verse 4, "And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying, 'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back.'"

And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear. So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering."

Joseph leads this entourage to the land of Canaan. He arranges a state funeral, with a full military escort.

Verse 10, "Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation. He observed seven days of mourning for his father. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a

deep mourning of the Egyptians." Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim..." Literally, "mourning of Egypt." "Which is beyond the Jordan."

"So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them. For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan..." His sons served as pallbearers. "And buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place." This was the only parcel a Hebrew ever purchased in the land God promised them. "And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father." In other words, Joseph and his friends went back to work.

Last night at the Georgia Bulldogs football game the stadium was packed to the gills - except for one seat on the fifty yard-line. There was an female Dawg fan sitting next to this one, lone, conspicuously empty seat.

Someone asked her, "*Why the empty seat?*" She replied, "This was my husband's seat, but he died recently." The fellow said, "*That's sad, but why didn't you get another family member to take his place?*" She replied, "No one was available. Everyone but me was at his funeral." That might be getting back to normal a little too soon, but at some point you've got to move on.

Verse 15, "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him." With Jacob dead, Joseph's brothers get worried. *Maybe, the only reason Joseph was nice and forgiving was for dad's sake. Will he now grow fangs?*

"So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.'" Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him." I'm sure it broke Joseph's heart to think his brothers doubted his love for them, and didn't trust his forgiveness. Sadly, they assumed he would turn on them the way they'd turned on him.

"Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."

Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, **you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good**, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them." Never forget, the story of Joseph teaches us that the key to our overcoming this *life's bitterness* is a strong trust in *God's providence*.

From the *pit* - to *Potiphar's* - to the *prison* - to the *palace*... at any point along the way, God could've stepped in and rescued Joseph from his troublesome circumstances... *but He didn't!* "It was too early to tell!"

And there was one more "P" to add to Joseph's comings and goings... It was "perfecting." God's purpose was *not just to position Joseph's career, but to perfect His character*. God uses our circumstances to *position us* and *perfect us*. His concern is both *where we need to be* - and *what we need to be*.

Verse 22, "So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.

And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." Joseph makes the same request as his dad. He wants his bones returned to the land God promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And we'll read in Exodus 13:19, that 300 years later, Moses and the Hebrews will comply with this request, and exit Egypt with the bones of Joseph.

It's interesting, of all the exploits that could've gotten Joseph into the Bible's Hall of Faith, in Hebrews 11, the one that's mentioned is his command concerning 'dem bones. Hebrews 11:22, "By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones."

Despite his faithfulness to God, his purity, his moral courage, his wise oversight, his forgiving spirit, he gets special mention because of his faith in God's covenant. Joseph believes God's promise of the land. Hey, *God values our purity, and courage, and devotion... but remember, it's faith alone that makes us right with Him*.

Genesis closes, "So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." John Phillips writes, "Thus ends Genesis. It begins with creation and ends with a coffin. It begins with glory and ends with a grave. It begins with the vastness of eternity and ends with the shortness of time. It begins with the living God and ends with a dead man. It begins with a blaze of brightness in heaven and ends with a box of bones in Egypt. That is the Holy Spirit's final comment in the book on the nature and tragedy of human sin..."

Remember, all our problems started when Eve believed a falsehood. The devil told her if she ate the forbidden fruit, "You will *not* surely die." But it was a lie.

The wages of sin *is* death: **Physical death**, or the **termination** of your body... **Spiritual death**, or the **separation** of your spirit from God... **Eternal death**, or the

damnation of your soul forever in the lake of fire.

And Genesis ends with a death, Joseph's death. But here's the good news, Exodus follows Genesis. And though the book of Genesis ends with Israel in Egypt, deliverance is right around the corner. The book of Exodus begins God's wonderful plan of redemption!