

Sunday, September 20, 2026

Joseph: The Prison

Genesis 39-41:40

- How many of you love you watch movies? You would call yourselves movie people. I love to watch movies, I come from a movie watching family.
- Remember the Titans is the greatest movie of all time. I would say that its my favorite movie of all time but I don't think that would do it justice.
 - It is the GREATEST MOVIE OF ALL TIME
- Now, within the greatest movie of all time, there is also one of the worst scenes of all time.
 - If you're not familiar with the story, TC Williams high school had just desegregated their school —and the football team, The Titans, are leading the charge toward unity.

- They have had an incredible undefeated season, and they just won the game that punched their ticket to the 1971 Virginia State Title Game.
- They get back to the school and when the team gets off the bus the whole town is out there to celebrate with them. Gary Bertier, the team captain, All American linebacker is taking in the whole scene.
- James Taylor is playing softly in the background— He just made amends with his girlfriend, he starts driving around taking in the scene of the school and the whole town finally coming together.
- He sees one of his buddies, they're pointing at each other. YOU MAN, NO YOU MAN!
- Garry hits the accelerator, starts to take off, and I want to yell "GARY! LOOK TO YOUR LEFT!" But by the time Gary would finally listens to me, a truck comes barreling into the drivers side of his Camaro, paralyzing him from the waist down for the rest of his life.

- And what makes hit even worse is knowing that it's a true story and seeing it played out on screen just tears me apart!
- Its one of the most heart wrenching, and gut wrenching scenes in all of cinematic history—it's hard for me even to watch!
- But you know, some of the greatest scenes of the movie come after the worst one. The way they rally in the hospital, the way the play through the adversity in the state championship game... and its actually the horrors of the car accident scene that actually propels the story to be even greater...turning it into THE BEST MOVIE EVER MADE!!
- **YOU MAY NOT LIKE YOUR SCENE, BUT GOD IS NOT DONE WITH YOUR STORY**
 - How awful would it be if I just turned off my favorite movie of all time, just because I didn't like the car accident scene?
 - So many people give up on their goals, or the dream that God has placed in their life....

they throw in the towel because they don't like the scene they're in right now

- One of the most famous verses in the bible—in Jeremiah 29:11 — The prophet Jeremiah is telling the people of Israel that they are about to be taken into captivity by another nation—and in the midst of that context God tells his people ***“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” -Jeremiah 29:11***
- You may not like the scene that's about to come up, you may not like the scene that you are currently in—but remember that there is a much bigger story playing out here.
 - God has a much higher calling for you than you realize. And you're gonna go through some tough scenes and seasons of life, but it's in those that God is going to grow something in you that will prepare you to walk out whatever he has called you too.

- I guarantee you the only way that Joseph could have gotten through what he got through was to have a perspective like this!
 - When he was thrown in the pit by his brothers, something shifted within him—God became his focus and he KNEW that God wasn't done with his story
 - Then he was sold into slavery, but he chose not to live as a slave. and he LIVED like God had a bigger plan for him
- And we left off last week reading in chapter 39 after his brothers had sold him into slavery, then verse 2 says: ***“The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.” -Genesis 39:2-4 (ESV)***
- Again, Joseph may have been a slave, but he wasn't going to live like a slave—and God caused all that he did to succeed to the point that Potiphar didn't have to concern himself with anything except the food that he ate
 - Joseph wasn't stuck in the scene of the pit, he wasn't stuck in the scene of slavery—When most would think that their lives were over—He kept carrying himself and living his life as if God was still writing his story
- And as a result, the Lord blesses him— and he got risen to a respectable position in a high ranking Egyptian official's household.
 - Potiphar is a big fan of Joseph—but the problem is, Mrs Potiphar is also a big fan of Joseph
- ***“Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master's wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in***

the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. ” -Genesis 39:6b-12 (ESV)

- We are seeing just how much of a man of character and integrity that Joseph is turning into
 - He used to be this entitled and arrogant teenager that had no problem telling his family that they should bow down to him

- And now, he is such a faithful servant that he refuses to give into temptation
- And Joseph here —gives us such a good example of how to maintain our Character and Integrity in the face of Temptation
- **1. Recognize Your Sin Doesn’t Effect Just You**
 - Joseph says that this entire house could fall apart because of this. There’s no way that he could betray her husband who elevated him to this position or hurt all of those who looked up to him and worked for him.
 - You see—If you know and care enough to acknowledge that your sin will negatively effect everyone else around you, and count them more significant than yourself, you will be more likely to be able to stand firm
- **2. Recognize Your Sin is Ultimately Against God**

- If God is truly Lord of our lives, we need to understand that every sin that we commit is ultimately against Him
 - Everything we have and every righteous standing that we have is thanks to His Love, His Grace, and Jesus' Blood shed on the cross
 - We sin whenever we take His presence for granted—and if we lived in a constant appreciation for the Cross and His presence in our lives, we will be much more prepared to stand firm in the midst of temptation
- 3. Don't Give Sin Your Attention**
- It says that Joseph day after day, would not listen to her
 - So many people try to combat sin, by constantly focusing on it and talking about it
 - And they give the sin and the temptation—all of their attention and get so discouraged when they fall into it
- But there's a reason why the bible says:**
- "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." -Colossians 3:2 (NIV)
 - "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." -Philippians 4:8 (NIV)
- Now, we do not ignore our propensity to sin, we acknowledge our sin nature—but we give God and His righteousness more of our attention**
- We are transformed by the renewing of our minds and we set our eyes on Jesus—the author and protector of our faith
 - And when we do that—we will be much more prepared to carry out Joseph's most important example here:
- 4. We Don't Fight Temptation, We Flee Temptation**
- When temptation comes, you run

- If you try to fight your temptation it will beat you 9.9 times out of 10
- We in our flesh are not strong enough—that's why Paul says to FLEE youthful lusts
 - Not endure them or stand strong—no flee!!
 - Especially when it comes to sexual sin and sexual temptation
- If there is another person out there that could have the slightest chance of threatening the sanctity of your marriage—stay as far away as you can and have no contact
- If you keep looking at things that you shouldn't on your phone—keep your phone away from yourself in times when you are most vulnerable
- If you find yourselves at parties or social gatherings that threaten your purity—leave, run, and don't look back
- Don't settle for any less than God's best for you and your family
- Set the standard for your life, as a Righteous Child of God that Jesus died in order for you to become—and allow everything that you do to flow from that identity
 - And when temptation sneaks up on you—especially when you are all alone, as it did Joseph—don't give it the time of day
 - I've heard it said, "You have to do something drastic to your sin before your sin does something drastic to you."
- And don't for a second believe the lie that you're the only one— or you are all alone in your struggles and temptations
- 1 Corinthians says: ***"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."***
-1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

- This is the passage that many will use to make the absurd claim that: “God will never give you more than you can handle”
 - That’s a dumb thing to say: Because if that were the case, why would we need God?
- I know people right now that are going through more than they can handle— tragedy is more than we can handle, life is more than we can handle, parenting is more than we can handle —sin is more than we can handle
 - But that’s why we are not supposed to handle it—we’re supposed to flee it—escape it
 - And the promise of scripture is that God will always provide us that way of escape when we make Him the priority and focus of our lives
- That’s what Joseph did! He was selfless in thinking how his sin would effect those around him, He was faithful and refused to sin against God, He wouldn’t give the temptation his

attention and focus, and when it grabbed hold of him—he fled

- He did the right thing! He should be rewarded and applauded— But instead he gets falsely accused
 - *Mrs. Potiphar is embarrassed at Joseph’s rejection and then when Joseph left his jacket in her grasp she gathered all of the other men that worked there back in the house and told this lie about how Joseph tried to force himself on her!—But then she says that she screamed and he ran away and used his garment that she had as her proof.*
- Then verse 19 says: **“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. 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.”**
-Genesis 39:19-20 (ESV)

- Is there anything more frustrating? Than when you're doing all of the right things and nothing ever seems to go the right way??

- But you know, Things don't have to be going right in order to live right
- Its living right, when everything seems to be going wrong that will develop your character and grow you the most.
- Even when everything seems to be going wrong, that doesn't mean God is absent

- Joseph was sitting in PRISON

- ***“But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”- Genesis 39:21***

- THE LORD WAS WITH HIM?!...again, like we talked about last week—most of us would be asking WHERE ARE YOU GOD!

- **NEVER MEASURE THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE BASED ON YOUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES**

- *You may feel like you're in a pit, you may feel like you're in the prison,*

- ***BUT GOD IS WITH YOU***

- Some may need to change the pronoun and speak that over your life and remind your soul that “God is with Me”
- And He's not just with you...His steadfast love is toward you, and you have His favor

- *Understanding those three things could change the way you see every circumstance in your life*

- You may be going through horrific family problems...BUT GOD is with you, His steadfast love is toward you, and you have His favor
- Life may be way harder than you expected....BUT GOD is with you, His

steadfast love is toward you, and you have His favor

- You may feel completely directionless in your life ...BUT GOD is with you, His steadfast love is toward you, and you have His favor
- You see, God does not create the chaos in our lives—but He’s with you through it and He’s gonna use it to work something in you that will not only benefit you, but everyone else around you
- Understanding this is where the power in your life will come from, and can allow you to be one of those annoying people can still be happy even when everything seems to be going wrong
- *Just like Joseph: Let me explain*
- So God gave Joseph favor in the sight of the prison keeper and we see a similar pattern emerge:

- ***“And 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. The 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.” -Genesis 39:22-23 (ESV)***

- Just like in Potiphar’s house, The Jailor sees something in Joseph’s life and puts him in charge of all the prisoners and everything that needed to be done in the prison.
 - Again Joseph, was in prison...but he didn’t live like a prisoner. He was living as if he was already walking in the Higher Calling God had for his life.
- *What God was doing in him was so much greater than what was going on around him*

- To the point that it effected his attitude and demeanor, to the point that it could be a little annoying.
- So Joseph while he was in prison, finds himself in prison also with the Chief Cupbearer to Pharaoh—the king of Egypt. His job was to taste test all of Pharaoh’s drinks to make sure they weren’t poisoned. Classy job
- And also with Pharaoh’s Chief Baker who had fallen out of favor with the King and was thrown in prison as well.
- And verse 6 says: ***“When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” -Genesis 40: 6-7 (ESV)***
- So I can picture Joseph getting up in the morning, stretching it out, being way too happy for first thing in the morning, twirls his keys

while he’s whistling a tune—see the other guys and says:

- Hey guys! Ahhh, Why are you so sad?!”
- Uhhhhhh “WE’RE IN PRISON BRO! There’s not a lot to be happy about right now!!”
- But I think that it says so much about Joseph and his character—that even in the midst of being in prison himself, he still takes the time to notice that something is a little more off with these guys than normal
- **PEOPLE OF CHARACTER, CARE FOR PEOPLE**
 - They don’t allow their bad circumstances to bring everyone else down around them
 - They help even when no one else will help them
 - Why? Because happy people help people, they don’t sit around and wait for people to help them

- So many people get frustrated with other people — so many people even get frustrated with church — because they're waiting for everyone else to help them and care for them
 - *But whatever you want other people to be for you, you first have to be for other people*
 - Or else you'll just stay frustrated and depressed...because all you are doing is *focusing on what everyone else ISN'T doing, rather than what you COULD be doing*
 - *And it's a very disappointing way to live*
- Sometimes the best way to keep your spirits up and to battle your low points in life is to stop focusing on yourself and how bad you think you have it —and start focusing on helping other people instead
 - Instead of having the mindset, “*Who is going to encourage me?*” We should have the mindset, “*Who am I going to encourage.*”
 - *Its SO Much more freeing*
- If we constantly are waiting around for someone to encourage or care for us, we will continue to drown in insecurity and will be so frustrated in life because we will be focusing on the times we're not encouraged rather than the times we are encouraged
 - Then we'll never actually appreciate the times that we actually are and we'll victimize ourselves, and feel sorry for ourselves all of the time and drag everyone else down around us.
- But IF YOU WANT TO BE ENCOURAGED, BE ENCOURAGING
 - *Be someone who lifts people up, be someone who puts others first, be someone that points out the good in people...even when you feel like things aren't going well for you!*
- You're not always going to feel it, you are going to have those days when the last thing in the world you want to do is encourage or care for someone...but that shouldn't matter!

- But do you know how incredibly selfish it is to allow your mood to dictate your day
- To allow how you feel —to determine how you communicate with people
- We should learn how to put those feelings and frustrations aside and genuinely look for ways to care for people—especially in the times we don't feel like it
 - Especially in the times when it feels like we are in a pit or in a prison
- Now, society will tell you that's being fake. Because we've turned feelings into truth and a sense of identity, which they're not.
 - So society would tell you it's fake, but Jesus would tell you it's "Dying to yourself."
 - It's loving each other as Jesus loved us.
- The amazing thing is, is that whenever you do that, whenever you start putting your focus and energy into helping other people in spite of the prison you might feel like you're in at the

moment....all of the sudden your stuff begins to get dealt with

- All of the sudden, that depression that frustration starts to lose the grip it has on your life. And all you do is get stronger and stronger and stronger
- How do I know this to be true? Because it's what God has called us to do!
- ***"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed." -1 Peter 2:21-24 (ESV)***

- And now, years before Jesus gave us this example— Joseph is giving us a foreshadowing into the character of our Savior...
- So Joseph even though he has been wronged, been falsely accused, been unjustly imprisoned—he is still here to help, and he genuinely asks this cupbearer and baker what's going on??
- Then they tell him of some disturbing dreams that they have had
- ***“They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.” -Genesis 40:8 (ESV)***
- So the Cupbearer goes first: This vine had 3 branches, grapes grew out from them and I was squeezing the juices into pharaohs cup
 - Joseph says: *“That’s easy! 3 branches means 3 days! In 3 days you’re gonna get outa here in 3 days and restored to your*

former position! You and pharaoh are gonna be cool again, but REMEMBER ME!

- *“Bet, I gotchu Joe....you’re my boy”*

- Then the Baker gets all excited and says, “My turn, My Turn!!! Ok, look—in my dream I had 3 baskets on my head, full of all kind of breads, and these birds were eating the bread out of the baskets...whats that mean?”
 - Joseph says—*“Yeaaaa, 3 baskets means 3 days— you’ll get outa here too...but you’re not gonna be reinstated to your position, you’re gonna be executed....sooooooooo, wanna get breakfast?*
 - *(Like, how do you move on from that right?!”*
- But everything happened the way Joseph said it was going to happen! The Baker— gone. And the cupbearer got forgiven by Pharaoh and restored to his former position!

- However, the problem was... the cupbearer completely forgot about Joseph!

- GENESIS 41:1 AFTER TWO WHOLE YEARS...

- Does anyone else ever feel like this life with God sometimes feels like one giant waiting game??
- But one thing that I have been learning, I feel like over and over again, in my short 35 years of life so far is that:

- IF YOU'RE WILLING TO WAIT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GROW

- If you want God to work THROUGH you, you first have to let God work IN you
- I told you last week how I had a pastor tell me—"A man cannot be greatly used by God until He is first greatly broken by God"
- *Furthermore—Jesus said: "Whoever is faithful with little will be faithful with much*

- And Joseph may not have completely understood it at the time —but God was using the pit, the slavery, and the prison, to prepare him for something so much greater

- AFTER TWO YEARS// Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, has a dream and tries to use every single resource as his disposal to get his dream interpreted but nothing is working

- Then the cupbearer is like....."ohhhhh yea, well there was this one guy, back in prison who interpreted my dream for me and it came to pass—and I told him I was gonna put a good word in for him—buuuut I forgot"
- Pharaoh says "Well go get him!"... how awkward is that gonna be? You know when you see someone in person that you forgot to call, text or email back and it doesn't hit you until you see them??
- Yea, this is much worse than that!!

- "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And

when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh.”

-Genesis 41:14 (ESV)

- Now, it is interesting to me that they say that they brought Joseph out of “the pit”
 - Because it is actually the same word that is used back in chapter 37 when his brothers threw him into the pit
 - In the Hebrew— the words pit, prison, and dungeon were all synonymous
 - It’s the **Hebrew word “Bôr”**:
 - In **Genesis 37: “And they took him and threw him into a “Bôr”**
 - In **Genesis 41: “they quickly brought him out of the “Bôr”**
 - (same “pit” different day right?)
- And we talked last week about how the pit can either break you or it can build you—and we saw how Joseph had been changed and built

up through the experience that he had in the Pit that his brothers threw him in

- But the difference was that this time, he had done nothing wrong! He’s got no one to blame but other people this time!
 - He had done everything above board, kept God his focus, treated other kindly even when he wasn’t
 - He has turned into one of the best people alive—such a high character man and yet even so—he experiences the pit again.
 - But its almost like it happens to him this time— to confirm that the changes in his faith and his character have lasted
- You know, those of us who have gone through the pit and came out different —should not be surprised when we experience another one
- Because once the Lord breaks you of yourself and rebuilds you the way you need to be rebuilt—now, the Pit or the Prison that you

experience can either expose you or it can prove you

- The “Bôr” as it were—will either expose that you had never really been changed in the first place, or it will prove the work that God has done in your life
- Peter says: ***“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you....let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” -1 Peter 4:12,19 (ESV)***
- Paul says: ***“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” -Romans 5:3-4 (ESV)***
 - Here's the point:

- THE PRISON IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE YOUR CHARACTER

- Jesus says blessed are those who suffer for doing good
- Joseph suffered for years for doing the right thing—the honorable thing—the righteous thing
- Then he finally gets a glimmer of hope that he will be rewarded for his faithfulness after God reveals the interpretation of the cupbearer's dream to him
- But then another 2 years go by —of seemingly unanswered prayers in this prison—this pit
 - And he had every opportunity (and reason) to become bitter, angry, callus, and even hateful
 - But instead he was consistent—and his character was proven—and now he was ready for the next scene
- He comes before Pharaoh: ***And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it***

said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” Joseph answered Pharaoh, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.” -Genesis 41:15-16 (ESV)

- Even through all that he’s been through, he refuses to make anything about himself anymore—God always get’s the glory in His life
- Pharaoh then explains his dream: “There are 7 cows standing on banks of the Nile—all fat and happy—And then out of nowhere 7 skinny-ugly cows come up out of the Nile and eat the 7 fat cows”
 - “And I have another dream after that where the same thing happens with some ears of corn! What does it all mean?!”
- And Joseph explains that God is revealing to Pharaoh that there is about to be 7 years of plenty in the land —where their crops grow like crazy and they’ll have more food and resources than they know what to do with

- But after the 7 years of plenty will come 7 years of famine—so what they need to do is store up as much extra food as they can during the 7 years of plenty to help take care of themselves and the surrounding nations during the 7 years of famine
- And Pharaoh says—“This guy is awesome!”
- ***“This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.” -Genesis 41: 37-40 (ESV)***
- Sounds a lot like Potiphar’s house doesn’t it, sounds a lot like what happened in the prison right?

- Joseph couldn't be successful in the Palace until he was first faithful in the prison
- Sometimes you need to be brought low, so God can lift you higher—Even JESUS didn't ascend to heaven until He was first lowered in the grave
- No matter what scene you might be in—you may be in the pit, or a prison...but God is working something in you because one day God is gonna put you in the palace
- I'm not saying that to be corny—because I'm not talking about in this life time
- I'm talking about in Ephesians 2 when it says: ***“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” -Ephesians 2:4-6 (ESV)***
- Keep this eternal promise ever before you and you will be able to endure the pit, encourage others while you are there, resist temptation—because you will always know that He is with you, His steadfast love is toward you, and you have His favor
- We just have to start living like it