

LX. Genesis in Biblical Perspective  
*The Gospel of Christ from Genesis*  
“The Life of Joseph #4—Victory over Victimization”  
Genesis 40  
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Joseph has been railroaded with false accusations, false trial and now he is headed into prison and that’s where we’ll pick up for this study. Genesis 39:19–23 says [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. [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. [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. [22] 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. [23] 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.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, this is God’s Word, it abides forever and may it be preached for you.

We are in the tenth book of the book of Genesis in this extended study of Genesis. The book of Genesis is a compilation by the Spirit of God of ten books and the last one is the book of the generations of Jacob but we are calling it the study of the life of Joseph because that is what it focuses on. This tenth book started in Genesis 37 and in this study we’ll cover Genesis 40. In Genesis 37 we found Joseph a privileged son of his father who in his privileged position of his father’s doting upon him had now been found in this family where the favoritism of the parent had produced an arena in which the brothers despised him. Joseph had two dreams and decided to share with them the message of those dreams which was that all of his family would bow down to him and that just fueled the fire. So they betrayed him for twenty pieces of silver, sold him into slavery and put him down in a pit and off into slavery he went.

As Joseph went off into slavery we had one of those moments in Genesis 38. When I was a kid I used to watch Hop Along Cassidy. I had my hat, coat, gun, badge and I was a member of the gang. When you watched the program there would be a time in the program where the scene would go blank and the words ‘meanwhile, back at the ranch...’ would appear on the screen. That is kind of what happens in Genesis 38. Joseph goes off into slavery and God has already told Abraham that all of His people would go into slavery and Joseph is the down payment. He is leading the way.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, Judah gets engaged in unbelievable disobedience to God, marrying outside the covenant, paganism, sexual immorality and it involves the betrayal of his sons and his daughter-in-law Tamar, who in turn shows his betrayal. Then there is this unbelievable sexually immoral text of Scripture out of which blossoms Judah’s conviction, eventual conversion and through that line will come the Redeemer. Joseph is not the line of redemption. He is the line of preservation. Through Judah comes the Redeemer and out of that will come Tamar, a woman who prostituted herself and though trusted the Lord she is brought by grace into the line of redemption and you find her in the genealogy along with five other women. Out of these other women some

were Gentiles, adulterers, and prostitutes but there she has found God's grace back at the ranch.

In Genesis 38 Joseph has been sold into slavery in Potiphar's house and in this chapter it says the Lord is with him three times. What happens? He just turns that whole house around. He becomes the head slave. Everyone else is reporting to him. All the power in the house is put in his hands. His appearance and his position become the occasion for Potiphar's wife to try and tempt him and he says "Absolutely not!" He basically tells her four things. I will not violate the covenant of marriage. I will not violate my conscience before God. I will not sin against God. I will not sin against my master. The result is that she frames him with false charges, Mr. Potiphar believes her and so off into prison Joseph goes. This is the same one who was dreaming that everyone would bow down to him. Joseph in prison is now where we find him as we pick up this study.

What will we learn in this study? Joseph is rapidly becoming one of my favorite people to study. I have some heroes I enjoy looking at in life and Joseph is rising to that point because there is much I can learn from him. I hope in this study I can share with you the most important lesson I believe Joseph has for each and every one of us in this text. It is important for us to learn it for a couple of reasons. One, is that today you live in an age of victimization. We have made a science of establishing personal irresponsibility. We have genetic victimization, environmental victimization where one says I do what I do because of my parents or the neighborhood I was raised in.

I want to be quick to say I understand the impact of genetic structure and the impact and influence of the environment and all of those things but when saving grace gets hold of a man or woman the first thing they do is they reject victimization and they go to something called confession. God, I agree with you. I'm a sinner, I did it and I stand before you justly. Until then we'll find a way to put the blame somewhere else. We'll do our best. I grew up in a neighborhood that didn't have enough street lights and that's why I became a thief.

That's not new for that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Adam did you eat the fruit? No, God, I'm a victim. I have a dysfunctional wife. I was abused by my wife. She tempted me with this. She gave me the fruit. I also have a dysfunctional religion and dare I say a dysfunctional God because the woman You gave me is the one who gave me the fruit and I ate. Eve said the devil made her do it. The serpent gave it to me. We have codified victimization.

Today I want to give you some good news but it may not be what you think. In this text we are going to see in Joseph what God does in the lives of those He redeems by grace. He gives them a soul that has steel and satin. It has the strength of steel and the sensitivity and softness of satin. He doesn't by grace turn us into terminators or warriors that don't see anybody but I'm going to get the goal done by whatever it takes to do it. No, He puts in the soul of those whom He has redeemed an understanding that men and women are made in the image of God and I'll treat them that way. I will deal with people in a way that is appropriate before the Lord God who made them and yet their sensitivity is not weakness.

There is a strength of soul that no matter what the adversity it becomes one more opportunity of growth that my life is not dependent upon the circumstances. There is a God who gives me the strength to be more than a conqueror in Jesus Christ in my school,

on my team, in my class whether I teach it or sit in it, in my office, in my neighborhood for I can be strong in the Lord and I can sense the needs of those around me and be moved not only with the passion of strength but the compassion of needs. Now let's look at the text for this study. We are in this tenth book and Joseph is in prison. Who else is in prison with Joseph? The Lord is there with Joseph and it tells us that twice in the Scripture.

Now let's go look at two VIPs – very important prisoners. They are very important people. Genesis 40:1–4 says *[1] Some time (about 11 years after Joseph was thrown into the pit) after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. [2] And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, [3] and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. [4] The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.* The VIPs here are the chief cupbearer and the chief baker.

In those days about the only way you could get rid of a king was to kill them. That would be known as assassination. In those days the preferred method of assassination was by poison which you could do two ways. One way was by what they drank and another was by what they eat. Therefore there were not more important positions and a place where you had to have trust for a king than the one who gives them something to drink and the one who gives them something to eat. The cupbearer and the baker are in important positions in the regime of the king. These two men had some kind of an offense here. It's interesting to note that they are going to jail because they did something and they will be cared for by Joseph who is in jail because he did nothing, except serve the Lord. The keeper of the guard puts Joseph over these two very important prisoners for him to watch over them.

The phrase 'in custody' here means 'awaiting sentence.' They are awaiting their sentence so what will the king do with them? These two very important people have two dreams. As a side note, you wouldn't believe what all these bakers did. A document was uncovered that said the bakers controlled 58 royal recipes for bread and 38 royal recipes for cake. They controlled everything and these men have done something where now the king does not trust them. As they are awaiting their sentence something happens in the meantime.

Genesis 40:5–19 says *[5] And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. [6] When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. [7] So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?" [8] 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." [9] So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me, [10] and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. [11] Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." [12] Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. [13] In three days Pharaoh*

*will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. [14] Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. [15] For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit."*

*[16] When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, [17] and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head." [18] And Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. [19] In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you."*

So here are men that have dreams. The book of Hebrews says in previous times God spoke by dreams and visions. This is 400 years before the first author of Scriptures. Genesis hasn't been written yet. God's Word is not yet in their hands. How is God communicating? He is communicating through angels, visions, and dreams so two dreams have come here. In Genesis 37 Joseph had two dreams and there are two dreams while Joseph was in prison. In the next chapter Pharaoh will have two dreams. Both dreams of Joseph's in Genesis 37 ended up with the same interpretation which was eventually everyone would bow down to him because God would put him in a position of power for His purposes, not for Joseph's self-esteem. Pharaoh will have two dreams that have the same interpretation which will be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine and the interpretation will call Pharaoh to employ Joseph to accomplish.

Here in the prison are two different dreams with different interpretations in one prison. The cup bearer immediately begins to share his dream. If I were Joseph at this time I'd probably be over in the corner feeling sorry for myself and could care less about anybody else. Not Joseph, for he walks in and he's aware with sensitivity. He sees these men are downcast and says "What's the problem?" They tell him and he wants to help. I want us to learn to think so Christ-centered, so Biblically that the reflex of our life is a God-centered view of life. Joseph knows if the dream is of God and from God then God is the interpreter. It just comes right out of his mouth. This is the way Joseph lives – with a God-centered view of life. Wherever he is he thinks God-centered. Joseph invites them to tell him the dream knowing God is the interpreter.

This is why later we'll hear Joseph say to his brothers "What you meant for evil God meant for good." That wasn't some conclusion he came to later on when we hear him say that. That is his view of life, right now in the prison. That was his view of life in the pit and in Potiphar's house. He had a God-centered view of life and as soon as something happened his reflex action was 'who and what is the Lord saying and what is my God doing, for my confidence is in Him.' So they tell him their dreams.

He immediately tells the cup bearer that he will be lifted up and he'll be released. That is a Hebrew way to say he'll be freed, set free and restored back to his position. The baker hearing that good interpretation then wants to share his dream. Joseph tells him he'll get his head lifted up too but it will be hung and the birds will eat off of his flesh. So we have two dreams and now there are two destinies.

Genesis 40:20–23 says [20] *On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the*

*head of the chief baker among his servants. [21] He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. [22] But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. [23] Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.*

Joseph observed. Joseph has had a God-centered view of life. Joseph interpreted the dream and to the cup bearer he had said when you leave will you mention me so that I could get out of this place which I'm not supposed to be in. There was no reason to put me in the pit, no reason to put me in the prison and I'm not here because of any wrong doing so if you could just mention that to Pharaoh. The cup bearer is freed. One is lifted up and one is lifted up and executed. The one who was freed forgot Joseph. Months and years will go by but he just forgot him. He is forsaken and forgotten again. This was not the first time. Could it not be entering into his mind "That with all this forsakenness and forgotten, I wonder if God has forgotten me?"

After reading this it reminded me of a lot of praying and thinking I did in 1999 when I was sensing God's call for me to come here to Briarwood as pastor so I resigned in May of 1999 from the church in Charlotte I was at. I remember the Sunday I resigned and went home and Briarwood hadn't voted yet to call me and so at that moment I was out of a job for sure. Then the vote came and we knew we were coming in September of that year. For that month or so in between, I kind of felt like a lame duck because at Charlotte instead of things coming to me they went around me and I felt useless there. My secretary there sensed that and wrote a sign that said "Harry Reeder forgotten, just not yet gone." That's the way Joseph is here, forgotten yet still in prison.

The takeaways are so obvious here. Here is a victim. He was victimized by his father's idolatry. His father was finding his meaning in life through his son to such a devotion and idolatry that he turned his other sons not only against him but against Joseph. Then Joseph is a victim of his brothers' treason, selling him into slavery. He is a victim of slave traders. He is a victim of Potiphar's wife. He is a victim of Potiphar who believed his wife, even though there was no evidence to convict him. He is now a victim in prison. He is now a victim of the cup bearer forsaking him. If there is any man who could be a poster child for victimization, it's Joseph, but instead you see a soul of steel as he tells the truth. He stays faithful. You see a man with the texture of satin in his sensitivity. A prisoner is hurting and Joseph says 'I'll help him.' There is an interpretation of a dream, faithfulness to the keeper of the prison and faithfulness to the captain of the guard who has just railroaded him into prison. Here is a man who has steel and strength in his soul with sensitivity and grace. The takeaways may seem obvious but let's start looking at them.

Number one, the lesson here for us is the sovereignty of God. There is no doubt about this and we'll mention it time and time again. Just think he happens to get put into slavery. He happens to be brought down to Egypt where God has already told Abraham before that all of Israel is going into slavery there. He happens to be brought down by the Ishmaelites who happen to sell him to the captain of the guard of Pharaoh's house, who happens to put him in a prison on a false charge and he happens to be put in a prison where the king's prisoners are placed. He happens to come across a cup bearer and a baker and they happen to have a dream. He happens to give the interpretations and all of this is occurring time and time again.

The hand of God is clearly at work through all of this. He works through slave traders, doting fathers, disloyal sons, pagan kings, pagan captains of the guard and a temptress (Potiphar's wife). Our God can draw straight lines with a multitude of crooked sticks. There is no doubt that the sovereignty of God is all over this and accomplishing this. This is not a collision of atoms, mutations and accidents that are taking place that will work out in the end. Here is the hand of God using even the sinful choices of men and women to accomplish His purposes. That is obvious here. When we see Joseph with this soul of steel and strength with sensitivity the lessons begin to pour out.

Don't trust men and women. Don't put your hope in men and women. Father, brothers, Potiphar, cup bearer – the lesson is clear for my hope can't be in men and women. I want to love them and serve them but my hope can't be met in them. My hope can't be met in circumstances. Joseph was in the prison but the prison wasn't in Joseph. Joseph was in the pit but the pit wasn't in Joseph. You are more than a conqueror through Christ. People say 'how are you doing?' They respond 'Okay under the circumstances.' What are you doing under the circumstances? Don't always count adversity as a statement that God's love has been removed from me. In fact the adversity may be the hand of God so as C.S. Lewis says "The megaphone gets louder in adversity and you can hear Him now." You don't hear Him in the clatter of prosperity. You hear Him in the meditative silence of adversity.

Those lessons are all there and I look at Joseph in amazement. He is a sinner saved by grace with steel and sensitivity. If I do that then I have done you a disservice and the text because the text hasn't been given to us to be like Joseph. I can certainly learn from him. I can be amazed from him but the text is there to tell us something else. The Lord was with him. Six times in Genesis 39 and 40 it says 'the Lord was with him' and that was enough. His brothers forsake, his father idolizes, Potiphar easily being led astray, a woman falsely accuses him and all through it the point is not that Joseph rose about it, the point is that Joseph's hope was never there. His hope was in the Lord who was there with him.

That is what I offer to you today, the Lord because of the Gospel. That is the takeaway for today. There is victory of victimization because of the power of the Gospel. It is the Holy Spirit within you. God's Word is within you. God's Word is living and active and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword. The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is now at work in your life that you might walk in the newness of life. That Holy Spirit has not promised to remove all of the turbulence and difficulties in life. He has promised to take you through and above it and over it but it's not anything else but Him. The Lord is with you.

About 18 years ago I went to do a conference in Arizona and when I came back I had to go through Dallas. The airport was trying to land all their planes and get everyone into the terminals because there were these unbelievable tornadoes and thunder storms coming through. As they came through everything was shaking and it was unbelievable to witness what was happening. The front finally went through and about six hours later they said they would resume flights and for whatever reasons my flight happen to be at the top. I got in the plane at Dallas to go to Charlotte, North Carolina and had seen on the weather channel that those storms that had just come through Dallas were heading north east which was where Charlotte was. Those storms were going at 70 mph across the land and we were going to fly at about 300 mph. I had figured that there was a good

possibility that we would catch up with those storms and we did. I will never forget that flight my entire life.

That is the only case in human aviation history where the passenger sitting in seat 3A held the plane up with his own hands through the entire part of that flight. I was bargaining with the Lord. The lady next to me had bribed the flight attendant to bring her double some things of alcohol. The flight attendant made some money on that flight. I'm thinking Holy Spirit I need some good stuff here in my life and I'm reading the Word. I'm negotiating with the Lord thinking can we just go straight up from here and not down first. The pilot came on the intercom with this very calm voice as we're going up and down like crazy and says "This is pilot George Smith and I want you to know that we have encountered some turbulence." That was an understatement. He went on to say "I have just received clearance, you'll hear the engines gain power and we're going up to a higher altitude where it will be a smoother ride because we'll be over the turbulence." That's the Gospel promise of power. It is not the removal of the turbulence. In fact, He sends it many times but He will take you through it and above it.

Secondly, there are the Gospel promises. I'll give you a new heart, new Spirit, new life, new family, new home, a new record for I'll save you. You are forgiven of all of your sins in thought, word and deed through the blood of Jesus Christ. There is victory over victimization because of the Gospel power and the promises found in Jesus Christ.

Then thirdly is the Gospel pinnacle. What do you believe is the pinnacle gift of the Gospel? Is it forgiveness? No, as much as I love it. Is it heaven? No, as anxiously as I'm awaiting it. The pinnacle gift of the Gospel is God Himself. He suffered our sins that He might bring us to God. He is the One who gives the power, gives the promises and He now says 'I give you Myself' and that's why I hate with a passion, not the people who preach it, anytime I hear people preach the Gospel based upon someone being saved because they do something that allows God to save them. I am saved by God's grace. Even the faith that I have is a gift of God. The repentance I have is a gift of God. It is from Him, to Him and unto Him. I thank God that there are many things I'm called to do because of the Gospel that I do for His glory and grow in intimacy with Him but what I do adds not one merit to my salvation. It is what God has done so I despise any preaching that says or any Gospel message that says 'here is what you must do for God to be able to save you.' Even the faith I have that is the instrument is God's gift to me.

I despise a Gospel of licentiousness where we who have been trapped in sin, experienced the death in sin with sexual immorality, perversion, seeking power, covetousness, embracing those things as idolatry and we have found out all is vanity. It is empty and brings death and despair. We need to flee to Jesus Christ and then someone comes along and says "Grace is greater than sin so don't worry about the sin stuff." Sin is death! I don't want anyone to preach a Gospel of grace that ever makes me look at sin in a cavalier and trivial way. I hate sin! It destroys families, homes, and lives.

I hate the Gospel of prosperity that misrepresents faith. Faith isn't something I bring to the equation that enables God to give me the things of this world. Faith is my ability to come before God, confess my sins, put my trust in Him and let Him know all the desires, hurts, ambitions and issues of my heart. Faith brings it to Him and then faith says 'now Lord not my will be done but Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' My faith puts my trust in God. It doesn't empower God to do anything for me. It is

God's gift to me that I will call upon Him and put my trust in Him. Away with any gospel that would take people of God back to the toys and dust of this world as if our hope is there.

Each one of us has an inexhaustible need for hope. That is why people flock to these perversions of the gospel but hope is not in my religion or my works or my baptism or in sin. Hope is not power, money, fame and gains. Hope is not there. There is only one place that I have hope and that's the Gospel News. Get you up people of God on a mountain and proclaim the Good News of the Gospel, behold your God! It is God who is my hope. In the prison and the pit God was not Joseph's consolation prize. God was his hope and it mattered not whether he was enthroned with Pharaoh or in a pit of this world for it is God who is my hope. Only He can satisfy that inexhaustible need. Know Him and love Him. He is mine and I am His. I don't need Him and a car and I'm not looking to get put into prison but wherever He leads me, He is enough. Get you up, O people of God and shout the Good News because of Christ, behold your God! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word this day. If there is anyone reading those who has put their hope anywhere else, even a Jesus plus hope, will You this day send us to Christ alone. In Christ alone I have my hope. In Christ alone I have my victory. Our brothers and sisters are walking into offices, work, neighborhoods and classes, will You give them the testimony that Jesus is my all and that in Him I am completely satisfied and now with strength and sensitivity I bring Him to my classmates, teachers, friends, co-workers, neighbors and students. Reflexively I tell you my all is in Him and my trust is in Him alone. My joy, my life, my crown is Christ the King, Amen!