

Back to Egypt

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Date: 03 September 2017

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[0 : 00] And as I begin my message today, I want to bring you first to the end of this passage where Jacob reminisces about his life to Pharaoh in chapter 47, verse 9.

And he says this, The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life. And they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning.

So he says, Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life. Now, some of you can relate to that. And even if you personally can't relate to that sentiment, you at least probably know someone who can.

In this world, we will have tribulation, Jesus said in John 16, 33. In this world, people suffer from natural disasters like Hurricane Harvey. We experience the loss of loved ones.

We endure hardships and injustice. People hurt each other. And hurt people hurt more people. And they sin and suffer in perpetual cycle.

[1 : 05] And for that reason, if you look around, there is no shortage of bitterness in this world. But in this passage, it teaches that for Christians, we can rise above it all to trust in God in the midst of sin and suffering because God's sovereign purposes prevail through it all.

Now, that's the main point of this passage. And we see this truth in Genesis 42 to 47 through the unfolding stories of three main characters. First, we're going to talk about Judah. And then second, we're going to talk about Joseph.

And third, we're going to talk about Jacob. And these chapters are really a literary clinic on character development. They're such complex, broken characters that God transforms in the course of these chapters and have been throughout the previous chapters as well.

Their stories teach us that we can trust in God in the midst of sin and suffering because God's sovereign purposes prevail through it all. So first of these portraits is of Judah in chapters 42 to 44. And by Judah, I mean all the brothers of Joseph, the sons of Leah, because he kind of functions as a representative of the brothers. And Genesis 41, the chapter before where we are today, concluded with Joseph rising to the rank of vizier.

[2 : 17] It is the second in command in all of Egypt after Pharaoh. And then he was entrusted with meeting the needs of the Egyptians during the seven years of famine. So he was in charge of the storehouses.

And then we are now turning, the scene is turning now to Canaan again to see how the Israelites, how Jacob and his sons are dealing with the same famine that struck the area. And so read 42, turn to 42 verses 1 to 5 with me.

I'm going to read that out loud now. Verses 1 to 5 of chapter 42. But actually, before we do that, I'm just going to pray to ask for God's help.

We usually pray before the scripture reading, so I got kind of thrown off my routine here. Let me pray. God, we know that our words often fall to the ground.

They are not fulfilled. We go back on our promises. But your words never fall to the ground. You're always faithful. That's why we cling to your word. And we want to hear from your word to be challenged and addressed by it.

[3 : 25] So we pray. We need your help. That by your spirit, you enliven our hearts, illuminate our minds to understand and to grasp and to apply these truths to our lives so that we can glorify you and honor you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Chapter 42, verses 1 to 5. It says, When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, Why do you look at one another?

And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die. So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him. Thus the sons of Israel came to buy among the others who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

So Jacob and his family, too, have been affected by the famine that struck Egypt. And now they are literally running out of food. And Jacob, in effect, scores his sons. Like, so what are you doing?

[4 : 31] Go and get us some food. I heard that there's some food in Egypt. And then it says in verse 3 that ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. And that's interesting because Joseph now has 11 brothers.

So why just ten? And then the answer is given immediately by the narrator. And it's because Jacob, their father, feared that harm might happen to Benjamin, his youngest.

And Benjamin, so Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. And Joseph and Benjamin are the two sons, the only two children he has by his favorite wife, Rachel. And so he's trying to protect his son, Benjamin.

The word harm coming upon Benjamin, it only occurs in Genesis. In the entire Bible, it occurs four times. And three of the times it deals with Benjamin. So he's trying to protect Benjamin from harm. And the last time it occurs is, interestingly enough, in Exodus 21 to 23, the harm is applied to a baby that is accidentally miscarried because some men who are fighting around accidentally hits the pregnant woman and the baby miscarries.

[5 : 33] And the harm is that to have come to the baby. So Jacob is literally here babying Benjamin, saying, This is my son. This is my favorite son. And no harm is going to come to him on my watch.

So he doesn't send him. He just sends the ten brothers. Well, harm might come to them. But, I mean, that's not a bigger deal for him than it is for Benjamin. So in God's providence, out of all those thousands probably of people that are there to buy grain from Egypt, Joseph is personally overseeing the sale of grain.

And he gets to meet his brothers. And Joseph recognizes his brothers because, I mean, they probably haven't changed too much except for aging. But Joseph has changed quite a bit.

One, he was an adolescent when he was taken to Egypt. And now he's the second in rank in all of Egypt. So he's hard to recognize. So they don't recognize him. And Joseph takes advantage of that disparity, that he knows them but they know him not, to test them to see if they have changed since the time they sold them into slavery in Egypt.

And so verse 7, it says, Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. So these words are signifying that divine justice is now catching up to Joseph's brothers.

[6 : 44] Because if you look at chapter 37, verse 18, it says that Joseph's brothers conspired against Joseph. And then in 37, 32 to 33, after selling Joseph into slavery, they dipped his robe of many colors in gold blood and then brought it to his father Jacob, asking him to identify it, right?

So those two words, identify, right, and to conspire, are the exact same Hebrew words that are translated here as recognized and treat as strangers.

So now, so those two are, so basically Joseph is doing to his brothers what his brothers did to him, exactly what he did to him. Possibly a little bit of vindictiveness there, but more likely he's trying to test him, test them to see where their heart is.

And he accuses them of being spies sent by foreign power to scout the weakness of Egypt. And then he presses them. And as he continues to press them, they start to divulge more information about their family in order to gain Joseph's trust.

And so they say in verse 10, know my Lord, your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants have never been spies.

[7 : 55] There's a lot of irony in those statements, right? So he says, we are all sons of one man, not knowing that even the man he is there speaking to is a son of one man. And then not just that, they're speaking, they say that they're honest men to the very brother that they sold into slavery, right?

So you can see the irony. Joseph is watching them. They're claiming to be honest men, sons of all one man. They continue in verse 13. We, your servants, are 12 brothers, the sons of one man in the

land of Canaan.

And behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more. Quite the vague euphemism. One is no more. When the reality is that they themselves heartlessly and callously sold him into slavery, right?

And so after, at this point, Jacob has learned that he has another brother because Benjamin was born after he was sold into slavery. So he presses them further to get more information about his family in verses 15 to 16.

By this, you shall be tested. By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of you and let him bring your brother while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you or else.

[9:11] By the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies. After saying this, Joseph puts them in prison for three days. And this too is evidence of the justice, right?

Joseph was formerly imprisoned on account of his brothers selling him into slavery. And now they are imprisoned on account of Joseph. In fact, the word that is translated in verse 17 as he put them all together in custody, that is a word play on Joseph's name.

It looks and sounds exactly like the name Joseph. So basically, Joseph is Josephing his brothers. He's treating them like the way they treated Joseph previously. Now, during their imprisonment, Joseph revises his plan.

And we don't know why exactly, but maybe he realizes, well, if only one of them goes back, I mean, he's not gonna be able to take much food back to his family. Maybe they won't survive. Okay, maybe it's better to keep one back and send the rest of them home.

We don't know what's his thinking. But he revises his plan. He decides to leave one brother with him and to send everyone back to grab Benjamin. And Joseph's brothers know that God is bringing them to account for what they did to Joseph as all this is happening.

[10:17] Because they say in verse 21, in truth, we are guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the distress of his soul when he begged us and we did not listen. This is why this distress has come upon us.

They caused Joseph distress. And now the same distress has come upon them. And then Reuben tries to justify himself in this situation to his brothers.

He says, did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. And so now there comes a reckoning for his blood. So Joseph overhears this, the narrator tells us.

And even though he has a translator between them, obviously the brothers think that he's understanding through a translator, but he doesn't need a translator. So he understands what they're saying. And so at this point, he learns that his oldest brother, Reuben, was not complicit in their plan to sell him, to kill him, right?

Or initially to kill him, and then later to sell him into Egypt. And so maybe that's why Joseph has some compassion on his oldest brother, Reuben. But he decides to hold Simeon in prison.

[11:21] Simeon is the second oldest brother instead of Reuben. And then he sends them back home. And this may also be just kind of ironic, divine retribution. Because now, because Benjamin, right, the second son of Rachel, is held by Jacob, and he wants him to bring him back.

So in exchange for Benjamin, he's now holding on to the second son of Leah. So there's a lot of just kind of retribution happening. Just Joseph, exactly the way they treated Joseph, mistreated Joseph, is happening to the brothers.

And so they go back with additional provisions and probably out of compassion for his family, he returns all the money that they paid for the grain and puts them back into the sacks. And as they're going, they discover, one of the brothers discovered the money in the sack and they panic.

They're like, oh no, my money is in the sack. So they're worried that basically when the Egyptians do their accounting later, they're going to realize that they didn't pay for the grain that they took. And then now, they're going to get in trouble later if they ever come across them again.

And so, they say in verse 28, what is this that God has done to us? This is a recurring theme. As all these things are happening, we recognize that it's not people who are the ultimate agents, but God is doing these things.

[12:35] God is bringing the brothers of Joseph to account. But that's just the start because it gets worse. So they discovered the money in one sack and now they arrive and they tell Jacob, their father, all that has transpired up to this point.

And then when they opened the rest of the sacks, they discover that the money is back in every single sack of grain. So that means they didn't get, they didn't pay any money for the grain that they just brought from Egypt.

And then it says in verse 35, of chapter 42, and when they and their fathers saw their bundles of money, they were afraid. And then follow this.

And what they say, what Jacob says in response, in verse 36, is shocking and highly suggestive. It says, you have bereaved me of my children.

Joseph is no more. Simeon is no more. And now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me. Right? So first, Jacob is blaming his sons for the loss of Joseph and Simeon.

[13:40] And if you have followed Joseph's story up to this point, well, maybe you can blame, you know, them for Simeon because perhaps they weren't persuasive enough with Joseph or something like that. But really, it's not their fault.

Right? And then secondly, Joseph, according to the theory, according to the lie that they sold to their father, right, Joseph was devoured by wild beasts. Right? So if Joseph was devoured by wild beasts, they're not to blame.

So when Jacob says here, you have bereaved me, my children, he's suggesting something that perhaps it was not up to no one. So this is, a lot of commentators note this, but it may be that first time they sold Joseph into slavery.

Obviously, they had a lot of money. It says that they sold them for 20 shekels of silver, which is about two years worth of wages. So think about how much you earn in two years. And all of a sudden, one day, they have that money.

And perhaps the father notices some of that and starts to harbor some suspicions. Okay, what happened to Joseph? What really happened? Where did all this disposable income come from? We don't know what he did, but he probably pushed the suspicion to the back of his mind, thinking, oh, that's just unthinkable.

[14:44] There's no way that happened. But then, now Simeon is lost, and then they come, and the Simeon is gone, and they open the sacks, and all the money that he gave them to get the grain is there.

There's Simeon. There's money. Again, and he's, so that, at least, it would be very rash, reasonable for him to suspect them of doing something unthinkable.

So he says, you have bereaved me. He doesn't say, you have all been bereaved. No, you have bereaved me of my children. You have, Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin.

All this has come against me. Now, that explains the, the overzealous response of Reuben in the following verse, because he says in verse 17, verse 37, kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you.

Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you. But Jacob does not confide in Reuben, and he replies in verse 38, my son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left.

[15:47] If harm should happen to him down on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol. Now, this is a statement because Jacob is saying, in effect, I don't know about your sons, but my son surely isn't going down with you, right?

And he's, and also look at how, what he says, Jacob refers to Joseph as his brother, meaning Benjamin's brother, not your brother or their brother, right? And he also says, he is the only one left, as if the other 10 sons of Leah are not even his sons, right?

He's the only one I have left. There's so much brokenness in this family. And Jacob is virtually renouncing his 10 sons of Leah as less than sons, and doubling down on his favoritism of Rachel's sons, of Benjamin now.

And so even though the brothers sold Joseph initially in order to gain the favor of their father by getting rid of the favorite one, they're back to square one, exactly the same place where they began.

Now Benjamin has taken that mantle of Jacob's favorite child. And in fact, the words that he uses to describe what would happen to him should he lose Benjamin is almost identical to what he said when he lost Joseph.

[17:00] You'll bring down my gray hair in sorrow to shield. So at this point, we are seeing, in the following chapter, we're going to see even more, but even in the midst of Joseph's brother's sin and

suffering, God is working something here.

He's working out his sovereign plan and we're going to see that in the following chapters. Look at chapter 43. Now some time has passed and it seems that at least some of the tension and suspicion that was there between Jacob and his 10 sons has been diffused because now they're hungry again and they need food, right?

So Jacob once again tells him to go buy some food and then Judah reminds him emphatically, father, it's not happening unless we take Benjamin with him. The man told us so.

And so we have seen since chapter 37, so basically that's when Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob, tried to usurp his father's authority by sleeping with his father's concubine.

Now ever since then, he's kind of lost his kind of status, his favor with his father as firstborn. And then after that, the second and third sons, Simeon and Levi, also lost their favorite status with the father by raiding and ransacking the town of Shechem.

[18:11] And so you see that later when Jacob blesses his sons on his deathbed. So he kind of, he passes over, I mean he blesses them but it's kind of a curse for Reuben, Simeon and Levi. And so that's, so now you see increasingly Judah, the fourth son, taking the mantle of leadership and that's what we see here.

So Judah starts to represent his brothers and then now, now he says in verses eight to 10 of chapter 43, send a boy with me and we will arise and go that we may live and not die.

Both we and you and also our little ones. I will be a pledge of his safety from my hand, you shall require him if I do not bring him back to you and set him before you. Then let me bear the blame forever.

If we had not delayed, we will now have returned twice. So Judah is, is more persuasive than Reuben and Judah, I mean Jacob trusts him more than Reuben and recognizing that the alternative really is death by starvation, he says to himself in chapter 43 verse 14, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

And he says, go take Benjamin and go back to Egypt. And not just, he doesn't just send them to Egypt with the money to buy the grain, he sends them also with the choice fruits of the land in order to basically gain the ruler of Egypt's favor.

[19:31] And he also sends them with double the money. And this is so interesting, what Jacob says, he says, perhaps it was an oversight. Perhaps.

He's not convinced that it was an oversight. Perhaps it was an oversight. So he says in verse 12, and he sends them all back. Now, man, this is such a gripping story.

I hope you guys, we didn't get to read the full thing. I hope you guys get to read it at home. But basically, when they arrive, they receive an exceedingly warm welcome from Joseph. And they are taken into Joseph's house for a luncheon.

But a guilty conscience doesn't sit well with kind dealings. And so automatically, they start to suspect, oh no, they're going to try to ambush us and then enslave us. So they go up to the steward preemptively and say, hey, remember last time, the money?

Like, we didn't do that. We didn't take the money. And we brought all the money back. And then the steward tells them in verse 23, peace to you. Do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you.

[20:31] I received your money. Now, whether knowingly or unknowingly, Joseph's steward expresses the truth that really kind of main point throughout this passage, that God is sovereignly working in and through all human activity, including Joseph instructing his servants to put the money back in their sacks.

So in this scene, we see Joseph's particular affection for his full brother, Benjamin. Read very emotional verses here. Verses 29 to 30.

Please read that with me. It says, Lifted up his eyes and saw his brother, Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me?

God be gracious to you, my son. Then Joseph hurried out for his compassion, grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep, and he entered his chamber and wept there.

In describing this entire second visit of Joseph's brothers, the narrator has intentionally not used any relational terms. So Joseph, up to this point, has always been called the man, and Joseph's brothers have always been called the men.

[21 : 43] It's not very creative, but then this is the first time where it says, Benjamin is his brother, and his mother's son. Relational terms are used to convey exceeding affection that Joseph has for Benjamin.

So he goes out to weep, and he returns, having composed himself. But after the feast, his test is not done. Joseph initiates the final part of his test of his brothers, and then he commands his steward in verses 1 to 2 of chapter 44.

We're in chapter 44 now, verses 1 to 2. Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack, and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain.

Now, at this point in the narrative, we don't know what Joseph is up to. All we know, he could be just pretty generous, like he was the first time, just giving them the money back, and then because he loves Benjamin, giving him his special silver cup.

But then we see what he's doing later in verses 4 to 5, because he instructs his steward further. Up, follow after the men, and when you overtake them, say to them, why have you repaid evil for good? [22 : 56] Is it not from this that my Lord drinks, and by this that he practices divination? You have done evil in doing this. So when the servant catches up to Joseph's brothers, and then the servant interrogates them, the brothers are so certain of their innocence, they say this in verse 9, whichever of your servants is found with it shall die, and we also will be my Lord's servants.

But the steward is working on Joseph's instructions, so he's not really interested in the rest of the brothers. So he just says, no, verse 10, he was found with it shall be my servant, and the rest of you shall be innocent.

So he takes their suggestion of making a servant, but he doesn't accept their suggestion of making them all servants. So it's a much more lenient punishment, but of course, the steward already knows where that silver cup is, and the tension in the narrative builds as they check one sack at a time, starting from the eldest to the youngest, and then finally, they come to Benjamin's sack, and then they open it, and the cup is found in Benjamin's sack.

Now, this is a brilliant test that Joseph has designed, right? Because what happened, right? The first time his brother sold him into slavery, right? They abandoned him callously to the Egyptians to be a slave there, and then they left.

And the test is this. Now, you're going to have to decide. Now, the other son of Rachel, Benjamin, is about to be enslaved in Egypt. Will you do the same thing you did to me and abandon him and go home?

[24 : 30] Right? That's the test. And so now, the test is set, and then we get to see the response. And this is, and the brother's response is so telling. I mean, they've been living with gnawing guilt for the last 20, 22 years.

I mean, it's in the back. It's bothering their conscience. They sense it in all their dealings with their father. And then so, Judah and the brothers, they say this. God has found out the guilt of your servant.

Now, they're not referring to the guilt of stealing the cup because they didn't steal the cup. They're saying God has found out the guilt of selling Joseph into slavery. And that's exactly what God is doing.

He's finding out their guilt, bringing them to account, and he's forcing Joseph's brothers to reckon with their sin and to repent of it so that they can be reconciled to one another.

Right? So in the midst of all their sin and suffering, God is working out his sovereign purposes. And we see what he's doing in the following years. Right?

[25 : 32] So 22 years of unconfessed sin, right, that they've been dealing with is finally coming to a climax here. So Judah's speech in chapter 44, 18 to 34, is one of the most beautiful, eloquent, and impassioned speeches in all of Hebrew literature and all of the Bible.

Now, it's really a point-for-point undoing of their earlier violation of that paternal and fraternal loyalty and love. So I'm going to read it in full because it's worth reading.

Verse 18 to 34, please read it with me. Chapter 44, verses 18 to 34. Oh my Lord, please let your servant speak a word in my Lord's ears and let not your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself.

My Lord asked his servant, saying, have you a father or a brother? And we said to my Lord, we have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead, and he

alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.

Then you said to your servant, bring him down to me that I may, and I set my eyes on him. We said to my Lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

[26 : 47] Then you said to your servants, unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again. When we went back to your servant, my father, we told him the words of my Lord, and when our father said, go again, buy us a little food, we said, we cannot go down.

If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down, for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us. Then your servant, my father, said to us, you know that my wife bore me two sons.

One left me, and I said, surely he has been torn to pieces, and I have never seen him since. If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs and my evil to shield.

Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant, my father, and the boy is not with us, then as his life is bound up in the boy's life, as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant, our father, with sorrow to shield.

For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, if I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life. Now therefore, please, let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my Lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.

[28 : 17] For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father. Oh, it's...

Judah now really understands what it means that his aged father's life is bound up with the life of Benjamin.

Right? And he states very plainly, right, that Benjamin is his favorite, that Jacob has singled them out for special affection, just as he had previously done with Joseph.

And this is a remarkable admission if you think about it, right? I mean, that's a very tough pill to swallow for Judah and the rest of the brothers, right, the ten brothers, the sons of Leah. That means because that's...

Jacob is not truly treating them like sons, acknowledging them as full sons. Right? It's a painful reality for them to admit. In fact, that was what aroused their jealousy in the first place to get rid of Joseph.

[29 : 16] But now, that same favoritism that had previously led them to sell Joseph into slavery, that same favoritism is the reason that Judah gives for cherishing and protecting their younger brother, Benjamin.

Do you guys see what's the change that has taken place in Judah and his brothers? Before, they said, you know what? Jacob just loves him. Well, let's get rid of Joseph. Let's get rid of him. Now, because Jacob loves Benjamin and with a special affection, they say, we cannot afford to do the same.

Take me instead and make me your slave so that Benjamin can go home to be with his father. And the word father is mentioned 14 times in the Hebrew in this speech of Judah.

My father, my father, that's his obsession. That's his primary overriding concern. I cannot, again, bring such grief to my father. Right? So that earlier violation of that paternal bond by selling Joseph into slavery is now being reversed and they're showing great and extraordinarily affection, loyalty to their father.

And so through Judah's speech, Joseph learns many things. One, he learns that his father had thought that he was torn to pieces by a wild beast. And then second, he learns what consternation he must have caused by withholding Simeon and demanding that they bring Benjamin.

[30 : 43] And then third, he sees that a true repentance and transformation has taken place in the life of his brothers. Now they really care for even Rachel's son, even the son that on account of whom they are in a way disinherited and disregarded.

And so that breaks down Joseph's last defenses and it says in chapter 45 verses 1 to 3, Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him.

He cried, Make everyone go out for me. So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers and he wept aloud so that the Egyptians heard it and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

And Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph. Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him for they were dismayed at his presence. So Joseph then comforts and reassures his dismayed brothers and then in verses 14 to 15 he says, Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept and Benjamin wept upon his neck and he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them.

After that, his brothers talked with him. After 22 years of not talking to one another as brothers. Now they talk once again to each other as brothers.

[32 : 05] as sons of the same father. God has sovereignly worked reconciliation in Jacob's family even through all their sin and suffering.

In a group this large the chances are that there's at least some of you who have a painful secret that you have been keeping from others like Joseph's brothers. Maybe there's a sin that you keep hidden and refuse to confess through shame and guilt.

Maybe you aborted a baby from an unwanted pregnancy. Maybe you visited sex parlors or watched pornography in the seclusion of your mobile device.

Maybe you cross-dress in secret and fantasize about sexual engagements that God forbids. Maybe you have a persistent image issue and you engage in binge eating and purging.

Maybe you have severe depressive and suicidal thoughts and you're cutting yourself. Whatever it might be I'm here to tell you on the authority of God's word that you can be healed and forgiven and free.

[33 : 33] We see that in the life of Joseph's brothers. God worked out his sovereign plan even through their sin and he brought healing and reconciliation to their family.

It's never too late to come clean before God. You are never beyond redemption because our redeemer is the almighty Lord himself.

So James 5 16 exhorts therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. Unconfessed sins will eat away at your soul and a guilty conscience will never stop nagging you.

And together they lead to alienation from God separation from him. Come clean before him today.

In this story Judah only offered himself as substitute but as Christians as God's people we know that God that Jesus Christ our true elder brother actually offered himself as a substitute for our sins and wrongdoings.

Jesus died in our place so that we can be forgiven of our sins and that's why we can come to him that's what we call the good news of Jesus and if you're already a believer then we are forgiven sinners right what the Bible calls saints and this passage illustrates for us the importance of reconciliation in God's family because the reason why and the reason reconciliation was made possible in Jacob's family right is Judah's brothers right instead of making right their personal grievance the point at which they relate to their brother Joseph and Benjamin it's because of them now I'm I don't have the favor of the father instead of relating to them in that way they turn that around and relate to them on account of the father's love for them no my father Jacob really loves them and cherishes them that's why I need to cherish them and love them that's why reconciliation is made possible in the same way in the family of God we are diverse and God intended it to be so he designed us so that we're interdependent and not independent and that experiences that make us need each other but when that happens and we're also still sinners we sin and therefore we're going to offend each other but when that happens we can be reconciled to one another and have unity in the family of

[36 : 00] God by not relating to one another on account of personal grievances they did this to me it's because of this they do these things that I don't relate to each other on those basis but relate to each other on the basis that we have the same father and the father loves them loves all of us that's what brings us together and reconciles us in the family of God it's because we have aligned ourselves with him that we can be aligned with one another and so God in the midst of the brothers Judas sin and suffering works out his sovereign plan and that's the first point it's also the longest point so stick with me yeah and the second we see the same truth displayed in the life of Joseph right we can trust in God in the midst of sin and suffering because

God's sovereign plan prevails through it all look with me if you turn with me to 41 chapter 40 and verse 32 there Joseph had said something very interesting to Pharaoh because he's interpreting Pharaoh's two dreams and he says that the two dreams actually have the same meaning and as he interprets it for Pharaoh he says this the doubling of Pharaoh's dreams means that the thing is fixed

by God and God will shortly bring it about now that's in there as a clue for the readers because where was another occasion when there were two dreams a doubling of dreams Joseph's dreams Joseph had two dreams they weren't identical but they were referring to the same thing that his brothers his family will bow down to him right so first dream he had he had eleven of his brothers bow down to him the second dream he had the sun and moon and all the stars bowed down to him so that's a sign we're wondering then at this point well Joseph's dream was doubled when is that going to be fulfilled and we're following that narrative as we go in chapter 42 6 it was noted that when

Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground in verse 9 it says Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them now that's certainly a fulfillment of the first dream had 10 brothers not 11 but it's not a fulfillment of the second dream because he's missing his last brother and he's also missing his parents so then we still hold on to that dream in their second visit it says they bowed down to him to the ground again fulfillment of the dream but only a partial fulfillment this time all the brothers are there but still no parents so Joseph's dream actually is not fulfilled until genesis 46 verses 5 to 7 where it says Jacob set out from Beersheba the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father their little ones and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him he also took their livestock and their goods which they gained in the land and came into Egypt so according to genesis 35 Joseph's biological mother Rachel passed died while giving birth to Benjamin so the dreams fulfilled not in Rachel but in Jacob and Leah coming with the 11 sons to bow down to Joseph so that is fulfilled in that way and so what is so this dream took a long time right

I mean according to genesis 37 2 Joseph was 17 years and if you do some math and follow along the years that are given we find that it's been 22 years for the fulfillment of his dreams to take place so God's timing didn't quite align with Joseph's timing right and Joseph in the midst of that had to be a slave at Pot for his home and he had to be imprisoned for years as well but nevertheless God fulfilled the dream he gave to Joseph and this story also teaches us that we can trust in God hold on to God in the midst of sin and suffering because God's sovereign plan prevailed through it all now what was God's sovereign plan in Joseph's story Joseph articulates that for us in chapter 45 verses 4 to 13 please read that with me chapter 45 verses 4 to 13 so hurry and go to my father and say to him thus says your son Joseph God has made me lord of all Egypt come down to me do not tarry you shall dwell in the land of Goshen and you shall be near me you and your children and your children's children and your flocks your herds and all that you have there

I will provide for you for there now four times Joseph repeats that God was the driving force behind all the faithful events of his life right so this is staggering because Joseph was sold against his will into slavery by his brothers right Joseph was imprisoned against his will by Potiphar and his wife right and then Joseph really to no will of his own was raised to the rank of his ear Pharaoh yet in all of those events God Joseph says not men God was the driving force God was the ultimate agent God did this to me he sent me right and the purpose of it all was to keep alive for you many survivors the word keep alive has the same used when God preserves humanity from the judgment in the flood judgment in

[42 : 26] Noah's story so God wants to preserve God's people in this famine and also be a blessing to other nations through this that was the reason why God sent Joseph to Egypt and this is an astonishing theological truth in reality and later in chapter 50 verse 20 Joseph repeats a very similar and even more pointed sentiment to his brothers he says this as for you you meant evil against me but God meant it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today notice it does not say that you meant evil against me but God used it for good doesn't say that you meant evil against me but God meant it for good that means from eternity past the evil that came to Joseph was intended by God for good he's not a God that you know salvages some stuff from a sinking ship right he's not a God that turns you know makes the best of a terrible situation that's not what God is doing that's that's a very you know diminished view of God's sovereignty no God intends he meant for good all the evil that happened to Joseph he meant that for good for Joseph how that's amazing what freedom and joy we'd have if happens to us all the evil things that happen to us all the harm that others do to us God meant it for good he doesn't just salvage it he doesn't just use it he's sovereign over and through it all that's why we can trust in God even in the midst of sin and suffering 17th century pastor Thomas Watson writes this in his book all things for good it says heart quieting consideration in all the afflictions that befall us that God has a special hand in them Ruth 1 21 it says the almighty hath afflicted me instruments can no more stir till God gives them a commission than

the axe can cut of itself without a hand job eyed god in his affliction therefore as augustine observes he does not say the lord gave and the devil took away but the lord have taken away whoever brings an affliction to us it is god that sends it if god were not sovereign then the ultimate explanation for sin and suffering in our lives is us that would make my job as a pastor really really difficult someone suffering comes to me ask for counsel well it's kind of your fault god you know god maybe i'm sure god didn't want that for you but really there wasn't much he could do about it brothers sisters that's not the god we serve he is powerful he is sovereign and through all situations sin and suffering he works his sovereign purposes and that's why we can trust in him and of course the consummate example of that is what god did through jesus the son of god comes to us people kill him on the cross like a common criminal he humbled himself he died on the cross but that death becomes the means by which god's grace is given out to his people to all who would entrust themselves to him so acts 2 23 to 24 describes it this way jesus delivered up

according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of god you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men god raised him up losing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it though lawless men killed jesus it was according to the definite plan of god this doesn't mean that we're not responsible for our choices we are right we do sin and we will be held accountable for our sins and there are implications consequences to that but in and through everything god works his sovereign purpose is for his people maybe some of you like joseph have a dream that god has given you maybe not a literal dream but maybe a calling that you have received from god maybe some of you I know some of you you feel called into ministry but it feels like maybe that calling has been indefinitely delayed or only partially fulfilled and you wonder if and when it will ever come to fruition or maybe you feel like you're a damaged good too old too sinful too messed up to be able to do god's will maybe there are people who can who have brought you unspeakable pain and suffering but joseph's story reminds us that we can trust in god in the midst of sin and suffering because god's sovereign plan prevails through it all and now a short final point from jacob chapters 46 to 47 the first time joseph's brothers returned to jacob after selling joseph into slavery jacob said i will down to shield to my son mourning he says a similar thing again the second time his brothers returned and the third time when his brothers returned with the news of joseph he says it's been great reversal he says joseph my son is still alive i will go and see him before i die again here reversing jacob's fortunes and working his sovereign plan through jacob's life as well and then here when and this is there's still some reluctance on jacob's part because he knows that and we know from being in genesis all this time every time someone a god's people settle in any place other than the land of promise the land of

Canaan it's bad right bad things happen and it's condemned by the narrator and so here they're going into egypt to settle and that's a warning like oh why are they going to egypt to settle so because lest we think that that was not sanctioned by god himself the narrator explicitly tells us that god appeared in a vision to jacob to send him to go to egypt and and then as he goes makes the promises reaffirms the promises that he had made previously to all the patriarchs i will make you into a great nation and i will go down with you and then i will eventually bring you up again to cana so three parts to the patriarchal promise one i will give you a place the land of promise and third i will give you my presence to be with you he is giving all of these six verse four and joseph's hand shall close your eyes after reiterating the promises of national importance international importance and cosmic spiritual significance god comes down to eye level with jacob and tells him joseph's hand shall close your eyes jacob's most intimate immediate personal concern he misses his son that's what he longs for more than anything i hope you see god's compassion and tenderness in this example see god's not this grand chess master right who ruthlessly sacrifices all of his pawns to advance his grand plan no he cares intimately about every one of his people he cares for us he cares about jacob sometimes as christians like we believe that god is sovereign and we believe that he is good and that he's going to work out all things for his glory and our good but at the same time we still have this fear in the back of our minds oh but i really don't want that plan that's ultimately going to be good for me to be immediately really bad and painful for me right and we have that reservation but if that is you you can look to jacob and be comforted jacob said few and evil have been the years of his life yet even then if through all of his suffering and sin god cares for him personally knows his losses knows his suffering and struggles and all of his and all and we see examples of god's promises being fulfilled and the chief among them is not only the multitude of children he has he says they have seventy which is a symbolic number representing fullness a full

nation of israel in jacob but most pointedly in chapter 47 7 to 10 when jacob has an audience with pharaoh and it's very interesting what happens it says then joseph brought in jacob his father and stood him before pharaoh and jacob blessed pharaoh and pharaoh said to jacob how many are the days of the years of your life and jacob said to pharaoh the days of the years of my sojourning are hundred and thirty years few and evil have been the days of the years of my life and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of the fathers and the days of their sojourning and jacob blessed pharaoh and went out from the presence of pharaoh right usually when you address pharaoh you address yourself as your servant that's what his that's what joseph's brothers do but jacob does not address himself as your servant instead he uses the simple personal first personal pronoun oh my sons did this and i did this you know and then he says and then he says that he blessed pharaoh twice and when upon his entrance and upon him before his exit and as hebrews 7 7 says it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior here jacob is pharaoh's superior everyone who's watching the scene thinks that you know pharaoh is granting jacob an audience but jacob is the one that's granting pharaoh an audience and why is this infirm old man who has to be carried to places and stood up by his sons why is he pharaoh's superior because of the abrahamic promise genesis 12 i will make you a great nation i will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed jacob is blessed by god almighty that's why he's pharaoh's superior god's promises are being fulfilled and even in the midst of that we also see glimpses of the promise of land going to be fulfilled so jacob insists that he gets buried in the land of canaan not in the land of egypt and all of this shows that we can trust in god in the midst of sin and suffering because god's sovereign purposes prevail through it all and for us this points ultimately to jesus right because jacob's promise the promise that god gives to jacob is fulfilled literally in in basically the conquest of the land of canaan and the establishment of the davidic monarchy but it's fulfilled typologically theologically fulfilled ultimately in the coming of jesus christ as the new israel as the new testament describes him and and it's so that when we are saved and we lay hold of the promises that these patriarchs had not by becoming a jew ethnically but by believing in jesus christ with faith repenting of our sins and saying i will believe in jesus cling to him align myself to his purposes and live for him and no longer for myself that's when you become heirs to the promises that these patriarchs have received and it's only when you have done that you can trust in god in the midst of sin and suffering because this promise is not for those who have not entrusted themselves to jesus so i urge you this morning if you have not yet aligned yourself to god and his sovereign purposes to do so so you can have a joy and peace that we enjoy as believers in being able to trust god in the midst of the severest sin and suffering because god's sovereign purposes prevail through it all so let's pray together god we thank you for this wonderful promise we pray that you would really help us to live in light of this truth because it would transform our perspective our attitudes the way we engage with interact with all the circumstances in our lives so help us god we want to honor you by trusting in you in jesus name we pray amen