

Never, Never, Never

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Date: 23 February 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Sue, what a blessing. If you have Bibles, I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 40. Genesis chapter 40, we are studying a life that is filled with ups and downs.

If you study the life of Joseph, man, what a rollercoaster ride. And when you think about it, that's kind of like life, ain't it? Filled with ups and downs.

Life can be like a rollercoaster ride. If you're on your way up, hey, don't be surprised when it flattens out. And if you feel like you're going downhill, relax.

It's going to level out soon. Life is topsy-turvy, and we see that. Probably no better in anyone's story than in the life of Joseph.

Just as a reflection, remember he was the favored son. He was a dreamer and a dude with a fine-looking coat. Not only was it had multiple colors, but also it was a cuffed coat, which meant that he's not a working man.

[1 : 1 5] That's a royal coat. And he stayed at home with mom and dad while his brothers were in the field shepherding.

And so when his dad tells him to go check on his brothers, he goes into that field to check on their status. They've moved around some.

He ended up going 50 miles in the desert before he found them. And he did all that with that royal robe on. And they see him coming. And they didn't like it.

For one, he had dreams of his own success over them and was stupid enough to tell them. And then he also had that robe that nobody else had.

And he's wearing that across the desert as they see him coming. And they think, who in the world does he think he is? Instead of killing him, they sold him into slavery because they debated about killing him.

[2 : 1 6] And after he was sold into slavery, he prospered as a servant, being promoted as house manager, even a state executive in a prominent official's house, a prominent official of Egypt.

He was entrusted with the management of the whole estate until he was set up by the master's wife. She yelled sexual assault and he went to prison. However, when he was in prison, he prospered again.

And he was entrusted with managing the prisoners. And I want you to notice the similarity of what happened in Potiphar's house, that official's house that he was working in, as well as what happened to him in the prison.

In Potiphar's house, Genesis 39 verse 6 says, So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, speaking of Potiphar leaving it all in Joseph's charge, and because of him, he had no concern about anything.

Then when you talk about the keeper of the prison in Genesis 39 verse 22, it says, And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it.

[3 : 24] And the reason was the same as well. In Genesis 39 verse 3, it says, His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

So in other words, his success was due to the Lord being with him. And the same thing in Genesis 39 verse 23 says, Now that does not mean there wasn't hard times in the midst of that.

Of course there was. But I want you to remember that Joseph was a dreamer. He dreamed of prosperity at an early age, and God spoke to him through dreams.

He foresaw his future through dreams. And when he shared those dreams with his family, it caused conflict between he and his brothers. But what he dreamed was from God, and what he dreamed was true.

However, God spoke to him through those dreams, and gave him the ability to interpret dreams. Now as that is the back story, let's look at Genesis chapter 40.

[4 : 35] Because Genesis chapter 40 says in verse 1, Sometime after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord, the king of Egypt.

And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard in prison where Joseph was confined.

The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. He continued for some time in custody. Now listen, we don't know why they were imprisoned, but let's let our spiritual imagination get away from us for just a moment.

Okay? The baker is, of course, the cook. So did he fix a bad meal for Pharaoh, or did some food poison, or did he try to poison Pharaoh, or was it just bad eggs, or was it just not done, or was it too done?

I mean, an overcooked steak deserves a jail sentence. The cupbearer is the guy that is responsible for making sure that nothing is wrong with the food and the drink, and the first to taste the food and to drink the drink.

[5 : 52] And if he makes it, then the Pharaoh can eat. So did they try to set him up, or were they set up, or was it a misunderstanding? We don't know, but I guarantee you it had something to do with the culinary responsibilities that put them where they were.

Verse 5 says, 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 his own interpretation, 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? And 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. So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, in my dream there was a vine before me.

And on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. 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.

[7 : 14] Then Joseph said to him, this is the interpretation, the three branches are three days. 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.

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. 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.

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, and to the uppermost basket, there were a sort of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.

And Joseph answered and said, this is the interpretation. The three baskets are three days. In three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat the flesh with you.

[8 : 34] And I think he said, I want a second opinion. And I bet Joseph said, you're ugly too. But on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all of his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants.

He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand, but he hanged the chief baker as Joseph had interpreted to them, yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Joseph was forgotten. He was a man who was faithful to his parents, and then he was abducted and sold into slavery. He succeeded at that level above and beyond and was wronged and imprisoned and in prison he succeeded above and beyond and helped someone with influence out, the cupbearer, who was the Pharaoh's side daily.

All you have to do is mention me at some point along the way, and he was forgotten. He was not mentioned. He was not vouched for. He was forgotten.

Genesis 41, verse 41, tells us that he was forgotten for two years until he was dragged out of that pit. A pit he was in because he was forgotten.

[10 : 17] Can you imagine how lonely he was? I mean, we don't know if anybody else was in that pit or not around him, but I am thoroughly convinced that no matter how many people were in that pit, no matter how many people were in that house, no matter how many people were in that prison, it might have been full of people, he was still in a pit and most likely still felt very lonely.

Do you know that sometimes you can be in a crowd of people like we are today and still be lonely? You might be sitting here today shaking hands with folks and smiling and looking at your Sunday best and still feel alone.

Have you ever felt alone? I believe there's much we can learn from Joseph and I believe God put this in this book so we could learn from his circumstances because I believe a lot of us have felt forgotten, felt alone, might even feel it today.

And that, my friend, is the part of the difficulty that can be so encouraging and such a gift in the midst of the mess.

Not that his relief is over because he endured it for two years, but that in the middle of it, in the pit, seemingly forgotten, seemingly alone.

[11 : 53] Seemingly alone. There are three truths that I want to show you this morning about Joseph's life. One of them is God never forgot him.

God never forgot him. It may seem like he did. He may feel like it did, but he never forgot him. The time was coming when the cupbearer would remember him. It'd take two years to do that, but God never forgot him.

I want to remind you of some passages that you need to keep in mind and enlighten you on some that you may not know. And one of them is found in Psalms 145 verse 17, and it says this, the Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him. He also hears the cry and saves them.

The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. God did not forget him, and he never does.

[13 : 00] Second truth about his life is this, God never left him. Joseph probably felt like God left him, but God's presence in his life was not based upon his feelings.

It was, it is, based upon God's promises. Do you know what God says about our feelings and our thoughts? Isaiah 55, 8, 9 says, for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. God never left him. Even though a two-year-long pit may make you feel like it, God never left him.

And the third truth about his life is this, God never stopped working. He never stopped working in his life. God was working in him, God was working on him, God was working through him the whole time.

I want you to notice something. It's back in verses 6 and 7 that we looked at a few moments ago. It says this, when Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled.

[14 : 15] So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, why are your faces downcast today? I hope you get this because I got this this week and it was just good to me.

Joseph was in prison on false charges. It would have been very easy for him to be throwing a pity party, only worried about himself. And instead, he wasn't coming out and saying, let me tell you about my dreams.

He wasn't saying that, not at all. Selfishness and pity will probably make your prison cell that much smaller. It'll make your pit that much deeper. It'll make your loneliness that much more lonely.

The walls will creep in on you quickly when you fill yourself with negativity like that. No, he looked beyond himself and had concern for others while his junk was going on, while he was in the midst of the injustice.

Now this ain't the end of Joseph's story. This is just one of those very low times that he faced and thankfully, he acted, he didn't act like it was the end. And I don't know what you're dealing with today but I want you to know you don't need to act like it's the end because it's not.

[15 : 27] Thankfully, he didn't give up on God for who knows what would have happened with the rest of his story if he would have gave up on God. but God never forgot him.

He never left him. He never stopped working in him. And I want to give you three truths about us that regardless of our circumstances or regardless of how deep our pit is or how small our cell is, you need to know.

One is God has not forgotten us. He hasn't forgotten me. He hasn't forgotten you. I want to remind you what Matthew chapter 6 says.

Jesus said, look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather in the barns and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow.

[16 : 33] They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Therefore do not be anxious. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

I want you to understand that we are the crown of his creation. We are the apple of his eye. We are his very own he sent his only son to die in our place.

God loves us dearly. Don't you ever think he forgot you. He never will. God's never left us.

He's never left us. Hebrews chapter 10 verse 23 says let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful.

What did he promise? He promised a bunch of stuff. But among them he promised he would never leave us nor forsake us. How it seems so often that he does forget us but he never has and he never will.

[17 : 46] It's best we stop thinking leaning on our thinking and our feelings and take God at his word. He's not forgotten us and he has not left us.

No matter your circumstances today guilty or innocent God has not left you. And third he's not done with us.

God's still working. The prophet Isaiah speaks the words of God to us and puts it all in perspective. It says in Isaiah 42 verse 2 when you pass through the waters God says I'll be with you and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you.

When you walk through fire you shall not be burned and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God the Holy One of Israel your Savior because you are precious in my eyes and honored and I love you fear not I am with you.

You may tell me today oh pastor you don't understand what I've been through. You don't understand what I'm going through. You're right. That is correct.

[19 : 08] But it's not really about my thoughts and it's not really about my ways. And with all due respect it's not about your thoughts and it's not about your ways.

It's about me and you placing our thoughts and trust in the thoughts and ways of God and placing our hands in the nail scarred hand of Christ and leaning on him to guide us through the valleys that we face.

That is where it's at. John was exiled on the island of Patmos by the Roman Empire because he would not stop preaching the gospel.

Patmos is an island of rock and not very inhabitable but they put him there because he wouldn't hush. And while he was there he was taken up in a visionary sense and was able to see from God's view what was happening on the earth as well as what was happening in heaven simultaneously.

He was given this revelation to provide for seven regional churches in Asia Minor that were on a postal route so that he could give a coded letter to a Roman courier who wouldn't understand the contents of that letter and circulate that letter among seven regional bodies of believers in Asia Minor under the persecution of the Roman Empire who would be very susceptible to discouragement and to wander away from their faith because in some cases they were not even legally meeting together.

[21 : 20] It is called an apocalypse, an uncovering. Apocalypse is a Greek word that means unveiling, a revealing of what is really going on.

And it is a letter that has been abused and misunderstood since it was written, never more than in the last hundred years. But it is a book that I absolutely love.

It's a code that you can break and you can understand and it is not as hard as people make it out to be. However, my favorite part is chapter one because chapter one paints the picture of Christ walking through the candlesticks which he tells us in chapter one are the churches.

And they're called candlesticks because churches are to give off the light of the gospel in the midst of the darkness. darkness. It shows that he had their messengers.

The word in the Greek is angelios which we would transliterate as angels but really in reality it means messengers. And so the thought is the messengers to the church was the pastors.

[22 : 48] And it says that he's holding those stars, they call them, in his hand. They're under persecution. They're seeing people die for their faith.

They're threatened if they meet together like much of the world is today. But even in the midst of that he walks with them.

And this is what it says. It says then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And on turning I saw seven golden lampstands.

That's the churches. And in the midst of the lampstands was one like a son of man clothed with a long robe and a golden sash around his chest.

That sash would normally be around his waist. But it's placed across his chest because it symbolizes royalty and victory. The hairs of his head were white like white wool like snow.

[24 : 07] That speaks of wisdom. It speaks of purity. His feet were like burnished bronze refined in a furnace.

It does not say his sandals. It does not say his boots. It says his feet. feet. He could walk through anything. He could walk through anything. He could walk through anything.

He could walk through anything. through anything. His voice was like the roar of many waters.

Mightier than Niagara Falls was the voice of God. in his right hand that's the hand of authority. In his right hand he held seven stars.

Later he tells us those are the angelios, the messengers. From his mouth come a sharp two-edged sword. Hebrews tells us what that is.

[25 : 10] It's the word of God. And his face was like the sun shining in full strength. The message is this.

In the midst of whatever persecution you're going through, in the midst of whatever valley you have, in the midst of your pit, Jesus is walking right in the midst of your circumstances.

He knows what they are. He's on top of them. He has not forgotten you.

He has not left you alone. He's not done with you. He's not looking from on high checking you out.

He's in the midst of it with you. Maybe nobody else knows. God's not left you alone.

[26 : 36] God's not forgotten you. God's not done with you. God's the Lord more than your feelings more than your circumstances more than what you can see.

You can trust the Lord. He'll be with you in a pit. He's doing a work in you. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I ask you this morning have you ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ has there ever been a time when you said Lord I know I've done wrong I know I need help and the only one that can help me is the one that knows me better than I know myself and so because Christ went to the cross I know that if I confess I'm a sinner you'll forgive me for my sins and come into my life and change my life you'll empower me by the spirit of God you'll change me from this day forward so today I surrender my life to you if you've never done that I encourage you today to do just that I'd love to guide you in that process and we're going to stand in a moment we're going to sing but more important than the song is that you obey God and if you come down and tell me we need to talk about this we'll make time to do that maybe you're here and you have done that and you've done that privately but you've never done it publicly you've never acknowledged it and by Jesus by his commission and by his example tell us to follow that with a public confession of our faith through baptism and if you've never been baptized as a believer but you know you're a believer it'll be a hindrance to your life to not follow him in obedience so I encourage you to be obedient with that

God's burdened you with that you come let's talk about that we're not doing it this morning we'll line up a time maybe God's leading you to Pickens First Baptist Church God's doing a wonderful work here and I'm thankful for it God's drawing you you didn't come up with that on your own he's leading you I just encourage you to be obedient to follow him and for the rest of us will you just take time to say Lord thank you that I'm not alone thank you that you hadn't forgotten me thank you that you're at work in me right now and help me God to not trust my feelings to not trust my circumstances to not watch the walls crawl in on me but instead to trust you Lord for you are at work you can do that where you'll stand you can do that at this altar you can do it with a pastor praying for you

Lord Jesus thank you that you don't leave us alone thank you that you hadn't forgot us thank you Lord that you walk with us help us oh God to stay in a faithful fight to walk with you dear God to be right with you oh God knowing that you are still at work in us today we love you Lord Jesus and thank you for the opportunity help us to simply be obedient this morning to follow you in Jesus name amen for this morning