

Through It All

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[0:00] in two of the Old Testament prophets' writings that was a popular phrase among the people of God in those days. One time it's mentioned is in Ezekiel 18, verse 2, when it says, The father eats the grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

The thought is that when your parents do something wrong, you're going to face the judgment for it. And there's talk of that in the book of Exodus. And there's talk of that in the book of Deuteronomy. Sometimes people call these generational curses. However, as the new covenant began to be revealed, that is the one that was promised through the prophets about the difference that the coming Christ would make.

That's the new covenant. Ezekiel and Jeremiah said that we teach, that we each are responsible for our own sins, not the sins of our ancestors.

We can't blame our sin on our ancestors. We're responsible for our sins, not anybody else's.

[1:11] And no one else is responsible for ours. That's not to say we're not influenced by others. However, we are influenced by other people's sins.

And the fault of those before us influence us as well. Either we fall right back in that cycle of fault, or either we learn from that and we do better.

Those faults lead to a lack of healthy function. It leads to dysfunction. And that dysfunction can drag from one generation to another generation.

And all of that can lead to disaster. I spent quite a bit of time last week looking at the book, I mean, excuse me, looking at Jacob in the book of Genesis, looking at Jacob.

Even though this series is about the life of Joseph, I thought it was important to understand the role that his father played in a lot of what happens in the coming days that we'll be looking at.

[2:12] And I want us to see today how Jacob's actions affected his kids' lives. I want us to look at the entirety of Genesis 37, which I know scares you to death.

But we're just gonna slowly weave through this passage together. Genesis chapter 37, beginning in verse one, it says, Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being 17 years old, was pastoring the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives.

And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now, when you look at this bad report that it's talking about here, look in the original language, it speaks of a whispering report about something evil.

Actually, about something immoral. So what you have here is a little bit of gossip, a little bit of a tattletale, but this content of what he had to say was something that his brothers had done that was immorally wrong.

[3:26] And he made sure that his dad knew about it. Now, just because I've got two older brothers that I grew up with, I happen to believe that the brothers found out that Joseph had told his daddy.

I might be wrong. I can't prove that. But I bet somebody knew about it. It says, Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons because he was the son of his old age.

If you remember the life of Jacob, Rachel was Jacob's real love. He worked for seven years, and his father-in-law betrayed him, gave him the ugly sister instead.

And when he woke up the next morning with the wrong woman, he'd come back and said, That's not the one that I worked seven years for. And he said, Well, if you'll pledge to work another seven

years, you can have the other one. And so he married both of them, but Rachel was always his love.

And Rachel had a hard time having children. As a matter of fact, she told him to go ahead and get with her servant and so they could have children. And then Leah, Rachel's sister had children, and Leah's servant had children.

[4:38] Everybody seemed to be having children, but Rachel, it's a big burden to her. And when Joseph was born to Rachel, Jacob's real love, it was a big deal. It was a big deal.

When she attempted to have a second child, she died in childbirth, right as Benjamin was being born. So understand that throughout the life of Rachel, the only child that she bore herself was Joseph.

And she cherished Joseph. And then Jacob cherished Rachel. And so whatever Rachel loved, he loved that much more. And it showed a favoritism over his other kids as well.

All of that played into this relationship. And while Rachel was alive, Joseph was the only child that she had. And paid a lot more attention to him than she did the other children.

And that played into Jacob's favoritism as well. And it says, and he made him a robe of many colors. Now I spoke of the elegant nature of that robe and what you see in the original language there that it speaks of.

[5:42] We think about the coat of many colors, kind of like Dolly Parton's coat of many colors, quilted together. That is not what we're talking about here at all. What we are talking about is a very elegant robe. Matter of fact, the Hebrew word there speaks of cuffs going to the wrist as well as dropping all the way to the ankles.

If it drops all the way to the ankles, what that means is it's not a working robe, okay? It is an elegant robe. And he was a privileged child. And so notice that although there was a pattern of him working with his brothers as with the sheep, it speaks of that earlier in the passage that we talk about.

In this passage, it says that they were working the sheep. And while they were working the sheep, Joseph was at home. He was wearing that equivalent to a mink coat around the house, okay? Instead of his brothers working in a pasture 50 miles from home. Verse four says, but when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

So Joseph was the golden child. And when they saw the admiration in the eyes of their father for Joseph, as well as witnessing him lauding over him, they hated him.

[7:04] They did not speak kindly to him. It doesn't seem like it could get worse than that, but just hold on a minute. Because it says now, Joseph had a dream.

And when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. Now listen, some dreams, even if they are of God, don't need to be shared immediately, okay?

And if they are, they need to be done carefully. And Joseph didn't do that. I want you to notice this. He said to him, hear this dream that I dream. Behold, we are binding sheaves in the field.

We were binding sheaves in the field. And behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf. Okay? Now I'm just thinking, if I had said that to my brothers, I wouldn't have remembered the rest of that day.

I would have went under the concussion protocol from dealing with that. Now, what about these dreams from God? Let me go there a minute. Because I've had people come to me over the years and say, Pastor, I had a dream.

[8:15] And I don't know if that was just my doings. I don't know if that was God telling me something. I don't know if Satan's messing with me. I don't know how to interpret this dream. Okay? And I got a minor in psychology and I did a dream project in college that I barely remember.

So I'm an expert. Okay? So when they share this dream with me, what I always ask them is this. How did that dream make you feel? And if they come out of that dream feeling convicted, well, the devil didn't do that.

He don't cause conviction of sin. And if they come out of that dream feeling encouraged, to be more obedient to the Lord, or to follow through with God's plan for something, that sounds like it's from

God to me.

But if they come out beaten down, and they come out discouraged, and they come out like they're on the losing end, then I always tell them, I don't think that's from God.

I really don't. I mean, let's look at the message. And I could go on with this. But we get caught up in the miracles of Scripture. But when you study the miracles of Scripture, always hang on at the end to find out the message there.

[9:29] Because they're not just sprinkled for no reason. There's always a message there. And that message says a lot about the source, whether it's a miracle or whether it's a dream.

So in response to this dream, his brother said to him, are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?

And Scripture says, so they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. So in other words, every time he opened his mouth, especially with that coat on, it gets worse.

But he's not done. He's still talking. Then he dreamed another dream. And he told it to his brothers and said, behold, I've dreamed another dream.

And behold, the sun, the moon, and 11 stars were bowing down to me. But when he told to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, what is this dream that you've dreamed?

[10:32] Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you? And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

How horrible. How horrible. However, I want you to understand that it's obvious these dreams are from the Lord because what he's saying is true. Did he have to say it?

I don't know about that. Scripture ain't clear about that. I don't know that he had to tell his older brothers. Why in the world would he do that? But he did. Okay. But the dreams came from the Lord. The dream was giving. Now think about this. Joseph's going to go through some stuff. And I hope I remember to bring you back to this time in this passage. Because when he goes through some stuff, he's going to need some encouragement along the way.

And you know what that encouragement will be? Where he will be? The dreams that he had so long ago that tells him that God's going to raise him up. That God's going to take care of him in the midst of all that.

[11:31] But what he's saying is true. Stirs up his brothers. They hated him anyway because he was favored. And then that favoritism showed because he got an elegant coat.

It stands out to me that they're in the field 50 miles away. And he's at the house. And then when he did see them before they went, he told them about these dreams of how most of them being his older brothers would bow down to him.

Man, that ain't going over in the home I lived in. I'm just telling you. He just wouldn't do it. They wouldn't allow it to happen. My brothers wouldn't. It says now his brothers went out to pasture. Their father's flock near Shechem.

And Israel said to Joseph, Are not your brothers pastoring the flock of Shechem? Come and I will send you to them. And he said to him, Here am I.

So he said to him, Go now. See if it's well with your brothers and with the flock and bring me word. So he sent him from the valley of Hebron and he came to Shechem.

[12:40] Several things about this passage I want to point out. One is, Did you hear the response of Joseph? His daddy told him to go. And what did he say?

He said, Here I am. I'm ready to serve. We see a wonderful passage of Scripture in Isaiah that talks about Isaiah worshiping before the throne of God.

And Isaiah's response to God in the midst of that was, Here I am. I'm ready. I'm ready to serve.

Joseph had the right attitude toward his father. Made a lot of mistakes.

Father made a lot of mistakes. But he had the right attitude toward his father. It's an encouragement to us to have the right attitude before our father. When he speaks to us, tells us what to do. Here I am.

He was ready to serve. Now it says he goes to Shechem. Does Shechem ring a bell at all? You see, Shechem was the name of the man that raped Joseph's sister.

[13:46] And after Shechem raped Joseph's sister, he wanted to make it right. So he went and asked for her hand. And his daddy, Jacob, was a passive father.

He didn't really do anything. But those brothers, those brothers said, if you want her hand, she's not going to be around a bunch of uncircumcised men.

So if you want her hand, not only you, but all the men around you must be circumcised first before you can have our sister as your wife.

And so, because the man Shechem really wanted Joseph's sister, they all were circumcised. And while they were still healing, and while they were still hurting, Joseph's brothers came back and killed every last one of them.

Killed everybody, every man in the region. Took the women and children into their home. But killed all the men. Now, the area in which Shechem lived was called Shechem.

[14:58] Because that's where he lived. And now they're back pasturing sheep in that very area. Now, due to the total clean out that happened previously, I don't know that it was dangerous.

Because all those guys were gone. However, you know, I get the sense that that may play into Jacob asking Joseph, will you go check on your brothers?

And make sure they're safe? Because we have a history in that area. Why don't you check on them? It says in verse 15, And a man found him wandering in the fields.

And the man asked him, What are you seeking? And he said, I'm seeking my brothers, he said. Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock. And the man said, They've gone away, for I heard them say, Let's go to Dothan.

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan. Okay? That's not Alabama. That's a long way from there. But Shechem was 50 miles.

[16:01] When he got to Shechem, he didn't bother to turn around and tell his daddy, They've moved on. They're fine. There's not a problem in Shechem. He found out they went on to Dothan, which was 14 more miles.

And he walked on to Dothan to check on his brothers. He went further than he had previously thought he was going. And I wonder why he did that.

I mean, it could have been because he was a good son and because his father put him on a task and he wanted to do what God, he wanted to do what his father wanted him to do.

However, I also wonder, was he looking to get something on his brothers? Remember, he had a history of giving bad reports about them. He at least gave one evil report about them.

So was he just trying to find something on them to make himself look better? Or was he following his father's command? I don't know. I just want you to think about it. I'll tell you what he did do.

[17:01] He strutted for another 14 miles in that coat. That non-working coat in front of his hard-working brothers.

Either way, whether it was for good or whether it was for bad, he walked all the way with that coat on and they saw him coming.

Looked like Ric Flair in the desert coming through. And they saw him coming. And they got to murmuring before he ever got to them. And they saw him from afar and before he came near to them, they conspired against him to kill him.

They said to one another, here comes this dreamer. Now they had a lot to get keyed up about. He was obviously the favorite. He got the preferential treatment. He was not in the field.

He was wearing that coat. And he also basically told them that they would serve him. Now let me reiterate that what he said was true. And yes, what he said was of God.

[18:01] But it may not have been of God the way he told them. I don't really know. But he may not. I know they didn't take it that way. And the dream came from God. His father took note of that dream.

He knew something special was about it. He knew God had his hand on Joseph. And his brothers said to each other, come on, come now. Let us kill him.

And throw him into one of the pits. Then we'll say that a fierce animal has devoured him and we'll see what will become of his dreams. Now this pit they're talking about is a large cistern in the

ground.

And the way they would dig these things out is they would dig out a hole and then they would open it up under the ground like you see. They went through rainy seasons.

It only rained about four months out of the year. You better get as much water as you possibly can out of that rain because they live in desert conditions. And so they had different inlets that would bring that water into that collection, okay?

[19:02] Now those things were, they were plastered with limestone limestone to seal them. But in reality, they didn't last all year long.

Not only would they use the water and the water would dry up, but they'd also have cracked cisterns sometimes that would not hold water. And even when they did hold water, I just want you to understand this, we're not talking about a fresh spring of sorts.

This is limestone, okay? So when you opened up that stone lid and looked inside of it, you couldn't see much of anything. And if somebody didn't put the lid back on that cistern, what fell in that hole? You don't know until you drop your bucket in to see what you got. Now that ain't part of this story, but I just want you to imagine, you know, you complain about, don't complain about water because I promise you, they had it rough when it comes to this cistern that they're dealing with.

They were wells that were dug out and limey water. I just thought I'd whip your appetite with that. This cistern that he dropped in had no water.

[20:13] We read of Jeremiah falling in one that was full of mud and having difficulty getting out because of that. But this one was dry. Cisterns often broke and the water seeped into the ground.

As a matter of fact, in Jeremiah, God uses cisterns to talk about how we turn to other options instead of faithfulness to God and how useless that is.

Jeremiah chapter 2, verse 13 says this, For my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

In other words, instead of relying upon the Lord, they try to go their own way and their own way is dry and does not work. That's another sermon for another day, but we'll never be satisfied when we try to substitute God's very best for our lives with other options.

They were going to kill him and they were going to throw him in a dry well. But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, Let's not take his life.

[21:19] And Reuben said to them, Shed no blood, throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him. And he said that, that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father.

Reuben thought, if they left him to die, I will leave them, but when they leave this area, I'll come back and I'll rescue my brother. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore, and they took him and threw him into the pit.

The pit was empty. There was no water in it. Then they sat down to eat. I'm going to say that again. They threw him in the pit.

The pit was empty. It had no water in it. And then they sat down to eat.

Does that strike you as coldly as it struck me? They sat down to eat.

[22:29] I find it interesting that later in the story, the brothers tell us what they were experiencing during the meal. The reality is, in Genesis 42, verse 21, it tells us that Joseph was begging them in distress, but they would not listen.

And that echoed in their mind in latter days. That's hatred, my friend. And it's wrong.

And that kind of action echoed in their minds. It says, and looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh on their way to carry it down to Egypt.

Then Judah said to his brothers, what profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and let not our hand be upon him, for he's our brother, our own flesh.

And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by and they drew Joseph up and lifted him up out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver.

[23:52] They took Joseph to Egypt. Now, it mentions here Ishmaelites and it mentions Midianites.

And Ishmaelites and Midianites are relatives. They're both descendants of Abraham. And Ishmaelites are thought to be like the Bedouins or like gypsies.

That name kind of become personified with that. They're thought to be gypsies and the Midianites cousins and of that same folk really was the was the middlemen for the Ishmaelites.

Ishmaelites were the ones that owned it. The Midianites were the negotiators or the managers typically.

And we're not sure why they are described like they are here but they're going to market and they got a slave at a good price. One theologian said that they paid the price for a disabled servant for Joseph.

[25:12] Another one said it was for a common servant. When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit he tore his clothes it was a sign of mourning and returned to his brothers and said the boy is gone and I where shall I go?

Now there's a back story to Reuben because after Rachel died Reuben laid with Bilhah his father's servant or often called his concubine.

Now I told you last week that having two wives and having two servants and having children with all of them is not of God. Okay?

It was culturally correct in that day. They thought little of it but God never honored that. God never allowed that. They just did it.

Okay? There's a lot of things in our culture today that will tell you it's okay. That don't mean that God says it's okay. And so they did that. But I'm telling you even society said don't go lay with your father's concubine.

[26:30] That's wrong. Even society pagan society knew that was wrong. Bilhah was the mother of two of Reuben's brothers and being the passive father that Jacob was he did absolutely nothing about it except speak to him later in his life.

Now when I get to this passage and I think about what Reuben did to his father and that confrontation that took place from that and how Joseph was his father's favorite and he knew that I can't help but think that Reuben is trying to make up for past mistakes.

If I can protect what my daddy loves the most well then maybe my daddy will love me and he freaked out when Joseph was not in the cistern that he thought he would be in.

Verse 31 says then they took Joseph's robe and they slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe into blood and they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said this is what we found. Please identify whether it's your son's robe or not.

Do you get that? They've taken it off of Joseph. They're the ones that tore it up and now they're bringing it to him saying does this happen to be Joseph's robe? And he identified it and said it is my son's robe.

[27:48] A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces. Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and his daughters rose up to comfort him but he refused to be comforted.

And he said now I shall go down to Sheodah to my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

Now when it speaks of him tearing his clothing and putting sackcloth on his loins and mourning for his son for many days, it speaks of an inconsolable grief.

Normally when somebody grieved they'd grieve for a week. If it was somebody in their immediate family they may grieve for a month. But in reality this speaks of many days.

And then he says now I shall go down to Sheodah to my son mourning. What Jacob is saying is I'm not going to mourn for my boy for a week. I'm not going to mourn for my boy for a month.

I'm going to mourn for him for all of my life. I'll die mourning the loss of my son. He mentions Sheod.

[29:00] Sheod. Sheod is the abode for the dead. And because of the truths that are shared in the New Testament we have a much better understanding of the afterlife than Jacob did.

We have a much better understanding of the afterlife than the people of the Old Testament did. very few references to as we see heaven and hell.

God through progressive revelation has revealed more and more of his work, more and more of his way, the reality of eternity.

As the word of God was made complete we got that much more of it. And the New Testament tells us descriptively of the horrors of hell and the glories of heaven.

When he mentions Sheod here it speaks a lot to the ignorance that he has about what's coming after death. And that's often what scripture spoke of in the Old Testament.

[30:03] Because God hadn't revealed to them the horrors of those without Christ and the glories of those with Christ. It says meanwhile the Midianites had sold in Egypt to Potiphar.

Potiphar. An officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard. That cell in the slavery is the beginning of the rest of the story.

But what's in all that for us? What does that say to us? Three things that I see. One is greatness can come through brokenness.

this family is a mess. And we've seen some of the fruit of it today. A passive biased father makes for a spoiled child and for some hateful brothers.

And when that child is so outspoken and very visionary it makes so much worse. The first part of chapter 37 builds a powder keg of family conflict. You know there's something coming when you see Joseph walking through the desert with that robe on looking for his hateful brothers.

[31:17] And when he got there it blew up. The boastful young brother was met by an envious murderous clan of brothers. And if you don't know the rest of this story you need to come back next week.

You may not believe me but all of this brokenness will turn into greatness over the next 13 years of Joseph's life that we have a lot of detail about. That's all to say that our past does not have to define our future.

Don't let the devil tell you that you can't. Don't let the devil tell you that you can't get out of the pit. That means you may feel like you're in.

Don't ever believe that. Because greatness can come through brokenness. Second thing is this. God's with us.

God's with us. There's a passage in Acts where Stephen is testifying about the Lord's work. It's such a powerful testimony that people couldn't stand it.

[32:20] And they ended up stoning him to death throwing rocks at him until he died because of his powerful, powerful sermon about the power of God and how those even of that modern day church had missed the power of God and had not walked with God.

and he is going through how God has worked, Stephen in his sermon about how God has worked through the generations. And he gets to this and he says this in Acts 7 verse 9.

And the patriarchs jealous of Joseph sold him into Egypt. But God was with him.

God was with him in the pit. God was with him in the slavery. God was with him through it all.

I said that to a grieving family on Friday. That God would be with them when the family and the friends and the food were gone. God's still going to be there with you.

[33:26] He'll walk with you through it all. I've said it through prisoners. between bars. Standing on the other side of the bars. I've spoken to them in solitary confinement and told them, I want you to understand something.

You feel very alone right now. God's with you. I've said it to those that feel like they're at the wit's end. And it's true. God's with you.

If you have ever surrendered your life to Christ, Christ promises us in Hebrews 13 5, I will not leave you or forsake you.

If you've ever surrendered your life to Christ, Romans 10 13 tells us that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. He will be with you.

I don't know what valley you're going through. I don't know what pits you feel like you're in. I don't know what kind of brothers you're dealing with, but I want you to know you're not alone. God's with you.

[34:29] Third thing is this. God's not done. God's not done. He's not done with Joseph. God's not done with us. Years ago, I was in a premarital counseling session with a couple, a dear young couple.

I loved them to death. And I asked them to fill out a form with a lot of open-ended questions. And one of those questions was, I see myself as, and there was a blank.

When I was looking at his paperwork before they came in, he put out there beside that, I see myself as a cycle breaker.

I see myself as a cycle breaker. Well, I'll just be honest with you. I was kind of dumb that day. I couldn't figure out what he was talking about. I thought, I didn't even know he rode bikes.

What does he do, jump or something? How is he breaking bikes? What in the world is he talking about? I didn't give it much thought until I met with that dear couple.

[35:43] And when I met with them, I said, I want to ask you a question. You answered the question in an interesting way. What did you mean by, I see myself as a cycle breaker? And that young man looked at me and said, throughout the generations, there's been a cycle in my family of alcoholism and lostness.

And I'm going to break that cycle. I can tell you, that young man's a faithful husband. That young man is a successful and a comforting source to this community.

That young man is a wonderful father to his children. That young man is a loving husband to his wife. And that young man is a force in his church.

And yes, he's a cycle breaker. And God's not done with him. And God's not done with you.

And God's not done with me. And God's not done with us. May we live every day to please him in all we do. Now, if you're here this morning with every head bowed and every eye closed, I want to ask you if you've ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[37:08] I didn't ask you if everybody thought you had. I ask you if you ever have. Because if you haven't, I don't want you to leave here today until you say, Pastor, I want to give my heart and life to Jesus.

I want to be saved. I want to know that he's always with me and I want to know that I'll always be with him. Maybe you've done that but you've never acknowledged him publicly so it's been a private matter for you.

Jesus, by his commission and by his example, told us that we are to be baptized to show our obedience to follow him. That's never happened to you. I encourage you to come in just a few moments when we stand to sing.

Be obedient. We'll line that up in the coming days. We're putting it on the schedule just these days. Maybe you're here and God's drawing you to First Baptist Church. God's doing a wonderful work in our church.

I'm thankful for that. Maybe God's drawing you to be a part of this church. You come. We'd love to talk about that with you. Or maybe there's just stuff in your life that you, maybe there's a cycle you need to break.

[38:06] Maybe there's a pit you need to be reminded that God's there with you. I don't know what your circumstances are, but I know he'll meet you where you are so you can seek his face where you'll stand in just a moment at his altar or with a pastor praying for you.

Whatever you need to do, I just encourage you to be obedient and follow the Lord as he leads you. Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you, dear Lord, for your love for us. I ask right now that you'll move and you'll work in our midst.

In Jesus' precious name, Amen.