

## ***Faith***

Genesis 37:18-28

Today's scripture reading is a very shocking story. It is a crime story, which involves older brothers plotting to kill their younger brother. If you read just the content of today's text, you will have a heavy heart. However, if you read the content of today's story spiritually, you will feel better. We might think that God has an interesting way of fulfilling his promises through us. That would be because you can see this with your faithful eyes. I hope that you will see today's story in a faithful way and pray that you will have discerning eyes.

As you read today's scripture, you read that Joseph's brothers plotted to kill him. There are a few reasons why they did this. First, Jacob, father of Joseph, loved Joseph more than any of his other sons. This was due partially to Joseph being born from Rachel who was beloved by Jacob. Jacob had other sons but he made a richly ornamented robe only for Joseph. Furthermore, the Bible says that Joseph told his father whenever his brothers did something wrong. However, the biggest reason that his brothers hated him was that he told them the dream in which they would all bow down to him. His brothers had their pride hurt. However, I can't understand why Joseph's brothers had plotted to kill him just because of these things. Don't you think that things like this happen in every family? Do you think this is a good reason to kill their brother? Today's scripture, however, tells us the brothers are plotting to kill Joseph. Joseph was saved from death because of the actions of Reuben and Judah, yet his brothers still sold him as a slave. Today's story is not about saving Joseph from his brothers, but rather how amazing God is. We should know that God is still accomplishing his plan through a horrible story such as this. God uses our sins as instruments for His glory. We can find God's endless grace and uncountable wisdom throughout today's scripture passage.

God had a plan. He wanted Joseph to be the ruler of all of Egypt and bring the Israelites there for 400 years. That's why God had Joseph taken to Egypt. Doesn't today's text tell us that Joseph went to Egypt? Even though he was facing death and was then sold as a slave, Joseph went to Egypt, anyway. This morning, we should know that God is still accomplishing his plan through this horrible story. The most important thing we must know is that God's plan was possible because of Joseph's faith in God. Can you imagine how much Joseph was frightened when his brothers tried to kill him? He seemed to have no desire to live because he was facing death due to his brothers, and then was sold as a slave. Joseph was beloved by his father but his father did not know of his plight. He was so disappointed that he could have become an invalid. If that had happened, God couldn't have completed his plan. This story would have had a very unhappy ending. Even though Joseph was enduring a difficult time, he didn't lose his faith. So God saved Joseph from the deep cistern and eventually enabled him to be the ruler of all of Egypt.

Of course, at first Joseph didn't overcome his hardship very well even though he thought God was with him. How could he handle this when he was only seventeen years old? Joseph's brothers saw how distressed he was when he begged his brothers for his life, but they didn't listen and sold him off as a slave. We can easily understand that he was shocked, was in deep grief, and was heart broken. However, he was able to keep quiet after becoming a slave. It cannot be explained how he kept quiet after enduring the shock.

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Joseph had been taken down to Egypt and became a slave of Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. Because Joseph worked very hard, he found favor in Potiphar's eyes. I can assume that there were many slaves in Potiphar's house. Nevertheless, Potiphar put him in charge of everything he owned. We cannot understand why he worked so hard as a slave. We can't understand why Joseph worked so hard even if his brothers tried to kill him and sold him for only a little money. The secret was that Joseph was able to trust in God. It is because he was convinced that God was with him even though he was about to be killed by his brothers and sold off as a slave.

In the Book of Acts 7:9, it says, "They sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him." It means that God was with him. This quote is from the story in Genesis 39. The words 'God was with him' appears five times when Joseph was in Egypt as a slave. The Bible also says that his master saw that the LORD was with him. That's how God's plan worked through Joseph. Try to think about it like this. Even though his master saw that the LORD was with him, how was Joseph feeling? Of course he knew that God was with him. Yet as a slave, he experienced walking under the burning sun in the daytime and sleeping in the severe cold in the nighttime. He might feel disappointed, broken down, sorrow, suffering, and fear. But we are sure that God came and encouraged him. "Joseph! Don't be afraid. Even though you are going to Egypt as a servant, you are not going as a slave because I have a plan for you there. Joseph! You are always with me. I will fulfill the dream which I have given to you."

We are sure that Joseph truly believed in God. We also know how Joseph lived in Egypt. Joseph impressed Potiphar, who was one of Pharaoh's officials, because he worked faithfully and was very capable. Genesis 39:6 says, "He left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate." Joseph couldn't understand anything at that moment. God gave Joseph a dream about everyone bowing down to him, but his life became a nightmare with his brother's plotting to kill him. How could he understand this kind of situation? He received great faith from God; God would always be with him and fulfill his dreams. Because Joseph strongly believed in God, he could do his best. When you read the Bible, you can find that Joseph didn't worry about anything and he never thought about revenge on his brothers. He believed in God who always controlled him. Later on, Joseph had a chance for revenge on his brothers. Joseph became the ruler of all of Egypt and ten of his brothers went there to buy grain. This was the time for revenge on his brothers. However, he didn't have any reason to seek revenge. He thought being sold to Egypt as a slave was God's will and believed that God made him the ruler of all of Egypt. So that's why he didn't have any reason for revenge. Rather, Joseph forgave his brothers and encouraged them. If you believe in God sincerely, you can do this as well. Everyone if you believe in God sincerely then there is nothing to worry about, nor anything to blame others, complain about, or seek revenge for. If you believe that God is with you, you can do that too. That's what Joseph did. If you would like to see how Joseph demonstrated that he was a great believer, you can see it in Genesis 50:24-25. It says, "Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.'" And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."

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And then 300 years later, it happened exactly as he dreamed. All the Israelites escaped from Egypt and went back to Canaan. When the Israelites were going up to the land with flowing milk and honey lead by Moses, the Bible said that Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. Joseph could foresee 300 years later with God's sight. How could Joseph know what would happen 300 years later? God had already promised him. Joseph greatly believed in God's promise. Because he believed in God's promise and knew what would happen 300 years later, he was convinced that the dreams given to him from God would be fulfilled in his lifetime. Joseph grasped for God and a dream was given to him though it made no sense in the context of the reality that surrounded him. Yet that's how God worked through Joseph. That kind of faith is today's message that has God given us. The message is that we should believe in God's promise even when we meet a gloomy future and should follow his direction. If do this, He will deliver us from the deep cisterns of our lives and accomplish His promises to us. Since Joseph believed in this manner, God fulfilled his promise. If Joseph gave up all his hopes, had hatred for his brothers, and sought revenge on his brothers, God could not work through him.

Sometimes we might say, "I am a good Christian, but why do bad things happen to me?" Or, "Why am I tested so often since I am such a good disciple?" Today's message clarifies our thinking about the Word of God. God gave a glorious dream to Joseph. However, the person that received God's dream had experienced plot to kill him and being sold by his brothers. The same thing may happen to you when you receive God's promise. The point to remember is don't be afraid when you encounter what appears to be a gloomy future or you fall into a deep cistern. Don't lose your heart. Follow your faith in God. God will surely accomplish the promises given unto us. You are the person that has received God's blessing beyond comparison with Joseph's. We have a positive future in front of us. We are not people who expect a troubled future. Tomorrow is always a better day than today. That is what God gave us as a promise. That is what God gave us in Jesus Christ. No matter what kind of circumstances are around you, you need to follow His promise. If you do so, God will do the rest.

I read a short story in a book. "When I participate in competitions, I have no fear. (Life is a competition.) That is because I changed the names of the competitors. If David, a boy, and Goliath, a giant, fight each other, David would absolutely be beaten. However, if God and Goliath fight each other, Goliath would absolutely be beaten. If Moses, a shepherd, and Pharaoh, the king, fight each other, Moses would absolutely be beaten. However, if God and Pharaoh fight each other, Pharaoh would absolutely be beaten. It is just substituting God's name instead of the name of others. For an example, if I and terminal cancer fight each other, I will absolutely be beaten. However, if God and terminal cancer fight each other, terminal cancer would absolutely be beaten."

We are just like Joseph. God has blessed us more than the words can describe. We are now on the way to receive more blessings as well. However, good things do not always happen in our lives. We may fall into a deep cistern. We should follow our faith in God even more in those difficult times. Then, God will absolutely work within us. I pray that you will keep your faith in God who is always with us and wants to give us His blessings.