

Picture Perfect Salvation Genesis 37:1-36

John 16:8 (ESV) ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

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Page | 1

When Christians hear the word, “save,” or “salvation,” we think immediately of salvation from sin. Ultimately we all need saving from sin but there are other ways to use these words. If you were to ask a Jewish person if they were saved, their response might be, “Saved from what?” There is salvation from disease, abuse, in all manner of things, not just eternal loss.

I have heard a lot recently about the need to rescue children and others trapped in the human trafficking slave industry. There are organizations like “Operation Underground Railroad,” that are actively rescuing children from this evil. They are “saving” them.

In 2014 Tonda MacCharles wrote an article describing a Canadian Senate committee that was considering a bill to provide greater regulation of prostitution in an effort to impede human trafficking.¹ A young male prostitute testified before the committee. He worried the bill would infringe on his rights. He told the Senators, “I don't need to be saved, and all my friends who are in the sex work industry don't need to be saved.” He said his line of work was “not negative. It's just a way to make a living.”

Even though there is danger, many people do not think they need to be “saved” in any of its forms. They have gotten accustomed to the darkness in which they live and are not interested in the light. We are living in these times right now.

In **Genesis 37** we have the incident of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers. Some rabbis say that this is the first picture of God's salvation of man. For the sake of time we will not read this entire passage. I encourage you to take the time to read it and meditate on the similarities between Joseph and Jesus. This story culminates in **Genesis 50:20** (ESV) after the death of Jacob when Joseph reassures his brothers of their safety. Notice what he says to them:

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Here is a demonstration of Joseph's grace toward his brothers. No doubt he could have taken revenge on them for the things they did to him. Instead he was generous to them – JUST LIKE God is to us in **Ephesians 2:8-9** (ESV):

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

¹ Tonda MacCharles, “I Don't Need to Be Saved,” The Star, September 18, 2014, <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/09/11>

JUST LIKE He wants us to be to one another. **Ephesians 4:32** (ESV) summarizes this for us:

³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

In addition to the display of grace from God, let's consider some other aspects of this story that parallels Jesus. Then, let's make some applications to our time.

Jacob, the father of the twelve patriarchs, is a picture of God in this story. Jacob is imperfect in his behavior but in certain actions represents the perfect Father of us all.

He is descended from Abraham through son, Isaac. In so doing, he becomes a partial fulfillment of the covenant God made with Abraham in **Genesis 15**. Notice **verses 5-6** (ESV, additions by PMG):

⁵ And he [God] brought him [Abram] outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

As the father, and patriarch of his clan, Jacob was concerned for his children. On this occasion, Jacob sends his beloved son Joseph in search of his brothers. **Genesis 37:12-13** (ESV):

¹² Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am."

Of course, God the Father sent His beloved Son, Jesus to the world in search of us. John states in **1 John 4:9-10** (ESV):

⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Joseph, the beloved son is set apart from his brothers. Jacob gave him the coat of colors or the coat of long sleeves as an indicator of his firstborn status (in **Genesis 37:4**). He was the son of Rachel, Jacob's favored wife. By the way, Rachel means, "lamb." She died in childbirth with Benjamin by Bethlehem. Jesus, God's lamb would be born in Bethlehem, not far from Rachel's grave.

Joseph's favor is further shown by his ability to interpret dreams (**Genesis 37:5-11**). This would play an important role in his journey to and in Egypt. But the important point is that Joseph is the set apart son who has firstborn status and is the picture of the coming Messiah who would save the world.

As we mentioned, Jacob sends Joseph to search for his brothers in Shechem. However, they are "lost." They are in Dothan, not Shechem. Yet, Joseph seeks them out (**Genesis 37:12-17**).

Joseph's brothers have a harsh greeting for their little brother. They see him at a distance and begin plotting against him (in **Genesis 37:18-21**). Reuben stops them from killing him and they imprison him in the dry cistern or pit after they stripped him of his special coat. **Genesis 37:19-24**:

¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰ Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." ²¹ But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." ²² 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"—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. ²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him

of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. ²⁴ And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Soon the brothers sold him to a caravan heading for Egypt. The price was twenty pieces of silver, most likely the cost of a slave (**Genesis 37:25-28**). They would deceive their father, the Deceiver, Jacob and tell him an animal had killed Joseph, showing him the coat with a goat's blood on it. Of course, Jacob grieved the loss of his special son (**Genesis 37:31-34**).

The providence of God is clearly seen throughout this story. Even though Joseph probably didn't see it or understand it for years, the hand of God was clear. God used the episode to save the descendants of Abraham from the famine that came into the world.

Whether it was in Potiphar's house or even in prison, God was with Joseph. Notice:

Genesis 39:3-4 (ESV) regarding Potiphar:

³ His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. ⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.

You will remember that Potiphar's wife would lie about his advances to her and eventually led to him being thrown into prison. Yet, God was with him.

Genesis 39:21 (ESV):

²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

By the end of the story, after Jacob's (or Israel's) death all of the pieces come together. Again we read in **Genesis 50:20 (ESV):**

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

A parallel we see with Jesus is that He was tried by His brothers. He was lied about in His trial. He was found guilty and literally died. In fact, it is possible that at some point between His arrest and crucifixion He was thrown into a pit to await the trial or the presentation to Pilate.

On one of our trips to Israel our guide told us of a practice the priests had in the first century for those who blasphemed (which they accused Jesus of doing). That practice was for a blasphemer to be thrown into a dry pit under the house of the High Priest to reflect on and repent of his blasphemy. If this happened to Jesus it is almost a sure thing that He would have cited **Psalms 88** during His stay there. Take time to read that Psalm and meditate on how Jesus must have felt.

Don't forget that Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, the cost of a slave. He was sold by one of the twelve closest disciples and brothers to Him. While Joseph appeared to be dead, Jesus really did die. The blood of Jesus, not an animal's blood, was poured out (not spilled, that sounds accidental, pouring is intentional).

Resurrection plays a part in this theme. During the process of the famine, Jacob and his sons will go to Egypt. Joseph has risen to the position of the second most important man in Egypt. Jacob gets to see his son again as though he was resurrected from the dead and was seated at the right hand of the king. Notice Jacob's words of faith in **Genesis 45:26-28 (ESV):**

²⁶ And they told him, “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them. ²⁷ But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸ And Israel said, “It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Then in the next chapter Jacob gets to see Joseph again. **Genesis 46:30** (ESV):

³⁰ Israel said to Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive.”

Because of Joseph and his submission to the providence of God, the posterity of Abraham through Israel would be preserved. What parallels to Jesus!

He was literally resurrected from the dead. How do we know that? There were witnesses for about forty days who literally saw Him. **1 Corinthians 15:3-9** (ESV):

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

The Role of Faith comes into play. I wasn't there to literally see Jesus after His death, burial, and resurrection. I trust (or have faith) that these events occurred. Faith is an important point for us. After the resurrection Thomas literally saw and was invited to touch Jesus. He expressed Jesus' deity that day. But you and I do not have that luxury. We live by faith in the Son of God, not because we have seen Him. Hear the words of **John 20:28-29** (ESV):

²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

There is a lesson about discomfort in the stories of Joseph and Jesus that apply to believers of every era. I do not like being uncomfortable. I do not like pain and inconvenience. Yet, a lesson we learn is that God isn't catering to our convenience. O, how we want preachers to tell us how God is going to smooth things over so that we don't have to worry and we will have an easy walk with Him. It's just not the case.

Through all of what Joseph went through we see his faith blessed in the long run, not the short term. We see the same for Jesus. In fact, **Hebrews 5:8** (ESV) reminds us:

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

We don't like to think of Jesus suffering. Yet, He set the pace for all of us. What He went through was anything but comfortable and He was obedient all the way through. Apparently Joseph was as well and was blessed for it.

The big question for us is, “Will we be obedient to God – even if there is suffering and inconvenience involved?” We don't like it, but the Christian life was never intended to be easy. Think about these verses:

Matthew 10:21-22; 24-25 (ESV):

²¹ Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

²⁴ “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

John 16:33 (ESV)

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

There is an upside to discomfort. The early church was flourishing in Jerusalem. Thousands, maybe as many as 100,000 Jewish people in Jerusalem became disciples of Jesus. Like us, they settled in to their new relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit and were not carrying the message of the gospel to the world. Jesus had told His disciples in **Acts 1:8 (ESV)**:

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

They adjusted and enjoyed their new found faith at home. It wasn't until an intense persecution came that they went out of the city to other locations with the gospel. In **Acts 8:1 (ESV)** we read:

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Discomfort is not always bad. In the case of Joseph it led to the salvation of his family. In the case of Jesus, it led to the salvation of the world. As the church was persecuted, it led to the spread of the life-saving message of the gospel throughout the world.

America was established on the gospel. Many people came to America to worship and serve God freely. The Pilgrims came to “advance Christian faith” according to the Mayflower Compact. They had religious freedom to worship in Holland. They wanted more. They came to America to be ambassadors of Christ to the natives and share the gospel with them. They too endured hardships for the sake of the gospel, but did so gladly.

As time went on, the gospel ebbed and flowed in America. There were Great Awakenings and low times of spirituality. Yet, the gospel of Jesus would prove to be a key element to our break with England and establishing the nation. **Patrick Henry** stated:

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here."

We are in one of the low times in America's history. Once we were the chief proponents of the gospel and sent missionaries all over the world. Today we have become the chief exporters of pornography. There is a spiritual vacuum being filled by the wrong things. We need God in America.

One more quick idea that I would point out in our Joseph story. That is, the **divisive** element that is present in that account. The brothers through arrogance and jealousy were divided. Jesus points out this danger in **Mark 3:25** (ESV):

And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

This was quoted by Abraham Lincoln during our Civil War to show the potential loss we could have had by being divided.

Yet, how dangerous it is for churches (or a nation) to be divided! There is a need for constant vigilance to maintain unity. In fact Paul reminds us to be, “**eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**” (**Ephesians 4:3**, ESV).

One of the Adversary’s strategies to defeat God and His people is division. “Divide and conquer” is the mantra. We see that on every side today. An unseen hand is dividing us racially; morally; religiously; regarding gender; regarding the unborn; concerning masks and vaccines; by lies and deception; so that we can be conquered.

The Wise Man, Solomon declares a truth in **Ecclesiastes 4:12** (ESV):

“... a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

If we unite with one another and with God we can stand. If not we count the days until we fall. With whom are you standing today? For America to stand as we once did, God must be the key factor for us.

Joseph was the perfect picture for the world’s salvation in paralleling Jesus. Jesus went through torment and discomfort for our sake. Are we willing to share in His sufferings for the sake of others? One of the blessings that will come is Liberty for all when the gospel has its effect on our hearts.

Thank you again for listening in today. Until next time, Keep The Light Burning!