

**Series: Beginnings, Betrayal, Blessings**  
**Title: MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION**  
**Text: Genesis 39**

Genesis is a series of stories that point out moral decisions.

These moral decisions govern your actions.

They are the most important decisions of your life.

### **Themes from the patriarchs**

Get out and do something – Move out into the world.

- Obedience to call of God
- Destiny
- Not easy to do so
- They run into conflict and difficulties right away
- Genesis does not sugar coat life
  - Abraham faces a famine
  - Fear over his wife
  - Live under tyranny
- There are proper and improper ways to engage in the world
  - Cain – bitter jealous angry manner
    - The world is unfair
    - People do better and worse
    - Then he becomes anger and bitter
      - Victim
    - Then becomes a fratricidal person
    - His children become genocidal
    - Evil is shown even more than good
      - Shown to call you to avoid the pitfalls of evil
      - These pitfalls are everywhere today
        - Resentment, jealousy, victimization
- Jacob and Esau
  - Other brother stories consistent –
  - Intense love and hatred within the family.
  - Pathology of Freud... people only see the world through the lens of their family.
  - He dreams the ladder that unites heaven and earth
    - Gives hope

- If only good guys win that would be bad.... Because we know that we struggle at times to be good
  - So to see erroneous people still offering hope.. we can have hope
  - Hope for goodness
- **Focus on faith**
  - People think faith is to give up intellectual thought
  - It is useful to aim at a HIGH good and a high MORAL Ideal
    - When you reach for it...you are better for the world and limits the mindset of the negative and bitterness
    - No empirical evidence
    - There is existential evidence and testimonial evidence that shows a HIGH path brings enlightenment and hope but a negative path limits ones lives
  - If you can live in a high faith and hope in being good
  - If you can orient your being to the good it will bring about a more positive orientation around your sphere
- If you were not actively trying to make things worse, how much better would life be?
  - Choose to live as the highest being... one of faith and hope. I hope to prove things rather than make it worse.
- Jacob – half way through life comes to a point of choice of shift. Will you BE this...Or will you be other?
  - Who will you be?
  - Even if you choose the highest... there is no instant final wonder and beauty for the rest of your life
  - But is preferable to the other alternative

...Which brings us to Joseph:

Last week we saw the actions of Joseph's brothers who threw him in a pit.

But this week we see that "the Pit" can be survived...

No matter the depth... **God can use you.**

You are called to be faithful and a person of integrity and purity.

**Let us look at chapter 39 of Genesis**

### **Genesis 39:1 - Joseph Purchased**

*Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.*

- **Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him:** The name **Potiphar** means *devoted to the sun*. It was a name connected with the Egyptian religious system.
- **An officer of Pharaoh:**
- **Captain of the guard:** The idea behind this title means *chief of police*, or probably more precisely, Potiphar was head of Pharaoh's personal security force. He was a highly-trusted official in the government of Egypt.
- **Bought him from the Ishmaelites:** Joseph was a *slave*. He seemed to have no control over his destiny, but was bought and sold like a piece of property. He could have ended up with anyone, but Potiphar **bought him**.

### **Genesis 39:2-3 - God is with Joseph**

<sup>2</sup> *The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.* <sup>3</sup> *His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.*

- **The LORD was with Joseph:** Joseph's ordeal was probably worse than any of us have gone through. Yet God did not abandon him, even in the smallest way. If God allowed Joseph to be a slave, then he would be a **successful man**, even as a slave.
- We often complain to God that He put us in a terrible or difficult place. Yet God's will is that we trust Him to bless us and make us successful (as *He* measures success) wherever we are.
- Some people think they we can't be blessed unless they are in authority, in charge of things. Jesus lived and taught a better way – a life as a *servant*.
- *For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.* (Matthew 20:28)
- **And his master saw that the LORD was with him:**
  - By his trust in God, diligent work, and blessing from God, Joseph showed Potiphar that God was real.
  - Followers of Jesus should live out the same principle today; others should see the difference Jesus makes in our lives by the way we work.
  - Our effort is a witness
- He made the best of every situation
- His involvement brought success

### **Genesis 39:4-6 - God blesses Potiphar for Joseph's sake.**

<sup>4</sup> *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.* <sup>5</sup> *From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field.* <sup>6</sup> *So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.*

**He made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority:** Because of God's blessing and Joseph's faithfulness, God made sure Joseph was advanced in his position, even as a slave.

- **The LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake:** After the same principle, blessing can be brought upon our workplace because of our presence of godliness.
- **Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand:** Joseph rose to the top, but it took a while to happen.
  - · Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery (Genesis 37:2).
  - · He was 30 when Pharaoh promoted him (Genesis 41:46).
  - · Joseph was in prison for two years before his promotion (Genesis 41:1).
  - · Therefore, Joseph was in Potiphar's house for 11 years.
- It took 11 years for the full measure of God's blessing to be accomplished in Joseph's life.
  - 11 years seems like a long time. Many think if advancement is from God, it must come quickly.
  - Sometimes this is the case, but not normally. Normally, God allows good things to develop slowly.
  - Human children have the longest development time both in the womb and in childhood compared to animals.
  - In the world of plants, it takes many years for an acorn to become an oak; a squash might grow almost overnight.
- **He left all that he had in Joseph's hand:** This means that Joseph was a hard worker. When he came to Egypt, he was at a great disadvantage. He knew nothing of the language, culture, customs, or ways of doing business. He had to get up early and stay up late to both do his job and to learn Egyptian ways.
- Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance: Joseph's appearance was of special note.
  - The Bible only calls two other men beautiful: David (1 Samuel 16:12) and Absalom (2 Samuel 14:25). Moses was said to be a beautiful child (Exodus 2:2).
  - NOW WE GET TO IT
- He was a slave... everyone saw him as a slave
  - But he was not a slave in His own mind

### **Genesis 39:7-10 - Resistance from Temptation**

*<sup>7</sup> And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." <sup>8</sup> But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. <sup>9</sup> He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" <sup>10</sup> And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.*

## HE IS NOW 28 YEARS OLD

- **His master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."**  
Potiphar's wife was undeniably forward towards Joseph.
- *Maybe Potiphar's wife felt deprived.* It may be that she felt free to pursue sexual pleasure outside the marriage. This attitude is common today, and our modern culture tells us that we are deprived unless we pursue every sexual desire we feel. This is a lie and makes our sexual desires gods that rule our life.
- It seems that in the ancient Egypt there were low moral expectations on women, even married women.
  - It was assumed that women would have sex outside marriage. Potiphar's wife wasn't looking for a relationship, just a good time.
  - Again, our modern culture tells us that sex is great and often better apart from meaningful relationships.
  - The truth – both Biblically and lived out in life – is that sex is far better in committed, married relationship; that sex *means* something.
- People are always looking for a reason to be corrupted.
  - See how bad it is... why bother.
  - God has abandoned me, why would I serve Him
- Satan wants us to think our temptation is unique; that no other person could understand what we are going through in a particular temptation, but there is no temptation that has overtaken us except what is common among people (1 Corinthians 10:13).

### **Joseph remembered what the act actually was - great wickedness:**

- We often want to call sin by another name.
- Hostility and temper are self-expression.
- Pride is self-esteem. Gluttony is the good life. Covetousness is trying to get ahead. Perversion is an alternative lifestyle. Adultery is a cry for help in a bad marriage.
- **She spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her:** Joseph showed remarkable faithfulness towards God, Potiphar, and himself **by resisting this temptation for so long – perhaps for up to 11 years.** Many character qualities helped in this, and Joseph gave several reasons for his refusal.
- **Joseph said to his master's wife:**
  - He did not flirt or speak in a provocative manner with her.
  - A foolish man would say, "It's just words, let's have a little fun."
  - Flirting and provocative words lead to disaster.

### **Joseph remembered his responsibilities:**

- **“My master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand.”**
- He remembered how much he had to lose.
- Today, even the single person has much to lose – their innocence, their heart, and their capacity to truly give themselves to the one God has for them.

### **Joseph remembered who she was: “You are his wife.”**

- She simply did not belong to Joseph. She was given to another, and another was given to her.

### **Joseph remembered that it was sin against God.**

- This was probably a pretty risk-free proposition – there was little chance of getting caught. Joseph cared about more than getting caught, knowing that everything was before the eyes of God. Joseph had a real enough relationship with God that he cared about more than getting caught before human eyes.

### **Joseph refused:**

- Sometimes it just comes down to that.
- One must refuse and say no to sin, even when they feel like saying yes.
- One must realize that there is more to live for than the desires of the body.
- We are more than our sexual urges, and should live like we are more.

He did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her:

- Joseph was careful to never be alone with his temptation. Joseph wisely avoided being alone around Potiphar’s wife (or to be with her).

### **Genesis 39:11-12 - The Day of Reckoning**

*<sup>11</sup> But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, <sup>12</sup> she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.*

In another translation it says that he resisted and he ran.

### **Joseph resisted**

- none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him:
  - Potiphar’s wife knew Joseph avoided her, so she made a deliberate plan to trap him.

- Surely, it was she who arranged it that none of the men of the house was inside.
- **Saying, “Lie with me.”**
  - That has two meanings
    - Lie with her sexually
    - And then lie to her husband – live the lie
  - The Devil is all about making your life a lie
    - To get you behind the eight ball where your life is lies stacked on top of lies
    - You even lie to yourself
- She caught him by his garment,
  - But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside: Joseph resisted this tremendous moment of temptation when he ran outside.

### **Joseph Ran**

- 2 Timothy 2:22 makes it clear: Flee also youthful lusts.
- Joseph did what we are all supposed to do when faced with this kind of situation: he fled and ran.

### **Genesis 39:13-18 - Falsely Accused**

*<sup>13</sup> And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, <sup>14</sup> she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. <sup>15</sup> And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.” <sup>16</sup> Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, <sup>17</sup> and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. <sup>18</sup> But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.”*

- This was not fair. Sometimes there is a price to be paid for resisting temptation.
- A Hebrew... the Hebrew servant:
  - In an age when punishment was brutal and life was cheap – especially the life of a slave –
    - Potiphar’s wife knew her accusation would mean a death sentence for Joseph.
    - That’s why she didn’t say his name; she didn’t want to think of him as a real person.
  - Had he succumbed to the temptation he would have lost his identity.
    - A faithful servant of the Lord

- A faithful servant of Potiphar
- A reliable individual
- A pure individual
- Yet here, though he resisted the temptation he loses his identity in the eyes of the world
  - He is slandered
  - He loses his position
  - He loses the trust that Potiphar had given him
  - He loses his reputation among those he managed over
- Yet he has not lost his true identity
  - **God** knows
  - **He** knows
  - After all is said and done and the tale is written, **everyone** who has read genesis knows that he remained pure.

### **Genesis 39:19-20 - Joseph is sent to prison**

*<sup>19</sup> As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. <sup>20</sup> And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.*

- His anger was aroused:
  - Potiphar knew what kind of woman his wife was and he knew what kind of man Joseph was.
    - His anger probably came because he knew that her accusation against Joseph was not true.
      - Had he believed it to be true Joseph would have been put to death.
  - Death was the only penalty Joseph could reasonably expect. His reprieve presumably owed much to the respect he had won; and Potiphar's mingled wrath and restraint may reflect a faint misgiving about the full accuracy of the charge." (Kidner)
    - We can see the mercy in this, because if Potiphar had believed his wife, he certainly would have put Joseph to death.
    - We can see the injustice in this, because Joseph suffered for someone else's sin.
    - We can see God's hand in all of this.

### **From the Pit to the Plantation From the Plantation to the Prison**

**Genesis 39:21-23 - Joseph prospers, even in prison.**

*<sup>21</sup> But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. <sup>22</sup> And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. <sup>23</sup> The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.*

- But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy: If God blessed Joseph in the pit, if He blessed Joseph the slave, we are not surprised to see that He blessed Joseph in prison. None of these terrible circumstances changed or defeated God's plan for Joseph's life.

The dominating theme is that Joseph succeeded because of the blessing of God:

- The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man. (Genesis 39:2)
- His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. (Genesis 39:3)
- The LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had. (Genesis 39:5)

Even after Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison, God still blessed Joseph with His presence:

The keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing:

- As happened before in the house of Potiphar, Joseph rose to the top, becoming the chief administrator of the prison.
- Through his experience in both places, God sharpened the administrative skills Joseph needed to one day save his family and to save the whole world.

## **Takeaways from the Text**

You can be abandoned by men yet be anointed by God.

You can be falsely accused by people yet be faithfully absolved by God.

You can be placed in low places yet be promoted to high positions.

Your world can look like the pit, the plantation, or the prison, yet you may be in center of God's purpose and plan.

## **How do you make something good from a bad situation?**

### **Your Mindset is a Decision / Decide your Mindset**

- He trusted God.
- He knew what God desired.
- He did not complain.
- He did not blame.

### **Integrity is a Lifestyle / Live with Integrity**

- He bloomed where he was planted.
- His work was his witness.
- He was Trustworthy... Worthy of trust.

### **Purity is a Choice / Choose to be Pure**

- He remembered God and would not sin against Him.
- He remembered those who trusted him and would not sin against them.
- He remembered himself and he would not sin against himself.

Prayer