

## **When the World Gives Us Lemons**

### **Acts 7:9-10**

9 "And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him 10 "and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

In the life of Joseph we get to see one of the greatest contrasts in the Bible. Here we have both the worst that humanity can offer and also the best.

It seems incredible that 10 grown men could all agree together to kill their own brother because of envy. What terrible cruelty. But this is what they had been taught from children. How to deal deceitfully and do what ever you needed to do to get what you wanted.

Sounds almost like our society today doesn't it.

But on the other had we have Joseph. It seems that no matter what come his way he is always looking up. He never lost faith in his God regardless of the circumstances.

His life was filled with disappointments. But he always overcomes thru faith.

To refresh our memory; Joseph is 17 years old and is now the favorite son of his father. His mother died when he was about 9 years old giving birth to his younger brother. He is envied by his 10 older brothers who cannot speak peaceably to him. In today's sermon we begin with Joseph being concerned along with his father about those older brothers and being sent by the father to find them and make sure that they are all ok.

When Joseph arrives at Shechem his brothers have traveled to Dothan and there he finds them. But let's read it for ourselves.

Genesis 37:12 Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am." 14 Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. 15 Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?" 16 So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks." 17 And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

18 Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. 19 Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! 20 Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

Think of this. Ten grown brothers of the father's favorite son conspire so ruthlessly to kill their brother. This is no doubt something they had thought of before. They had talked it over and over

as these type of men do. How they hated him and the special favor that he received from their father. So they will fix his dreams. They will show him that dreams can be destroyed. So with the greatest malice they carry out their plan.

21 But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him." 22 And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"--that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

Ruben, the oldest, begins to have a change of heart. We do not know why. It could have been because he changed his mind when the time came or it could have been that he just wanted to maybe get back into his father's good graces.

23 So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. 24 Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. 25 And they sat down to eat a meal.

With so little regard for human life let alone the life of their own brother they carry out the plan in no doubt the most cruel manner. Notice that they did not take his coat from him but stripped him of it. And then they throw him in a pit, maybe an abandoned cistern that he could never get himself out of. And then they sat down to eat lunch, which I am sure they did not share with their brother.

Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. 26 So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. 28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Now it just so happened that a caravan headed for Egypt was passing by and Judah, maybe feeling a little squeamish about allowing his brother to starve to death, or maybe because he thought they might as well get some money out of him, comes up with a plan to sell their brother as a slave. And the brothers agreed.

29 Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. 30 And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?"

If Reuben had been man enough to stand up to his younger brothers, he could have prevented this, but now what he had planned to do in secret now cannot be done for the lad is gone. I have often wondered that if they really regretted what they had done, could they not have gone after the caravan and caught it and bought their brother back. But they were not that concerned.

31 So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the

blood. 32 Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" 33 And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces." 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

Now they finish the plan. They take the blood stained coat to Jacob and begin their tale of lies that they will continue for the next 11 years. What cruel and thankless sons to put their father to such grief and sorrow. But they have what they wanted. Now they will not have to put up with their father favoring Joseph over them again and again. But I think we can all read between the lines. Don't you thin that Benjamin is now the favored son? But they never have nerve to do anything to him.

36 Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.

Here in Egypt Joseph has the choice of what he will do. I think that Joseph determined to do what God wanted him to do.

God will never lead us wrongly. But it does not mean that He will not lead us through some very difficult paths.

Notice what it says about Potiphar and how he took notice of Joseph's relationship with God.

Genesis 39:3 (NKJV) 3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand.

When Potiphar's wife set about to bring Joseph down, Joseph calls to mind what God would want.

Genesis 39:8-9 (NKJV) 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

But even in prison Joseph was favored because of his relationship with God.

Genesis 39:21-23 (NKJV) 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And 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. 23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

Even when Joseph was in prison his minds was still on God and he give God credit for understanding dreams.

Genesis 40:8 (NKJV) 8 And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it." So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please."

But the butler forgot about Joseph until Pharaoh had some dreams that no one could interpret. But when Joseph is called notice that he does not take credit but gives it to God.

Genesis 41:15-16 (NKJV) 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Genesis 41:25 (NKJV) 25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do:

When Joseph's brothers come down for food, Joseph wants to know if they are sorry for what they did to him years ago, but he does not take vengeance on them. He does treat them roughly and accuses them of being spies. He did that so that he could get Benjamin to Egypt where Joseph hoped to keep him.

So he locked them in prison for 3 days. And then kept Simeon in prison until they should bring Benjamin. He did that to Simeon because he was the oldest present when they had sold him into slavery.

But notice the attitude of Joseph when he finally reveals himself to the brothers.

Ge 50:20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

What a wonderful picture of the grace of God. God could permit these wicked men to sell their brother, lie to their father, and then afterward use this very act, this dastardly sin, to become the means of salvation for the very ones who were guilty. DeHaan, M. R. (1995). *Portraits of Christ in Genesis* (pp. 181–182). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

Next week we want to look at how Joseph is a picture of Christ. This is what we call a type. A picture of Jesus Christ, His life and ministry from the Old Testament. There are literally hundreds of them in the Bible.

The way to deal with lemons is not to make lemonade but rather to give them to God. He makes such better lemonade that we do. It is much sweeter.

If we try to handle things ourselves we will mess it up. But if we give these things to God, God can use the worst things in our lives to bring out His glory and will eventually work it all together for our good.