

February 2, 2020 In All Things God Works Genesis 37, 39-46

Sermon Summary

This message looks at four major life events in the life of Joseph and traces how in each of these events, God is working all things together for Joseph and for the fulfillment of God's plan and promise! The comparison between Joseph's life events and our life events is made in the fact that God is working all things together for our good. Joseph's story is a good way for us to be reminded that in all things God works personally, practically, purposely, and providentially to accomplish His plan and purpose for our lives. One of our New Testament memory verses for this coming week, Roman's 8:28, is used as a foundational verse for the interpretation of how and why God worked the way He did in Joseph's life events. The end of the message showcases how God's plan and Joseph's dream had indeed come to pass. (At the end of the full sermon notes are some additional thoughts on Roman's 8:29-30, which are also a part of our memory verses this week.)

Full Sermon Notes:

What a song! Think about it, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace because they wouldn't bow down and worship a golden image King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When asked about their refusal, they said...

Daniel 3:16b "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.

Daniel 3:17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.

Daniel 3:18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Of course there was another in the fire with them and they were saved! Today we're going to talk about a young man who had that same kind of tenacity even though the pit he was thrown into was not a fiery pit, but a dried up cistern. And we're going to see through our story today that God was with him as well, and "In All Things God Works!"

Let's pray!

Zach did such a wonderful job last week of teaching us about Jacob, Joseph's father. Jacob was a bit of a schemer and a deceiver back in the day. Zach also taught us last week how Jacob had literally wrestled with God one night! It changed Jacob's life, and not just because his hip had been dislocated and he walked with a limp! It changed his spiritual life. We were talking about that in staff this week and Jay said when you wrestle with God it will change the way you walk! How true! But here's the situation with Jacob: He had already set some bad examples for his sons, and as we'll see today, that came back to haunt him! However, God has a way of even using our mistakes to make sure His promises prevail! In fact, one of our memory verses for this coming week points this out and is where our sermon title comes from. Romans 8:28. Let's read it together...

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Just a quick word here. Verse 28 does not say that all things are good, it says in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. I was telling someone just the other day, how I don't have a doubt in the world about my salvation and heaven someday. That's my gift from God and I trust Him 100% with my eternity. So why do I sometimes have such a hard time trusting God with the details of my everyday life? Trust Him with my soul in eternity, but not with my life here on earth! What's up with that? Well life can be a challenge, right? Ever feel like you can't catch a break? Ever feel like everything is against you and you're fighting an uphill battle? Ever had your dreams, your hopes and your plans collide with reality? Joseph, the young man in our story today, certainly faced all of the above. We'll look at three major discouraging life events, each one seemingly the end of his dreams and the end of God's covenant promise! But we'll see that in all things God works!!

Life Event #1 Joseph Sold Into Slavery

Gen 37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him.

Gen 37:4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Gen 37:5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

Gen 37:6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had:

Gen 37:7 We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

Gen 37:8 His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Gen 37:9 Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

Gen 37:10 When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?"

Gen 37:11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

So Joseph in his youthful naivety, doesn't even think about how his brothers or his dad would take his dream. His brothers hated him all the more! Jacob was bothered by Joseph's presentation of his dream, but he was wise enough not to totally dismiss it. He was aware that God sometimes works in mysterious ways, so he kept the matter in mind. Let's read on...

Gen 37:12 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem,

Gen 37:13 and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied.
Gen 37:14 So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron...

Spoken just like a true dreamer. "Sure, I'll go, no problem. I love adventures!"
Impervious to the peril that awaited him at the hands of his brothers. Unaware his dream is about to have a serious collision with reality.

Gen 37:17 ...So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.
Gen 37:18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.
Gen 37:19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other.
Gen 37:20 "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

Amazing the sick depths jealousy and hate can take people! But, thanks to God there was at least one brother who had not allowed the hate to totally consume him.

Gen 37:21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said.
Gen 37:22 "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.
Gen 37:23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe--the richly ornamented robe he was wearing--
Gen 37:24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.
Gen 37:25 As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.
Gen 37:26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?
Gen 37:27 Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.
Gen 37:28 So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.
Gen 37:29 When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.
Gen 37:30 He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"
Gen 37:31 Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood.
Gen 37:32 They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe."

Gen 37:33 He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces."

Gen 37:34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.

Gen 37:35 All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son." So his father wept for him.

Like I said, Jacob's poor example of deception has now shown up in his sons. Don't think you can be in sin and it won't affect your children. It will even if you don't think they know about it! Sin is contagious! Of course we also must remember even if you are a wonderful example, your kids may not follow, but that's on them. So Jacob is devastated and heart broken and Joseph is about to face some difficult times. What will Joseph do with his difficult circumstances?

Let's see...

Life Event #2 Joseph Falsely Accused and Imprisoned

Gen 39:1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.

Gen 39:2 The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.

Gen 39:3 When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did,

Gen 39:4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.

Gen 39:5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.

Gen 39:6 So 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. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,

Gen 39:7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

Gen 39:8 But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care.

Gen 39:9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

Gen 39:10 And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

Gen 39:11 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants were inside.

Gen 39:12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

Gen 39:13 When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house,

Gen 39:14 she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed.

Gen 39:19 When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger.

Gen 39:20 Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined...

Life Event #3 Joseph Is Forgotten

Gen 39:20 ...But while Joseph was there in the prison,

Gen 39:21 the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

Gen 39:22 So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.

Gen 39:23 The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Are you noticing a pattern here? Joseph can't catch a break, but he stays faithful and simply seeks to do the very best with whatever his circumstances and God blesses him in the midst of his terrible circumstances! Talk about can't keep a good man down, that's Joseph! It's important to note Joseph dreamed of being exalted but he didn't dream of being sold into slavery or put into prison. God, in His wisdom doesn't always reveal the struggles we may endure on the way to dream fulfillment. If He did, we might be inclined to abandon the dream. But Joseph just keeps doing the right thing and trusting God no matter what and God kept blessing him. In all things God works! While Joseph is in prison two of Pharaoh's officials get thrown into prison, his baker and his cup-bearer. Then this happens...

Gen 40:6 When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected.

Gen 40:7 So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

Gen 40:8 "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

Joseph interprets their dreams. In your readings this week you'll see it's not good news for the Baker, but really good news for the Cup Bearer. Joseph tells the Cup Bearer...

Gen 40:13 Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer.

Gen 40:14 But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison.

Gen 40:15 For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

Three days later it was Pharaoh's birthday and the Cup Bearer was restored to his former position, but he forgot Joseph. Forgotten? Really? You've got to be kidding? How in the world could this guy just forget Joseph? Can you imagine Joseph, week after week just waiting for someone to come and tell him, "The Pharaoh has ordered your release!" But that just didn't happen. He had been forgotten. Have you ever felt forgotten? Have you ever felt God has forgotten you? Maybe you've begun to wonder whether or not God ever had a dream or a plan for you in the first place. Would Joseph's dream endure the wait? Will your dream endure the wait? Why would God make us wait in the first place? I mean, if it's God's dream for us why the wait? Why doesn't God just work His magic and make the dream happen in an instant? In the blink of an eye! Why put us in a holding pattern and make us wait? Here's some things we can learn from Joseph's life events!

In all Things God Works - Personally

God was working in Joseph's life personally. He had a plan and it would ultimately result in the fulfillment of Joseph's God given dreams. God is also concerned about you personally. He desires to use all of the events in your life to make you the man or woman of God He created you to be! The reason the dream takes time to fulfill is God is working with you personally to grow you, just like He was growing Joseph! I once heard this statement...

God is more concerned with our character than He is with our comfort!

Paul put it this way...

Rom 5:3 ...but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

Rom 5:4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Rom 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Sometimes it is uncomfortable when God starts chiseling away at some of the attitudes, habits or traits that are holding us back from becoming the work of art God wants us to become. When an earthly architect designs and builds a building, people are used to construct the building. The focus is on the building. God's kingdom is so different. He is building people. So the timing of the completion of the project is not as important as the completion of God's goals for the people!

Gal 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

God is more concerned with who we become than how quickly we become! Sometimes we want to become leaders without having gone through the life experience we need in order to be a good leader. And we must remember, how we achieve the dream is as important as the dream itself! Does our integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness remain intact as we pursue our dreams? All of those things remained intact as Joseph faced difficulties. And we'll see that God was getting Joseph ready for a huge responsibility. One that would allow him to save not only his family, but the nation of Israel.

In All Things God Works - Practically!

This is so important for us to know! God's timing makes sense. Joseph certainly didn't understand this at the time! We may not understand it in our life events, but He understands and knows things we can't know and perceives and sees things we can't see. Sometimes His plan not only takes time, but unusual routes. God has His reasons. Listen to this most practical advice from the writer of Proverbs. We've read it recently...

Prov 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
Prov 3:6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

The King James version says "He shall direct thy paths." In other words, God will give you good directions. Straight paths simply means you won't be meandering around without direction! God making our path straight doesn't mean He's going to take us on the shortest route! The shortest route would seem most practical to us, but let me explain. If God's plan for you is to get from point A to point G on the map, He will probably not draw one long straight line from A to G.

He may, in fact, draw several short straight lines. One from point A to point B. One from point B to point C. One from point C to point D. You get my point! Why is this? Because at point B, there's a lesson you need to learn! At point C there's a person you need to meet whom God will use to help you in your journey! At point D there's some critical supplies you'll need to pick up! At point E there's someone who needs your help in their journey! Point F may just be a place to rest before you get to the destination, point G, because you may need all the energy you can muster once you've arrived! Certainly seemed true for Joseph!

In All Things God Works - Purposefully!

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails.

Remember, God's dream for you is not just about achieving some goal, or doing some task! No, God's plan has a purpose far beyond just being able to say, "I did it!" A part of God's plan for you is found in the journey to get to your dream and the little

accomplishments along the way that are really not so little after all! Lives touched, lives changed, lessons learned, lessons taught, love received, love given! If you just run past the needs and the hurts of others on your way to your grand prize, how sad is that? What dream could be so important for you to step on others just to achieve your dream? One of the saddest things I've seen in my life is folks who are always trying to get somewhere and they're trying to get there as fast as they can. Some people spend their whole life always trying to get to the next goal or dream or station in life and they never slow down enough to learn any lessons, or share any lessons, to give any love or receive any either. They never take the time to live in the moment and cherish the powerful gift of life God has given them today!

In All Things God Works - Providentially

Remember God has a way of making good come from even the worst tragedies when we let Him! This doesn't mean we don't weep, or hurt, or question, or even at times feel totally helpless and just without words, but we are not without help...

Rom 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Rom 8:27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

This was certainly true for Joseph! He had been called according to God's plan, purpose and covenant promise!! Ok, are you ready for this? When we started our story Joseph was 17 years old. He's around twenty eight when the cupbearer forgot him. Two years later, when Joseph was around 30 years old, the cupbearer finally remembers him. Do the math! That's 13 years it took from the time Joseph was sold into slavery. But when the dream came true, it came true in a big way. Pharaoh had a dream and none of his wise men could interpret them. The Baker tells Pharaoh about Joseph, Joseph is summoned and interprets the dream. It's a prophecy about the 7 years of abundance that was coming and the 7 years of famine that was to follow. Joseph not only interpreted the dream but wisely set forth a plan to deal with the famine and this happens...

Life Event # 4 God's Plan and Joseph's Dream Becomes a Reality

Gen 41:37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.

Gen 41:38 So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

Gen 41:39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.

Gen 41:40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

Gen 41:41 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."

Gen 41:42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

Gen 41:43 He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way !" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

Gen 41:44 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt."

And when the famine hit, Joseph's brothers were sent to Egypt to buy food and they bowed down to their brother Joseph, although they did not know it was him! Joseph's dream and God's plan had come to pass! I don't know what life events you may be facing, but from Joseph's story, I can tell you... "In All Things God Works!"

Let's pray!

Additional Study notes for small groups.

Paul said "those God foreknew!" How many people have ever been born that caught God by surprise? That's right, zero! And to predestine means to predetermine, or to pre-choose! God predetermined before you were ever born, that He wanted you to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, and He made a way for that to happen! It is through His Son's sacrifice on the Cross that we are justified and glorified! Paul goes on to describe how God's sovereignty is seen in God's plan of Salvation for us! Paul later describes our responsibility in this way...

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Rom 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Rom 10:11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

Now, that's trusting God's plan with our soul salvation! But what about trusting God's plan for our life! See full sermon notes!!

