

Added by Faith – Genesis 39:1-6

I. Introduction:

- A. Picture a vast swath of land – about the size of the Oregon, Washington and Idaho.
1. For two years there hasn't been any rain and relatively little snow over the entire area.
 2. Crops have failed. Wild fires have swept through the region. Homes have been destroyed; resources gone
 3. No, this drought has not been caused by man-made global warming, because the government hasn't yet figured out how to use that idea to their benefit. This has to be classified as *"an act of God."*
 4. There has been no rain, because the Lord who rules over heaven and earth is in the process of judging those people for their sins. It is to bring those people to their knees in repentance.
 5. Ultimately, the purpose of this famine is to magnify the name of the Lord.
- B. Despite all the problems this has caused, including food shortages, death, riots and dissent, the Lord has not forsaken His creation or the people of that affected area.
1. In the midst of all the chaos, He raises up a young man, saving his soul and instilling in him a love for the Lord and a love for his neighbors.
 2. And that boy begins to pray – not only for rain, but for God to reveal himself to others, as He has to him.
 3. He not only lives in hope for a restoration of the *"good old days,"* but he prays, trusting God, to bless in ways that He has not yet revealed Himself.
 4. This lad yearns for rain and snow, but also for spiritual showers, and he **expects** to see them.
 5. However, God is not through with his object lesson, so the drought continues for another five years.
 6. But then, when the time is right, the faith and prayers of this young man are answered in a revival of the name and glory of God.
- C. Is my story fanciful fiction? Not exactly. We see a similar situation in Joseph, the son of Jacob.
1. And we have seen it in church history.
 2. I can only touch the hem of Joseph's coat of many colors this evening.
 3. But I hope that you can see some the practical aspects of faith in this man's life.

II. Joseph was born into a highly dysfunctional family.

- A. Time and time again, God's great servants came from inauspicious beginnings – or even worse.
1. Joseph's family was eventually comprised of one father, two wives and two concubines, a brother, ten half-brothers and an unknown number of half-sisters. It was a recipe for disaster. It **WAS** a disaster.
 2. For years his mother had been childless, and that basically lit the fire.
 3. She demanded of her husband, *"Give me children, or else I die,"* and his angry reply was, *"Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?"*
 4. A few years later, Rachel gave birth to her first born, and she expressed in him a tiny bit of faith.
 - a. *"She called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD SHALL add to me another son."*
 - b. The name *"Joseph"* means, *"The LORD has added,"* but **she** added that **God** would add again.
 5. And He did. Rachel died giving birth to her second child, but her faith was honored and rewarded.
 6. This is an example of practical faith.
- B. As Joseph grew, he didn't display any kind of faith or love for God that I can see.
1. His father, although one of God's people, was not a great example of faith or service to the Lord.
 2. And in the midst of that family mess, Joseph was spoiled and coddled by his father.
 3. *"When his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."*
 4. While still a young man, God gave him two dreams, both of which prophesied of his future greatness, and a dominant position over the rest of the family.
 5. But Joseph didn't ascribe them to God, and probably didn't see them that way. He was not a man of faith.
 6. Those dreams added fuel to the fire of his brethren's hatred. And eventually they took steps to kill him.
 7. But by the will of God, his life was spared, and they sold him as a slave instead.

III. While a slave of the Lord, God slowly began to give Joseph great gifts, including the gift of faith.

- A. He became the manager of the house of one of **Pharaoh's** chief officers.
1. *"The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man,"* even as a servant.
 2. During that time Joseph began to see the hand of God in his life.
 3. He began to grow in his trust in the Lord, and to live according to the principles of the holy God of Israel.
 4. When the wife of his master made sexual advances toward him, Joseph refused saying, *"Can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*
 5. This unjustly put God's servant in prison, but the Lord continued to bless him.
 6. *"The Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." "And because the Lord was with him... that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper."*
- B. Not only did Joseph prosper, but he was able to see through all his problems and the painfulness of his past, learning to enjoy the limited life which he had been given.
1. He had joy, real joy, wonderful joy, because by faith he could see the face of his God through the fog.
 2. I doubt that he remembered the dreams which he shared with his family. I doubt that he was living in hope.
 3. But in the midst of his emptiness – no friends, no prospects, no future – he had the Lord God.
 4. And reading between the lines I see a young man who was happy and content – wherein is great gain.
 5. He possessed a joy which flowed out of his faith in the Lord.
- C. There is no scripture which declares that Joseph's faith was growing, but I can see that it was.
1. There were two others in that prison, who on the same night had extraordinarily vivid dreams.
 2. As was customary in their day, both men believed that these were visions with special meanings, but there were no priests in the prison to explain them.
 3. When Joseph heard about the situation he said, *"Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you,"* implying that he believed that the Lord would reveal the meanings.
 4. Joseph's ability to trust God for miraculous things was growing. His faith was real and practical.
 5. *"Tell me your dreams, and I will tell you what God's message is for you."*
 6. They described the dreams, and he explained God's plan. For both men, Joseph's message was spot on.
- D. Two years later, a similar event took place in the bedroom of the royal palace.
1. Pharaoh was given a pair of dreams which were so vivid they either woke him up, or he remembered them when he woke up. Not only did he remember them, but they really disturbed him.
 2. You and I might have just laughed at them and gone on, but Pharaoh believed that these were important.
 3. When he demanded that his wise men interpret them, they couldn't.
 - a. That in itself is significant. I'm surprised that they didn't come up with some bland explanation.
 - b. But God forced them into silence, to bring on His eternally ordained plan.
 4. Then Joseph, the dream interpreter, was summoned and commanded to give the meaning.
 5. Once again, Joseph replied, *"It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."*
- E. There are two declarations of faith in this short sentence – in addition to the denial of personal ability.
1. Joseph said, *"God SHALL give Pharaoh an answer."* He had no doubt that God would bless. Faith.
 2. Furthermore, he believed that the answer to be given would provide a degree of peace to the king.
 3. But Joseph was standing on shaky ground right here; quicksand. He was out on a flimsy limb.
 4. If his interpretation was not accurate, he would have been executed.
 5. But not only did God bless Joseph's faith with the proper interpretation, but he also blessed by giving Pharaoh faith to believe Joseph's interpretation.
- F. Let's say that the Lord has put someone on your heart; someone whom you expect is not a believer in Christ.
1. Of course, you know that the God who saved you can save anyone, including your new acquaintance.
 2. But that kind of knowledge and faith is different from the faith which actually expects God to give that man the answer to his dreams, providing the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

3. In this Joseph is a good example of a God-trusting soul-winner.

- G. As you may know Pharaoh's dream involved seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine.
1. Along with the interpretation, Joseph suggested that Pharaoh choose from among his advisors someone to oversee preparations for the upcoming famine.
 2. Perhaps without thinking about it, he was willing to let someone else reap the benefits of his faith.
 3. It wasn't actually, *"To God be the glory,"* but neither was it, *"To me be the glory."*
 4. These are two direct results of true faith.
 5. But then as an indirect result of that faith, Joseph was taken from prison and put into the office of the Prime Minister of Egypt, with only Pharaoh being above him in authority.
 6. I would never tell anyone that faith in the Lord will result in worldly wealth and power, but Joseph shows us that this is always a possibility.
 7. God honored this faith, because He had another objective in mind.

IV. Joseph continued to mix practical faith into his daily life as he served Pharaoh.

- A. He instituted some pretty harsh policies on Egypt, encouraging people to store grain for the upcoming famine, but at the same time heavily taxing them, bringing a great deal of wealth to the crown.
1. Year after year the people were getting fatter, probably never thinking their prosperity would end.
 2. But by faith Joseph knew it would.
 3. He based his actions on nothing more than what God had revealed to him. He was living by faith.
- B. During this time, Joseph married, and into his family two sons were born: Manasseh and Ephraim.
1. Both their names give evidence of their father's faith in God.
 2. At Manasseh's birth, Joseph said, *"God, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house."*
 3. And when Ephraim came, he said, *"God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."*
- C. Through all of this, what sort of **lateral encouragement** was there for Joseph's faith?
1. Did he have Christian friends fortifying him? Was his wife a believer?
 - a. Did he ever hear people sharing their testimonies of God's grace on their faith?
 - b. Was he able to attend church to hear the Word of God preached every Sabbath?
 2. He had nothing and no one but the Lord Himself. His faith was pure.
 3. It was unadulterated by the theologies of well intentioned men.
- D. I won't pretend that Joseph is an example of the perfect saint, because there never has been one and there never will be one.
1. For example, why didn't he think of his father and his brethren as he made preparations for the famine?
 2. He should have anticipated that it would hit them as hard as it would Egypt.
 3. Wasn't there a lingering animosity and resentment until that day when he actually looked into Benjamin's eyes, and when he saw the remorse in the hearts of the others?
 4. And then threatening to kill Benjamin was certainly cruel, even if he didn't really intend to go through with it.
- E. When he finally revealed who he was, his faith was able to reach back and to express God's purpose in it all.
1. **Genesis 45:4** – *"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.*
 - a. *Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*
 - b. *For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.*
 - c. *And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."*
 2. Although this is not a **declaration** of faith, it is an **expression** of faith.

3. Joseph knew what was coming, not because he was a good meteorologist, but because he believed God.
4. And no unbeliever would have looked back on the events in this life, declaring that this was all of God's design.
5. Every Christian, every believer, should be able to see God's providence and direction in his life.
6. But it takes a higher degree of faith to see **why** the Lord has done it.
 - a. There is a God-designed reason why you were made sick and brought back from the brink of death.
 - b. The Lord had a plan when he brought you into this land of blessing and curse.
 - c. You have been given certain friends for a reason.
7. It make take considerable faith to see these things, but oh, what a blessing when we can see them.

- F. When his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain, the famine had barely begun.
1. There were five more years of hardship on the way.
 2. But in that region of physical and spiritual dearth, there was a small pocket of revival.
 3. There was a home in the midst of Egypt were a lone, single and singular believer dwelt.
 4. He made his living in the world like all the rest of us, but he did so as a servant of Jehovah.
 5. No one was going to take that from him.
 6. And by faith he lived in the anticipation of seeing God's blessings – revival, souls saved, lives restored, God's Name magnified.

V. Joseph's faith blessed his family during those lean years, but it was not finished.

- A. The book of **Genesis** closes with **chapter 50:22** – *“And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.*
1. *And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.*
 2. *And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.*
 3. *And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.*
 4. *So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”*
- B. The faith of this man had carried him from day to day, from slavery to prison, & then from prison to the palace.
1. But Joseph also believed that God was going to carry him from Egypt to the land God had given to his grandfather Abraham.
 2. He had a kind of faith which meant his salvation, but he also had a faith which enabled him to have victory after victory throughout his life.
 3. Joseph was a man who lived his life in real, practical faith in God.
 4. That is where I want to live.