

**Genesis 37: 1- 11; "Joseph, God's Chosen Man", Sermon # 97 in the series -
"Beginnings", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 22nd, 2007,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

We now have come to one of the greatest stories in all of Scripture; of what God did for Jacob and Joseph and their whole family in His grace and mercy. From the beginning to the end of this story God gives us indications that He purposed to do a great work of deliverance for their family, through very unusual and unlikely means. Actually, this is often God's way of doing things for families who have believers in them, although we may not like what we see at first. We find sometimes that family members oppose our conversion or our interest in being godly and doing the right thing. But God uses the unusual and unlikely means of opposition from family members, to the things which he has shown us in His Word, in order to ultimately give to those who are trusting in Him the greatest blessings by His grace. "Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness." "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37: 3 and 4) It is God's way to bring great joy out of sorrow and great usefulness out of disappointment for those who love Him. It is His purpose to fulfill the dreams that He gives to us in relation to His Word, as we trust in Him. We do not have revelatory prophetic dreams, as Joseph did in this story, but many believers have and should have dreams of what they could do for the Lord with their life. And so, the learning experience of Joseph applies to all believers who desire to be faithful and useful to their Lord. All believers have been chosen of God to learn His ways. Perhaps you are a young person surrounded by brothers and sisters who know the Lord. Perhaps you are the only one among your brothers and sisters who knows the Lord. Perhaps there is only one godly parent, or even no godly parent in your life. But whatever is your situation, the way that the Lord teaches a believer can be seen in the life of Joseph. He taught Joseph godliness in the context of a family who did not understand his dreams. He is God's chosen man in relation to his family, and not only to his family but in relation to whole future history of the nation of Israel in his generation and in many generations that will follow. But his family does not understand, and many in the family oppose him.

As we think about the purpose of our own life in relation to God, we should understand that God would have us to think about how we can serve Him in our generation; how we can live to bring glory to Him, even if we are in such circumstances as Joseph was. We tend to believe that nothing that we do has any impact for good on others in our family or in our society, but this story teaches us that this is simply not true. God has created us as responsible beings who, before Him and before His law, are all equally seen by Him as men created in His image, and shall be held accountable to Him for all their actions. In the judgment of the last day it will be the "small and the great" that shall stand before the Lord. But, though this is true that God has created all men equal in these significant ways, it is also very evident from the story of Joseph, that he was raised up from early in his life to be different from other men and to fulfill a special purpose in the plan of God. In this sense God has not created all men equal. God is the One who causes one man to differ from another by His grace and His purpose. He is the only One who can give the grace and order the circumstances in that person's life that will establish in them a good character and usefulness in His sight. Men can be great and not be godly. But God raised Joseph up, to be godly first, and then great later. This is one of the primary lessons which God would teach all of us from the life of Joseph. What a mighty work of God it is, when he raises up a person to greatness because He has worked in him first to become godly. I hope that one of the reasons that you

have come here this morning is because you want to learn more about God and His ways in your own life, so that you might be more useful to Him. If this is the case, then let us ask ourselves this question this morning. How did God so order things in Joseph's life, so that His purpose of grace would be fulfilled; so that Joseph would be raised up to have a good character and greatness in God's sight? God did certain things here in the time that Joseph was a teen-ager that would most certainly lead Joseph to become godly and great. But when we hear of them, I think that we might be inclined to disagree, and to say that this could not possibly be the way to godliness and greatness, either one. But God providentially ordered some very significant things in Joseph's life in relation to his family that set the stage for what He would do for him and for them in later years. There are 3 things revealed to us in our text.

1st- He caused Joseph to be singled out by his father's love. (Verses 1-4)

"Jacob," it says in verse 1, "dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan." He was doing the will of God in this. He was following in the footsteps of his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham, living by faith in the land of promise and looking for that heavenly and spiritual inheritance which comes only from God and not from men. He was a peaceable man dwelling in tents. He was living by faith in the word of God to him. But there was someone else now, someone who had quietly stood by him and watched him in the trials of his faith. It was not Rachel, for she to his sorrow had died, but it was their oldest son. Jacob had loved Rachel so very much and so it should be expected that he would love Joseph because he was her son. But Jacob marveled that God had given to him as a son who was interested in the spiritual things that he was interested in. Truly this was a great gift to Jacob, perhaps the greatest gift in relation to his family. Out of all of his sons Jacob knew that he had only one with whom he was like-minded in spiritual things. That one was Joseph. Joseph had seen the terrible lusts and passions of sin raging in Simeon and Levi when they took matters of justice into their own hands and killed Shechem and Hamor and all the males of the city after their sister had been violated. They had persuaded all of the rest of his sons except one to enter into this evil deed with them and to plunder the city afterwards. But Joseph was not persuaded. Joseph agreed with the sentiments that Jacob uttered on his death bed many years later, which are found in Genesis 49: 5-7. "Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place." "Let not my soul enter their counsel; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox." "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel!" Joseph saw the treachery of his brothers and would not go with them to this crime. In chapter 49, verse 26, when Jacob gives Joseph his blessing he says to him, "The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." "They shall be upon the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him was separate from his brothers." Jacob comforts himself with these words on his death bed, but he saw the reality of these things long years before, when Joseph was 17.

Then there was the matter of Reuben. Reuben was Jacob's first-born son by Leah, the wife that was not loved as much as Rachel. Reuben would have inherited the blessings of the first born had he not committed an atrocious sin not long before the time of the story we are speaking about this morning. In Genesis 35: 21 it says, "Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder." "And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it." How could Jacob give his blessing to one who had done such a thing? He could not trust him and something must be done. If you turn over to 1 Chronicles 5: 1 and we will read what Jacob did. Here we find an extensive genealogy of those descended from Jacob in relation to their being settled in the land in the time of David. And something very important is said about

Reuben. "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel--he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's." We see from this that Jacob could not pass on to Reuben the covenant blessings of the Messiah to such an unstable, immoral man as Reuben was. In Genesis 49: 3 and 4, Jacob says on his death bed, "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power." "Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it--He went up to my couch." He was disqualified from the rights of the first-born and Joseph was appointed the first born in his place. Joseph is a type of Christ who was "Lion of the tribe of Judah." We will read about Judah's immorality in our next chapter in the book of Genesis. And he is not worthy of the covenant blessings of the Messiah either. But there was One who would conduct himself wisely and rightly in everything that he did. And He was from that tribe. He would do valiantly what pleased his Father in heaven. That was the Lord Jesus Christ who you should trust in this very day if you have not already done so. "The Father has loved the Son, and has given Him all things." Jacob and Joseph are a type and a picture of this greater relationship.

It is these incidences from the past, in which Joseph conducted himself wisely and in the interests of doing what was right, and thinking lovingly of what his father would have him to do, that endeared him so much to Jacob. Rachel was gone, but he still had Joseph. And he could say of Joseph as Paul said of Timothy in Philippians 2: 19 and following, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state." "For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state." "For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus." "But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served me in the gospel." This is how Joseph was thought of by Jacob; in just this same way. He was "the son of his old age." It was not so much that Jacob had Joseph when he was old, for Benjamin could much more appropriately be called by that name. Rather, it was that Joseph was such a great encouragement to Jacob in his old age by his sincerely looking out for the interests of dear and godly father. This also partially explains the meaning of the "coat of many colors." It is true that Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children, and because of this great love he favored him with a beautifully woven garment, "a tunic of many colors" to show to everyone how much he really cared for this particular son. But could it not have also been true that this was the garment by which he showed the rest of his sons the fact that he had appointed Joseph to the position of first-born and that he had also appointed him their supervisor in all the work that his sons did? James Montgomery Boice in his commentary says, "Most tunics were sleeveless and stopped at the knees; they were worn by working men." "A long-sleeved, tailored garment was worn by one who did not have to work." "So when Joseph appeared in this coat, his brothers recognized it as a sign of his father's choice of Joseph to be a manager, one preeminent over them." He also says, "This is also the explanation of the notation that Joseph brought Jacob 'a bad report about the brothers.'" (V. 2) "This has been construed as tattling, which we dislike." "But Joseph was not so much a tale-bearer as a truth-teller." "It was his responsibility to report to his aging father what was actually going on."

This leads me at this point to ask the question to the children and young people here this morning, whether you look out for your father's greatest interests if he is a godly man? Nothing is so great and so good a thing, personally to your earthly father, as to know that this will be your constant and fixed attitude. It is not only because you are submissive to his authority and you do what he asks when he asks you to do, but it is because you are trying to

please him by looking out to see how you can affirm and support and encourage the things that are dearest to his heart. The things that are the dearest to the heart of a godly man are seeing his children wanting to do what is good and right and true, and their being loving helpers to their parents and others. They want to know Christ and to walk with Christ. In 3rd John, verse 4, the apostle John says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his children because he was this way. But it was God who caused Joseph to be singled out by his father's love. When you become a Christian it is because you have been singled out by the Father's love, who loves you for Jesus' sake, for the sake of His perfect obedience and His willingness to suffer on your behalf.

And if Joseph was going to be singled out by his father's love, and distinguished for his good behavior, then it was also something which caused his brothers to hate him. "But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him." Let me apply this spiritually to you as Christians. When you become a Christian by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are going to be hated at times by those who do not know Christ. Part of that hatred is due to the idea that they have that God loves you more than He loves them; that God is a God who shows partiality by choosing to save some and not saving others. But gently let them know that no one will be excluded from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. They exclude themselves by their own hatred of God's way of salvation if they will not believe. God is not a God who shows partiality. The one who "fears God and works righteousness is accepted by Him." Every man is unworthy of the love and the salvation of Jesus Christ, even such a good man as Joseph. And all of the goodness and righteousness that we see in Joseph was the result of the grace of Christ at work in Him. Come to Jesus today and you will find such grace.

Then 2ndly- It was God who gave Joseph great dreams which told him of His future greatness. (Verses 5-8)

Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more," it says in verse 5. This seems to be something that was very unwise for Joseph to have done. Could he not see that his relating these dreams would be a very provoking thing to his brothers who already hated him? It seems like "casting his pearls before swine." And Jesus says in Matthew 7: 6, "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." But let's look at the dream and see if we can discern why these brothers hate Joseph so much. He says to them in a respectful tone of voice, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: "There we were binding sheaves the field." "Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed to my sheaf." "And his brothers said to him, 'Shall you indeed reign over us?'" "Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" "So they hated him more for his dreams and for his words." I believe personally that it was very unwise for Joseph to have revealed these dreams to his brethren. He could have related them to his father privately and asked him to give him his thoughts about them. He should have been humbled to think that such a thing could actually come to pass, and he could have kept the matter to himself and prayed over it. We read of no such thing. I believe that Joseph was a young man who really wanted to do great things for God. He was excited to know that there was a God and that He had personally revealed Himself to him in this dream. He thought that if God had given him such a wondrous dream that he should declare it. He saw it as a message which he should believe and proclaim to his family because it was from God. God would make him great and he would be raised to such a position in the family that his brothers would bow to him. I think he wanted to use the meaning of this dream to establish his desire; which was that he would be given greater respect in the minds of his brothers and

his father. He now believes that God has saved him for a great purpose and that this purpose will be to become such a ruler that his family would all bow to him. He declares it to his brothers because he so much believes in the certainty of what God has shown him. Surely there is a great deal of naiveté in this. He does not have the authority of a "Thus saith the Lord," in this dream. It is not a revelatory dream in the sense of others being bound to receive it. It was not something that his brothers must believe because it was something from God to them. It was a prophetic dream, but the details of fulfillment, of how this could come to pass, were not made known to him. His brothers thought him presumptuous and proud.

This is something that each of here today should consider, and especially our young people; in terms of what you believe that God will do with you in your life. You may sense that God has given you great gifts and abilities. Your parents and other people may be very pleased with your godly character and have great hopes for your future. As you pray, you may sense that God is calling you to some great work or to some position of authority where others could greatly benefit from the things that you will do. And yet, do you see it from this text; even such a great and godly young person as Joseph was; he had a great need to understand the truth of Proverbs 15: 33. "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor comes humility." And Proverbs 25: 27 which says, "It is not good to eat much honey; so to seek one's own glory is not glory." Joseph was looking for greater respect from his brothers. He was hoping that they would respect the God that had given him the dream. Instead he found their hearts and their words rising against him in indignation. "Shall you indeed reign over us?" "Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" "So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words." Is it wrong to share your dreams? No, it is not, but learn to share them in the right way. The right way is humility and the fear of the Lord. It is more important to cultivate the secret life of prayer and waiting upon God, than in trying to impress yourself or others with your own greatness. Proverbs chapter 2, verse 1 and following says, "My son, if you will receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly." Joseph was going to have to face some very difficult days ahead while he proved the truth of these verses. But God and the wisdom that He alone could give, would become even more precious to him through it.

Perhaps, my friend, you have come to understand that there are many people in this world who have a problem with authority, even as Joseph's brothers did. They do not like the idea of anyone having authority over them in any sense. They do not like the authority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They do not "want this man to rule over them." I think that Joseph's brothers had a problem with submitting to their father's authority. The matter of their killing Shechem and Hamor and the others proves this. They were their own authority and certainly no young "dreamer," as they later would call Joseph, is going to rule over them, and have dominion over them. But God will use their opposition to Joseph's dreams to fulfill them. He would indeed rule over them after they sold him as slave to those who were going down to Egypt. He would rise and become everything that he dreamed that he would be. But many difficult years lay ahead.

Finally in this text we see that God providentially withheld from others in the family the real interpretation of Joseph's dreams for a long time.

(Verses 9-11)

We must ask ourselves, Why did God choose to reveal these dreams to Joseph at this time when he was young and naïve and most vulnerable to the temptation of pride and selfish ambition? I think that it was in order to lift up his heart in the joy of what He would make him by His grace. It was also to show him his weakness and his sinfulness by nature. But it was also to accomplish His great purpose of how He would bring Joseph down to Egypt. The way that this would be accomplished would be by the instrumentality of the hatred of his brothers who hated him for his dreams as much as his words. They were intending to kill him, but God would prevent them. We are going to see, as we go through the story of Joseph, that he is in many ways a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not," it says in John 1: 11. "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." "And we hid, as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we did not esteem Him," it says in Isaiah 53: 3. This was the same lesson that Joseph had to learn in being taught the lessons of what it would mean to be godly and what it would mean to be great. But he would learn them well and turn out to be one of the greatest types of Christ in all of the Old Testament Scriptures. You see, the Lord Jesus when He came to this earth came on a mission of mercy and compassion, but His mission, the purpose for which He came as Savior and Lord was rejected by those who should have received it. The Lord Jesus was hated, despised, and rejected by his brethren, the Jews. They hated him for all that He said that He was and all that He said that He would become. And they did succeed in falsely accusing Him and putting Him to death. But God raised Him from the dead, and has crowned Him with glory and honor; the fulfillment of His great purpose so that many sinners could be saved. Are you one of those for whom Christ died? If you will come to Him in faith and receive Him in His offices what He came to do and to be; that is Savior and Lord, then you shall know the forgiveness of your sins and deliverance from sins bondage.

The interpretation, the true interpretation of Joseph's dream was withheld from Jacob and his sons for a number of years so that God's purposes could be fulfilled in every way with regard to both Joseph and them, his family. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter." But it is our glory to search it out. If you are perplexed about the way that God has led you in your Christian life; you don't understand the things that He has providentially ordered concerning you, or others in your family, remember to pray and to ask God for wisdom. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting.." "Lord, why am I like this?" you ask. And He will show you what you need to do to repent of your sins and to learn His ways, and to walk in them. You will learn this all because of our Joseph, the Lord Jesus Christ, died so that you could be loved by the Father. He who is now seated at the right hand of the Father, ever lives to make intercession for you. Come to Him and you will find the answers. May He single you out in His love today.