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God Meant it for Good

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Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Once again we continue our pilgrimage through the land of living legends. We are coming to the final pages of the final chapter of the extraordinary life of a man named Joseph. For seven lessons, we have walked alongside this man of God. We have seen him as the favorite son. We have seen him as the dreamer, as one despised by his brothers, as an innocent captive, as the slave of an executioner, as a faithful man on the job, a faithful man under temptation, a faithful man in a dungeon, and a humble man before Pharaoh, as he quietly acknowledged, "It is not in me."

When last we left Joseph, we witnessed the faithful slave becoming at last the exalted one. His brothers, who thought they had sent him away forever, now bow before him and call him "lord". We saw in the last lesson how these brothers passed through seven tests on their road to repentance. We then saw Joseph's response to their repentance, and recognized that it represents a picture of how God responds when we repent. We saw the Father weeping. We saw the Father waiting. We saw the Father reveal Himself. We saw the Father restore those who came to Him in repentance. We indeed are left to marvel at the love of a God who waits, and at the mercy of the God who forgives.

This lesson unfolds the happy years of Joseph's life as the toil, the misunderstandings, the persecutions, the testings now have developed a man of God and thus given way to a life of victory. We see the man who managed to be faithful when unjustly cast into prison become the kind of man who can rule a nation. We see the man who humbly made no claim to greatness when given his big chance. That kind of man can be trusted to now forgive those who wronged him, who seemingly wasted years of his life.

These were not, however, wasted years. These were years of preparation for greatness. They were years of learning how to be faithful when those in whom he placed his trust, proved unfaithful. He was learning to be patient as the days of waiting

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turned to months, the months turned to years. He was learning to come to the end of himself, to cast aside his dreams of greatness so that the One who is greatness could make his dreams come true. These are the years through which a man without God can find no purpose. Days of endless defeat. Days, seemingly endless days, with no recognition. Days so common to some of us. But those days viewed from the eyes of a sovereign God are the “good” days. From these days will ultimately issue forth the birth of character, the character of the Living God. Like Joseph, we will be amazed at what our God can do.

We begin our journey through these final pages of Joseph’s life by taking a look at the story itself. As we have these past six lessons, we will be looking through the story to the foreshadowing of the Coming One, even the Lord Jesus Himself. We were in the opening verses of Genesis 45 when the curtain came down in our last study. Judah had just offered to remain with Joseph as a slave in place of his brother Benjamin, rather than go home without him and break his father’s heart. Finally, Joseph could control his emotions no more. He dismissed all of his servants so that no one remained in the room but Joseph and his eleven brothers. He then told them who he really was. Now listen to the dialogue:

And he wept so loudly: and that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph! Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed [troubled] at his presence.

Then Joseph said unto his brothers, “Please come closer to me.” And they came closer. And he said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

And now be not be grieved nor angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all of the land of Egypt.

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Hurry and go up to my father, and say unto him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, do not delay.

And you shall live in the land of Goshen, and shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have.

There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, lest you and your household and all that you have be impoverished.'"

And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you.

Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here."

Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck.

And he kissed all of his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

(Genesis 45:2-15 NAS)

Never in history has there been a more moving scene than this. Here is the exalted one weeping uncontrollably at the sight of his own people, the very people who betrayed him and sold him for a few pieces of silver. He reveals himself in verse 4 to be the very same one they had betrayed. Then in verses 5-8 he makes three of the most amazing statements ever made to guilty men. We will look at them a little later in this lesson, but basically he says this, "Don't be grieved over the past, and don't become bitter with yourselves over what you have done. There was a purpose deeper than you understood and a God behind that purpose greater than you have ever known." Once again, Joseph simply says, "Behold, my God."

In verses 9-15 we see a beautiful painting on the canvas of Joseph's experience from which emerges in breathtaking color, a portrait of Jesus Christ. Look at these verses, and as you do, look at Jesus. In verse 10, he promises *intimate fellowship* as he says, "You shall be near me, you and your children and your grandchildren to come." In verse 11, he promises *infinite provisions* in the hard years. "There I will provide for you lest you and your household be impoverished." Then, see Jesus again as Joseph promises to *reveal himself through his word*, "Behold,

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your eyes see that it is my mouth that is speaking to you.” Then, in verse 13 he charges them with the *responsibility to go back and tell* what they have seen. With urgency, he adds, “Hurry.” Then, in verses 14-15, again he reveals himself to be the fountain of love, and we see fellowship restored. He wept, he kissed them, and afterwards they talked with him and had fellowship.

Joseph represents the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe Pharaoh, the one who exalted Joseph and gave him a name which was above every name, represents God the Father in this picture. As Jesus proclaimed in John 17, the Father delights to receive those that the Son has received.

Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh’s house that Joseph’s brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants.

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Say to your brothers, ‘Do this: load your beasts and go to the land of Canaan,

‘And take your father and your households and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you shall eat the fat of the land.’ (Genesis 45:16-18 NAS)

‘And do not concern yourselves with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”

To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments.

And to his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things in Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey.

So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said this to them, “Do not quarrel on the journey.”

Then they went up from Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. (Genesis 45:20-25 NAS)

Now I believe Jacob and the brothers in this story represent those to whom we are to go with the message. Keep that in mind as we go on.

And they told their father saying, “Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” But he [Jacob] was stunned, for he did not believe them.

When they told him of all the words that Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph

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had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. Then Israel said, "It is enough; my son Joseph is alive. I will go and see him before I die."

(Genesis 45:26,27 NAS)

So remember as you view this scene to see Joseph representing the Lord Jesus, God's precious son, Pharaoh representing God the Father, and Jacob as those to whom the Word is being sent by Joseph's brothers. In this passage, we see God's compassion, His promise and His wisdom. First he says to them "Go back now where you came from with the news. Tell them to come to me where they can eat and live. There is no need to collect what you have, all you need is mine to give." Then he sends the forgiven ones back with a message, "Tell them I am alive." And so they did.

Now they didn't meet with instant success. At first Jacob didn't believe them. But, they told him the words of Joseph and showed him the provisions of Joseph and his spirit was revived. He cried out, "He is alive!" There is the message. That is what you and I are to do.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
(1 John 1:3)

That is the message. We who have been received and restored are the messengers. But he gives them this penetrating warning as they departed: "Listen, do not quarrel on the journey." Can't you just hear Jesus in John 17, "*Oh, Father, make them one as We are one.*" So the messengers were sent with the message, "Come to Him, He is alive!" But they were admonished not to be sidetracked from their mission by petty disagreements or jealousy along the way. Don't you see, they had all been forgiven. In the light of that experience, what could come between them that was important enough to overshadow the reality of the one thing they had in common? They were forgiven and he was alive.

Christians, don't you see that Satan's ploy from the foundation of time has been to take the believer's eyes off of who God is and what God has done? He wants to lock us up in endless disputes, frustrated with our differences instead of joined in unity at the Cross. We have a mission. We have a message. "He is alive and I'm forgiven," as the song says, "Heaven's gates are open wide. He is alive." Nothing, no pettiness, no greedy desire to be right

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must ever deter us from the primary mission or ever detract us from the primary message. It doesn't mean that there wouldn't be differences between the brothers. Nor does it mean they are to compromise their convictions by pretending that the differences don't exist. But it does mean that as we recognize our differences that we determine not to let our differences destroy our message. That is the one thing we have in common. Imagine the power that would be unleashed in this world and this country today through the community of evangelical Christians if we were to fully grasp this principle.

So Jacob said, "I will go." He set out at the age of 130 on a long journey to Egypt. No one said it would be an easy journey, but he had been given provisions for all he would need along the way. He had been promised joy unspeakable. He was promised a face-to-face reunion with the beloved son when his journey was done. What a portrait of the Christian pilgrimage on earth. Here we find Jacob's journey marked now with the presence of God along the way, just as ours is. Let's look at chapter 46:1:

So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."

And God said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.

"I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."

(Genesis 46:1-4 NAS)

Even the excitement of the trip did not deter Jacob from spending time with God. God called Jacob by name as Jacob worshipped, and Jacob answered, "Here I am." God replied, "I AM God. Don't be afraid, this trip is necessary. You are not going alone, Jacob. I am going with you. I will give you greatness there and when the time is right, (and only then) will the loving son close your eyes and I will see that you return home safely forever." So Jacob, now having been assured by God of His presence, His provisions, and His promise, gathers together his children and his grand-children, seventy in all, and begins the journey of a lifetime. It is a journey filled with excitement and hope.

We look next at Judah. Judah was one of the brothers and

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a type of the Holy Spirit. He it was, you remember, who had interceded on Jacob's behalf in chapter 44. Now in chapter 46:28 he reveals another facet of the Spirit's life.

Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out the way before him to Goshen; (Genesis 46:28a NAS)

There it is. First, the Spirit intercedes with groaning that cannot be uttered, and then He points the way before us to come to the Son. Let's read on in verse 29, and see another beautiful picture:

And Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck for a long time.

Then Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive."

And Joseph said to his brother and his father's household, "I will go up to tell Pharaoh and say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me;

And the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.'

"And it shall come about when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'

That you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth until now, both we and our fathers,' that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians." (Genesis 46:29-34 NAS)

So Judah, the intercessor, becomes Judah, the guide, called alongside to point the way. Joseph, the son, comes to meet the father in his chariot and there ensues a long time of joyful reunion. Oh, the grand reunion that will one day be ours, perhaps soon. We will hear more about that in a moment, but here Jacob, representing us, sees that the son lives and so he is ready to die. So are we. But it was not time to die, for a time of shepherding must come first. The world may not understand the role of the shepherd, but the Shepherd, the Good One, will go before you and make the way. So in chapter 47:3, five of the brothers were presented to the king.

Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" So they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers."

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And they said to Pharaoh, “We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants’ flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, therefore, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen.”

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and brothers have come to you.

“The land of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land, and let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know any capable men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock.”

Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How many years have you lived?”

So Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, nor have they attained the years that my fathers lived during the years of their sojourning.”

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from his presence.

So Joseph settled his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered.

And Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food, according to their little ones

(Genesis 47:3-12 NAS)

So Pharaoh, a type of God, accepts those who come simply because they belong to the Son. He says, “I will give you the best I have. You are to select capable men to lead my flock.” We see this as pastors and elders and deacons were to be called out years later to shepherd the flock of God. Then the son presents those who have come to the King through Himself. Those who come bring praise and believe the King. Their confession was simple. They were asked, “What kind of life have you had up until now?” They answered, “Few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, and I have not yet attained the age of my fathers.” But the son settles them and gives to them a possession and inheritance and provides them all the food they or their children could ever need.

Now we see the scene shift. In the next chapter, we see the Egyptians, now struggling to stay alive in the midst of the

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drought. Here we have another picture. This picture is the one of the Christian in the times of drought and testing, which lead him to a deeper walk with God.

If we were to condense the story, it would go like this: All of the food in the people's houses was running out. They had no food apart from Joseph. So now that they are out of money, Joseph asks them to come back and give him their livestock. In exchange for their livestock, he gave them more food. That food ran out and they came to him again. This time they had no money or livestock. Joseph told them to give him their land and he would feed them continually. So the people gave Joseph their land. He gave them back the right to use the land and the seed with which to sow it. When the crop came up, they were instructed to give twenty percent to Pharaoh and they could keep the eighty percent. In verse 25 we see their response:

So they said, "You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves."

(Genesis 47:25 NAS)

So what unfolds here is really a portrait of the Christian in various stages of his coming to understand the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The pressures come. We find ourselves inadequate to face those pressures. We cry out to the Lord. Quietly He says, "Give to Me what once sustained you and I will meet your needs." So we give it to Him and He sustains us. A deeper need arises and we cry out, "God there is nothing left." So softly God says, "That is what I have waited for. Now give me title to all you have and I will give you back the privilege of using it all, plus the seed of the Word to make it fruitful." We cry, "You have saved our lives, we will be Your servants forever." We then begin to enter into the sheer freedom of harvesting the crop of the Master's land from the Master's seed and thus for the Master's glory. Do you see the picture?

Then chapter 47 ends with Jacob, now one hundred and forty-seven years old, expecting to die, and beseeching his son, "When I die, must I remain here? Promise me that you will take me home." So the son promises that when death comes, he will immediately return to the father's house. Here is another beautiful portrait of Christ in us.

Now Joseph brings his two boys, Ephraim and Manasseh to Jacob. The old man, who now is virtually blind, blesses the boys. Crossing his hands, he blesses Ephraim, the younger,

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rather than the firstborn. Thus, he duplicates the picture of another blind and dying saint a generation before. Once again, this leaves upon the history of man the indelible impression of the sovereignty of God. Joseph rebukes his father in verse 18 for blessing the wrong boy. In verse 19, Jacob replied, "I know, my son, I know. The eldest shall also become a people and he shall be great, but his younger brother shall be greater than he and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations." So we see a picture here of the younger Gentile son, the church, who, at least for a season, would be God's primary instrument of faith until the church again is gone and God turns again to Israel.

In chapter 49, which we will omit in this lesson, Jacob prophesies, as he is dying, of the fate of each of his sons, once again revealing the perfect foreknowledge of an omniscient God. Chapter 49 ends as Jacob takes his last breath and dies.

I know this lesson covers a lot of ground, but please bear with me. For now we come to the exciting conclusion of Jacob's life and Joseph's life. As chapter 50 begins, Joseph embalms Jacob, seeks Pharaoh's permission and takes his father home as requested. But the brothers are now stricken with fear. We read in chapter 50,

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!"

So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died saying,

"Thus you shall say to Joseph, Please forgive, I beg you, the transgressions of your brothers for their sin, for they did you wrong. And now, please forgive their transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants."

But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?"

"And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and for your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

(Genesis 50:15-21 NAS)

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Now if you are a Christian, and you can't quite forgive yourself for things you did before you repented and came to the Son, you might want to memorize Genesis 50: 17-21. Here is one of the most comforting passages in all of Scripture. It shows that God weeps when we still live in fear over sin that He has long since forgotten and that He has long since woven, even as transgressions, into the fabric of His sovereignty. His answer to us is, "Don't be afraid. I will provide for you." He also comforts us and speaks kindly to us.

So Genesis 50 ends with the death of Joseph. His life was shorter than most, thirty-seven years shorter than his dad, just as Jesus' life was short. Yet he had fulfilled his purpose even as Jesus had. He was buried in Egypt, but though he died, you know he can't really die because he lives on in the living legends of Scripture. So there we have the story. Doesn't the Messiah literally breathe through every word, saying, "I am alive and I am your Joseph"? But as we see the Messiah in the story, we also need to see the message in the story. I believe there is a two-fold message for everyone who names the name of Jesus.

The first message is a message of ultimate victory. It says this: There is coming a day in God's plan for each of us, a grand reunion when we will be united with our Joseph forever and all the brothers will gather around the throne and have sweet fellowship with the Son and with each other forever. If we really get a grasp on that, it doesn't really matter how bad things get on planet earth. They may deteriorate. They may explode with all the fury of the ages in the next few years. But it really doesn't matter, and it really doesn't matter how deep the wounds are that this life inflicts upon us. The pain is real, *but soon it will be over*. As eternity begins its endless flight of joy, those brief moments of pain will seem as but seconds in the flashback of life's memories. Pay no attention to Satan who tells you to focus on those hours of grief, for it will soon be done, my friend. Oh, the reunion that lies ahead. It goes something like this:

THERE'S A GRAND REUNION COMING

There's a grand reunion coming
When with all the saints gone by,
We'll behold the Master's glory
And the Vict'ry shout we'll cry.

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We'll see seas of happy faces
In a sky devoid of rain,
We'll behold a world of triumph
Now devoid of death and pain.

There's a grand reunion coming;
We'll see Moses, Paul and James,
We'll sit down by Father Abraham
And call them by their names.

We'll learn from them to worship
Oh, what power they can impart!
Why, we can spend an age or two
Just learning, heart to heart.

There's a grand reunion coming!
All our loved ones in the Lord,
Will be joined as one with open arms
To gather 'round His Word.

We'll hear choruses of love and joy,
We'll sing Amazing Grace;
And with all the saints who've ever lived,
We'll gaze upon His face!

Our God's planned a happy ending
So, take heart through every trial.
There's a grand reunion Coming
That will make it all worthwhile.

Stop and ask yourself, "How excited am I at the prospect of His coming?" Are you so wrapped up in all this life affords that the thought of leaving it brings you grief rather than joy? When you pray, do you envision glory and long for that moment when you will see Him face-to-face? Do you really have a grasp on that grand reunion where all the saints of the ages past and all of our loved ones gone before us will join together with us in one great chorus of victory? If not, you are missing something. You are missing part of the real joy of walking with God. It isn't that we lose the joy of our day to day fellowship here on this earth, but it ought to intensify our longing to be with Him. Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face-to-face. Now we know in part, then we shall know even as also we are known. Every moment we spend in His presence ought to cause us to long for that moment when there will be nothing between us. There will be no sin, no sin nature, just us and God. If you don't have that

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kind of heavenly hunger, maybe it is time to ask God to place in your heart a healthy desire for heaven. Paul had it and we ought to have it.

We can learn one more lesson as well. That is the lesson of the sovereignty of God. I know that we have touched on it in Joseph's life from start to finish. It has cropped up again and again in all the living legends who have passed through our lives in the last few months. But nowhere in Scripture does God more definitively express His total control over the circumstances of life than He does in these last few chapters of Genesis. To untrained eyes, it appeared that the greedy acts of ruthless men had all but destroyed the life of His chosen one. But now we see that God was actually using them and what they did to accomplish His purpose and to bring about His glory. Now listen again:

And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves that you sold me here, (you didn't do it), God sent me before you to preserve life. (Genesis 45:5)

Here he deals with the guilt problem again of those who can't forgive themselves for the past. Then in verse 7 he says,

And God sent me before you for a purpose, to preserve a remnant in the earth and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

Now therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God, and He has made me what I need to be. (Genesis 45:7,8)

God is saying that He knew the brothers would sell Joseph and he would end up in Egypt, so He engineered a plan to make it the best thing that ever happened to Joseph.

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid, as for you, you did mean evil unto me. You were wrong, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result to preserve many people alive." (Genesis 50:19)

In other words Joseph says, "Satan's plan was to destroy. God turned it around and made it into joy."

"So don't be afraid, I will provide for you." So Joseph comforted them and he spoke kindly to them.

(Genesis 50:21)

Here is the heart of a sovereign God as He comforts those who do wrong. We also hear the voice of a sovereign God as He speaks kindly to us. "You know the thoughts I have toward you," saith the Lord, "thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an

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expected end.” God says that we mustn’t be bitter over our past or bitter over those in our past who seemed so to have used us or hurt us. God was there, and He says to receive them and forgive them because He used them to accomplish His purposes in our lives in order to make us into men and women He could use. There are some of you who have people and incidents in your past that continually rise up and create a bitter spirit. You may say, “If only that had not happened in my life. If only that person hadn’t come into my life. If only I hadn’t made that choice in my life.”

God is saying, “I have been there all the time. I knew that would happen. I took that choice and I took that person and I took that incident and engineered it for your good and for My glory. Relax.” He speaks kindly to us. It isn’t that God designs evil, it is simply that God has designs on that evil to turn it into good. Therefore, every device of Satan, every so-called tragedy, every so-called “mistake of man” is only clay in the hands of a sovereign God that becomes part of a building block for His ultimate goal: “to save many people and bring them alive”.

Isn’t that the master blow to Satan? Not only is Satan faced with ultimate defeat, but meanwhile, he faces continual defeat at the hands of the very circumstances he so devises to destroy. Satan means it for evil. A broken marriage. An untimely death. The physical affliction. The unnecessary rejection. Satan cunningly fuses those events as the stroke of death to a life of faith. All you may see are the jagged edges of broken lives, but God in heaven is taking those broken pieces and rearranging them into prisms that reflect His light from every direction so that all can see His glory. When viewed from His vantage point, they blend into the picture of the whole of His plan and produce for a searching world, a giant, four dimensional perfectly colored portrait of Jesus Christ.

Is there a better example than the Master Himself? Did not that cross seem to be the untimely end of everything He seemed destined to accomplish?

Satan wrung his hand with glee
Crying out in victory,
“Now at last my job is done,
I have crucified God’s son.”

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But with heaven's power unfurled,
God brought life to all the world,
"It is finished!" thundered down,
And a cross became a crown.

Do you see the application in your own life? The sovereign hand of a God of love has a plan for you. Satan may have been allowed to seemingly interrupt that plan by casting you into that dungeon experience of life. You may have even cried out, "What hope is left?" My friend, Satan meant evil unto you, but God meant it for good. Through it, He can change you, perhaps even exalt you, and certainly use you for His glory. Now we can answer Satan's question once and for all.

WHAT HOPE IS LEFT?

"What hope is left?" In pain they cried,
"For lo our King's been crucified."
"What hope is left? How can this be?
The Son of God hangs on a tree."

How could a God of love and power,
Who tasted death within that hour;
Ever now fulfill His plan,
And thus redeem His fallen man?

Had not the plan of ages failed?
Were not the victors, those who railed
Beneath that rugged Roman tree
And thus proclaimed God's death decree?

No, that cross was God-designed
Though earth's weak vision cannot find
Any blessing in a cross,
We cry, "What good could come to us?"

But look, the message comes instead,
The Son has risen from the dead.
Could this hour of triumph be,
Had not He climbed that Roman tree?

Could Satan's plans, bent to destroy,
Bring to us our greatest joy?
Yea, from the death blow of his spear,
God dispelled our every fear.

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Now, in triumph, from that tomb
Life springs forth from God's own womb.
He took Satan's mad design;
Turned it into grace sublime.

So it was with Joseph, too,
Brothers evil sought to do.
Satan gave it all he could;
God still turned it into good.

So it is within your life;
All the sadness, all the strife;
All the failures yet untold;
In those ashes, God finds gold.

Then, those ashes, cleansed above,
God transforms to vials of love.
He pours them on life's soil and then
Uses it to transform men.

Satan's evil, cunning plan
Is turned around by God's own hand,
And all the blackness of that hour,
Now reveals God's greatest power.

So, there is cause to pause today
And praise our God that, in His way,
All the things we so despise
He turns to good before our eyes.

"What hope is left?" In pain they cried,
"For lo, our King's been crucified."
All hope, all power, all victory, too,
And He will do the same for you.

That is our final message from Joseph. It is not that God desires that tragedy to mar your life. But it is that we, living in a world now twisted and distorted by sin, find the impact of that world with death, disease, disappointments, others' mistakes, and our sins, seems bent to destroy the handiwork of God. But God, knowing what was to take place, has chosen to weave each of those products of a world of sin perfectly into the pattern of your life to produce a quality of life beyond understanding and to bring you into places where few can go. With every blow, Satan thinks he has thwarted God's design. What a fool! Rather, he has unknowingly and unwittingly cooperated with God in making

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your life more beautiful. He meant evil, but God meant it for good that through your life, even through the scars of your life, He might bring many people to *real* life. We thank you, Joseph, for the message of your life. You are truly one of “God’s Living Legends”.

For Focus and Application

1- As we come to the conclusion of our study of Joseph, *which of God’s attributes have been most evident?* In what ways have you been able to identify with Joseph? In what ways has it been difficult to identify with Joseph?

2- How does Genesis 45:5-7 reconcile the sovereignty of God and the justice of God?

3- Can you imagine how Jacob felt when these boys returned and told him Joseph was still alive? Think about how we tend to try to disbelieve or explain away things that God does that are beyond our comprehension. Once he realized it was true, he wasted no time going to his son. Think of what that journey must have been like for Jacob.

4- Why do you think it was necessary for Joseph to caution his brothers: “Do not quarrel on the journey”? Can you make personal application to your journey back to the Son’s home in heaven?

5- What was so interesting about Jacob’s priorities in Genesis 46:1-4? Would you have taken time to stop and worship? Do you?

6- Explain the ways in which Judah typified the Holy Spirit in Genesis 46:28-34.

7- These men were Jews and they were shepherds, yet Pharaoh took them in and made them honored guests. How is this likened to how the Father receives us when we come in the name of the Son?

8- Why do you think the brothers panicked when Jacob died? How did God use their faithlessness?

9- Memorize Genesis 50:20. It is one of the most beautiful evidences of God’s sovereignty in all of Scripture.

10- Do you ever think seriously about the wonderful reunion that awaits us and our loved ones who have died in Christ? Do you tend to overlook it because it seems difficult to imagine?

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Stop right now and visualize that grand reunion that will one day be ours. Then thank God for the beauty of that glorious promise.

11- God's sovereignty is at the heart of all of Joseph's life. It is difficult to grasp for it is so contrary to the mind of man. Take a week and praise God all week for His sovereign plan; that He "sets up one and puts down another". (Psalm 75) Praise Him that because He is sovereign, *we can rest*.

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