

JOSEPH'S THRONE

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**GEN. 37:2-4, 39, 41:37-45,
AND PSALM 105:17-22**

The first book of the Bible is a book of biographies because our God is interested in man. But the man that he wants is not just any man; it must be a man after his own heart. In Genesis we find the lives of eight persons presented to us in whom God did some work. Out of God's working, we find the man after God's own heart. As God works in each of their lives, something begins to be manifested in and through them, certain signs as trademarks upon each one of them. And when you gather all these together you find the man that will satisfy God's own heart.

Now we come to the last one, Joseph. As a matter of fact, Joseph is the consummation, the summing up all that God had done in the men before him. The symbol of Joseph's life is the throne—Joseph's throne. In the very beginning this was God's purpose. When God created man, He created man in His image. And after he was created, God said to man, "You shall have dominion." Image and dominion. Image refers to life; dominion refers to the manifestation, the outworking of life or the function of life. Unfortunately, man lost the image and therefore he lost his dominion. But God worked in these men until finally He had Joseph. The life of Joseph is a throne life—dominion, power, authority, rule—because the image of God, the image of His Son had been restored.

In I Peter 2:9 it says that we

who believe in the Lord Jesus are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession to declare the excellency of the One who has delivered us out of darkness into His marvelous light. And Revelation 5 says that we are redeemed unto God by the blood, out of every nation, every tribe, every tongue, every people, and every tribe. And He has made us kings and priests unto God. So we who have believed in the Lord Jesus are not only redeemed by the precious blood, having our sins forgiven, but we have been made kings and priests. In other words, we all have royal blood in us. We are born again to be kings unto God; of course not kings in the sense of the world, but kings before God. We are destined to rule. A throne life is in us. However, in order to rule, we need strict training. No one can sit on the throne, even if he is born of the royal family, if he is not strictly trained. It is true, when one is born of the royal family as the successor to the throne, he is destined to rule; but he cannot rule if he himself has never been disciplined, if he himself has never been trained. As a matter of fact, the training of a king is stricter, more severe, more disciplined than the training of any other profession.

When we were in college, we thought that it was very hard. But think of the training of a king or a queen, what he or she must go through in order to be prepared to sit upon the throne! And the same thing is true spiritually. We are born into the king's royal family. We are all successors to the throne. We have the blue blood within us. Because of this, God

has to train us very severely. Otherwise, we are not fit to rule. And this is what you see in the life of Joseph. Because Joseph was destined to rule, therefore God put him through crucible after crucible of suffering in order that he might be fit to sit next to Pharaoh.

JOSEPH IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE

In Genesis 30 you find that Rachel, Joseph's mother, was barren; therefore Joseph was not born naturally, as were the other sons of Jacob. Joseph was born supernaturally natural. Why? The Bible says, "God remembered Rachel." God answered her prayer. God opened up her womb and Joseph was born. Joseph was born as a result of the mercy of God and of the prayer of his mother. Because he was born of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, and he was born in Jacob's old age, of course, Jacob loved Joseph more than all the other sons. But this was only the natural reason. Over and above this natural reason, there must be something else—Joseph had such character, an honorable character that made his father love him more than his brothers. He was born out of the favored wife of Jacob. He was born in Jacob's old age. He was born supernaturally naturally, and yet, this boy developed a noble character that would appeal to any father on earth. Because of this, Jacob made him a vest of many colors. Now a vest of many colors is also a vest with sleeves. It is a symbol of honor. And we are told that it is also a sign of the birthright of the firstborn.

In the old days, the firstborn did not necessarily get the birthright of the firstborn. The father could decide who among his sons would have the birthright of the firstborn. And the birthright of the firstborn was not only that he would have a double portion of the inheritance, but that he would succeed his father as the priest of the family. He would continue in the covenant that God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So Jacob, Israel, made a vest of many colors and put it on Joseph. In other words, Jacob chose Joseph to be the firstborn, and because of this, his brethren hated him. They would not speak anything good to him because he was favored by his father.

Uncompromising

Now, how good was Joseph? The Bible said that when he was seventeen years old, he tended the sheep with his brethren and his brethren were very evil. He reported the evil deeds of the brethren to the father. Well, you might say that he caused it; but no, he was concerned. Even though he was the favored son of the father, even though he was a teenager and in bad company, he was not spoiled. A teenager likes to belong. It is probably the natural tendency to try to belong to a group, to identify yourself with your companions. In order to do that you compromise; that is the natural thing to do. But this young man, seventeen years old, was with his brethren who were older than him and they were evil. Here was a young boy who would not compromise. He wanted to belong and yet he

would not compromise. Instead of that, he was so concerned for the well being of his brethren that he reported them to the father, not as a sign of gossiping, but hopefully that they might be corrected.

Innocent

Joseph was very innocent. He dreamed dreams that God gave him. He was not a dreamer, but God gave him dreams. God showed him his destiny, and he was so innocent that he told his brethren about it. His brethren hated him even before he dreamed. Now he dreamed that his sheaf stood up and the other eleven sheaves surrounded him and bowed to him. When his brethren heard it, they hated him even more. And they said, "Will we bow to you?" But he was innocent; he was not cunning. Joseph dreamed again and he told his dream again to his father and to his brethren. He dreamed that the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to him. Even the father said, "Now do not say that." But the father kept it in his heart.

Faithful and Obedient

Joseph was so innocent, so pure, even though his brethren hated him and would not say anything good to him. When his father said, "Joseph, go and see whether your brethren are well," Joseph could very well have said, "Father, I cannot go. They hate me." No, he was obedient to his father. Even knowing that his brethren hated him, and yet he went. When he could not find them, surely that was an opportunity to come back and

say, "Father I could not find them." But no, he persisted until he found them in Dothan. In other words, he was faithful. Though his brethren hated him, yet he loved them. He had noble character. And with such character, no wonder his father loved him more than all the other brothers.

Even in his father's house, spiritually speaking, Joseph sat upon the throne. In other words, he was above the hatred of his brethren, he was above even the favor of his father, because he was not spoiled. He loved his brethren; he honored and respected his father. He was a man upon the throne.

Are we born supernaturally? Or are we just born naturally? If a person is born once, he will die twice. If a person is born twice, he will never die. If you are only born once, that is naturally; you are born into this world. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. You will die twice because the Bible says it is appointed that all men should die and after death, judgment. And what is the result of judgment? The second death. But if you are born twice—not only born by your parents, but you are also born supernaturally by the Spirit of God—then you will never die. Why? Because even when this body dies, the Scripture says that it is sleep. It is because the sting of death is already gone and the sting of death is sin. What makes death so terrible? It is sin. You cannot afford to die, because if you die, you know what will happen. But thank God, we who are born again have no fear of death because the sting of death is gone. That is just a sleep and we

will wake up and we will be like Him. Oh glorious!

Are we not supernaturally born? Surely we are. It is the mercy of God that we are born again, but it is not because we are better than anybody else. Very possibly you are saved, born again, because someone has been praying for you. It is through the travail of some and because God remembers, that you are born again, you are saved. If you are saved, you are destined to rule. You have the royal blood in you. You are to rule and reign with Christ. But remember, you have to be trained. You must have a character suitable to sit on the throne. Character must be developed in you that makes you fit to rule. If you have a wrong character on the throne, woe to the nation! So God must not only give you a kingly life, but that kingly life has to be developed. God has given you Christ-life, but the Christ-life has to be developed to be like Christ, so that which characterized Christ will characterize you. And only then are you fit to sit on the throne and reign with Christ forever.

Unfortunately, even though many believers have the kingly life in them, that life is never developed. On the contrary, they still walk according to their flesh. They imitate the behavior of the worldly people. They want to belong so they compromise. If that is the case, they will lose the birthright of the firstborn. So Joseph sat on the throne in his father's house.

JOSEPH IN THE PIT

When Joseph came to Dothan,

his brethren saw him coming and said, "That dreamer has come. Let's see whether his dream will come true. Let's kill him." So they seized upon him, and the first thing they did was to strip off his vest of many colors because that was the thing that they really hated. Then Reuben said, "Don't kill him. Put him in that pit." Now Reuben was thinking that afterwards he could save him.

They put Joseph in the pit and his brethren sat down and ate. Now think of that! When the young brother was in the pit, agonizing, weeping, crying out, these brethren had the heart to sit down and eat. How could they swallow? But while they were eating, a company of Ishmaelites were passing by. They were merchants on their way to Egypt. Then one brother, Judah, suggested, "What's the good of killing our brother? Why not sell him to these men. At least we will get some money out of it." So they sold their brother Joseph to these merchants. Later on, they confessed that they saw the agony of their brother's soul, but they hardened their heart. They killed an animal, stained the vest with the blood, and took it to their father and said, "See if this is the vest of your son?"

JOSEPH IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE

Joseph was sold and Potiphar, the bodyguard of Pharaoh, bought him. From the favored son in his father's house, Joseph became a slave in Potiphar's house. Now, if this thing should happen to you, what would you do? Probably we would murmur, and not only murmur, but rebel.

Probably we would say, "Where is God? It is no use to serve God, to love God." Probably we would be bitter against the whole world. Probably we would refuse to work. We would rather die.

It was not so with Joseph. He was sold to be a slave in a far country. He was only seventeen years old. But here you find, he was not murmuring. He was suffering, yes, but he was not rebelling. He worked so faithfully; God was with him and he became a prosperous man. His master noticed that everything that passed through his hand was blessed by God. Even though his master did not fear God, did not know God, and yet he saw in Joseph a man who had the very presence of God and the blessing of God with him—everything prospered in his hand. So finally, the master committed everything in the house to Joseph. He cared for nothing but eating his food. Everything came to Joseph and he became the ruler of the house of Potiphar. Again, Joseph sat on the throne.

Do you know what environment is? Oftentimes, we blame our environment and say environment makes a person what he is. But only a weakling is made by his environment. A strong person controls or makes use of his environment. Here, you find Joseph was taken out of an environment of love, his father's love at least, and put into another environment that was so mean, so base, and so low. He was a slave in another house. You could not find a worse environment. A weakling would be crushed by that environment. But instead of being crushed, Joseph rose above his

environment and ruled over it.

It is not a matter of environment. As a matter of fact, adverse environment only brings out the strength within you to show whether there is an inward strength or not. That is why God often puts us in a difficult environment. Maybe you are blaming God and you are complaining to God: "Now, God, if You love me, why do You allow such an environment to surround me?" But this is love. God loves you. He puts you in such a difficult environment in order that He might bring out the life that he has planted in you.

Think of our Lord Jesus. When He was on earth, what environments He had! He was born in a manger. He fled for His life when He was a baby. He was raised in Nazareth, a barren, out of the way, hilly country. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He was trained to be a carpenter in a small city. Even though He went around doing good, He was opposed, He was threatened, He was rejected. But whatever His environment might be, He lived above His environment. He was a heavenly man living on earth. Wherever He went, He brought His heavenly atmosphere with Him. Whatever He touched, He touched it with a heavenly touch. He went among those cities, and yet they rejected Him. Even when they rejected Him, He said, "Oh, Chorazin! oh Bethsaida! oh Capernaum, if you only knew." Then He could turn to heaven and say, "Father, I thank You because this is Your will." He lived above His environment. He ruled over His environment. He made His environment work for

His good, for the Father's glory. He was a heavenly Man, even when put on earth. It did not take away His heaven.

In Philippians 4, Paul said, "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. In everything and in all things I am initiated to be satisfied in myself with fulness or with hunger." Think of all that Paul went through! Sometimes he was praised by people, but that did not spoil him. More times, he was misunderstood, persecuted, rejected by people, but that did not bring him down and depress him. He lived above his environment. He ruled over his environment. His kingly life came out of his environment. God was with him and God prospered him, not in the sense of physical prosperity, but certainly in the sense of spiritual prosperity.

Where are we? You may be put in an environment like Potiphar's house. You may think that you are almost like a slave, bound, made to work, but do you not know that you are seated with Christ in the heavenlies? In Ephesians 2 we are told, "Oh the riches of God's mercy that He should quicken us when we were dead in sins and transgressions. We are saved by grace. He has raised us up together with Christ and He has seated us together with Christ in the heavenlies." Don't you know that we are seated in the heavenlies? Don't you know that even when you are in Potiphar's house you are seated in the heavenlies? Don't you know that you are to carry your heavenly atmosphere into Potiphar's house? Don't you know that you are to rule and

reign in Potiphar's house, even as a slave? You say, how can a slave rule? But here you find a slave does rule. It is not a position; it is life.

Whatever your circumstance may be, do not murmur, do not rebel. If you can see God, if you can believe in God and God is with you, you can prosper even in that circumstance. All things work together for good for those who love the Lord, who are called according to purpose.

JOSEPH IN PRISON

Joseph was prosperous in Potiphar's house. He was made the steward of the house, and yet temptation came. He was severely tested because Potiphar's wife tried to entice him, but Joseph would not compromise. He feared God. And because he feared God, he was falsely accused. He was not even given a chance to explain. He could not defend himself because he was a slave. And his master, in his anger, put him in the tower, that is, the prison house.

When Joseph was on the throne in his father's house, he seemed to fall down, not because of his fault, but because of his brethren's fault. In Potiphar's house, he again sat on the throne, and again he was overthrown, not because of any sin of his, but because of his faithfulness to God and to his master. He was going down, down, down, into the dungeon. Oh, what suffering! The Bible says that his soul entered into iron. Not only was he put in fetters, but his soul entered into iron. Oh, how he suffered! Why? Why did God allow such things to happen?

Would' he murmur now? Rebel? No. He had that kingly life in him. God was with him. Even though he was thrown in the dungeon, very soon the chief jailer saw that everything he did was prospered by God. So he began to rule the prison. The jailer put everything in his hand and let him rule. Very soon, he was again on the throne in the dungeon.

You know you can sit on the throne in a dungeon. It is not necessary for a throne to be in the palace. Think of Paul and Silas. When they were thrown in that prison in Philippi, they were beaten and put in irons, fetters. They were in the dungeon and at midnight, the time when the pain would be more severe than at any other time, Paul and Silas were singing and praising God. It was a throne in the dungeon, and all the gates were opened.

Think of Madame Guyon. She was thrown into the Bastille because of her faith. While she was in the Bastille, she wrote a beautiful poem, which describes a bird. She said she was like a bird in a cage, but the bird sang; and that was her experience. You can rule in the tower-house.

Why did God allow such suffering to come into the life of Joseph? Because God was training him. Hebrews 4 says that the father, for the love of his son, chastens him. If he does not chasten him, he does not love him. He will not chasten a bastard, but he will chasten his son that his son may be partaker of his nature. This is exactly what our heavenly Father is doing. He has to child train us. When a person is trained, he suffers; but through suffering, he is made

partaker of the divine nature of God.

There you find Joseph was ruling in the prison, and it so happened that Pharaoh had his birthday. One day two of his men displeased him. One was the cupbearer, the other was the chief of the bakers, and he put them into the tower-house. Now, do not think that one was a baker and one was a waiter. No, in the old days, the chief of the bakers and the cupbearer were very high officials in the government. The cupbearer was the one who would deliver the cup to the king. Usually, he would drink it first before he delivered it to the king because the king was always afraid of being poisoned. So the cupbearer must be his favorite, his companion, the king's confidant. But somehow they displeased the king. Probably it was a misunderstanding or there may have been a plot, so the king put them into prison. While they were there, one day they dreamed dreams.

The next morning when Joseph was serving them, they were very sad, and Joseph said, "Why are you sad?"

And they said, "We dreamed dreams but we do not know the explanation."

So Joseph said, "Tell it to me. I may be able to explain it to you." And Joseph did.

Through suffering, God gave him spiritual understanding. When he was in the father's house, he was just dreaming, but he could not interpret. Now, through all the sufferings, a spiritual discernment, a spiritual understanding developed in him. He could interpret dreams. He

knew the secret of dreams. That is what suffering will do to you, if the suffering comes from God.

So Joseph told the cupbearer, "In three days you will be lifted out of prison and you will be restored." And he told the baker, "In three days you will be taken out of prison and hanged." And it happened. But he told the cupbearer, "When you are restored, remember me before Pharaoh, because I am not here for my fault." Unfortunately, after the cupbearer was restored, he forgot Joseph completely for two years.

What testing that must have been! He was ruling in prison, and then he interpreted the dreams and the dreams came true. And because of that success, he should be lifted out of prison and all his trouble would be gone. But the cupbearer forgot him. God allowed the cupbearer to forget him. Isn't that a tremendous testing of Joseph's faith? Oh, the last two years must have been the most difficult. He went through the crucible of suffering for thirteen years. When he appeared before Pharaoh, he was thirty years old. It started when he was seventeen. The last two years must have been the most difficult years. He had the chance and somehow he missed it. God did not work until two years later.

JOSEPH IN PHARAOH'S PALACE

Then God worked and gave Pharaoh dreams. He dreamed two dreams but nobody could interpret them. Then it reminded the cupbearer. He said, "Now I remember. That Hebrew man in-

terpreted my dream and it came true.”

So Pharaoh said, “Get him out.”

Joseph came out of prison and stood before Pharaoh. Pharaoh told him the dreams and Joseph said, “It is not of man. No man can interpret. It is God.”

He did not take any credit for himself. He gave all the glory to God. Through all the sufferings, he was delivered more and more from himself. He was centered more and more upon God. Now that is what it should be.

Sometimes suffering will make us more self-centered. The more we suffer, the more we think of ourselves. That is bad. But if you suffer with God, with Christ, then the more you suffer, the more you are delivered from yourself and the more you will see the Lord.

Joseph said, “It is not man, no man can interpret it, but God wants you to know. So this is the interpretation.” He not only gave the interpretation, he gave the counsel too—wisdom. Through suffering comes wisdom. You can get knowledge without suffering, but you cannot get wisdom without suffering. He gave counsel as to what should be done. And Pharaoh said, “There is no man in my kingdom that is so discreet and wise as you are; therefore you be the man to take care of the future.” So he set Joseph next to him, the second in the kingdom.

Joseph again came to the throne; it is the throne of the house of Pharaoh of Egypt. God had prepared him for that throne and when he sat on the throne, what happened? First, he made provision for the future—food,

not only for the nation, but for the whole world at that time. Everybody came to him during the famine years. Pharaoh said, “Do not come to me. Go to Joseph.” He was the bread giver. Even people from Canaan, from all around came to find food and Joseph provided food for the whole world.

Second, his brethren came from Canaan because there was famine there too. It is a most interesting story of how Joseph dealt with them. Sometimes you wonder why Joseph did not tell them who he was when they first came. That would have saved them from all the troubles and the agonies. Why did he treat them in such a way as though he was playing games with them? It was because Joseph treated his brethren in the way that God treats us. In other words, it is not just a matter of giving some food to the brethren; it is a matter of restoring his brethren. And to restore his brethren, they must be brought to the place of repentance. After his brethren came to the place of repentance, they began to talk with one another: “We saw the agony of Joseph’s heart when we sold him; therefore the sin is upon us.” Only when they repented, did Joseph appear and restore his brethren.

And not only that, before Joseph died, he gave an order: “After I die, God will take the children of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Don’t forget to bring my bones out and bury them in the Promised Land”—by faith. Joseph was not in any way deceived by the favor and the riches of Egypt. He held on to the promise of God, the covenant of

God. Even if in life he could not return, in death he returned to inherit God’s promise. Now he sat upon the throne. There is no doubt that Joseph was a king.

God is training us today. You may be still in your father’s house. Or you may be now in Potiphar’s house. Or worse, you may be in the tower-house, but God is training you. If you will accept the training now, you know God is with you. Just because you are in Potiphar’s house God has not forsaken you. No. Through water and through fire, in your affliction, he was afflicted. He is with you. He is going through with you in order that He might bring you to a place that you are trained, disciplined, educated, and well able to reign and rule with Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, today is the day of our training. It is hard, but one day we shall reign with Him. We shall enter into our inheritance; we shall be co-heirs with Christ. Just think, if that day should come and you are not prepared for it, you are not able to sit and rule, what regret that will be. So may the Lord help us. Even though today it seems to be hard going and yet, think of the glorious purpose of God. In the very beginning God’s purpose was image and dominion. If you have the image of God’s Son, that is His character, then you will be given dominion, to be kings unto God, to rule and reign with Christ. These two things go together.