

JOSEPH, part 2
How Dreams Come True
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Years and years later, decades later when Jacob is on his deathbed, he's still remembering what Reuben had done. I wouldn't be a bit surprised that Reuben's activity to attempt to save Joseph was related to the idea that perhaps this would be a way of his being restored to favor in his father's eyes. He'd done some what really was an extreme sin, an extreme affront to family relationships. Maybe he saw his salvation of Joseph as a way to get back in good stead as the oldest child in the home, as the one who is the first born in the company.

Lets look at the four tests that Joseph faces.

One test that he faces is the test of circumstances not of his own choosing. Genesis 39:1-6. He did not choose to be taken in the caravan. He did not choose to be put on the slave block in Egypt. He did not choose to find himself in Potipher's household. He did not choose to find himself tempted daily by Potipher's wife. He was a victim of life's circumstances converging on him.

But in these kinds of circumstances he chooses to be a person who continues his relationship with the Lord. Well might we ask what the options are if we ourselves fall into adversity.

I've found that some people when they fall into extreme adversity such as this where it seems to be no future, Joseph in the rational side of him had to admit that there was not a great deal of future that lay ahead of him. For a moment he had gotten off soft. He had been put in like the captain of the guard, maybe equivalent to the head of the secret service position for Egypt. But he could have been a person who gave himself over to self-destructive thoughts. If at the age of seventeen I am in this kind of environment, what's the use? Might as well call it quits now.

He chose not to check out on life. He chose not to live with rage and bitterness against his brothers for what they did to him. He chose not to go on with rage and bitterness against the hostile circumstances that were around him. Neither did he choose to be a person simply given over to resignation and have his spirit beaten out of him so that he became a slave in his spirit as well as a slave in fact. He chose somehow, he found a resiliency in the Lord. Genesis 39:3 says "The Lord was with him and the Lord gave him success in everything."

I suspect when we look at that phrase, "The Lord was with him," and realize that Joseph didn't have the Bible and the Lord couldn't be with him in that sort of way of reading the scripture, that we are left with the conclusion that Joseph continued his meetings with the Lord in his dreams and his visionary life, in the openness of his subconscious and spiritual life to God. He continued that. He chose to live with an attitude that God is with me and I will not surrender to these difficult circumstances.

Because Joseph does not give in to the adverse circumstances other tests come his way.

Sometimes the best thing we can do when we don't see what's down the road and when there's just today ahead of us, the best thing we can do is just keep going. Take a step at a time. Not surrender to our circumstances.

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A second test that Joseph faced was the test of moral temptation.

He was a person perhaps that by the time he faced the test with Potipher's wife was maybe between 19 and 23. I would suspect that it took him several years to arise to some kind of stature in Potipher's house where Potipher trusted him with everything that was his. Then Mrs. Potipher came along. I look at Joseph from a modern point of view and I've lifted seven excuses that Joseph could have had for giving in, in regard to moral temptation. These are excuses that people use today when they surrender to moral temptation.

The first excuse he could have used would simply be "I'll get even." I think there's a great deal of connection between sexual sin and anger in a person's life. When you are jilted, when you are treated roughly, when somebody has abused you, you look for the tender nurture that a sexual experience might be able to provide you. Joseph could have well said, I've been treated very poorly. I'm depressed. I'm hurt. I'm betrayed. I've got this coming to me. I deserve this after all my brothers have done to me and all the wrong that I have suffered then I see no reason for not getting even and having my fair share of recompense for all the suffering that I've gone through.

A second thing that I think Joseph could have legitimately said in the giving into temptation is, "If I give into this temptation, I'm no worse than anybody else in my family." Look at my father Jacob. I've been a young man of moral purity. You can't say the same about my dad. I think if Joseph would have known what was going on with his brother Judah back in Genesis 38, that's an intriguing story. Genesis 37 tells us up to the time that Joseph was sold into slavery and Genesis 39 picks up the story of Joseph again. But Genesis 38 tells the story of Joseph's older brother Judah who has an immoral relationship with his own daughter-in-law. Joseph had he known that could have well said, "Seems like moral failure runs in a typical pattern in my family. I'm no better and no worse than anybody else in my household. Everybody else is a hypocrite anyway including my father and some of the other people I know. They've all done it. I might as well do it too."

A third thing that he could have said and it closely relates to the second excuse: "Everybody is doing it."

Everybody has affairs. Everybody has encounters of this kind sooner or later. Probably Potipher is playing around on the side himself. All Egyptian high officials were noted for their immorality. That's a track record in Egypt. It's stamped upon the lives of the Pharaohs, and wealthy people in Egypt. It's the custom of the day. It's what's prevailing. I might as well go with it. Why fight it? I think this is a tremendous pressure that Christian people face in a culture that is going really bizark with immorality and situational ethics. If you don't engage in immorality then there must be something wrong with you. You haven't been liberated yet. Everybody's doing it so why should you miss out. Joseph could have very well said this.

I think a fourth thing that Joseph could have said is how could I resist?

The approach of Potipher's wife to him was not just a one-time kind of thing. She according to Genesis 39 is coming to him day after day. Joseph has the misfortune of being well built and handsome. Potipher's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me." But he

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refused. Then verse 10, “Though she spoke to Joseph day after day he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.”

So much excuse for falling into moral sin is “I couldn’t help it.” If you look at much of the material on homosexuality today you have people saying for example “God made me a homosexual. I’m this way and I have to give rein to my nature.” People who find themselves falling into moral sin of a heterosexual or homosexual variety say, “God made me this way. The passions. There’s no way I can put a check on them. I’m the way I am and I can’t resist. The temptation is too great. I can’t resist.” Joseph could have said this but he didn’t.

The fifth thing he could have said is no one will every know.

We might ask ourselves, What would I do, what would you do if you could do anything you wanted and there were no consequence to face? Joseph might have well tested himself with the temptation “No one will ever know. I’m away from my family. They’ll never know even if they do disapprove. Potipher will never know became Mrs. Potipher and I can keep this a secret.”

The sixth thing he might have said is “This might be my only chance.”

“I am a slave. My master might deny me the privilege of getting married. I might die young. Just this one time will do me some good. I need to be man anyway and this is what makes a man according to some people’s view. Therefore it’s the right thing to do in this context.”

The seventh thing he could have said is “God will understand and God will forgive.”

This is the attitude again that many heading into sin. “I know I’m going to do this. I know it’s wrong. But God’s going to understand and God’s going to forgive me.” Granted God does because of his longsuffering does forgive. Although I think when we use that going into a sin we misuse God’s grace and forgiveness. Sometimes I think persons who speak on morality are sometimes being criticized with being judgmental. I don’t want to be understood as that. But forgiveness is not easy with God. It’s not easy in human relationships. God does forgive sexual sin but it does imprint. There are consequences to face. David we know was forgiven by God for his sin but certain things happened in his life because of that sin which were irreversible. The sword did not depart out of his house, his wives were given to others, and his son died. Joseph might have opted for a cheap kind of grace but he didn’t.

All I’m saying in looking at these seven things is that there are always excuses to sin. If you want a reason to justify a wrong, you and I could always find it. If we can’t, something’s wrong with our creativity.

I want you to notice the steps Joseph took to resisting temptation. They’re the same steps we must take if we’re going to resist sexual temptation or any other kind of temptation.

The first thing Joseph did was he put a distance between himself and the temptation. 39:10 “Though she spoke to Joseph day after day he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.” Notice the last phrase “or even be with her.” He didn’t choose to try to prove how strong a person he was by saying I’ll be with her in the house day after day and just see how much

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spiritual stamina I have to resist the advances. But he put a distance between himself and the temptation.

Some persons in failing to do this fall into sin just like a moth flies toward fire.

I recently came across some warning signs in regard to adultery that Norm Wright gives to married couples about infidelity. He has eight things that people ought to watch even in married relationships about being unfaithful.

The first thing he says that a married person ought to watch is whether or not they are drifting from their spouse. Are you drifting from your spouse? If you are drifting perhaps you are beginning to set some things in motion.

Secondly, are you creating excuses to continually visit with someone in your work environment, in your neighborhood, in a social club, an organization? You find excuses to be with someone who are attracted to that is not your spouse.

Third, how are you handling repetitive contact with a particular person in a working, social or sporting situation?

Fourth, do you find yourself preoccupied with thoughts about another person that is not your spouse?

Fifth, how and why do you exchange gifts with a close friend of the opposite sex? And the type of gift exchange may indicate a developing intimacy.

Sixth, has the telephone become an important medium in your relationship with a friend outside your marriage? You find it very convenient to visit on the phone where as in person you know that that would be discouraged.

Seventh, are you consciously putting yourself into situations where you could increase your chances of meeting someone who might become more than a friend?

Eight, what is your body language telling potential lovers?

What Norman Wright is suggesting is exactly what Joseph did – putting a distance between yourself and the temptation.

The second thing that Joseph did in resisting the temptation that is very critical is he had respect for the institution of the family.

He had respect for Potipher, for example. He said to Mrs. Potipher, “You are Potipher’s wife,” and he knew that she was not his. Indeed outside of marriage no one is ours. To resist sexual temptation therefore is to have respect for the family. Joseph didn’t go in and attempt to wreck someone’s home or someone else’s future.

The third critical thing about Joseph is he recognized that a sin in this arena was a sin against God. So he says to Potipher’s wife, “How can I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”

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Genesis 39:9. Persons who really walk with God know that sin in any area is ultimately a sin against the Lord. David says this in Psalm 51:4 after his sin with Bathsheba. He cries out to God, “Against thee and thee only have I sinned.”

When I first read that I got a little upset about David. You’ve done more than sin against God. How about Uriah out there in the grave? How about Bathsheba? How about the dead son that you have? How dare you say, against thee and thee only have sinned.” But David understands rightly that all sin in its essence is a sin against God and therefore to be resisted. All temptation is simply a shortcut to take ways to experience something that is not in God’s approved time pattern.

A fourth thing that Joseph did in resisting temptation, he did the most difficult thing that I think a person can do. In fact, he pronounced the most difficult word is No. The most difficult thing in the world to pronounce. But he learned to say no.

To successfully resist temptation in the area of morals you’re going to have to do the same thing. I’ve had to do these kinds of principles in my own life – put a distance between myself and the temptation, have respect for the institution of the family, choose not to sin against God, and choose to say No.

Suppose Joseph had yielded though. Suppose he had given in to the temptation. What would have been the consequences in his life? Maybe we haven’t thought of that sufficiently in respect to Joseph.

If he had said yes to the temptation he would still have been in prison. We know that he was in prison for saying No. That was one of the consequences of trumped up charges against him. But if he had said yes to the temptation he would have been imprisoned only it would have been a cell. The prison keeper would have been Potipher’s wife. She at her beck and call would have had Joseph in a continual condition of blackmail. It’s much different to be in prison with a clear conscious that to be in prison with a bad conscious. If you’re going to choose prison at least choose prison with a clear conscious.

The second thing if Joseph had yielded is that he would have been forced to do other wrongs. That’s inevitable. If you do one wrong you must do others to cover it up. He’d have had to continue committing more adultery. He would have ultimately if Potipher’s wife had threatened him needed to rub out her or rub out Potipher. He’d have had to invent lies. He’d have been pushed into other areas of moral conflict and wrong.

The third thing that would have happened to him is that his relationship with God would have been affected by mounting guilt and if he had not dealt with that guilt ultimately he would have had a seared conscious.

The fourth thing that would have happened to him is that his sin would have moved him away from the chain of events that God was using to catapult him into saving a whole nation. It is Joseph who saves Israel. It is Joseph who through his becoming Prime Minister will keep the children of Jacob alive so that they can exist to later become the nation. If he gives in here, he misses achieving God’s highest purposes for his life. He moves himself away from that chain of events.

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He resisted the temptation to moral wrong.

The third test of Joseph is not only the test of adverse circumstances, not only the test of a moral nature, but a test of not being rewarded for doing right. He does the right thing. He says no to Mrs. Potipher. The next moment he finds himself in prison.

We looked a couple weeks ago that maybe Joseph deserved some hatred on the part of his brothers because he was such a seventeen-year-old braggart. Tooting his own horn all the time and getting on the nerves of everybody that was around him talking about how great he was. But this time when he suffers adversity he really doesn't deserve it.

If you're expecting a Pavlovian response with God you're going to have a difficult time handling adversity. A predictable response that if you push this button you get *this* result. We have some Pavlovian responses in regard to God. "If I do good, you'll take care of me won't you?" Not maybe like we think. "Lord, if I pay my tithes I know you're going to dump the windows of heaven open for me and bless me with untold prosperity and I'll be a millionaire overnight." And next week your car goes out on the freeway. You just started to tithe and now you've got a \$300 repair bill. "God, where are you? I've started to do things right. It's not fair! Lord I just repented and all the problems in my relationships that could occur have occurred."

Sometimes a Christian doesn't make as much commission, as much money because they are honest about a product or a particular thing associated with their work. You don't always get rewarded for doing right do you? Joseph had to learn that.

When you're learning this it's terrible. I don't want to learn this lesson. I want to learn the lesson that when I do right, I get rewarded. That helps me to do right. We don't want to learn this lesson. When it's happening us we want to get self pity out. This is not fair! God, why is this happening to me? I want self-pity me and I want to get a little bit upset with God. God, you don't know how hard I'm working for you!

The thing with God is to see his ways you have to have some time go by. You never really see the Lord's ways in your life unless some distance occurs. It took Joseph twenty years to figure out what was going on. Twenty years down the road when he's finally reunited with his brothers. Twenty years to get perspective on why he was going through what he was. God actually had in mind to use the whole chain of events to launch him into the prime ministership of a country. It'd be wonderful if God had said to Joseph, "Don't worry. A few years of faithful service here and you're going to be the number two man in the country Pharaoh. I've got a wonderful plan for your life." Then Joseph could have stayed their smugly.

But the problem with God is he doesn't tell us what he's up to. So we've got to set there and suffer saying, What's going on? This by the way why the New Testament principle is so critical. That God is working good in all things. If we don't have that as a ballast, as a hope when we get into problems we're really going to have problems. Somewhere deep in Joseph I think he still had his dream about God. We learn that God was still with him while he was in prison and even in prison the jail keeper finally committed every thing to him.

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But if I can remember as kind of a reflex of faith that when crazy things are happening to me that I don't deserve that just remain true, remain steady. I may not understand the full perspective but I will understand when enough time goes by I'll have a better perspective.

Actually when we see what transpired during those years we can see how God was preparing him. What a crazy way to get launched into a political position. Spend years in prison on an unjust charge. That is not the way you get to power. God's ways of advancing his people are often very circuitous. What did Joseph learn during these times that later helped him when he became a prime minister, the number 2 man to Pharaoh. He learned to avoid pride, that's for sure. Any pride he had got beaten out of him in those times. He would need that. If he is going to be a ruler he cannot afford to be suffering from pride. He needed to learn to persevere under stress. It was not an easy job being famine administrator and crop administrator. He needed to learn in his life how to persevere under stress. He needed to perform well when given a demanding task.

He survived that test, the test of being treated wrongly. Why? He kept his relationship with God, he avoided blame. He avoided self-pity. He avoided dumping on others. He avoided a fighting retaliatory spirit. He didn't consume his time with things that couldn't be accomplished. If you know starting out that you can't accomplish something or you're going to be eaten up in the process don't do it. What could Joseph not accomplish? In the legal system he had to deal with there's no sense filing a civil suit against Potiphar or Potiphar's wife. He couldn't have gotten civil damages in the Egyptian legal system. So Joseph does not waste his energy working on things that can't happen. He spends his energy working on things that can happen. And the thing that can happen at that particular moment is that at least he could get the favor of the jailer so he makes that his goal. That's realizable. That's attainable. And he goes for that.

We could all probably spare ourselves a whole lot of problems if we would live with Psalm 131 "My eyes are not lifted up too high and I've not occupied myself with things too great for me." Staying within realizable objectives.

So Joseph faces the test of adverse circumstances, the test morally, the test of not being rewarded when he's done right. Three major tests that he survives there. And he has a fourth test...

It's the test of success.

When he gets to the top and when the day finally comes when his seventeen-year-old dreams come true will it turn his head? Will he become spiteful? When he has a chance to retaliate, will he retaliate? How will he respond to that test? Some people when everything finally goes well in their life after a time of adversity become bitter in their own spirit.

You see some beautiful ways that God works in Joseph's life. I'd like to run through some things here for just a moment.

Joseph by the way several times when he was not rewarded for doing right, including giving correct prophecies for the butler and the baker. But finally Pharaoh dreams and Joseph interprets the dream. He's given a significant position. Joseph's brothers back in Canaan here that there is food in Egypt so they come to Joseph. That is very dramatic moment when they first arrive on

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the scene. Joseph speaks to them through an interpreter. He does reveal to them that he can speak Hebrew.

They come and Joseph inquires of them in Genesis 42:12-14 and on, how things are going with them, who they are. They reply, “Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest now is with our father and one is no more.”

Joseph for the next period of couple of years is going to put his brothers through a process. He doesn't prematurely jump in here and say to them the brother that is no more is me. I forgive all of you for everything you've done to me. Sometimes a premature forgiveness when it's extended to a person I think Joseph had already forgiven his brothers in his heart, but Joseph knew that some things spiritually needed to happen in his brothers' lives before the relationship could ever properly be restored. So at this point he doesn't go cheap grace on them and throw his arms around them and say, I'm your long lost brother. God's meant it for good. Let's all rejoice.” He takes a moment where he lets his brothers sweat. Why does he let them sweat? Because he's mean? Because he wants to punish them? Not at all. We'll see as we look at this for just a moment that he lets them go through some things so they can come to grips with the guilt in their own life that they've buried away and haven't dealt with.

Joseph says, “You're spies. I'm going to put all of you in prison and send one of you back to get your younger brother. I think you're telling me a lie that you have a younger brother at home.” And by the way the fact that the younger brother Benjamin was at home suggests to us that Jacob who had always had Joseph as his favorite son had now selected Benjamin as his favorite son and said, I can expend the other ten brothers but I can't expend Benjamin. He's my favorite so he's staying here. Joseph I think would have immediately been sensitive to pick that up in his father's character. So he says, “I'm going to put you all in jail and just send one of you back to get your younger brother and then I'll know that you're not spies.” They're in jail for three days. At the end of three days Joseph comes in and says I've changed my mind. I'm going to let you all go but one of you I'll keep here. They start talking to one another. Verse 21 “They said to one another, ‘Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded for his life with us. But we would not listen. That's why this distress has come upon us.’ Ruben replied, ‘Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen. Now he must give an accounting for his blood.’ They did not realize that Joseph could understand them since he was using an interpreter.”

What's happening? Joseph by the way, begins to weep on that occasion for the first time these brothers are beginning to deal with the fact that we are guilty and this might be happening to us because we violated our brother. All those years, and there's been at least fifteen years elapse from the time they sold Joseph until this moment has come. All those years they kept it to themselves. Kind of hard for ten or eleven boys to have kept that story to themselves. Not told their wives, not letting it get back to Jacob. He still believes their story that they brought to him about Joseph. Now the guilt is beginning to surface and they're saying, this must be happening because of what we did to our long lost brother. Not realizing that the ‘Egyptian’ who stands there understand what they're saying and that's why Joseph begins to be moved because his brothers are beginning to come to a perception. Joseph perhaps remembers all the suffering that their mistakes have made for him.

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Ruben goes back with the other brothers to the father and in Genesis 42:37 Ruben says to his father, “The proposition is this. We need to go back and get more food. You let Benjamin go. You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust Benjamin to my care and I will bring him back.” Ruben is doing anything at this point to try to win favor with his dad because he is the guy again who had violated his father’s concubine. He is the one who has the guilt that he had not saved Joseph. And he’s saying this crude deal, you put your grandsons to death if I don’t return with Benjamin if you let him go with me.” After that proposition, Ruben drops from the biblical record until Jacob dies.

Jacob refuses Ruben’s offer and they continue to stay in Israel for a while and finally they run out of food. Then Judah who had proposed in the first place to sell the brother to the caravan that was coming through, Judah finally comes in 43:8 and says to the father “Send the boy along with me and we’ll go at once so that we and your children may live and not die. I myself will guarantee his safety. You can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. As it is if we had not delayed we would have gone and returned twice.” Judah doesn’t make a foolish proposition like Ruben. Ruben has said you can kill your own two grandsons if I don’t come back. Judah wisely says, I’ll simply bear the blame. So they come back. They are brought and treated like kinds when they come into Joseph’s presence. They presented gifts. They reply in Genesis 43:28 “Your servant our father is alive and well,’ they bow low to pay him honor. He looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother’s son and he asked, ‘Is this the youngest son? The one you told me about?’ He said, ‘God be gracious to you my son.’ Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.”

He still does not disclose himself to his brothers. Instead he has a banquet for them and arranges them in a seating order that shows he knows the youngest to the oldest. And he gives Benjamin the youngest five times as much food as all the rest. Then he orders a silver cup, his own silver chalice to be placed in Benjamin’s sack of grain and sends them away. He then puts his servant on their trail and when they find the brothers they open the sacks. Benjamin’s sack is discovered with the silver goblet and they come back. The man who holds the silver goblet is in deep jeopardy. Judah now says in Genesis 44:16 “What can we say to my lord? What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants’ guilt. We are now my lord’s slaves. We ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.’ Then Judah makes A proposition in verse 18 and following that rather than having Benjamin stay as prisoner he himself would be willing to go. It was the first point that a marvelous thing has happened. Fifteen years before Judah had been willing to exile the brother. He had been willing to sell him into slavery than to let him go. But over the years he’s had to wrestle with the guilt of what he had done wrong. And now he is a different man. He is accepting the fact that he is guilty, that God has uncovered his guilt after all these years. He’s accepting the fact also that rather than letting his brother stay and bear the punishment he will stay for him. An action which if he had taken years before would have saved the whole matter of Joseph.

So this meal keeps on going and at the end of Genesis 44 Judah sums it up by saying, “Now please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in replace of the boy and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me. Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.” Why did Joseph put these brothers through this long torturous thing? He had to know were the brothers still motivated by jealousy as they were

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with him. Benjamin had now replaced him as the favorite son. Did they hate Benjamin like they hated him? Were they still insensitive to their father's feelings. Would they come back home having left Benjamin in Egypt and make up a story about him as they made up a story about him? Has there been any personality growth, any spiritual growth in their life in fifteen years? Were their consciences still hardened? He made them go through that process so that they could know and he could know whether they were still controlled by jealousy, whether they were still insensitive to their father's feeling and whether their consciences were still harden to God. When they passed the test, when Judah had spoken and passed the test, Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence." So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers and he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him. They had gone out the door and Pharaoh's household heard about it and Joseph disclosed himself to his brothers.

He met the test of success. But in the moment when he had power in his hands to execute vengeance on his brothers he forgave them and allowed them to be restored to him. Joseph shows that in all the suffering that he'd endured that he did not become a hardened person. Some people when they go through great adversity harden themselves. But Joseph is seen as a man of compassion and tears. In fact there are seven times in Genesis where Joseph weeps. Always remaining sensitive to what God is doing in his life. Joseph as you look back upon him the kind of person that perhaps of all the people in the Old Testament is most like the character of Jesus Christ. You do not read of a major flaw that occurs in his life. When he has two children, Manasseh and Ephraim, he calls the children names which express his positive attitude. "God has caused me to forget" and "God has made me fruitful." That is his attitude upon the adversities that happened to him in life. They are forgotten. They're over. He can't unscramble the past. He's responsible for this present attitude. That present attitude leads him to a place of being fruitful rather than to a position of being barren.

You see in the brothers, people who failed yet God restored as well and restored a relationship. There are therefore in our audience this evening two kinds of people. There are some that are like Joseph who have met tests and have not failed them and are currently meeting tests and have not failed them, but are succeeding. As you are God is using that in your life in a very special way. There are others who may be like Joseph's brothers. You will never, never come to a closure on the wrongs that have happened to your life until you become honest. Until you become honest with God. Until you frankly admit your guilt. Until you look at what has happened that is wrong in your life that you have covered up, that you have let your life become deadened by a sea of meaningless activity.

Some of you perhaps are here this evening that have done great wrong in your life. You have never taken care of that with God, you've never taken care of it with the people you love. It's there. It's covered over but it's like a sore that healed without the core of it ever being dealt with and cleansed. God will not let you have any peace in your life until you have come full center and come back to that failure in your life, which you have refused to honestly deal with. You can never be made a new person. You can never be cleansed from guilt. You can never be free in your conscious until you deal with that and lay it to rest and go on and experience God's forgiveness to you coming like Joseph's forgiveness came to his brothers.

I don't honestly know what may apply to you. I know that you know as you heard the word of God.

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Our Father, we think of these tests in our life. We realize that we are a tested people and that that test is designed to make us as pure gold. We see Lord what happens in our lives when we resist temptation and how as the years come and go and we keep walking with you, you work things out for the good in our life and you bring us to a secure place. We know that you have not changed. You are the same Lord yesterday, today and forever. Just as surely as you brought Joseph through so you will bring everyone through whose trust is in you. Then too we recognize that some have been in the place of Joseph's brothers and have done wrong. And by the grace of God are here to be able to be confronted again with the good news of the gospel and with the scripture. We pray Lord that this message will be used by the spirit to bring unsettling until there has been an open acknowledgement in your presence of guilt, of genuine and true repentance, laying aside the sin and let that be followed by a joyous restoration. We ask that you by the Holy Spirit will take these words to our heart. In the Lord's name we pray. Amen.