

**Date:** February 15, 2026

**Title:** The Pit Wasn't Plan B

**Passage:** Genesis 37:18-36

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Summary:

I. The Plot to Kill Jesus (v.18-20)

II. The Pit of Mercy (v.21-24)

III. The Perversity of Sin (v.25-28)

IV. The Consequences of Sin (v.29-35)

V. The Sovereignty of God (v.36)

Key Truths:

- When you feel there is no hope for tomorrow, know that God has a plan for your life.
- The providence of God is the way God governs, sustains and directs all creation toward His purposes.
- God redeems even the worst of situations.
- God sometimes has profound lessons He wants us to learn that will guide us to grow in faith in Him. In trials, we learn lessons that we would not have otherwise gained on our own.
- "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world" (C.S. Lewis)

Application:

- God's sovereignty over inexplicable events.
- God is sovereign over the brother's willful sin.
- God pursues our well being.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- What's a takeaway from the sermon you can apply to your life?
- What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have heard or seen?

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**Introduction**

Sermon Series on Genesis

- While much about the story about Joseph, it is also how God uses broken people, chiseled down, and be used as part of God's redemptive plan in history.

God's sovereignty

- When things are going poorly, can we still see and recognize God's sovereignty?

### **Context of Passage:**

Joseph

- 17 years old
- one of the sons of Jacob
- Among one of 12 sons.
- He was favored by his father.
- He was given a special colored robe showing his favored status.
- He was managing his brothers.
- He had snitched on his brothers.

### **Passage:**

Genesis 37:18-36

[Joseph's brothers] saw [Joseph] from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes and returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?" Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not." And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

## **EXPOSITION**

### **Introduction**

Joseph

- Here, Joseph was doing what he was told to do (instructions from his father to find his brothers).
- Observation: sometimes the worst moments of our stories occur when we are obeying God.
- Reflection: Are we tempted to question God: I had been obeying God and now in a pit of circumstances...what is going on?
- Question: What do you do when obedience leads you into a pit instead of a blessing?
- Question: What if the pit is not the interruption of God's plan but God's instrument?

## **I. THE PLOT**

### **Genesis 37:18-20**

***They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams."***

- How does someone get to the point where brothers want to kill their own brother?
  - Their own sinfulness
  - Dysfunctional upbringing
    - Lack of fatherly discipline and discipleship
    - Favoritism.

Dysfunctional Family of Israel/Jacob

- Jacob - life of a pattern of lack of discipline and not being active in his children's lives.
- See Genesis 34. One of Jacob's daughters gets raped.
  - Jacob doesn't do anything but instead his sons exact revenge.

### **Genesis 34:5-7**

Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah. But his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry, because he

had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing must not be done.

Genesis 34:25

On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males.

Genesis 34:30-31

Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household." But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?"

Genesis 49:3-4 (Jacob's failure to discipline Reuben)

"Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch!

- Jacob had failed to address and discipline Reuben though he knew of it.

*Importance of discipline*

Proverbs 13:24

Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Proverbs 29:17

Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

Hebrews 12:6-11

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Proverbs 29:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

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Proverbs 19:18

Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.

Also see example of Eli in Old Testament:

1 Samuel 3:12-13

On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the

iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.

*The sin of jealousy*

Proverbs 14:30

A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.

- Jealousy harms both spirit and body

James 3:16

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

- Jealousy leads to sin and chaos

## II. THE PIT OF MERCY (v.21-24)

**Genesis 37:21-24**

***But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.***

- "God's mercies often arrive wearing rough clothing." (Anonymous)
- While a pit, it wasn't empty and not filled with water.
  - Wasn't as bad as could have been.

## III. THE PEVERITY OF SIN (v.25-28)

**Genesis 37:25-28**

***Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.***

*Then they sat down to eat.*

- brothers ignored Joseph's pleas for help while they ate.

Genesis 42:21

Then they said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us."

- the cruelty of sin hardens the heart.

***And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver.***

- Joseph was sold for the price of the cheapest slave.

#### **IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (v.29-35)**

##### **Genesis 37:29-35**

***When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes and returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?" Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not." And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father wept for him.***

The irony of the trickery of Jacob

- Jacob previously tricked his own father to get his father's blessing.

##### Genesis 27:14-18 (Jacob's own prior trickery/deception)

So he went and took them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. So he went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"

- just as an animal was slain to help Jacob's in his deception of his father, an animal was slain by his own children here to deceive him

##### *Heartbreak*

- Jacob grieved the loss of his son
  - But also the loss of his favored son.
  - He also thought Joseph was the coming fulfillment of the promise of the coming Messiah (Genesis 3:15)

##### **Genesis 37:36**

***Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.***

- Key word: "Meanwhile"
- Though Jacob was heartbroken and thought his dreams were broken, God was still at work.
- When you feel there is no hope for tomorrow, know that God has a plan for your life.

## **APPLICATION**

### **God's sovereignty over inexplicable events**

- The sovereignty of God is the attribute of God from which the providence of God stems.
  - The providence of God flows from His sovereignty.
- God is in full control over all circumstances.
  - Jacob had sent Joseph to find his brothers.
    - Joseph happened to come across a man who knew where his brothers were
    - A caravan happened to be passing by when Joseph was in the pit.
    - Joseph happened to be sold as a slave to someone who was Pharaoh's captain of the guard.
- Circumstances can be confusing
  - The peace and happiness of Jacob and Joseph was disrupted.
  - Jacob experienced real heartbreak with perceived loss of his favored child.

Key points:

- The providence of God is the way God governs, sustains and directs all creation toward His purposes.
- Basis of comfort in trial:
  - It is God's exact providence that works through every painful season.
  - God never does something that is not ultimately for your good.
- God's character is sure: there is no shadow of evil in Him.
  - God has a plan for your life.
  - God has profound lessons He wants us to learn that will guide us to grow in faith in Him.
    - In trials, we learn lessons that we would not have otherwise gained on our own.

Genesis 50:20 (Joseph recognizing God's sovereignty)

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

*Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said,*

- Jacob grieved the loss of Joseph.
  - During this time, his family grew closer together.
  - At some point, the brothers developed love for their father.
    - How seen? Later, they did not want to come back to their father without their youngest son knowing it would kill him.
    - They previously wouldn't have cared.

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world" (C.S. Lewis)

- God has a purpose with your life.
- Trials are tailor made for your life.
- God is sovereign and He is good.

### ***God is sovereign over the brother's willful sin.***

- Why does God allow you to sin?
  - He will use you through he situation to teach you key truths:
    - You are a sinner and a dependent human being that is in need of God's grace.
- God doesn't excuse any sin but explains the bigger picture.
- Analogy: Police sting operation. When people's true colors are shown, they are arrested.
  - People arrested do not argue that they couldn't help it. They bear the circumstances of their evil actions.

### ***God pursues our well being.***

- God uses human sin for His purposes
  - See great example of Jesus' crucifixion.

### **Acts 2:23**

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

- While people are fully responsible for their sinful actions, God used it for His glory.
- God redeems even the worst of situations.

Psalms 121:5-8

The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

**Related Verses**

*God is sovereign over all circumstances*

Ephesians 1:11

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Daniel 4:35

all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Isaiah 45:6-7

that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

Isaiah 46:8-10

"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,"

Psalms 23:4

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.