
GENESIS: IT ALL STARTS HERE

AN UNLIKELY SAVIOR

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on October 23, 2016

INTRODUCTION

This morning we are introduced to a new kind of character in the Bible. Joseph is displayed as both a good man and a great man; and these two are not often combined in a single human. Virtuous warriors often serve corrupt kings, and virtuous kings often struggle to lead corrupt people. However, in Joseph, we are able to see the virtues of goodness and honesty coupled with the skills of wisdom and intelligence. Joseph is a rare character indeed.

Additionally, Joseph travels a path of incredible suffering in order to rise to his seat of authority. He seems to go very far backward before he ever goes forward, and these setbacks are no fault of his own. Joseph seems to think, talk, and live in an upright and honest manner before all people. He also seemingly maintains a posture of trust and gratitude before God, in spite of his many pains and losses.

Joseph is an interesting character in his own right, but he is exceptionally interesting as we begin to understand that Joseph is also meant to throw our eyes upward towards Christ. As we see the events of Joseph's life unfold, we are also able to see incredible parallels to the life of Christ. We learn here that God is telling the story of Jesus, long before He actually reveals the fullness of the unlikely Savior.

Like the Christ who is to come, Joseph seems the least likely savior of his family and his people. If anyone would describe Joseph's end in the midst of his beginning, and even for some time after, the pictures would be irreconcilable. There just seems to be no way that Joseph will ever be what he ends up being.

Christ, like this type who went before, seems less than regal at times and not nearly prestigious enough to warrant the title "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). But, Christ is both the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29) and "the Alpha and the Omega, the One who was, who is, and who is to come" (Rev. 1:8).

May God draw us near to Himself as we look to Christ through this type of the Messiah today.

GENESIS 37:1-36

37:1 Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

2 These are the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. 4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: 7 Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

9 Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" 11 And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

12 Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am."

14 So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word." So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" 16 "I am seeking my brothers," he said. "Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." 17 And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'"

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

18 They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. 19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. 20 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."

21 But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, “Let us not take his life.” 22 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.

23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. 24 And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

25 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. 26 Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 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.

28 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.

29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes 30 and returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?”

31 Then they took Joseph’s robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 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.”

33 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.” 34 Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.

35 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.

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

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

(1) QUICK REVIEW & WALK THROUGH THE BEGINNING OF JOSEPH’S STORY

(2) MARVELING AT JOSEPH AS A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST

(3) RESTING ANEW IN THE UNLIKELY SAVIOR

(1) QUICK REVIEW & WALK THROUGH THE BEGINNING OF JOSEPH'S STORY

As we considered last week, the storyline of Genesis stops in Chapter 36. After this odd memorial of Esau and his descendants, the story continues very slowly with Jacob's son: Joseph. As has happened a few times before, God reminds us that He is not interested in telling us a full history of humanity... He is telling us the history of His redeeming work *for* and *through* humanity.

The dramatic scenes of that first wonderful garden, and the sinful rebellion that took place there, were followed by a stark illustration that sin was dreadfully destructive and radically pervasive.

Cain killed his brother, and he was unapologetic about it. That murder was followed by widespread death and increasing wickedness throughout generations.

The story broadens and we read about the destruction of every man, woman, boy, and girl on the planet (except, of course, the eight people God preserved through the midst of His judgement by the use of Noah's ark). That judgment was God's response to the radical sinfulness of humanity, but God still intended to make good on His promise of an "offspring" who would save His people (Gen. 3:15; cf. 9:14-17).

After humanity was dispersed from Babel, we zero in on a single character for a while. We meet Abraham as "Abram," and one of the first things we learn about this man is that he is the one through whom God intended to bless all the peoples of the world (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham was no picture of perfection, but we often found ourselves admiring his obedience and his trust in the God who speaks. Abraham was certainly set apart from among all other people, and we are wise to take notice.

After Abraham came Isaac (he is only briefly the focus of the story), and then we meet Jacob. In each of these characters (Cain, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) we are right to look for signs of God's promise in Genesis 3:15.

"Is this the 'offspring' God promised?" we might ask.

Of course, we have been sorely disappointed as of yet, since each one of these characters has failed badly to show the kind of consistent righteousness we should expect from Adam and Eve's better descendant.

But, then we meet Jacob's son, Joseph...

And this is where we will begin walking through Genesis 37.

Unlike Esau, “**Jacob** (Joseph’s father) **lived... in the land of Canaan**” (Gen. 37:1), the land God had promised as a feature of His blessings (Gen. 12:1-3, 15:17-20). Jacob lived there with his whole family, which included 12 sons. Joseph was number 11 of the 12, and we are told that Jacob (also called “Israel”) “**loved Joseph more than any other of his sons**” (v3).

Jacob’s favoritism motivated him to give Joseph a special coat that set him apart from his brothers; it was a “**robe of many colors**” (v3). “**But,**” we read, “**when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him**” (v4).

Making matters much worse, Jacob seems to have assigned Joseph as a manager over several of his older brothers. At seventeen years old, Joseph “**was pasturing the flock with his brothers,**” and he “**brought a bad report of them to their father**” (v2). The report must have been something like, “**Dad, my brothers are not picking up their room... He’s looking at me... He’s bothering me...**”

Wait, no... that is what my boys say...

Joseph must have said something like, “**Your sons are not serving you well, father.**” This was not a great help to gaining favor from his brothers, but it was true.

In addition to Jacob’s favor, Joseph also enjoyed God’s favor; and this was too much for his brothers to take. We read of two distinct dreams that Joseph had, each revealing what God would do with Joseph’s life, but not at all in the way anyone would expect.

Both dreams revealed that Joseph’s family would come under his authority. The dreams were not misunderstood by his brothers, since their reply to him was “**Are you... to rule over us?**” (v8). Moses, the narrator of this story, tells us that Joseph’s brothers hated him for both “**his dreams**” and “**his words**” (v8).

Even Joseph’s father, Jacob, had a tough time with these dreams; but he was at least willing to keep what Joseph said in mind (v11). At the very least, Jacob may have simply considered: “**If these dreams are mere ramblings, then they will come to nothing, and there is no reason to get upset... But if these dreams are from God, then they will inevitably come to pass, and there is no good that will come from my opposition to God.**”

We read in verse 12, “**Now his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock near Shechem.**”

At this point in the story, if we were watching it as a movie, we would hear the narrator and dramatic music like this, “**Now his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock near... Shechem... dun, dun, dun...**”

Shechem was a place of *half-way obedience* for Jacob (Gen. 33:18); it was a place of *defilement* for Jacob's family (Gen. 34:2); and it was a place of *horrific bloodshed* for some of Jacob's sons (Gen. 34:25-29).

Shechem is the "bad land," and Shechem is where Jacob sent Joseph to check in on his brothers. Furthermore, Joseph is sent as a manager or foreman, just like he had been before (v14); and we know that his brothers did not like his previous report.

The whole thing is stacking up like a perfect storyline. Each sentence paints another stroke in the rise of conflict and the picture of approaching climax is coming fully into view.

What will Joseph do? What will his brothers do?

How can Jacob be so foolish?

How in the world is God going to make Joseph any kind of ruler over his brothers?

At the moment, it sure looks like Joseph is headed for a buzz-saw.

But as we continue reading, Joseph seems to be either the most naïve person in the world, or the sincerest. In spite of his brothers' hatred for him, Joseph seeks to do his father's will and serve his brothers well – even at the cost of some considerable effort on his part.

Joseph went to Shechem, but he did not find his brothers there, so he asked a man where they had gone (v15-16). And, diligently, he followed his brothers' trail to Dothan (v17).

We are not told much about their move from Shechem to Dothan, but some investigation may give us at least two possible and cooperative reasons for Joseph's brothers to go there. **First,** Dothan was a fertile plain just about 5 miles north of Shechem. This would not have been too far to go, and the plains would have provided well for the sheep they were keeping. This is a very likely motivation for Joseph's brothers.

Second, Dothan was likely a traveled route for merchants and traders who were bringing things *to* and *from* Egypt. In fact, this is exactly what we see in verse 25 – a caravan of Ishmaelites going from Gilead to Egypt to sell their goods.

In God's providence, the fertile plain that attracted Joseph's murderous brothers also gave Joseph a way of escaping their wicked intentions and finding his way to Egypt. And all of this is exactly as God said it would be (Gen. 15:13).

This is a very strong theme throughout the last 13 chapters of Genesis. We shall consider this more intently on a later Sunday, but let us keep in mind God's unfolding plan in Joseph's life.

Nothing happens by mistake; and that is a major point in all of this.

At any rate, Joseph did make his way to Dothan, and he did find his brothers. But, we are told, "They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him" (v18). "They said to one another," the narrator explains, "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" (v19-20).

Oh, the treachery in their words! Here comes their brother to check their diligence, Joseph will report their service to Jacob, and Joseph has said that God intends to make him ruler over all his family.

His brothers will not stand for it... even if that means the end of Joseph. Maybe his demise will even be a relief to them. "We will see what will become of his dreams," they say. Their tone is one of hatred indeed.

Calvin comments, "in [non-biblical] history **no such thing is found,** as that nine brethren should conspire together for the destruction of an innocent youth... like wild beasts, [they] pounce upon him with bloody hands. Therefore a horrible, and even diabolical fury took possession of the sons of Jacob [when they] prepared cruelly to rage against their own blood."¹

Let us not forget that these brothers we are reading about here are the same ones for whom the tribes of Israel are named.² These are the fathers from whom "Abraham's descendants" come, and this account of their origins and biography is not flattering to say the least.

They are murderers (the kind that calculate their murderous activities); and this is not the first time that some of them have engaged in such a thing.

Their wickedness and treachery could not be more candidly displayed; and no one in their right mind would include warts such as these in their religious lineage unless the warts were real. It is content like this in the Bible that shores up my trust in this book's authenticity.

¹Calvin, J., & King, J. (2010). Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis (Vol. 2, p. 265). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

²Some adjustments are made for Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, at a later point.

The Bible is not a book of fairytales. It is a book of truth – God’s truth. The Bible does not hide the blemishes of human depravity; instead, the Bible throws the curtain back to let us see them all.

The Bible speaks honestly about the brokenness of life under the sun, and the Bible never places any ultimate hope in worldly power or efforts. The exact opposite is true.

The Bible tells us that humanity is radically depraved, and the only solution is God’s atoning work through Christ, which brings about the only effective rescue of sinners; and all of this is by God’s gracious grace.

One could certainly spend more time on this point, but we are now at a crucial segment in Joseph’s story, so let me return to it.

So, Joseph’s murderous brothers devise a plan to kill their brother and then throw his lifeless body into a pit, so that their predatory deed will be hidden from sight. “**But when Reuben heard it**” (v21), he tried to think of a way “**that he might rescue [Joseph] out of their hand**” (v22).

Ruben said to his brothers, “**Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here... but do not lay a hand on him**” (v22). Do you hear the awful reasoning? We may think it good that Ruben is trying to save Joseph from death, but let us not pass over the brutal and calloused reasoning we are confronted here.

Instead of murdering Joseph with their bare hands, Ruben asks his brothers to consider starving Joseph to death at the bottom of a pit. Homicide is still the goal, but now they are thinking about how they may keep their own hands unstained by the blood of their victim.

But we know that such a thing cannot be... When a sinner steps over the line into cosmic treason, he or she does not go unnoticed by the God who sees and knows everything.

Isn’t this the way we think, though?

Don’t we think we are covered as long as no one else knows about our sin? Don’t we think in terms of “victimless” crimes? Oh, what a ridiculous notion!

You may think that you are getting away with what you have done...

You may think that no one knows who you really are...

You may imagine that those nights, those deeds, and those words are too far hidden for anyone to find them.

But, they are not!

All things are utterly exposed before God. He has seen everything you have ever done.

He knows every thought that has gone through your mind. He has heard every word you have breathed from your mouth.

And He never forgets.

Joseph's brothers exemplify the kind of sinful foolishness that prides itself on conniving a plan so that guilt will not be sure, but in doing so, they only bring more condemnation upon themselves. Verse 23 says, **"they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. And they took him and threw him into a pit."** And verse 25, **"Then they sat down to eat."**

Can you imagine!? They have thrown their brother into a pit, to starve him to death, and now they sit down for a meal!

We can know from their later confession in Genesis 42:21 that they were still able to hear Joseph's cries for mercy. They admitted that Joseph begged them for mercy, but they did not listen.

They are eating over a fire, filling their bellies, while they listen to the faint pleas of their dying brother.

Who knows what injuries Joseph suffered when he was thrown down the dark hole to die... He was not completely immobile, since he was still worth some money as a slave, but he must have been in some physical pain.

Think also of the emotional grief Joseph must have felt. Much more would this kind of pain have gnawed at his heart and mind. What skin-crawling yells must have come from that pit of despair, while his brothers enjoyed a meal before they headed for home to tell their father of Joseph's death.

But, Joseph did not die in the pit...

His brothers **"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"** (v25). **"Then Judah"** (the youngest of Leah's sons), 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"** (v26-27).

All of the sudden, it seems, **Judah realizes** what they are doing. He says, **"he is our brother, our own flesh."** Yes! That has been the point the whole time!

They have been conspiring to kill their own brother because father loves him best, because Joseph tells father the truth about their service as shepherds, and because Joseph said that God revealed, Joseph would be ruler someday.

But now, they decide that the Midianite/Ishmaelite traders will be able to take their problem away. Therefore, it does not seem Judah really had any care at all that Joseph was “**our brother, our own flesh.**” Because, if he really cared, he would have recognized that throwing Joseph into a pit to die or into slavery for a lifetime would both be serious betrayals.

We are told that the slave traders took Joseph to Egypt, and they gave his brothers “**twenty shekels of silver**” in return for the life of their brother.

What a tragedy...

But after all of this, someone still has to tell their father the story of what happened to his beloved son.

They could not tell the true story, of course... So, they “**took Joseph’s robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood**” (v31).

The irony here is thick. They should be throwing themselves on the mercy of God, offering Him a sacrifice that might (at least temporarily) appease His wrath towards them. They had, no doubt, heard of these kinds of sacrifices happening before.

This goat was not offered as a sin offering, but instead, this goat was sacrificed for their own wicked deception.

Then they “brought it to their father,” (v32)... Hear the glib and uncaring way they tell their father that his son is dead. They brought the bloodstained-coat to their father, and they say, “**This we have found; please identify whether it is your son’s robe or not**” (v32).

They offer no explanation. They do not try to console their father with the closure of recounting even a false story of Joseph’s demise.

They simply offer a bloody coat and a missing son.

Jacob assumes that Joseph was killed by a fierce animal, **but he could not have known that the vicious predators were standing right in front of him.**

He understandably reacted with horror. Jacob “tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days” (v34). We are told that he “refused to be comforted,” and he vowed to mourn for the rest of his life (v35).

Oh, what torment must have been in Jacob’s heart!

What depravity is standing in front of his face!

What a dashing of any hope we should feel as we read through this story...

But, then the narrator cuts back to another scene – Egypt.

“Meanwhile,” we are told, “the Midianites had sold [Joseph] in Egypt to Potiphar,” who was “an officer of Pharaoh” and even the “captain of the guard” (v36).

And, with this brief clip, like the short scene after the credits of a Marvel super hero movie, we are given just enough information to send our hopes rising for another climax yet to come.

(2) MARVELING AT JOSEPH AS A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST

As I mentioned in my introduction, **Joseph is a “type” of Jesus Christ.** This word, *type*, may not be familiar to everyone in the room; so allow me to briefly explain what I mean.

“Typology” is a literary tool used in the Bible and in other works of literature as well. ***Typology includes types*** (those *forms* or *shadows* that give a less than full picture of something or someone to come) **and *antitypes*** (those *perfect* and *full* displays of what the types only imaged or shadowed).

It might help to think about it like this...

If I stood in front of a cardboard wall, and someone traced the outline of my form, and then cut out the shape, then that shape would be a “type” of me.

It would resemble me; it would even portray me to a certain extent; but it would only be a type.

Once I stand beside the cardboard cut-out, you would easily see that the cut-out gives you an impression of me, but the real thing is much more vivid.

In a complex story, there may be any number of types and antitypes; and the Bible is certainly the kind of story in which we find several types and antitypes.

The author of Hebrews gives us a great example of both *type* and *antitype*.

He says, “Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. [A] tent was prepared, [and] the first section... is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant ...” (Heb. 9:1–4). Then in verse 11 he says, “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through **the greater and more perfect tent** (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:11–12).

So the author of Hebrews tells us that the Old Testament Temple was a type of Christ (for in Christ, God came to dwell among us [Jn. 1:14]) and a type of the actual “holy place” in God’s eternal presence, which is “the greater and more perfect tent.”

The subject of typology is fascinating and mind-blowing. We could easily get lost in such deep and rich imagery, but let me pull our focus back to the character at hand this morning.

Joseph is a type of Christ in many respects, but let me list some parallels.

- Joseph was Jacob’s beloved son (Gen. 37:3); and God the Father says to Jesus Christ, “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased” (Lk. 3:22).
- Joseph was sent to seek out his lost brothers (Gen. 37:15-16); and Jesus said that He “came to seek and to save the lost” (Lk. 19:10).
- Joseph was sent with a message of love from his father to those lost ones (Gen. 37:14); and Jesus was the apex of God’s message of love to the lost world (Jn. 3:16).
- Joseph was a willing messenger from his father, saying “here I am” (Gen. 37:13); and Jesus willingly came to do His Father’s will (Heb. 10:7).
- It was out of envy that Joseph’s brothers were moved to violence against him (Gen. 37:11); and the religious leaders of Jesus’ day were moved to violence because of envy toward Him as well (Mk. 15:10).

- Joseph was hated by his brothers because he reported against them to their father (Gen. 37:2); and Jesus is hated because of His testimony against the evil works of the world (Jn. 7:7).
- Joseph only further aggravated his brothers when he spoke about his coming superiority (Gen. 37:8); and Jesus was fiercely opposed when He spoke of His superiority over all things (Jn. 8:59).
- Both Joseph and Jesus were conspired against by murderers (Gen. 37:18; Jn. 5:18).
- Both Joseph and Jesus were derided for their prophetic statements of victory (Gen. 37:20; Mk. 15:29).
- Both Joseph and Jesus were falsely condemned (Gen. 39:20; Matt. 26:59-60).
- Both Joseph and Jesus were wrongly numbered among transgressors (Gen. 40:2-3; Matt. 27:38).

In all of this, we can see that God means to carve out a cardboard silhouette for us to begin seeking to fill with greater detail as we read through the rest of the Bible.

Jesus came to His disciples, after His resurrection, and “**beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself**” (Lk. 24:27). In this way, He showed them how He is the antitype of many types; He is the full display of these partial pictures.

We should never read the Bible in order to only gain some simple instructions about *what to do* or *not do*. If we read the story of Joseph and only come away with life-lessons on relationship conflict or personal purity, then we will have missed the major point.

Do not forget that chapter 37 comes right after chapter 36!

Esau was a man of worldly power and fame, but Joseph was headed in the exact opposite direction. God’s intentions are to show us His pattern of operation in this world.

God has offered sinners a Savior, but He is an unlikely one.

Christ saves sinners through weakness, in the face of seeming defeat, and without ever using any worldly power.

(3) RESTING ANEW IN THE UNLIKELY SAVIOR

The brief look at Joseph's story today has reminded us that Joseph was an extremely unlikely savior for his family, but that is exactly what he became. So significant was Joseph, that he made his descendants swear to bring his bones out of Egypt when they would depart about 400 years later, and Moses did exactly that when God delivered them from the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ex. 13:19).

When we think about Joseph as a type of Christ, we are reminded that Jesus was also an unlikely Savior. He was born into the humblest of families, and He had no honorary welcome from the world. Shepherds and obscure God-fearers were the primary ones who noticed Jesus as the Messiah of old.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus never seemed to own any property, and He didn't seem to have any place to call home. Jesus was constantly rejected by those with authority, and He was ultimately humiliated and executed by the religious and state leaders at that time. Additionally, Jesus death was a crushing blow to everyone who hoped in Him.

Jesus was an unlikely Savior indeed.

Of course, we know that the Bible proclaims that Jesus did not stay dead. He arose from the grave with divine power and snatched victory from defeat. But here is where I hope to focus for the closing moments of our time today.

When we think of Jesus Christ, we are right to think of Him as the victorious King and the conquering Lord. He is such things indeed!

And yet, He wins victory, He conquers His foes, with the total opposite of the expected strategy (at least in this age). There is coming a day when Christ will incinerate His foes and crush every opposing force with His omnipotent power, but that is not His method of operation for the time being.

Think hard about this...

It is **not** that God "turned Jesus's defeat into a victory." He didn't use the circumstances of a bad situation to bring about something good.

That is not the case at all! Christ won victory precisely the way He intended.

Christ suffered defeat, He died, and He was buried. Defeat and death is the way He won supreme victory.

Now, His resurrection is proof that victory was won; and we may rest assured that Christ is forever victorious because He is the risen Savior. But let us not forget that Christ has accomplished His work through the crucible of suffering.

The importance for remembering this is made known to us when we discover that the Christian life often seems unlikely to end in victory. Listen to how the Apostle Paul wrote about this to first-century Christians in Rome.

He said, “**God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.**”

Then Paul went on to say, “**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God**” (Rom. 8:16–19).

Suffering... Suffering with Christ... Suffering during the present age...

Suffering is something Christians do not seem to talk much about except in clichéd and euphemistic ways. Christians will speak of suffering as something to avoid, something to eradicate, and something to be beaten with various strategies.

Ah, but such a posture towards suffering does not come from the Bible. Christ was the “suffering servant” (Is. 53), and Paul said (in the passage I just read) that a Christian should not expect to be glorified with Christ unless he or she has suffered with Christ first.

What a cheerful note to end on here today? Huh?

But listen... I really think there is something profound here for those who will take it. And I think there is something joy-filled and freeing here as well.

Anyone who has lived a little while will know that suffering in this life is unavoidable. The Bible does not deny your suffering, and it does not promise that you will be totally free from it during this mortal life.

But, the Bible does remind us that Christ has demonstrated the path of divine victory... and that path inevitably travels through suffering. Christ shows us that suffering can and does lead to our victory, therefore we may embrace the course we have been given.

Calvin said, “[Christ] brings forth the salvation of his Church, not from magnificent splendor, but from death and the grave.”³ So, we will follow our Savior, and trust in Him – this One who brings victory through defeat and joy through suffering. We trust in Him, because He is with us and He has gone before us.

³Calvin, J., & King, J. (2010). Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis (Vol. 2, pp. 260–261). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

“The Faithful Endurance of Suffering” by Keith Mathison

<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/faithful-endurance-suffering/>

“Joseph – The Suffering Servant” by I. Gordon

<http://www.jesusplusnothing.com/studies/online/jcjoseph.htm>

“Personal Types and Shadows of Christ” by Nicholas Batzig

<http://feedingonchrist.com/old-testament-personal-types-and-shadows-of-christ/>