

WHAT GOD SEES

What Joseph saw was a pit, then servanthood to Potiphar and finally prison.

Living Through Trials

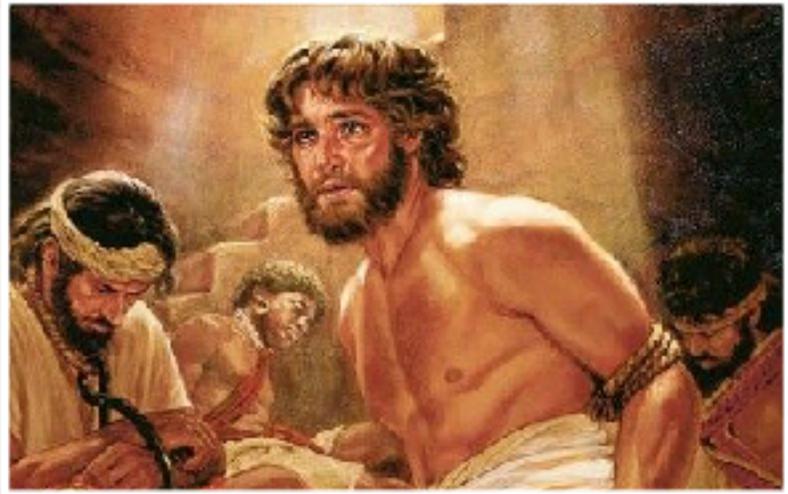
What is it that we see when going through severe trials? Is it not just the trial? Little else matters. The mind races, the heart is consumed, and the soul is troubled. Such was the heart and mind of Joseph.

At 17 his brothers threw him into a pit and sold him to Midianite traders, who sold him into slavery. Anger, bitterness, and fear must have all but consumed him. How could his brother's do this? Will he ever see home again? How can I escape? Why is God letting this happen? Joseph experienced all these thoughts and more, packed with fear, rage, and despair.

When he arrived in Egypt he was reduced to a piece of property with no rights, chained to a pole and humiliated as he stood naked on a slave block before buyers. He was finally sold to Potiphar.

We estimate he serve Potiphar for 13 years — from 17 years of age until 30. In that time he must have resigned himself to God (Genesis 39:2-3) for we are told that the Lord prospered him.

“And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him,



and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.”

In this period the trial had abated a little, but he was still a slave. He had gone from a free man to a bondman in a blink of an eye. Joseph must have wondered what the Lord was doing. Was this to be his lot for the rest of his life? What Joseph could see was a pit and servanthood to Potiphar. But his trial didn't end there. It got worse.

He stood for righteous purity and he was thrown into prison. This injustice proved to be worse than the first. How could God allow this to happen? Joseph was standing firm for God and he was defamed and thrown into prison. What was God doing? All Joseph saw now was a prison, the stocks, the poor food and living conditions with no way out.

He did not yet see as the Psalmist wrote that he was sent before his family to save them

“He (God) sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant” — Ps 105:17.

All Joseph saw was the latter part of what the Psalmist wrote:

“Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him” — Ps 105:18-19.

Joseph experienced hardship, suffering, confinement, injustice, and sores on his legs. His only comfort was what came from the Lord. The light on his path was enough to see the next step, but not enough to see beyond that. Scripture tells us he spent over two years in prison.

“Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him. And it came to

pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed . . .” — Gen. 40:23-41:1.

Sometimes all we see is the trial, the hardship, the loss and the suffering, interrupted occasionally by a blessing from the Lord.

Today’s lesson will examine what God saw in this case with Joseph. Now this lesson will not be able to tell you everything God saw. That is impossible to do. What it will do is highlight what we are told in Scripture. In doing so, we will find some of the answers as to why God waited so long and what God was doing while Joseph suffered.

It is my prayer that through Joseph’s trial we will be able to better grasp the fact that , “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” — Romans 8:28.

- 1. Read Psalm 105:17-19 and discuss drastic changes Joseph experienced over the last 13 years of his life (from freedom to the pit, to slavery and prison). Discuss the range of emotions you might experience going through those situations. How would you handle it?**
- 2. Read and discuss the butler’s dream (Genesis 40:5-15, 20-21; 41:1). Joseph still had to wait two more years before the butler brought his name before Pharaoh. How do you think this might have affected Joseph?**

3. Obviously, God being omniscient, saw the full range of Joseph's struggles and emotions. **What did God do for Joseph to help him through this period of time (Genesis 39:21)? Would that have been enough for you?**

4. **Discuss the dynamics in Joseph's family before and after Joseph was sold into slavery. How does all this fit into God's sovereign plan?**

- **Genesis 37:32-35 — with Jacob**

ANSWER:

God also saw Jacob, Joseph's father's grief. His beloved son was killed by a wild beast, never to come back to him again.

Genesis 37:35 says that Jacob refused to be comforted.

"And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

Jacob was a changed man. He was filled with grief over the loss of Joseph, and grief over his wayward sons. And God saw this broken man and his family and was doing something about it.

- **Genesis 38:1-2 — with Judah**

ANSWER:

Judah left home – Genesis 38:1-2. No doubt in guilt and grief. It was his plan to sell Joseph to the Midianites (Genesis 37:26-27). Now He could not stand to see his father grieving. So he left home.

"And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. 2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her . . ." Genesis 42:21-22

- **Genesis 38:26-27, 29; Matthew 1:3 — with Tamar/Pharez**

ANSWER:

God also saw the guilt eating away in Judah. Even with all of Judah's wrongs God provided twins to Tamar. This child (Pharez) became part of the Messianic line.

Yes, as God was working out our eternity He was also preparing Judah's heart to repent and return to Him.

- **Genesis 42:21 — with Joseph's brothers.**

ANSWER:

God also saw the guilt eating away in Joseph's brothers.

Gen. 42:21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. 22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required

God wasn't just working with Joseph. He was working with Joseph's family, the Egyptians, Israel's future and our eternity, all at once. In Joseph, God was doing a work to restore them.

5. What does God see in the following passages and how does this impact what God was doing with Joseph?

- **Genesis 15:12-16; Exodus 12:40-41**

ANSWER:

God knew the future. Israel's future and our future – Genesis 15:13-14

"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

God knew the famine was coming. He also knew if Jacob and his sons remained in the Promised Land they would be consumed by the Canaanites and their corruption. He also knew they would be in the land for 400 years.

God was in the process of working every aspect of Joseph's deliverance and rise to power; restoring and delivering Jacob and his sons and fulfilling prophecy and much more.

God was at work behind the scenes in all of Joseph's anguish — 13 years with Potiphar, 2 plus years in prison, another 9 years working for Pharaoh before he saw his brothers. Then another 2 years before Joseph was restored to his father. Twenty-six years in all.

- **Genesis 37:5-8; 9-11 and Genesis 40:5-23**

ANSWER:

In these passages we can see God's omnipotence as He moves behind the scenes preparing hearts.

It began in the dreams and interpretations of Joseph. God wanted everyone to know Joseph's rise in power was not a random coincidence or sheer luck. This was the work of God (Genesis 37:5-8, 9-11).

6. So what do we learn from this lesson regarding . . .

a. God's Grace - (Undeserved blessings)

ANSWER:

God deals with Joseph's brothers guilt over human trafficking, lying, deceiving, envy and much more. God deals with Jacob's guilt of favoritism. The family was not much of an example worthy of blessing, but out of Judah, and his Canaanite daughter-in-law Tamar, comes Pharez who became part of the Messianic line. What we are seeing is grace. Undeserved favor. Undeserved loved. This trait is the foundation of our salvation and God's continual blessing in our lives.

b. God's Sovereignty - God is moving history to His end

ANSWER:

If God was moving in history then, is He not doing it today? We see the nations in upheaval, we see men rejecting God and His word and yet we have God's promises. God is still in control

c. God working in dysfunctional families

ANSWER:

God is still rebuking and restoring families. He is able to change hearts. In Joseph's case it took 26 years to restore the family. It just reminds us that it is never too late for your family.

7. In what ways does this lesson help us understand Romans 8:28?