

## **“Down and Out, But Never Alone!”**

(09-22-13)

Joseph was truly gifted by God. He had a gentle spirit and he'd also been given the ability to have dreams that seemed to have special meanings. He was spoiled by his father, Jacob, and that made him the scourge of his brothers! When they saw him coming to see them out in the field, they took the opportunity to take control!

Open to Genesis 37. They tore off his special robe and threw him into a pit. After ignoring his pleas for help, they saw the chance to get rid of him and sold him to some traders as a slave for 20 shekels of silver! Verses 26-28, *“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.”*

Hatred put Joseph in the pit! Greed got him out! The brothers were still going to have to lie to their father, but at that point, they felt the sweet taste of revenge! It wasn't until they were confronted with Joseph in Egypt as the Prime Minister, that they realized their guilt and uncaring and had done wrong! At that point, the guilty turned repentant!

**God was with Joseph.** Now Joseph is in Egypt! Now his life of privilege is gone! Now he's a slave! But God had a destiny for Joseph, and Joseph believed in it! Joseph was seen as someone special. He moves to Potiphar's house to command the servants, but then is accosted by Potiphar's wife and sent to prison for his alleged actions.

But his blessings didn't stop there! He was seen as a special prisoner and his interpretation of dreams came in handy! Pharaoh himself made him Prime Minister in charge of food distribution! God had His hand on Joseph and was guiding him through it all!

**God is with you.** God has a destiny for you too! He knows you as His special creation. He knows every talent and ability He's given you, and knows your strengths and weaknesses even better than you do! You are God's child! Listen to the beginning of John 15:16, *“You did not choose me, but I chose you.”*

As we found in Isaiah 43 last week, God says, *“I have called you by name, you are mine!”* No matter where you are. No matter what you do. No matter what situation you find yourself, God is there! You will never go where God is not! Even when you think it could never get worse and you feel all alone and with no hope, you've got to remember that God knows and He's right there at your side!

But there is something else you need to know! Survival in your Egypt begins with a yes to God's call on your life! He has a plan. All He asks of you is that you're open to Him and He will give you exactly what you need! That doesn't mean every struggle is going to disappear and you'll be free, but it does mean He will get you through all of them if you just turn them over to Him!

God saw your need. That's why He not only promised a Savior, but sent His One and Only Son to take your place and suffer and die for you. Jesus' death and resurrection is a gift that comes with real blessings. Because of Him, we will see heaven for eternity as we walk by faith! Your struggles will not last forever, but you will!

Open to 2 Corinthians 5. This world and our life in it is so temporary! We get so wrapped up in the now, and what's going on each moment, that we sometimes lose sight of the big picture and the ultimate reality God has planned for us. Look at verses 1-2, *“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan,*

*longing to put on our heavenly dwelling.*” We’re just strangers here. Heaven is our true home!

**Make God’s Presence your Passion.** God’s presence is all around you. Just look! He’s continually acting in your life. Because of our human nature, many times we respond to Him with a hardened heart because things didn’t turn out the way we wanted. Hardened hearts don’t heal! Instead, we need to fill our lives to overflowing with the warmth of His Spirit by being in His Word each day and seeking His guidance through prayer.

Lay claim to the nearness of God! God said in Hebrews 13:5, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* As Max put it, *“Grip this promise like the parachute it is. Repeat it to yourself over and over until it trumps the voices of fear and worry.”* God is near you whether you’re happy or not. You have to trust His plan and guidance!

Cling to the character of God! Look at the Bible and find the deep qualities of God and then press them deeply into your heart! He is the Almighty Creator. He loves us with a never-ending love. He cares for us and sent Jesus to take our place. He’s in control of everything around us. There’s no one on earth that can match His power and majesty! No one! The world may change, but God doesn’t!

Pray your pain out! When you’re in pain, turn to God in honest prayer. Tell Him how you feel even if the situation has made you mad at Him! Don’t worry, He can take it! He’s your Almighty, Loving Father! Psalm 142:2 put it this way, *“I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him.”* As Augustine put it, *“How deep in the deep are they who do not cry out of the deep.”* Tell Him everything! Don’t quit!

Lean on God’s people. Instead of turning inward, know that God has placed you here to be around fellow children of God! Matthew 18:20 says, *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”* God’s presence is here! Just like you greet each other at the beginning of worship, be open to share and listen to each other sharing your joys and sorrows. It’s wonderful to know that there’s someone else who’s lifting your situation up to God in prayer!

We’ve all been in the pit! We’ve all experienced the bottom of life! Listen how Max closes the third chapter with hope, *“We know what the bottom looks like, and we know who’s waiting there—Jesus Christ.*

*He’s waiting on you, my friend. If Joseph’s story is any precedent, God can use Egypt to teach you that He is with you. Your family may be gone. Your supporters may have left. Your counselor may be silent. But God has not budged. His promise still stands: “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go!”*