

# PM Genesis 37:12-36 Joseph Sold

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[0:00] Well friends, good evening. Welcome to another online service, another opportunity to come together and hear from God's Word. We're continuing tonight our studies in the book of Joseph. We're continuing tonight our studies in the life of Joseph.

We've come to this incident this evening where his brothers take Joseph and they sell him to this caravan of passing Midianite traders. As we come tonight, let's read together from God's Word in Genesis 37.

Genesis 37 and these verses 12 through the end of the chapter. Genesis chapter 37, beginning to read at verse 12. Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem.

And Israel said to Joseph, Are not your brothers pasturing the flock of Shechem? Come, I will send you to them. And he said, Here I am. 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 them from the valley of Hebron and he came to Shechem. And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, What are you seeking? I'm seeking my brothers, he said.

[1:12] Tell me, please, where are they pasturing the flock? And the man said, They've gone far away, for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

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. 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 colours that he wore, and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty, there was no water in it.

[2:15] 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 with 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.

[3:17] 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 sons for 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 in 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. Amen. This is the reading of God's inspired and an errant word.

It will be helpful for us if you keep that passage open in front of you, if you keep Genesis 37 open in front of you, as we come to study it this evening. It will enable you to see and test everything that I'm saying against the word of God.

One of the fascinating aspects of Scotland is Scots law. It's the Scottish legal system. It is, in many senses, of course, similar, very similar, to the legal system that we find in England.

[ 4 : 25 ] But there are some slight nuances, there are some slight differences in the Scottish legal system to the English one. The most obvious way that we see that is that, of course, in Scotland there are three verdicts open for a jury to return on a defendant.

There is the guilty, there is the innocent, and then unique to Scotland there is, of course, the not proven verdict. You can also see it when it comes to murder trials. When it comes to murder trials, very often people are quite happy to admit the offence of culpable homicide without being willing to admit the offence of murder.

And that kind of got me thinking, well, what's the difference? Why are people so keen? Why are people so ready to admit to culpable homicide but not to murder? Now, I have to confess that I'm no legal expert.

I'm sure most of you are shocked to hear that this evening, but I'm no legal expert. But it seems to me that the main difference between culpable homicide and murder seems to be the question of intent.

With culpable homicide, what you're admitting to is that I am culpable, I am responsible for the death of this person, but it was kind of an accident or it wasn't planned, it wasn't premeditated, it wasn't what I intended.

[ 5 : 41 ] Things got a little bit out of hand, and that's how it happened. Whereas with murder, there is that sense of premeditation, there is that sense of, this was exactly what I had planned to do, this was exactly how I thought it would pan out.

Now, why do we mention that this evening? Why do we use that as our opening illustration tonight? Well, because as we come to Genesis 37, as we come to this incident with Joseph and his brothers, we see that their actions are entirely premeditated.

In a sense, we thought a little bit about that last week, didn't we? We saw how this hatred was building in their hearts for Joseph. The actions that we see tonight are not a one-off, they're not a spur of the moment, it's not just a decision that they make like that, and it happens, it's been a premeditated, preplanned action that they've had for quite some time.

They see Joseph coming from a long way off, and initially they have this plan to kill him, initially they have this plan to do away with him. But then later that plan changes, and instead they just throw him into this pit, but it's all premeditated, it's not spur of the moment, it doesn't just happen.

It's what they've planned and conceived in their hearts. We want to see three things, we can think about three things tonight. Firstly, we want to think about the check, the check that Jacob sends Joseph on, to see what his brothers are doing, to see how the flocks are doing.

[ 7 : 10 ] Secondly then, we want to think about this conspiracy that the brothers come up with, the conspiracy to murder Joseph initially, and then secondly, this conspiracy to sell him to these Ishmaelite traders who happen to be passing by.

And then thirdly and finally, we want to think about concealment. How they go about trying to conceal their sin, how they go about trying to cover up their sin. Check, conspiracy, concealment. So firstly then, we come to the check, the check, and we see that in verses 12 through 17, verses 12 through 17, the check. So we remember where we are in the life story of Joseph, we remember where we are in the history of Joseph, the things that we've seen so far.

In our first study, we thought about how Jacob loved Rachel, we thought about how Leah knew that she wasn't really valued by her husband. We saw how ultimately the Lord had blessed Leah with offspring, with children, and Rachel was barren for a long time until Joseph came along.

We saw how this caused resentment, even in the family. We saw last week how Joseph was clearly the favourite. We saw how that showed itself through the presentation of a robe with many colours.

[ 8 : 27 ] We saw how his dreams had obviously caused resentment, again had caused this feeling to build up within the family of Joseph being the favourite, of Joseph being untouchable. So it was a dysfunctional family then.

It's not a happy family, it's not a picture, postcard family, if you like. It isn't a family at peace with itself, and we're going to see this disharmony this evening bubble right to the surface.

We're going to see this disharmony tonight break through in very extreme ways. So we see as we come to verse 12 then, we're told by the author that the brothers have gone off to pasture the flocks, that the brothers have been sent away to Shechem to pasture the flocks.

But notice who doesn't go. Notice who isn't sent initially. Notice who doesn't have to do any work, because what are we told? Verse 13, Israel said to Joseph, Joseph's not there.

Joseph isn't doing the work with the brothers. Joseph isn't doing the hard labor of looking after the flock with the rest of the brothers. Again, we see that resentment. Again, we see that favoritism building, don't we?

[ 9 : 40 ] Joseph isn't a young boy at this point. It isn't like he's being kept away because he's too young. We're going to figure out and find out later on in Genesis that as Joseph came into Pharaoh's service, he's probably 30 years old, Genesis 41.

Joseph at that point had been in prison for two years, so that takes us to 28. Joseph had also been in Potiphar's service for a little time and to work his way up to the position that he did, he probably would have had to have been in Pharaoh's service for, in Potiphar's service, sorry, for a little bit of time.

So he's not a young boy. He's probably, I think Genesis 37 here tells us that Joseph was 17 years old. So I think we're in that ballpark, 17, 18, 19.

He's not a young boy. He should be at work with the rest of the brothers. He should be there pastoring the flocks with them, but because he's his father's favorite, because he's daddy's boy, he's left at home in a life of ease and comfort.

He's being protected by his father. He's being shielded by his father to use the common parlance of today. He doesn't have to do any real hard graft.

[ 10 : 56 ] He doesn't have to work hard. So Jacob sends him, right, go and see what's happening with your brothers. Go and see how they're getting on. Go and see how the flocks are near Shechem.

And bring me word. Let me know what's happening. I want to make sure your brothers are okay. I want to make sure that the flocks are okay. Now, of course, we know that from last week, Joseph has a pretty low opinion of his brothers, doesn't he?

Think about what we read in verse 2 of chapter 37. We saw how Joseph brought a bad report about his brothers to his father. And so almost it's being set up for confrontation again, isn't it?

Jacob says to Joseph, look, go and see how they're doing. Bearing in mind, of course, that he's already brought a bad report. Bearing in mind, of course, that he's already said bad things to them. About his father. So that's all feeding in to what we're going to see tonight.

That's all feeding in. That's all the background to what we see this evening. He comes to Shechem. He arrives, but of course, the problem is that the brothers aren't there. The brothers and the flocks are nowhere to be seen.

[ 12 : 01 ] And this man finds Joseph wandering in the fields. He finds him looking for his brothers and says to him, look, what are you looking for? Can I help you? One of my relatives who shall remain nameless has a terrible habit of going to supermarkets and standing around looking lost.

His theory is that if you stand around looking lost for long enough, then eventually a shop assistant will come to you and say, what are you looking for? Can I help you? And that they will then take you to the product and if you wait long enough, they'll probably scan the product for you as well.

His theory is that it involves cutting down waiting and looking time. And you can almost imagine Joseph here wandering around the fields.

You can almost imagine him looking lost. And eventually this man takes pity on him. Eventually this man says to him, look, what are you looking for? I'm looking for my brothers, verse 16.

They're supposed to be pastoring the flocks. They're supposed to be here in Shechem. And the man says, oh, your brothers? Yes, well, I'm afraid they've gone to Dothan. So Joseph follows and goes to Dothan in search of his brothers and in search of a flock.

[ 13 : 19 ] It's tempting to ask the question tonight, well, what does this have to do with me? What do these five verses really mean to us today? I mean, it's pretty obscure, isn't it?

We don't live in a farming, largely agricultural setting today in Dumfries. So what does it mean for us? Well, we've seen before the danger of favoritism in families.

We see here how it's going to ultimately tear this family apart. Yet again, we remember how we are beloved sons and daughters of the Most High God this evening. That when God adopts us in his Son, Jesus Christ, when God brings us into his family tonight, we cannot be any more loved and valued than we are.

All the saving who are in Jesus Christ will receive their reward. So that's the check Jacob sends Joseph on. Secondly then, we want to think about the conspiracy, the conspiracy that the brothers come up with.

And we see that in verses 18 through 28. Verses 18 through 28, the conspiracy. So the brothers are there in Dothan. They see Joseph coming from a long way off.

[14:32] How they recognize him, we aren't told. It could be that he had his distinctive coat on. Well, we know that he had his distinctive coat on from what we read later on in the chapter. It could be that as they see him coming in the distance, they say, look, there is Joseph's coat.

It could be something about his gear. It could be something about the way he carries himself, the way that he walks. So the brothers say, well, I mean, that guy kind of looks a little bit like Joseph. We all have that experience, don't we, of perhaps driving or walking in a busy street.

And just suddenly you'll catch someone that you know. You'll catch them from their mannerisms. You'll catch them from the way that they carry and conduct themselves. And you'll say, look, there's Jimmy. So too for the brothers.

As they see Joseph approaching here, they're in no doubt that is Joseph. That is our brother. And yet notice what's recorded for us in verse 18.

They saw him from afar, verse 18, and before he came near to them, they conspired against him to kill him.

[15:37] That's what I said at the beginning, isn't it? There's intent here. This wasn't a spur of the moment thing. This wasn't a fight that got out of hand. This wasn't just a decision made in a split second that they regretted.

This was a deliberate decision. This was a deliberate decision to kill their brother. It was a deliberate decision that they made in their hearts. That they wanted their brother dead and they were going to follow through with it.

It is, of course, the same thing that we see with our Lord Jesus Christ, isn't it? Often we read in the Gospels, often we read in the life stories of Jesus, how the religious leaders had in their hearts decided that Jesus had to be killed.

That they plotted what they might do to him after some particularly controversial teaching that he'd given against them, after some particularly scathing criticism that he'd given against them. They said in their hearts, well, what can we do with this man?

And they come to the conclusion he must die. The death of Jesus Christ was no accident. The death of Jesus Christ was no spur of the moment decision.

[16:45] Rather, it was a decision that had been planned. It was a decision that had been prepared and plotted for by the religious leaders. But actually, it was a plan that had been prepared for by God long before that.

Constantly in the Gospels we find Jesus teaching his disciples what it meant to be the Messiah. That it meant suffering, that it meant death, but also that it meant after three days rising again. The death of Jesus Christ was no accident. Jesus came to lay down his life willingly for the sheep. Jesus came to take away the sin of the world.

Jesus came to lay down his life and to take it up again. It was a premeditated act by the religious leaders. Of course it was. But it was also an act of God to bring deliverance and salvation. According to his plans and purposes, it was also an act that God would use to advance his plan of salvation to the nations. So they've set apart in their hearts.

[17:50] They said in their hearts that he must die. And notice what's got them so riled up, verse 19. Notice what it is that's got them so annoyed. They said to one another, verse 19, here comes this dreamer.

Come, let's kill him. Come, let's throw him into one of these pits. And then let's see what becomes of his dreams. Let's see what becomes of all of the things that he said then once he's dead.

They hadn't forgotten about the dreams. They hadn't forgotten the clear implication of the dreams. They hadn't forgotten what it was that Joseph had said. And so their response, the only thing they can do is plan to kill him.

They hadn't forgotten that he said that one day they'd bowed on and worshipped him. That one day they'd kneel before him. And so he must die.

I remember after one of the games a few months ago now, sadly, chatting to the manager of Dalbedee Star afterwards. And I was chatting to him on the Monday night at training and saying to him, you know, we were unlucky on Saturday.

[ 19 : 03 ] It was quite often a common refrain, sadly, that we heard on a Monday night at training. And he said, yeah, I thought we played really well. Our plan was essentially to stop them playing football.

Our plan was to try and stop them from playing football. And that's what the brother's plan is here. Let's stop this dreamer. Let's kill this dreamer.

And then we'll see what becomes of his dreams. Then we'll see what becomes of his plans. Then we'll see how we bow down and worship him. Let's kill him and stop him. And we see the depths that they're prepared to sink to, don't we?

If murder wasn't bad enough, if killing their brother wasn't bad enough, then they're prepared to lie to their father. They're prepared to tell their father.

They're prepared to put their father through the grief of thinking that his son was dead in order to stop this dreamer. They're prepared to say to their father, look, a fierce animal took him.

[ 20 : 02 ] We found this robe and it's covered in blood. What could have happened to him? So we often see sin leads to sin, leads to sin, and ultimately sin leads to death.

The sin here of wanting their brother dead leads to the action of, well, ultimately casting their brother into a pit, leads to the action of lying to their father, leads to the action of trying to conceal their action.

sin leads to sin, leads to sin, leads to death. And in our own lives we so easily see how that happens, don't we?

We perhaps do something that we know we're not supposed to do and then we have to tell a lie in order to cover for that thing that we weren't supposed to do.

Or perhaps we tell a little white lie, just a little half-truth, a seemingly inconsequential thing in the grand scheme of life. But again, before we know it, we have to tell another lie to cover up that lie and then we have to tell another lie to cover up that lie.

[ 21 : 11 ] And so the process just carries on mushrooming until we don't know where we started in. Sin leads to sin, leads to sin, leads to death. Yet friends, this evening we can know forgiveness from sin.

We can know the peace of sins forgiven through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. All our sin is nailed to that cross and we bear it no more. The wages of sin is death, the gift of sin is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life in His Son, Jesus Christ. So that's the plan then. That's the conspiracy that they've come up with against their brother.

But Reuben catches wind of the plan now. Reuben, remember, who's the oldest. Reuben, remember, who is the oldest son of Leah. And in verse 21, perhaps knowing the pain that this would cause his father, perhaps even out of genuine love and care and concern for Joseph, perhaps even just for care and concern for himself.

He would, after all, be responsible for the brothers when they were out pastoring the flock as the oldest, tries to save Joseph. He tries to get the brothers to change their plan. Look, don't kill him, verse 21. Instead, let's throw him into the pit, verse 22.

[ 22 : 34 ] He knew full well that he was going to come back. He knew full well that the plan ultimately was that he would come back and rescue Joseph. Joseph. So Joseph come near and they beat him.

Now they take his robe off him. Notice that, please. They take the sign, if you like. They take the seal of the father's blessing, of Jacob's blessing on Joseph. They take that off him and throw him into the pit.

But yet the pit was empty. There was no water in it. So all seems to be going to plan, at least Reuben's plan anyway. Reuben's managed to make sure that the brothers don't kill Joseph.

He's managed to make sure that he's been thrown into a pit that has no water in it so that he doesn't drown. He's got this plan formulated in his head that he's going to come back slightly later and rescue his brother from the pit.

And then suddenly over the hill, verse 25, they see this caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. And Judah pipes up and Judah says, well look, what do we gain, verse 26, if we kill him?  
[ 23 : 39 ] What do we gain if we kill him and conceal his blood? Why should we? But his reasoning, his reasoning is so hard to take, isn't it? Because what does he say, verse 27, don't touch him, why?

Why? Verse 27, for he is our brother, our own flesh. Beating him up, no problem with that. Taking his coat off him, no problem with that.

Throwing him into the pit, no problem with that. It doesn't matter then that he's our own flesh, it doesn't matter then that he's our brother, but don't touch him. Instead, let's sell him to these Ishmaelites, instead let's sell him to these traders and we can make a bit of money out of it as well. they sell Joseph for 20 pieces of silver, 20 shekels of silver. And they take Joseph to Egypt, the Midianite traders take Joseph to Egypt, very end of verse 28.

So we've seen this check that Jacob sends Joseph on, we've seen the conspiracy that the brothers launch against Joseph, and then finally tonight we think about the concealment of their sin, the concealment of their sin.

[ 24 : 50 ] We see that in verses 29 through 36. Verses 29 through 36, the concealment of sin. So I'm not sure what's going on here, Reuben perhaps has other duties to attend to, he's perhaps away, looking after a section of the flock, he probably has something more pressing to deal with, but anyway, he comes back to the pit.

He obviously hasn't been there when Joseph has been sold to the Ishmaelites. He obviously hasn't been there when this transaction has taken place. But now he comes, verse 29, to the pit.

And he sees that Joseph isn't there. The boy's gone, he says, verse 30. And what am I to do?

Where am I to go? It was Reuben's job, as we mentioned earlier, to look after the family.

It was Reuben's job to protect them as the oldest. It was Reuben's job to make sure that they were safe as they pastured the flock. And now he's saying, well look, where can I go?

But now the original plan kicks in, doesn't it? Verse 31, they take Joseph's robe and slaughter the goat and dip the robe in the blood. This original plan to try and conceal the death of their brother, this original plan to try and make out like a fierce animal had taken him, kicks back in.

[ 26 : 07 ] They kill a goat and dip the robe of many colours in the blood of the goat. Now please pay careful attention to that, friends.

Please don't miss the symbolism of that. A goat is killed. A goat is sacrificed to try and cover the sins of the brothers. To try and conceal the sin of the brothers.

And it's always been that way since the Garden of Eden, hasn't it? Think about Garden of Eden. As God is driving Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, as God is driving them out because of their sin, because of their disobedience of him, what's one of the final acts of grace that God gives to them?

He sacrifices an animal so that they might have clothes. He sacrifices an animal so that they might have a covering. The whole sacrificial system is based on the concept of an animal dying in the place of a sinner, of an animal taking the sins of a person, of an animal dying in the place of another to cover their sin.

The brothers here shed blood in an effort to conceal their sin but it won't work because this is a concealment that is based not on genuine repentance and faith but it's a concealment that's based on trying to hide their sin, trying to cover up their sin against their brother.

[ 27 : 32 ] It's trying to hide their sin. Friends, the great truth for us this evening is that the Lamb of God has been sacrificed. That the offering has been made this evening.

That the once for all sacrifice for sin has been made through the Lord Jesus Christ. And no longer do we need to offer the blood of bulls and goats for our sin.

No longer do we need the blood of animal sacrifices for our sin because the Lord Jesus Christ has sacrificed himself so that we might be forgiven. So that we might know the peace of sins forgiven.

They bring the cloak to Jacob and they say to him look, is this your son's robe or not? Is this the coat that you gave him or not? Is this the right one?

He says it is indeed and goes into this state of mourning. He goes into this state of refusing to be comforted. But it's here finally that the narrative starts to take an upward turn if you like.

[ 28 : 38 ] It's here that the narrative finally starts to move upwards if you like. Because what do we read? Verse 36. Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh,

the captain of the guard.

God's hand was upon his servant placing him at just the right place at just the right time. God kept his servant safe. God gave him this influential position at just the right moment.

Friends, as we close tonight, no longer do we need to try and conceal our sin as the brothers do here. No longer do we need to try and hide our sin from God as the brothers try to hide it from their father here.

Instead, when we sin this evening, and we do, we know that we have an advocate, we know we have a great high priest this evening who pleads our case before God. We know that the sinless, spotless Lamb of God has been slain so that our sin might be forgiven.

Instead of trying to conceal our sin tonight, instead of trying to hide our sin tonight, let's run to God with our sin. Let's confess our sin. Let's admit and acknowledge when we get things wrong.

[ 29 : 52 ] And what do we read about God? that he is faithful and just to forgive us all of our sin if we confess it in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's not conceal it.

Let's not try and hide it. But let's come and know that the sacrifice has been paid. Let's come and admit our guilt and receive forgiveness.

Amen. let's pray together now. Heavenly Father, we thank you this evening for your son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you tonight as we come that he has indeed paid the price. We thank you tonight that he is the sacrifice for our sin. And we pray, Father, that rather than try and hide our sin, rather than try and conceal our sin as the brothers do here, that we might run to Christ with our sin, that we might receive that forgiveness, that we might receive that cleansing.

And that peace with you again we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, friends, we've joined together for another Sunday morning, another Sunday morning continuing our studies in Luke's gospel, in Luke's gospel.

[ 31 : 21 ] And this morning as we come, we've come to Luke chapter seven, Luke chapter seven, and these verses 36 through 50, verses 36 through 50. Let's read them together now.

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him. Thank you.