

# The Sale of Joseph

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Genesis chapter 37, beginning in verse 2. It says, These are the generations of Jacob. Or Jacob, yeah, yeah, rather.

Joseph, being 17 years old, was pastoring 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. 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.

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.

[ 1 : 05 ] Now Joseph had a dream. And when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, Hear this dream that I have dreamed.

Behold, we were binding sheaths in the field. And behold, my sheath arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaths gathered around it and bowed down to my sheath.

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. 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. But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, What is this dream that you have dreamed?

[ 2 : 12 ] Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come and bow ourselves to the ground before you? And his brothers were jealous of him.

But his father kept the saying in mind. Now his brothers went to pastor their father's flocks near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, Are not your brothers pastoring the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them. And he said, Here am I. 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. And the man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, What are you seeking?

I am seeking my brothers, he said. Tell me, please, where they are pastoring the flock.

[ 3 : 15 ] 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.

They saw him from afar. Before he came near to them, they conspired against him to kill it. 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, A fierce animal has devoured him. And we will see what will become of his dream.

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

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.

[ 4 : 19 ] And they took it and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty. There was no water in it. Verse 25, Then they sat down to eat.

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 brother, 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 the 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 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?

[ 5 : 38 ] 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, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

All his sons and all their daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, and said, No, 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.

[ 6 : 43 ] This is the word of God, the word of the Lord. See, we're going to get this at some point, you know. We are liturgically challenged.

Beginning with myself. In the fall of 2001, I will never forget reading an article from Pastor John Piper with the title, Why I Do Not Say God Did Not Cause the Calamity of 9-11, but he can use it for good.

After the sudden and tragic killing of nearly 3,000 Americans on 9-11, many pastors were speaking up, if you remember those days, and declaring what God was doing.

Some were saying God is bringing judgment on America for her materialism and worldliness.

Others were saying God is calling a people, a nation, to repentance, and surely God is always calling us to repentance and salvation through Jesus Christ.

Still others were saying God did not cause this massive calamity, but he's going to use it for good. There's hope out there. That's why I was taken aback when I saw Piper's article.

[ 8 : 02 ] He said, I do not say God did not cause the calamity of 9-11, but can use it for good. He went on to say God did cause the calamity of 9-11, and he will use it for good.

Now, he argued that saying that God did not cause the calamity of 9-11 goes against the clear teaching of Scripture. Ephesians 1 tells us he works all things according to the counsel of his will. Amos 3 tells us, does disaster come to a city unless the Lord has done it? I realize that's a bit unnerving, but the alternative is far worse.

He also argued, as he has done for 40 years now, that saying God did not cause the calamity of 9-11 or all the suffering in our lives undermines the big God theology we so desperately need to live life in a fallen world.

If we say God could not have prevented 9-11 or any other calamity, what hope do we have that he can turn it for good? We need the big God theology of the Bible.

[ 9 : 24 ] We need the God of the Bible who's absolutely sovereign over all things and yet thoroughly good from head to toe in all that he says and does. We need the God of the Bible who is sovereign over suffering that invades our lives yet without sinning and working all that suffering for his good purpose and often unseen, mysterious ways.

We need a big God theology. What I long for for my kids in so many ways for you, for the members of this church, is a big God theology. That alone will put the ice in your veins and the steel in your spine to be like those apostles who said, come and mow me down that I might confess Christ.

This morning we come to a most helpful section for grasping a big God theology. It begins, as you saw, these are the generations of Jacob. It means this is what happened in the lives of Jacob's kids, Jacob's sons and his family.

Jacob had 12 sons. The 12 tribes of Israel come from his sons, but all the focus here is on Joseph. This story has been referred to as a novel.

It reads more like a J.K. Rowling page-turner than holy scripture. It's filled with all the stuff of a good novel, childhood dreams, rivalry, deception, obscurity, false accusations, faithfulness, and success beyond our wildest dreams.

[ 10 : 59 ] All the ups and downs, twists and turns of Jacob's life, all that's behind it all the way is the God we worship. This story that begins in Genesis 37 leads to the end of the book, the generations of Jacob, but most especially of Joseph.

The story of Joseph begins with 12 sons in Canaan and ends with 70 in Egypt. Why? Because God is making a nation. But though God is the author of Joseph's story and we are able to watch the life of Joseph unfold, Joseph is just a character.

Joseph doesn't know what lies ahead. He doesn't know what's coming. He knows the promise of God, but he doesn't know how it's going to come to pass. And we're just like Joseph.

We're just characters in our lives, unaware of where our lives are going. We don't know what today holds, let alone 10 years from now. We're meant to see that the many ups and downs, twists and turns our lives are ruled by, or governed by an overruling providence.

And where we're going is no sin or suffering can undo the plans of God's providence to make us more like Christ. No sin or suffering can undo the plans of God's providence to make us more like Christ.

[ 12 : 28 ] Point one, the dreams of Joseph. The dreams of Joseph. The story begins with Joseph as a young boy. If you remember, many sons were born to Jacob before Joseph.

You remember Leah had four sons, and then Bilhah had two, and then Zilpah had two, and then finally Rachel has Joseph, the 11th son.

Sometimes later he has Benjamin. So Joseph is one of the younger brothers, 10 older brothers, quite a life. At an early age, it becomes clear that Jacob loves Joseph more than the others.

Joseph runs to Jacob to tattle on his brothers, seems to reveal a special relationship between the two. But it becomes clear, look in verse 3, when Jacob gives him this cloak.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other brothers, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a robe of many colors.

[ 13 : 35 ] He made him a robe of many colors. Now it's unclear what this robe really was. I know the play came out, Joseph and his technicolor, something like that dream coat.

It could be a multicolored robe. That's the way a lot of people translate it. The only other time in Scripture this phrase is used, it's translated, a richly ornamented robe.

Regardless of the design of the robe, it's clearly lavish, loud, and flashy. That's what we're meant to see. Jacob gave Joseph a robe that stood out.

Not only that, it appears that Jacob gave him a robe, because even though he was the 11th son in the line, Jacob is saying, I want Joseph to rule.

I want him to be first in this family. Though he had 12 sons, he only made Joseph the robe. It's obvious Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons.

[ 14 : 46 ] Now we live in America, in case you're wondering, newsflash, where equality, equal opportunity, is often misunderstood to mean equity, equal outcome.

Many of the policies promoted in America are not after achieving equal opportunity, but actually achieving equal outcomes. Are those policies biblical?

Does the Bible teach that it's unjust for some to have more and some to have less? I'm not going to answer right now, but I remember one of my seminary professors saying that he had seven kids.

He would practice strategic inequity in his house. We were all leaning forward to find out what that means. He had seven kids. When he would travel, he would buy a gift for only one child.

Now I'm sure there's some financial reasons that played into this with seven kids, but when he would come home, he would buy one gift for one child. He would gather all the family around, honor the one child, give the one child a gift, and call all the other children to rejoice at the inequity that had just occurred in their household.

[ 15 : 58 ] So he taught them to rejoice with those who rejoice. Probably taught them to weep with those who weep too. In a day of participation trophies, practicing strategic inequity is not a bad idea.

Introduce your kids to the real world. Is that what Jacob's doing here? Just giving a gift? Teaching his boys to rejoice with Joseph?

Doesn't appear so at all. Jacob has chosen a favorite. A chosen son. Jacob has not learned from his childhood.

Remember, Rebekah loved Jacob. Isaac loved Esau, and his brothers began to hate him.

Look in verse 4. But when his brothers saw that his father loved him more, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. They couldn't barely speak to him. As if he needed anything else

to set him apart, Joseph begins to dream dreams.

[ 17 : 13 ] His first dream, he dreams his brothers. He and his brothers are out gathering sheaves. Just, I do is gathering a bundle of wheat. And so they're out gathering bundles of wheat, and his bundle just suddenly stands upright, kind of like Jacob's tower.

Stand upright, and all of their bundles bow down before his bundle. Now, we might not understand that meaning immediately, but they did.

Are you going to reign over us, they say? Are you going to rule over us? Are you going to boss us around? They hate him even more.

And the second dream, the sun, moon, and stars, all of creation is bowing down to Jacob. You can imagine how that goes over like a lead balloon. Even his father rebukes him.

His brothers hate him even more. Look at verse 11. Their hatred turns to jealousy, and his brothers were jealous of him.

[ 18 : 20 ] Surely they concluded something must be up here. You know, two dreams, one dream, weirdo. Two dreams, something must be going on. But his father kept the saying in mind, kind of like Mary.

What are we to make of these dreams? On the one hand, throughout the book of Genesis, dreams are a form of divine communication. God is revealing his plans and purposes for Joseph's life.

God revealed to Isaac and Rebekah through the oracle, through the word that Jacob, not Esau, would be the promised son before they were born. Now God reveals to Joseph and his father and his brothers his plans before anything happens.

Psalms 75 says, for not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgment, the putting down of one and the lifting up of another.

It's alerting us that something divine is going on here. But interestingly, all the other times that dreams appear in the book of Genesis, a word comes with it.

[ 19 : 33 ] God appears to Abimelech in a dream and says, stay away from Sarah. God appears to Jacob in a dream and says, I'll be with you. God appears to Laban in chapter 30 or 31 and says, do not touch Jacob.

But God doesn't give Joseph a word. He doesn't tell him what the dream means. I think the point is Joseph is meant to wait on the unseen hand of providence to bring it about.

So we see there's something divine. Divine communication is going on. But on the other hand, we see Joseph is immature and unwise. The first thing we learn about him in this story is that he's a tattletale.

Now, whether you're in the cartel or in a safe Christian family, one thing you cannot do is snitch. All kidding aside, he tells a bad report.

He's slandering his brothers. Not merely reporting information, but slanting information to damage his brother's reputation.

[ 20 : 42 ] He reports it to tear him down. Twice, he tells these dreams of his exaltation. At a minimum, Jacob lacks street smarts.

He lacks the ability to discern how those reports of his exaltation might tempt his brothers. But it seems more likely that he's boasting, gloating in his favorite son's status.

and boasting of the future. Joseph needs to grow. Needs to build character. Though unwise and even sinful for Joseph to report these dreams, the reporting of the dreams sets in motion the wheels of providence to bring about God's purposes for Joseph's life to make him more godly and to use him mightily.

Point two, the sin of the brothers. The story of Joseph turns now to the brothers.

The brothers are away shepherding the flock in Shechem. Now we didn't study this passage we went through but the name Shechem should signal trouble. Years before a man from Shechem had raped Jacob's daughter Dinah and Jacob's sons rose up and killed every man in the city.

[ 22 : 05 ] That must be why Jacob sends Joseph to check on the boys. Look at verse 13. He says, Are not your brothers pastoring the flock at Shechem?

Come, I'll send you to them. He says, Here am I. Surely Jacob knows this is a bad idea. Yeah.

Surely he hasn't been oblivious to the rivalry in his own household.

Oblivious to the hatred among his own sons. Nevertheless he sends him. Joseph travels 50 miles.

He's wandering through the wilderness looking for his brother. The man comes to him and says, What are you looking for? In a very ironic, sadly, very ironic phrase, I'm looking for my brothers.

The man directs him to where they are, to Dothan. Look at verse 17. Joseph went after his brothers. He's seeking them and found them at Dothan.

[ 23 : 20 ] When they spot him afar off, a plot unfolds. Though they are far from home, they have not forgotten Joseph and his arrogant dreams.

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

Perhaps they see the robe of many colors. They know immediately that it is him. No one else has this robe, but they don't run to him like Esau ran to Jacob.

They conspired together, conspired together to kill him. They finally have him completely alone.

They conspired together. They resolved to kill him. The first use of this word kill since Genesis 4, where Cain killed Abel, meant to alert us to the severity of what's going on.

They say to one another, here comes that dreamer, that pompous jerk.

[ 24 : 31 ] Immediately a plot is hatched. Hatred and jealousy think clear and fast. One author imagines a scene with one accord, their hearts beat with a wild rapid rhythm like drums so that a hollow concerted drumming noise arose in the breathless silence.

This drumming, this drumming noise to figure out how they can kill their brother. With the drumming filling their minds, they quickly decide to kill him. Will they beat him with their fists? Will they club him with their shepherd's club?

We don't know. They look around. They see one of these large cisterns that are filling the countryside to gather water to feed the animals. They think will kill him. We'll throw him there. No burial for him.

For that pompous dreamer, we're going to cast him there. No one will mourn him. No one will mourn his life.

Reuben suddenly intervenes. Look at verse 21. But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands and said, this is in the hatching of the plot, but he rescued him out of their hands and said, let us not take his shed no blood.

[ 25 : 41 ] Throw him not out here in the wilderness. Do not lay a hand on him that he might rescue him out of his hand later. They agree with Reuben.

When Joseph arrives, they strip off his robe, the hated robe, grab a hold of him, throw him into the pit. And then they sit down to eat.

Look in verse 25. Then they sat down to eat. Is there a more heartless verse in all of Holy Scripture?

They eat while their brother is in the pit. Perhaps they clubbed him to the point of unconsciousness.

They thrown him into the pit. God but later in Genesis alerts us that something else might be going on. Later when they realize their guilt, look with me at this passage.

[ 26 : 44 ] They said to one another, this is later on in the story that we'll get to, in truth we're 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. It's telling us there's more to the story than the drum beat of their hearts hatching a plan to kill their brother. The more to the story is that Jacob was crying out the whole time.

Don't do this. What are you doing? Don't throw me in this pit. Don't kill me. Don't club me again. Simeon, Judah, please.

Perhaps he's still in earshot as they eat. satisfying themselves with a meal as he yells help from the pit.

The scene could not be more distressing. Just then they see a group of traders on their way to Egypt.

[ 27 : 49 ] Not traders like Benedict Arnold, but traders going to sell something. They see a way to turn a profit. Judah appeals to them. What good is it if we kill our brother?

Let's sell him. And so they do. Look in verse 28. The Midianite traders passed by and they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver.

They took Joseph to Egypt. In the original language the point is even clearer. Joseph is repeated three times. Not the pronoun.

They drew Joseph. They sold Joseph. The Ishmaelites took Joseph. It is done. Joseph didn't stand a chance. The solidarity!

The solidarity of the brothers could not be more striking. The plural subject tells the story. They saw him. They conspired.

[ 28 : 53 ] They said dreamer is coming. They stripped They took him. They threw! They sat down. They saw a caravan. They drew him up. They lifted! Him out. They sold him. Joseph didn't stand a chance.

Now we think in marriage that communication problems are a really bad thing. Well, not always. Communication problems are not always bad things.

Ananias and Sapphira had no communication problem. Nor did the brothers because they were united in a plot.

United in the great sin. The most spectacular sin we might say in the Old Testament. Now one of the most wonderful gifts God can give us is friends.

C.S. Lewis, my wife and I were talking about this last night, says a friend doubles our joy and halves our sorrows. They capture it pretty well.

[ 29 : 54 ] The movie Cast Away tells the story of Chuck Nolan, played by Tom Hanks, who's stranded on an uninhabited island after a plane crash in the Pacific Ocean. One of the most well-known scenes is when Chuck uses his bloody hand to create Wilson, a volleyball that becomes his only companion on this deserted island for the next four years.

Cast away and completely alone, Chuck gives Wilson a face. He later adds hair. He talks to him. there's nowhere in this world we can go to where we would not want a friend close by.

If that's one of the most wonderful gifts, the rejection of friends is one of the most difficult experiences. That's the crushing reality of these verses.

Jacob is rejected. I mean, Joseph is rejected. Joseph is attacked. Joseph is beaten. Joseph is humiliated. Joseph is left for dead and sold to slavery. And it's not his enemies who reject him, just like our Lord.

It's not his enemies. It's meant to be his friends. It's his brothers. The church is meant to be a place where the bloodline of Jesus makes us more than fair weather friends.

[ 31 : 21 ] We want the church to be more than a place where we greet one another with a churchy smile, all teeth. more than a place where we dole out well wishes than to stand with one another, rescue one another, let no pettiness separate one another.

I was thinking about the deacons this week. You know, deacons, one of the main things, well, in its prototype form in Acts 6, what did they do? They protected the church from disunity because of conflict about the Hellenist widows.

None of us know what Hellenists are. We know what widows are being neglected in the daily distribution. Why? Because there's few things more dangerous than a church, than disunity in a church.

And one of the things I think is sometimes we can, as a church ages, you can kind of go into church and just try to make it through the day at church avoiding certain people. And it just kind of becomes a growing list of avoiding certain people as you go through church and you skate through these interactions.

Well, I don't want that at this church. I long for us to be a church that resolves our disagreements, that refuses this solidarity, this cliquishness, that is so cancerous to a church that we would have nothing that would identify us with Joseph's brothers.

[ 32 : 45 ] Instead, we'd be those friends that Joseph needed. thirdly, the deception of Jacob. The deception of Jacob.

The brothers have sold Joseph. Now they've got to figure out what to save their dad. Apparently, Reuben is gone. We're not told when he leaves, but apparently he's gone.

When they sell Joseph. Look at verse 29, when Reuben returned to the pit and saw Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes and returned to his brother. The boy is gone and I, where shall I go? Reuben is the oldest, feels responsible for what is going on. He appears deeply grieved. He gripped to the core, tears his clothes as an act of deep mourning.

Joseph is gone. Where can I go? What shall I do? Joseph? The boy indicating Joseph's, the way they looked at Joseph.

[ 33 : 57 ] What can I do? Where am I going to go? It's striking that even though he's so distressed, almost immediately he joins the brothers in the next plot.

He has the appearance of repentance. But he doesn't go to his dad and tell the truth. Doesn't do anything. Doesn't take him long to join the brothers in the next plot.

They decide on a plan. They take Joseph's robe. They slaughter a goat and dip the robe in the blood. They send the robe of many colors to the father.

Walter Brueggemann points out the robe that began in deep love, then was torn in deep hate. Now is the main tool in a deep deception.

Along with the torn, blood stained robe, they send along this message. Look at verse 32. This we have found. They sound like a coroner, not like a brother.

[ 35 : 13 ] This we have found. Please identify whether it is your son's robe or not. Not our brother's robe.

Like a family member picking up possessions of the departed, Jacob says, it's my son's robe. He concludes just what they wanted him to conclude.

A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces. Their deception of Jacob has gone off without a hitch.

It appears they're thoroughly successful. Jacob is deceived by his own sons.

Think about this. Jacob deceives his father by cooking a goat and dressing up in goat skins and Esau's clothing. His sons deceive him by killing a goat and covering his son's cloak with goat's blood.

[ 36 : 16 ] almost all these deception scenes include clothing and goats. Obviously, that was an animal they ate a lot of.

Then Jacob mourns for his son. The scene concludes with Jacob tearing his garments, putting on sackcloth on his loins and mourning for his sons for many days. All his sons and daughters, all his daughters rise up to comfort him, but he refuses.

He insists that he's going to mourn for Joseph until his final day. Now, it's common for a parent in that culture to mourn for a week. I don't mean that you don't grieve continually, but you mourn, a practice of mourning, not doing anything but mourning for a week.

When Moses died, the people mourn for a month, but Jacob insists that he'll mourn much longer.

The contrast is meant to be startling. The brothers coldly and callously come up and say, oh, we're so sorry.

Dad, can't we comfort you? But it's all empty. It's meaningless. And Jacob grieves. Jacob tears his clothes, refuses to be comforted, refuses to stop, resolves to go to his grave mourning.

[ 37 : 35 ] While Jacob is weeping, the Midianite traders sell Joseph to Egypt. Look at verse 36.

Meanwhile, telling us in another part of the story something's going on. The Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

God Why does this passage conclude in this way? If you remember, Genesis 15, the Lord promised that the people of Israel would be taken to another land for 400 years, to be enslaved in another land for 400 years.

Look with me, Genesis 15, the Lord said to Abram, right, at the covenant that we studied, know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there and they will be afflicted for 400 years, but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

So what is going on? Well, the narrator, the all-knowing narrator is telling us it's all happening according to plan. Joseph is now sold as a slave to Egypt, to Potiphar in Egypt.

[ 38 : 57 ] And if you look closely, the narrator's been saying it all along. Joseph is a spoiled brat, but God is rescuing again and again. God rescues him in Shechem.

When he travels there, he finds his, he can't find his brothers, he's searching out, he's wandering in a field, looking around, no idea where he's going. Suddenly, this unnamed man appears.

Well, what is that? That is Providence at work. That's what's going on. He says, the brothers, I heard, another Providence word, I heard that the brothers are going to Dothan.

Then, when they hatched the plot, literally, the text says, God rescued him through Reuben from death. The brothers decide to kill him, but Reuben stands up, rescues him, Reuben stops him from doing so.

God rescues him in Judah, through Judah, unbeknownst to Judah, he's just a pawn in God's hand. He wanted money, God wanted a man in Egypt. Do you see?

[ 39 : 55 ] God is working through these sinful plans of men. Then God rescues him through the Ishmaelites. The rejected son comes and buys the rejected son to bring many rejected people to safety.

They load him up. They take him to Egypt where he will save the world. What's that mean? It means no sinner suffering can undo the plans of God's providence to make us more like Christ. That is what is being held together in this most distressing passage.

It takes us into the most spectacular sin of the Old Testament and what stands behind the sin and all the workings and yet without sin is God. The all-knowing, the all-good, the all-wise, the all-sovereign God working out his unspeakably marvelous purposes for his people.

would you trust him? Would you trust him?

Piper says, God's doing a thousand things in your life and you may know three or four. What? This God is not to be found out. You're not going to understand him but he is unspeakably good and always working.

[ 41 : 18 ] It's impossible to read the story of Joseph and his betrayal and not think of the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Like Joseph, the chief priests and scribes, the ones called to be his friends, conspired to arrest him and kill him. Mark 3.8 Like Joseph, Jesus was sold for a few pieces of silver, a pittance, the king of kings.

Like Joseph, Jesus was stripped not in a robe of many colors but of all his clothes.

Like Joseph, Jesus was punched, spat upon. Did he cry out? The word says no.

Like Joseph, the sin and evil of the chief priests and scribes saved many. Like Joseph, it was all according to the plan. man. Acts 2.22-23 says, Men of Israel, hear these words.

[ 42 : 43 ] Jesus of Nazareth, a man tested to you by God with many mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst. As you yourselves know, this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

And the mystery of the way God governs the universe, he can ordain the way things come to pass and yet condemn the sinful actions and motives of the people that bring him about.

If it was true of Joseph and true of our Lord, then no sin or suffering can undo God's plans and his providence for you.

finally, if we're to read our Bible rightly, we're not meant to mainly identify with Joseph in this passage. We're meant to mainly identify with the brothers.

We're going to conclude this morning by identifying with the brothers.

[ 43 : 54 ] Which character are you in this story? the one mistreated? Or the one doing the mistreating?

He came into his own and his own people rejected him. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

one from whom men hide their faces. Gosh.

John Stott says, we ourselves are guilty. If we were in their place, we would have done what they did. Indeed, we have done it.

Were you there? When they crucified my Lord, the old Negro spiritual ask, and we must answer yes, we were there. Not as spectators only, but as participants, guilty participants, plotting, scheming, betraying, bargaining, and handing him over to be crucified.

[ 45 : 10 ] We may try to wash our hands of responsibility like Pilate, but our attempt will be futile. This is precious. Before we can begin to see the cross has done something, has something done for us, leading us to faith and worship.

We must and we have to see it as something done by us, leading to repentance. Indeed, only the man who is prepared to own his share in the guilt of the cross may claim his share in its grace. Beloved, that's where we stand today. Grounded for the cross is wonderfully level. We come in repentance to not do what Reuben did, but to turn completely to Jesus Christ.

Whether this is the first time or the one thousandth time, or much more than that, I invite you to come to Jesus Christ, to turn away from your sins, place your trust again in the shed blood and forgiveness of the one you spat upon and crucified, one we rushed to the cross.

May God help us. Father in heaven, we hide ourselves in you, confess our need for you. Thank you for the privilege of sitting under your word.

