



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 37: 1-36

“Joseph: Beloved, Hated and Sold”

TRANSCRIPT

Now for the Scripture reading this morning, turn with me to chapter 37 of the Book of Genesis. Today, we begin our study of the life of Joseph as Moses has recorded it in the last chapters of the Book of Genesis. Genesis chapter 37 and verse 1:

“Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned in the land of Canaan. These are the records of the generations of Jacob.” (Now that expression incidentally is designed to say that the following chapters will be the generations of Jacob, not the preceding.) Joseph when 17 years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wife, and Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. Now Israel (remember this is Jacob’s new name) now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.”

This expression has been discussed quite a bit. The Authorized Version has the famous rendering, “A coat of many colors.” Many people have liked to make fun of the Authorized Version rendering as being incorrect, but as you can see the New American Standard Bible has rendered it similarly except not quite so impressively, characteristic of this version in my opinion, a varicolored

tunic. It may mean simply a full-length robe. We are not exactly certain of the rendering. I will say a little more about it later. Verse 4:

“And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and so they hated him, and could not speak to him on friendly terms. Then Joseph had a dream and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. And he said to them, ‘Please listen to this dream, which I have had.’”

Notice in the 7th verse how Joseph uses the term, behold or lo three times, it is the same word in the Hebrew text. It is very much like the use of the expression. I think it is a vile kind of transformation of the English language. “You know”, there are people today who cannot talk without saying “you know” half a dozen times, almost in every sentence and particularly athletes. If you listen to athletes, [laughter] they can hardly say a sentence without you know, you know, you know, so we will translate it that way.

“For, you know, [laughter] we were binding sheaves in the field and lo, you know, my sheave rose up and also stood erect and you know your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheave.’ Then his brothers said to him, ‘Are you actually going to reign over us, are you are really going to rule over us?’ So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. (I didn’t want to make fun of the reading of the word. This really however is designed to give an impression of Joseph’s enthusiasm and telling them about this dream.)

‘Now he had still another dream and related it to his brothers and said, ‘Lo,’ here it is again, ‘Lo, behold, I have had still another dream and behold the sun and moon and the eleven stars were bowing down to me.’ And he related it to his father and to his brothers and his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have had, shall I and your mother, and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?’ and his brothers were jealous of

him, but his father kept the saying in mind. Then his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock in Shechem and Israel said to Joseph, ‘Aren’t your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem. Come and I will send you to them.’ And he said, ‘I will go, literally behold me.’ Then he said to him, ‘Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock and bring word back to me.’ So he sent him from the valley of Hebron and he came to Shechem, and a man found him and behold he was wandering in the field and the man asked him, ‘What are you looking for?’ And he said, ‘I am looking for my brothers, please tell me where they are pasturing the flock.’ Then the man said, ‘They have moved from here for I heard them say, let’s go to Dothan.’ So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan. When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, here comes this dreamer.”

“Now then come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits and we will say a wild beast devoured him, then let us see what will become of his dreams. But Ruben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said let us not take his life. Ruben further said to them, shed no blood, throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him that he might rescue him out of their hands to restore him to his father. So it came about when Joseph reached his brothers that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him and they took him and threw him into the pit.

“Now the pit was empty without any water in it, then they sat down to eat a meal, and as they raised their eyes and looked behold a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh on their way to bring them down to Egypt. These particular spices were used for both medicinal and for purposes of burying and probably also for anointing. Then Judah said to his brothers, ‘What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him for he is our brother, our own flesh, and his brothers listened to him. Then some Midianite traders passed by. So

they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.”

The commentators made a great deal over the use of the term Ishmaelites and then Midianites as if there is some contradiction, but from a text in Judges, I believe it is chapter 8, above verse 13 or so, it is evident that these terms overlap to a great extent and that is recognized now, no serious problem there.

“Now Ruben returned to the pit and behold Joseph was not in the pit, so he tore his garments and he returned to his brothers, and said the boy is not there, as for me, ‘Where am I to go.’ So they took Joseph’s tunic and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, ‘We found this, please examine it to see whether it your son’s tunic or not.’”

It’s rather ironic I think that in order to make it appear as if Joseph has been slain by a wild animal, they slaughtered a male goat. If you remember some of the lessons in the past several number of weeks back now, probably about 10, when Jacob and Rebekah deceived Isaac, remember they slew a goat, and she made some savory food for Isaac and the goat was the means of the deception and it is rather ironic that Jacob is deceived here through the slaughter of a goat. If he had looked very carefully, he would have seen that the garments were not torn and if he had examined the blood carefully, he would have probably come to see it was not human blood, but animal blood after all. So God has a text in Scripture that is always true. “Be sure your sin will find you out,” and the Lord likes to use our own deceptiveness to deceive us as well or to make us deceivable and thus judgment is brought upon us ironically.

“Then he examined it and said, verse 33, ‘It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!’ So Jacob tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, ‘Surely, I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.’ So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.”

The subject for this morning and the continuation of our study of the Book of Genesis is “Joseph, Beloved, Hated, and Sold into Egypt.” The life of Joseph of whom more is told than of any of the patriarchs is a story of divine sovereignty.

I would imagine that if you were to speak to biblical scholars about the Book of Genesis that is biblical scholars who are believing biblical scholars, it would be best known this section as the *locus classicus* of providence because it is such a beautiful illustration of the divine providence, but when you think about it, divine providence is nothing but an expression of divine sovereignty. And so what we have stressed in these chapters is the divine sovereignty as it finds its outworking in the providence related to the life of Joseph and the life of his brethren.

Joseph is introduced in chapter 37 as a specially chosen member of his family because he is singled out by Jacob for special recognition. Consequently, he illustrates as does Isaac and Jacob, divine election and royal grace. In fact, if the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 9 had wanted to give more illustrations of the divine electing grace than the illustration of Abraham and Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau, he could well have come to Joseph and the brethren because the story is the story of divine electing sovereign grace and you will notice too as you as you read this chapter that it begins with reference to the dreams.

Now dreams are the work of God and so the very fact that we have dreams right here at the outset is designed to make God and not Joseph, the hero of the story. So when we read it we are to think first of all, here is a story of God working in the history of Joseph and in the history of Jacob.

Later on, I want to say just another word about the relationship between Joseph and Jacob, but what I want you to see right here in the beginning is that this is a story of divine sovereignty in electing grace and that the Lord God is the person who is the real hero of the account of the life of Joseph.

W. H. Griffith Thomas has written a little commentary on the Book of Genesis which has a number of good thoughtful things about it and he suggested that there are three other values in the story of Joseph beyond the illustration of divine providence. He has said that it is a necessary story and for this reason that we gain some historical material about information about the Hebrews and we learn in this section how the Hebrews who began their life in the Euphrates valley make their way finally down to Egypt and did we not have this particular section, we would not understand how that had come about. And he also points out that these chapters afford us a splendid example of personal character in the life of Joseph.

Commentators, students, and preachers have often wondered about Joseph's life as it is presented in chapters 37 through 50 of the Book of Genesis because it is very difficult to find any flaw at all in the character of Joseph as he has presented here and in fact many Bible students have contented that there are no flaws in the character of Joseph and then they have gone on to say that the reason for this is that Joseph is presented to us as a type of Jesus Christ and that is why we have no flaws in his character.

Now Joseph is a type of Jesus Christ. There is no question about that, but nevertheless the question of flaws in his character is a rather interesting one and I think that as we go through we will be able to point out that Joseph is not without flaw. Of course, if we understand anything about the Bible, we understand that the writer would not even if there were no flaws, be desirous of presenting a person as flawless, for the Bible makes it very plain that all of us who are the sons of Adam are flawed in all of our being in our wills and in our emotions and in our minds as well.

And then Mr. Thomas has suggested that we have here a striking series of typical pictures of the Lord Jesus. And this morning, we will refer to some of them. So we will outline those typological correspondences and the basic correspondence is simply this: that Joseph becomes a

pattern of rejection. He is a deliverer, but he is rejected by his brethren and though a chosen deliverer and though rejected because of the unbelief of the brethren, their very rejection of him becomes the means by which God brings about the deliverance of the people and so the pattern of rejection by brethren and then God using that rejection in order to bring about restoration and reconciliation of the brethren is a pattern that we see preeminently played out in the life of Jesus Christ. And it is true of all of the deliverers of the Old Testament that pattern of rejection, but yet God using the rejection in order to bring about one of his designs.

Now it's Stephen who puts his finger on that definitely and makes it plain. Some Bible students have even had the nerve to suggest that Joseph is not even a type of Christ because he is not called that in the New Testament. Now that particular philosophy is a false one because we have many types or illustrations of individuals who are not said to be that in the New Testament. There is no text of Scripture that says that if a person is a type, he has to be called a type in the New Testament.

It is as a matter of fact, those that are called types in the New Testament are often types simply by contrast. Adam and Christ are linked together in correspondence and Adam is said specifically to be a type of Christ, but he is largely a type of Christ by contrast, not by comparison. So this idea is false to start with, but it is particularly false since if you study Stephen's sermon carefully, you will see that he was thinking about Joseph when he brings out in a series of pictures the pattern of rejection of chosen deliverers by the nation Israel, and that very act being the means by which they had been blessed down through the years. Of course Stephen is trying to point out that's what God has done in Jesus Christ and you have not responded to him. He is a chosen deliverer and you have put Him to death, but God is using that very act to bring about His own purpose and plan and your ultimate restoration, that's the pattern of Scripture. We will talk about that in a few moments a little bit more deeply that we will drop it at this point and I want you now to look at the opening verses of chapter 37 in which Joseph's hatred or the hatred of Joseph by his brethren is stressed.

One of the students of the Book of Genesis has said, “In divine providence we learn that the darkest moments are short corridors leading to sunlit rooms,” and so Joseph now must enter into the short corridor of a dark moment which will lead ultimately to the sunlit room of being the deliverer of his own brethren. Joseph’s story begins here in chapter 37 verse 1 picks up the account from chapter 35, chapter 36 about Esau’s generations, which we looked at last week being something of a parenthesis.

Now I know you will think that if you read through these chapters that it is Joseph who is the prominent figure, but that is not true. Joseph is the one who appears before us constantly and if we were thinking simply about the mention of his name; yes, he is the prominent figure here, but notice the opening clause of verse 2, these are the records of the generations of Jacob, so we are still to think of Jacob as the dominant figure, but he is the figure sitting in the background, sitting in the shadows, so to speak and later on we will have Jacob come to the fore, but he is the dominant figure, although, Joseph is prominent in these chapters.

Now Moses writes about the love of Joseph by Jacob. Joseph was a shepherd and he was pasturing the flock, evidently a kind of chief shepherd, made that by Jacob with the treacherous, murderous, incestuous older brothers and specifically mentioned are those that are the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah that is Dan and Naphtali and Gad and Asher. Ruben is evidently regarded as having forfeited his birthright because of the terrible sin referred to in chapter 35. So Joseph was 17 years of age, just a lad, and he was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth along with Dan and Naphtali and Gad and Asher. And we read that Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

Now this report is unspecific. It’s not said what it is, but it is easy to believe because these brothers were vile men as you can see in a moment they will be plotting the murder of their own brother, of their own flesh and blood. And evidently Joseph had been put over them and perhaps not simply because he was the son of Jacob’s old age and therefore is the one that he has specially doted upon, but perhaps also because he of all the sons was most sympathetic in morals to Jacob the

father. So being responsible to Jacob, he acted, probably, properly if not tactfully. I don't think this was an ancient sting operation, but it certainly sounds like that. He brought back a bad report about them to their father.

Now this would not be an Arab scam or an Abscam, but would be a Hebscan, because he would be bringing back a report concerning the Hebrews, but I rather think that this is his responsibility and so we are not to blame Joseph for it, we probably would have to say he was not so tactful. I read a story this past week about tact, Paul said Henry, looking at from the book he was reading, “What's meant by diplomatic phraseology?” Well, replied Paul, “If you were to say to a homely girl, your face would stop a clock, that would be stupidity, but if you said to her when I look into your eyes, time stands still. That would be diplomatic phraseology.” [Laughter] So it's definitely true that -- I thought that was pretty good too -- but Joseph is not very tactful.

He should have realized of course that he was the one upon whom Jacob have doted, his favorite son and he should also have realized that bringing back a bad report when he was wearing the varicolored tunic, was not a very tactful thing to do, and that brings me to this coat of many colors. The Authorized Version is rendering coat of many colors is a very good rendering. Many think it's possible that the Hebrew expression means that.

On the other hand, there are Hebrew scholars who contend, “No, that cannot be the meaning of the phrase.” The facts are we don't really know exactly the meaning of the phrase. It could be a long robe with sleeves. It could be a ceremonial garment with appliquéd ornaments. One thing we do know about it, it was very impressive and being impressive it was that which excited envy on the part of the brothers. The expression, a very similar expression identical in some ways is used in 2 Samuel 13 in verse 18 of a garment worn by Tamar, the daughter of David. In that case, the garment would be a kind of a royal garment and being a kind of royal garment would have singled Joseph out. So it was an impressive kind of robe and it definitely was a robe in which a person did not work.

If it had long sleeves or long robe with sleeves it was not a working garment and so it marked out Joseph as a superior and it marked him out probably as an overseer. And though he was much younger than his brothers, he nevertheless was given the job of oversight of the flock and thus he had a kind of preeminence among them. It was therefore an impressive garment and a provocative garment so far as the brothers were concerned and we are not surprised then to read in verse 4, “And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.” It reminds me of the statement that Ahab made about Micaiah the Prophet. He said, “I hate him” because he is always prophesying evil and not good and so they hated Joseph.

Now he didn’t hate them, but nevertheless it was their fault so far as the hate was concerned. They hated him because Joseph represented that which was more righteous than they and the Lord Jesus has a good deal to say about that in the Gospel of John in chapter 3 and verse 20, there is one particular text that I think about in connection with this. He said, “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light lest his deeds should be exposed.” And then in John chapter 7, I believe it’s about verse 7 the Lord says, “The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.” And so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

Now at this time, Moses recounts the two dreams that Joseph had. Now Joseph is obviously enthused over these dreams. He says, “Please listen to this dream, which I have had. Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field and Lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect and yours gathered round and bowed down to my sheaf.” So he dreamed that they were out on the field and they were there with the wheat and they were all engaged in binding sheaves of wheat and as they threw them down on the ground, suddenly Joseph’s stood upright, and the other sheaves of the other brothers gathered around it and bowed over before it and it was clear the meaning of that particular dream because they replied, “Are you actually going to reign over us, are you really going to rule over us,” so they hated him even more.

Therefore, it's clear from this that this blaze of hate that had sprung up in their hearts is growing hotter and furthermore it is spreading because the hate now is not confined to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, but to all the brothers, and soon even Jacob himself will have some questions about the next dream.

And he had another dream and he related it to them. He said, “I had another dream and behold the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me,” and Jacob recognizes immediately that the sun and the moon is a reference to him and to Leah and the eleven stars are reference to the brethren. Incidentally, this passage is very important for the interpretation of a very difficult section in Revelation chapter 12. It illustrates for us the great principle that if we are to understand the Bible, we must understand it according to the analogy of faith.

Now the analogy of faith was a great principle that the reformers especially publicized and made prominent in the study of the Scriptures, and it is simply as this: that the Bible is to be interpreted by parallel passages in the Bible. That is, the Bible is its own final interpreter. *Scriptura ex scriptura explicanda est*, they have said; Scripture is to be explained by Scripture. Or *scriptura sui ipsius interpres*; Scripture is its own interpreter. In the final analysis we are to interpret the Bible by the Bible. That's why it's so important to keep reading the Bible. There are some people that pick up the Bible and read a chapter and read ten commentaries. That's alright. It's alright to find out what others have said. I recommend that, I think it's terrible when a person reads only the Bible and does not read what God has taught other teachers, since he gives teachers. But at the same time in the final analysis, the Bible is to be interpreted by the Bible and we are to understand the Scriptures by all of the Scripture and to bring all of the Scripture to bear on a particular passage is the way to interpret Holy Scripture.

In the Book of Revelation, there has been a great deal of debate over the meaning of the woman in that chapter and the clue to it is found in this dream here interpreted by Jacob as a reference to Israel. So the woman of Revelation chapter 12 is a reference to Israel and not the Virgin Mary as some have insisted or even Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy, the founder of Christian

Science, if you can call it Christian or science as some have suggested. In fact, I think it was Mrs. Eddy herself who interpreted the woman as herself. It could not be her of course because in that chapter Satan does not get the woman and we know that Satan did get her. This is an important little section, this little dream for the interpretation of that 12th chapter, the Book of Revelation.

Now at the conclusion of this, we read the brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. See Jacob being at least spiritually minded, a man of faith, senses that there may be something in these dreams that is of significance, and so like the Virgin Mary, she kept those things in her mind and he kept them in his mind pondering the significance of these dreams that Joseph was having.

At this point, Jacob knowing that the brothers are down near Shechem and remembering that it was at Shechem that Dinah had been seduced and the brothers had gone in and slain the males of that city, making Jacob's name odious among the inhabitants of the land. Jacob, realizing that they were pasturing the flock down there, realized that they might be in danger and so he calls Joseph to him and gives him a commission and his commission is to go out and find the brethren and see how they are doing. Joseph responds with characteristic alacrity and offers himself in obedience to Jacob for this particular commission.

Someone has also commented, I think it was Mr. Thomas as well, that Joseph is a person who has within him the capacity of Abraham, the quietness of Isaac, the ability of Jacob, and also the personal beauty of his mother. I think it's interesting that Joseph the male is described in words that are identical with the description that is given of Rachel. In chapter 29 in verse 17, we read, “And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.” And then when you turn over to Genesis chapter 39 in verse 6, I believe it is, we read, “So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge and with him around he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.” And so he inherited the good looks of his mother Rachel. So Joseph then a beautiful young man, a handsome young man, characterized by obedience and qualities of wisdom and responsiveness to Jacob says, “I, I, sir, he will go,” and

promptly he goes to seek the brethren. When he went down to Shechem he couldn't find them because they had moved down to Dothan and so finally in verse 18 and following we read of the account of his being sold by the brethren.

Now this account is a beautiful illustration, I think of the statement that Paul makes in Romans chapter 8 and it is this, “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God.” It is not subject to the Lord God and it cannot even be. The mind of the flesh, that is the mind of the old nature is not subject to the Lord God. It not only is not subject to the Lord God, it cannot be subject to the law of God. That's another expression of human inability to respond to the message of the word of God.

There is not a single person in this audience who can of himself respond to the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You do not have it within yourself to respond. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It is not subject to the Lord God neither indeed can it be. And that is an important principle to remember. It's an important principle to remember as a spiritual principle. You do not have it within you to respond to the word of God. So many people you know that preach, they preach a kind of evangelism which is not biblical evangelism at all. They preach the gospel of Christ and then they tell us that we may choose to follow the Lord or we may choose not to follow the Lord. That's not the gospel that the Bible presents. Why, not complacently in the pulpit, because they like to think that they can of themselves make that choice, and thus they remain, finally in the final analysis, the sovereign of their own destiny. But Scripture tells us you cannot be subject to the law of God. You cannot decide. You have to decide, but you cannot decide for the Lord God. And so when you preach the true gospel that men are under the curse of God and unable to respond, and that God has in the death of Jesus Christ satisfied his own claims of righteousness and holiness and he has received the death of the substitute, the representative substitute for his own people and that he has chosen some out and has brought them to the knowledge of himself when they could not of themselves respond, and he has loved these to the end, and will love them to the end.

Then, there is something within human nature that rises up. It's called Adamic fury, rises up and says, “No, it can't be that way!” But that is what God says in his word. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It is not subject to the Lord God neither indeed can it be. So we learn that if we do respond and we are responsible to respond, it is because God has jiggled our willer. That is in wonderful sovereign grace, he had brought us to himself and he becomes the sovereign master of our destiny. And then we are grateful and thankful and then we want to serve him out of love and appreciation for what he has done. We don't nod complacently in the pulpit, in the pew rather, while the pulpit drones on with this false gospel. We respond in love and gratitude because he has brought us to himself when we could not of ourselves come. I love that gospel.

Here we have Joseph now approaching the brethren. The brethren see Joseph coming and they recognize him. Maybe he had a certain gait about him. He had those handsome looks, and it may well have been that they noticed immediately that beautiful garment that he was wearing, because he was wearing it, and so when they see Joseph coming, this group, as one of the commentators says, the group hums with schemes. Fools make a mock at sin, the writer of the Proverbs say. “And so they say one to another, here comes this dreamer. Let's kill him. Let's throw him into one of the pits. Let's say a wild beast has devoured him. Then we will see what's become of his dreams.”

How could Abraham's descendants do something like this? After all Jacob was their father. Isaac was their grandfather. Abraham was their great grandfather and here the great grandchildren of Abraham acting like this. You know how they can? Well, to give you a human reason, first of all they were the products of a bigamous home to start with. That didn't help. You see the things that we do, really do affect our children. But of course in sovereign grace, God may overrule things like that and has done that often in the past. There is one thing about these men that makes them no different from you and me. They were sons of Adam as well as Abraham and thus afflicted with the depravity that is common to us. So Ruben now is having some second thoughts about life. He says,

“Let’s don’t take his life. Don’t shed blood. Throw him into the pit,” because he had the idea that he would rescue him from the pit perhaps to restore himself to favor with Jacob.

While well anyway, the brothers took Joseph, they threw him into the pit, the pit was empty without any water in it, and then, “What do you think they did then?” That opening sentence of verse 25 is so vivid. That’s the final touch of callousness, some commentator has said. “Then they sat down to eat a meal.” One of the Puritans says, “With what heart could they say grace either before or after this meal?”

Later on about twenty years later, the brothers were in the presence of Joseph and at that time now he is the premier of Egypt. And they talk about this and they say, we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we could not or would not hear. They remember Joseph in the pit. They remember Joseph crying out, asking them to take him out of the pit, and they paid no attention to him. That incidentally may be one indication of a flaw in Joseph’s character. He may not have at that point had perfect trust in the Lord God, but Donald Gray Barnhouse has written some jests of little meditations on verses in Genesis says, “A physicist could compute the exact time required for his cries to go 25 yards to the eardrums of the brothers, but it took 22 years for those cries to go from the eardrums to their hearts.”

It is very easy to hear a message. You can sit on audience like this and hear a message about the Lord Jesus Christ and you hear the same words that the person sitting next to you hears. But often they are just in the ear and sometimes it does take 5, 10, 15, 20 years for the message to go from the ear to the inmost being of an individual.

So I ask you his morning, “Are you listening?” I am not talking about you that are nodding. Are you listening? Are you really listening? That is or you are doing more than just hearing the words and are they really sinking deep down into the heart. Is the Holy Spirit bringing a response to the message of God? Amos reflected on this. Later on hundreds of years after this, he describes men whose hearts are hard and callused and he does it in the language of Genesis chapter 37, he speaks about those who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments. I

wonder if what he does not mean here is that when the Midianites and the Ishmaelites came along, not only did they sell Joseph, but they also got some of their goods and they sat around, they drank their wine, they were eating their meal, they drank their wine, and they anointed themselves with the chief ointments, but Amos says, “But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” That is they don’t care a thing about those cries that are coming out of the pit. People can be awfully callused and hardened.

Well, the rest of the chapter is a description of how they deceived Jacob. When Ruben returned, he was devastated by what he saw, but the others are hard and callous and finally Jacob hears about it and Jacob is so overcome because of the relationship that he bears to the son of his old age that he refused to be comforted saying, “Surely, I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.” And so he spent much time weeping over Joseph. This chapter illustrates both the sin of man and the grace of God and especially the sin of envy. We covet things and we envy persons and a person has no peace when he is an envious individual.

The writer of the Proverbs says envy is the rottenness of bones, but if God fills our lives and if we are satisfied with him and if he is really the object of our affection, then He fills our lives and there is no place for envy. Grace brings that condition about. Samuel Taylor Coleridge once said, “Our greatest mission is to rescue admitted truth from the neglect caused by their universal admission.” That’s true and one of the duties of a commentator and preacher and student of the word of God, teacher of the word of God is to rescue some of the admitted truths from the neglect that is caused because we all agree and consequently we do not pay the things that we agree about with proper attention.

Now I think that’s illustrated here because if there is one thing that stands out in the life of Joseph it is the providence of God. It is the expression of the sovereignty of God and the other thing that we all see is that Joseph somehow in the experience of his life is a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus Christ who was rejected and ultimately exalted and becomes the means of the blessing of the brethren who rejected him.

Let me just close by pointing out a few of the likenesses or correspondences between Joseph and Christ. Joseph and Christ are alike in that they both are the object of the affection of their father. Lord Jesus at his baptism heard the words, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” And just as Jacob doted upon Joseph, so in the true sense, the father dotes upon the son and rejoices in him and in us only as we are in him. Joseph and Jesus Christ are alike in that they both have a commission from the father. Joseph was sent out for the brethren, so Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time, God sent him forth, born of a woman, born under the law that he might redeem those under the law and bring to them the adoption of sonship.

Joseph and Jesus Christ are alike in that they both were rejected by their brethren. He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. They are alike in their humiliation and Joseph is sold into slavery and so the Lord Jesus comes as a servant, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of men, and ultimately in becoming the representative, substitutionary sacrifice, reaches the epitomy of humiliation, for the Son of God dies as a common criminal. He was obedient unto death, even such a death as the death of a cross, the death of a criminal.

Joseph and Christ are alike in their exaltation for just as Joseph was humiliated, sold into captivity, and by the grace of God becomes the second in command over all of the land of Egypt and really all over the world of that day. So Jesus Christ has been exalted to the right hand of the Father and one of these days He is going to appear again, a second time, apart from sin unto salvation.

They are alike also in their exaltation; they acquire a bride. And Joseph acquires a bride and the Lord Jesus Christ today is acquiring a bride by the preaching of the gospel. It’s just possible that this morning as the word of God goes forth, someone is responsive to Jesus Christ and the atoning sacrifice, and has in their heart said, “Lord, I am a sinner, I need to be saved, I do receive Christ as my savior,” and you become a member of the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, that’s what God is doing today acquiring a bride for his son Jesus Christ, and finally Joseph ultimately will become the means of the restoration of his own brethren to the proper relationship that they should have to him

and the Lord Jesus Christ is ultimately the means by which the nation Israel is restored to its rightful relationship to the Lord God.

The Scripture says that, “They shall look upon him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son and the Nation Israel shall be reconciled to the one whom they have put to death.” What a great day that’s going to be? Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful for the stories of the Book of Genesis and for the wonderful spiritual truths that are taught us through the experiences of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and others of the patriarchs. Lord, may be we responsive to them. Enable us to realize and truly act upon the great principle that Thou art sovereignly at work in the affairs of men. And we pray for those who may be here without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, give them no rest nor peace until they rest in Him. Through the Holy Spirit, make those who are unable to respond, willing to come to Him. And we give Thee the praise and the thanks for the wonderful saving grace that flows only from our sovereign God. Go with us Lord as we part.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.