

Joseph - Finding Who We Are in Christ (Part 7)

Sunday, December 20, 2020

We have been on a journey through the life of Joseph asking The Holy Spirit to show us who we are in Christ and how we can grow into the person we were meant to be

So far, we have learned that...

- We are wanted by God and were created to add to His kingdom
- We are loved and highly favored by God
- God has put dreams and purposes within us that He wants us to fulfill
- It doesn't matter how old you are, God has plans for you. And it doesn't matter how long you have been waiting, you can't give up on the dreams God has put in your heart. Believe what God has said. Hold on to the things the dreams and visions he has planted in you.

We said that there will be times when the enemy wants to strip us of our God given identity, purposes, and dreams. In these times we must hold on to who we are in Christ by...

- Having HOPE for better days ahead
- WALKING forward in faith one step at a time
- TRUSTING that God still has a plan and is still in control
- PRAISING God in spite of the pain

We discovered that God uses the tool of Servanthood to help form us and shape us into the masterpiece that He created us to be. Servanthood shapes us by...

- Instilling a heart of humility
- Exposing the dangers of pride
- Teaching us the value of hard work
- Shifting our focus from ourselves to others

Through Joseph's life we saw the importance of maintaining our identity in Christ by living with integrity and doing what is right...

- Even if it seems very small
- Even when we believe it won't hurt anyone
- Even if we feel we deserve it
- Even when we think no one will know
- Even when we assume, we can get away with it
- Even when we feel it is justified
- Even if others don't
- Even if we are falsely accused
- Even if it doesn't seem fair
- Even if the cost is great

Our journey with Joseph also taught us that there will be times in all of our lives that who we are in Christ will be challenged by times of waiting. While we are waiting, we must...

- Stay the Course
- Stay Active
- Stay Productive
- Stay at Peace
- Stay Close to God

The next stage of Joseph's journey involved Pharaoh's call for Joseph to leave his prison cell and interpret his dreams. This part of Joseph's story teaches us that, In Christ...

- We are **CHOSEN**
- We are **CALLED**
- We are **FORGIVEN**
- We are Set **FREE**
- We are **CLEANED UP** (Made New)
- We are **NEEDED** (have a purpose)
- We are **CLOTHED** (anointed)
- We are **RAISED UP**
- We are **ADOPTED** into the family
- We have a **FUTURE**

Now let's turn our attention to the next 14 years of Joseph's life and learn what those years have to teach us about who we are in Christ

Feast and Famine - Persevering in good times and bad

Genesis 41:25-57

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. **26** The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. **27** The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

28 "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. **29** Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, **30** but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. **31** The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. **32** The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

33 “And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. **34** Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. **35** They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. **36** This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.”

37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. **38** So Pharaoh asked them, “**Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?**”

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. **40** You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.”

Joseph in Charge of Egypt

41 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” **42** **Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus, he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.**

44 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.” **45 Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife.** And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh’s presence and traveled throughout Egypt. **47** During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. **48** Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. **49** Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

50 Before the years of famine came, **two sons were born to Joseph** by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. **51** Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, “It is because **God has made me forget all my trouble** and all my father’s household.” **52** The second son he named Ephraim and said, “It is because **God has made me fruitful** in the land of my suffering.”

53 The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, **54** and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. **55** When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.”

56 When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. **57** And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

Who am I in Christ? I am one who perseveres in good times and bad times

For 7 years there was great abundance followed by 7 years of terrible famine. Very different and yet both sets of years teach us the same principle of who we need to be in Christ Jesus. We are called to persevere in both good times and bad

Now some mistakenly believe that perseverance is not needed in times of abundance; but abundance can be as much of a temptation to give up on our faith as times of famine. When things are going well people tend to think they don't need God. They become dependent on their wealth and forget that the blessing came from God. In times of great need, people can give up on God believing the lie that He doesn't exist or doesn't care. We can be consumed with our abundance or defeated by our lack

James 1:2-4, 12

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

So how do we stand firm in good times and in bad?

1. Trust that God has a plan, and He is in control

Joseph said that God gave the dream in two forms because the matter has been firmly decided by God and He will soon do it

Perseverance means believing that God has a plan and that he is in control

Sometimes we look at things and wonder if God has a plan. Other times, I think we believe God has a plan but doubt his ability to bring it to pass

The 7 years of Abundance were a part of Gods plan. He had a reason for it, and it was He who brought it to pass

But so we're the 7 years of famine. This too was a part of Gods plan

Why is it that so often God's children have no problem believing that prosperity is a part of Gods plan, but struggle to accept that times of great need are also a part of Gods plan.

Mary and Joseph experienced both good and bad as a part of Gods plan. It was one thing to believe that a God was in control when he sent the angel to deliver the news, when Mary became pregnant without knowing a man, when the shepherds and wise men came to see the baby and confirm the plan of God. But what about when they had to travel to Bethlehem when she was at the end of her pregnancy, what about when they were trying to find a room and couldn't, what about when they had to flee to Egypt because Herod was sending his men to kill all the babies.

Joseph's family were affected by the famine as well, but this was a part of Gods plan to bring them back together

And what about our day? Will we only trust that God has a plan and is in control when things are going well, or will we continue to trust him when things seem to be going in the opposite direction.

2020 has been one of those years that we have had to learn to trust that God has a plan in spite of what we see happening all around us.... and personally, I believe we have more to come. Remember that Joseph told Pharaoh that the famine would swallow up the abundance and the abundance would be forgotten.

I have been going back and reexamining some of the words that David Wilkerson spoke concerning judgment coming to America. If you haven't read his book America's Last Call: On the Brink of a Financial Holocaust, you might want to pick up a copy or re-read it if you already have it.

“. . .Beloved, America is facing God's judgment—and we will never be the same! In the days to come,'

He talked about America's Golden Calf (The Stock Market) coming down. He reminds us that a great time of Prosperity precedes a great time of Judgment. That Prosperity is God's final call of mercy giving people time to repent and prepare (much like God's plan revealed in Pharaoh's dreams.

As of 1998, the world had had some 16 years of great prosperity. With three brief interruptions – late 1987, 2000-02 and 2008-early 2009 – worldwide prosperity continued at a strong pace until the S&P 500 reached an all-time high on February 19, 2020, only about one month ago.

As a stock market historian, I can tell you that from mid-August 1982 to mid-February 2020 (37½ years), the S&P 500 gained a whopping 32-fold.

That's the most prolonged period of prosperity in U.S. history, by far. I also can tell you that from February 19, 2020 to March 20, 2020 (22 trading days), the S&P 500 fell 31.9% – the swiftest decline in U.S. history.

From <<http://tulsabeacon.com/a-warning-by-david-wilkerson/>>

In Christ, I will persevere because I trust that God has a plan and is in control

Deuteronomy 31:8

8 The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

2. Do not turn away from God

Persevering means that we determine not to turn away from God. Some people turn away from God in the good times

Deuteronomy 6:10-12

10 When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, **11** houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, **12** be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

2 Timothy 4:10

10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me

Others turn away from God in the bad times. But those who are in Christ will remain steadfast in their faith.

1 Corinthians 16:13

13 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.

3. Contentment is Key

Philippians 4:11-13

11 ...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. **12** I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **13** I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

4. Be prepared

Jesus gave us the Parable of the 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins in chapter 25 so that we would learn to be ready... One aspect of persevering is being ready for what is coming. Joseph's interpretation of the dream was a warning from God to get ready.

David Wilkerson Article America's Golden Calf is coming down...

I must ask you: "Are you prepared for what is coming? If not, are you acting now to get ready? When I speak of being ready, where do your thoughts take you? Do you think immediately of investments, bank accounts, survival plans, safety for your family?"

Yet, I believe it is much more important today for American Christians to focus on spiritual preparation—before the coming storm hits. Let me tell you why.

I believe that when the coming storm hits with full fury, and the nation is reeling with panic and fear, people will flee all false gospels and feel-good churches. Christians will forget about gospel entertainment and Christian TV, and they'll start demanding hard truth. They'll flock to hear godly pastors, demanding the true Word of God. Their cry will be, "Who will preach to us a prophetic, life-changing word?"

Sadly, many charismatic Christians today talk much about being Spirit-filled—but they are totally bankrupt of truth. They're not intimate with Christ—and so they don't know how to draw on His strength in truth. They don't tremble at the truth of His Word. They don't know how to walk in His resurrection power or live wholly dependent on Him. Instead, they twist, manipulate, and misinterpret His Word to accommodate their flesh.

Many pastors and evangelists today have no interest in seeking the Spirit of truth. They think they can call on the Holy Ghost at any time to come down and sweep away all the powers of hell. But these people won't be prepared for the dark times that are coming?

The only manifestations we'll see when the storm hits will be men and women falling to their knees in awe and fear of God. They'll be slain by the piercing, convicting, soul-cleansing preaching that comes from the Spirit of truth.

5. Help others be prepared