

# From Dreams to Nightmares

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[ 0 : 00 ] When we started the study of Joseph's life a couple of weeks ago, we discussed how the chapters! on Joseph's life really are not about Joseph. It's about the progression of redemptive history, how God will redeem his people from the curse of sin. You'll likely hear that during every lesson because it helps us stay focused on the bigger picture as we go through Genesis 37 through 50.

Throughout Genesis, including the account of Joseph, God shows that he's faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem his people. In the first 11 verses of chapter 37 plus the cross references, we met Jacob's family last week. Jacob had 12 sons and one daughter. Those children came from four different mothers. That alone had to cause tension, but Jacob playing favorites caused even more strife among the family. Remember Genesis 37 verses 3 and 4. Those verses said, 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. The robe marked the owner as the one whom the father intended to be the future leader of the household, and that was an honor normally given to the firstborn son. Verses 5 through 11 of chapter 37 told us that Joseph had two dreams. When Joseph told his brothers about his two dreams, the hatred intensified. Verse 5 said,

Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. The reason why they hated him is because both dreams contained clear imagery of the brothers bowing down to Joseph. Joseph's visions revealed that one day he will be placed in a position of power, prestige, and privilege, and that even his own family members will honor him. The verses we covered last time ended with verse 11, and that verse said, And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. We'll go all the way through the end of chapter 37 tonight. In the process, we'll see Joseph's life change from having dreams to living a nightmare. Unbeknownst to Joseph and his brothers at the time, Joseph's real-life nightmare has a purpose. We know from the two previous studies that the themes of land, seed, and covenant appear again and again in the book of Genesis to mark the progression of redemptive history. But if someone reads tonight's verses without knowing how the story turns out, that person understandably would think that the verses actually move us away from God fulfilling his covenant to Abram for providing land and offspring. These verses show that God often uses difficult experiences in the lives of his people to accomplish his purpose. So that's really the main thing I want you to get from the study tonight. God often uses difficult experiences in the life of his people to accomplish his purpose. God accomplishes that purpose through providence.

Providence is defined as the exercise of God's sovereignty to preserve, support, and direct his creation. It is founded on God's general decree and normally accomplished by means of secondary causes.

God's government of creation is inseparably oriented to his redemptive actions. So God's government of creation is inseparably oriented to his redemptive action. That last sentence is key. And God even uses people's sinful actions to accomplish his redemptive purpose. Listen to how this explanation puts it on how God uses sinful actions and makes them fit with his providence.

[ 4 : 02 ] It says, As regards sinful actions of men, they are represented as occurring by God's permission and as controlled and overruled for good. God does not cause or approve of sin, but only limits, restrains, overrules it for good. The mode of God's providential government is altogether unexplained.

We only know that it is a fact that God does govern all his creatures and all their actions and that this government is consistent with his own perfection and to his own glory. The events we'll see

tonight are terrible. We should never minimize or sugarcoat what happens to Joseph because at first glance, things work out decently for him and his family in the end. However, we'll also see how God restrains these terrible events for ultimate good. So let's go ahead and read tonight's passage. It's a little lengthy, but we'll read it as one block and then come back and dig into it in detail.

So here are Genesis 37 verses 12 through 36. Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at 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 him 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 am seeking my brothers, he said. Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock.

[ 5 : 43 ] 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, 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 and 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, and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty.

There was no water in it. 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.

[ 6 : 57 ] 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 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.

[ 7 : 59 ] Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son 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, mourning.

Thus his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, the officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard. In our passage tonight, Moses intends for us to see the distinction between Joseph and his brothers.

He does this first through a simple yet profound episode, where Joseph does nothing more than obey the will of his father. Joseph's character will be seen in the magnitude of the task, his instant and unwavering commitment to obey, and the persistence with which he pursues completion of that task.

We're going to break tonight's passage into three sections. In verses 12 through 17, we see the virtuous son. The virtuous son is your first fill-in.

Look at verse 12 again. Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. Before we go any further, we need to consider why Jacob would be concerned about the older sons pasturing the flock near Shechem.

[ 9 : 23 ] Jacob was concerned because of what Moses documents in Genesis chapter 34. That sad story involved Jacob's daughter, Dinah. Listen to Genesis 34, 1 through 7.

And we're actually going to cover the whole chapter, so you might want to go ahead and flip there. Genesis 34, 1 through 7 say, Now Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had born to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land.

And when Shechem, the son of Hamer the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her. And his soul was drawn to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob.

He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamer, saying, Get me this girl for my wife. Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah, but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came.

And Hamer, the father of Shechem, went out to Jacob to speak with him. The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry, because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing must not be done.

[10:40] Jacob's sons are right to be outraged at what happened to their sister. The problem comes from what the sons do without outrage. Listen to how the story continues in verses 8 through 12 of Genesis 34.

In these verses, Shechem and his father meet with Jacob and Jacob's older sons. Starting in verse 8, it says, But Hamer spoke with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter.

Please give her to him to be his wife. Make marriages with us, give your daughters to us, and take your daughters for yourselves. You shall dwell with us, and the land shall be open to you.

Dwell and trade in it, and get property in it. Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me, I will give.

Ask me for as great a bride price and gift as you will, and I will give whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife. Jacob's older sons falsely pretend to be open to that idea.

[11:49] Instead, however, they're actually plotting revenge, and they use that openness and the fake openness to set up their revenge. Listen to verses 13 through 17 of Genesis 34.

They say, The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamer deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. They said to them, We cannot do this thing to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us.

Only on this condition will we agree with you, that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised. Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people.

But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone. Hamer and Shechem swallow the line, hook, line, and sinker.

They take that lie and believe it full well. Even more than that, Hamer and Shechem convince the other men of the city to do the same thing. So, listen to verses 18 through 24 of chapter 34 now.

[13:04] They say, Their words pleased Hamer and Hamer's son Shechem, and the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his father's house.

So Hamer and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city, and spoke to the men of their city, saying, These men are at peace with us. Let them dwell in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them.

Let us take their daughters as wives, and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us, to become one people, when every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised.

Will not their livestock, their property, and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us. And all who went out of the gate of the city listened to Hamer and his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

After the men follow through with their promise, Shechem and Levi strike. Listen to verses 25 through 31.

[14:13] On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city, while it felt secure, and killed all the males.

They killed Hamer and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. The sons of Jacob, these are the other sons apparently, came upon the slain and

plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister.

They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys and whatever was in the city and in the field, all their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and plundered.

Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.

But they said, Should he treat our sister like a prostitute? So, as we said before we started reading the chapter, Jacob's older sons were correct that Shechem himself needed to be punished for what he did to Dinah.

[15:23] However, the sons used Shechem's crime as an excuse to murder and steal from people who had no part in the crime. This story does more than just tell us why Jacob had reason to be concerned about his sons pasturing the flock near the side of their crimes.

It also gives us more insight into the older son's character, or more correctly, the older son's lack of character. We see that they don't hesitate to murder and steal from innocent people.

Going back to our text tonight, the only words we hear Joseph speak in the first section come in Genesis 37, 13. Look at Genesis 37, 13 again.

And Israel said to Joseph, Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them. And he said to him, Here I am. Joseph shows no hesitation at all in obeying Jacob.

And that's even more remarkable because Shechem is about 50 miles away from where Joseph is at this time. How many 17-year-old boys do you know who would willingly want to go 50 miles to look for somebody, especially doing that on foot?

[16:38] So, Joseph is pretty remarkable here. We can marvel at Jacob's lack of wisdom in sending his beloved son alone on a journey like that, but we should also marvel at how much Jacob trusts Joseph.

Little did Jacob know that this would be the last time he would see and speak to Joseph for more than two decades. When Joseph makes it to Shechem, his brothers are nowhere to be found.

An anonymous man there tells Joseph that the brothers have moved on to Dothan. Joseph will go the extra mile and continue to Dothan, too. Actually, he'll go the extra 13 miles because Dothan was about 13 miles from Shechem.

Notice the irony in Joseph's encounter with the anonymous man near Shechem. Joseph is safer with this stranger in the place where his brothers would have been hated than Joseph will be with his own brothers.

The hatred of Joseph's brothers is greater than the hatred of the men of Shechem who had endured a bloody slaughter. Joseph actually is safer with the family enemy than he is with his own family.

[17:51] He survived the dangers of Shechem, but he will not survive the danger of his own brothers. The remaining verses in this chapter show in even more detail the contrast between Joseph and his brothers.

The next section of this lesson covers verses 18 through 30. In these verses, we see the vicious sons. The vicious sons.

Here are verses 18 through 22 again. And you'll see the vicious sons there. They saw him, Joseph, 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, and restore him to his father.

[19:04] After Reuben gives his suggestion, Reuben leaves. At first glance, we might be inclined to give Reuben some credit for discouraging the other vicious sons from killing Joseph, and maybe he did have some good motives there.

But he also may have had some selfish motivations for wanting to bring Joseph safely home.

Remember that Reuben was the oldest son, whose mother was Leah.

Reuben's great failure occurred when he slept with his father's concubine, Billa. This act, a serious crime, was punishable by death. As the oldest son of Jacob, Reuben should have been granted the

birthright, but he was denied this honor because of his act of disrespect.

Listen to Jacob's words when Jacob was on his deathbed. These are Genesis 49, verses 3 and 4. Jacob said, Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed, then you defiled it. He went up to my couch. So we know then that Reuben is already on the outs with his father.

[ 20 : 24 ] Back to our main text tonight, Joseph is coming nearer and nearer to where his brothers are, totally unsuspecting, as far as we can tell, what would happen next. We can almost hear the foreboding music in the background as Joseph gets closer, but unfortunately for Joseph, this is no TV show.

It's a true story. Look at verses 23 through 25. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore, and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty. There was no water in it. 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.

The pits in these pasture lands typically were cisterns hewn out of rock for retaining water for the flocks. They would usually range in depth from six to 20 feet and could also serve then as excellent dungeons.

The pit nearest them, according to this verse, was empty, suggesting that water is what normally would be found in a pit. So Joseph is stripped then and he's thrown into that pit.

[ 21 : 41 ] Obviously, it had to be pretty painful to just be tossed into the pit. They don't seem to care about that either. And his place in the pit stands in ironic contrast to the image of elevation that he's had in his dreams.

But look what happens next. His brothers callously sit down and have a meal. Can you imagine doing that to somebody and then sitting down to eat? What Joseph says and does at this point is not recorded here.

But Genesis 42, verse 21 gives us more insight into what was happening. Genesis 42, 21 comes after the brothers are temporarily put into jail in Egypt.

Genesis 42, 21 says, Then they said to one another, In truth, we are 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. So even though Moses doesn't record it here in the chapters we're looking at tonight, we see that Joseph was begging them and in great distress when he was in the pit.

[ 22 : 48 ] He wasn't down in the pit saying, Oh, but someday you're going to bow down to me. I'm convinced of that. Just let me out of here and we'll see what happens. No, he was really concerned about what was going on.

And so while the virtuous son was in distress and begging them, we already mentioned how the vicious sons sat down to eat. Remember the main idea of this passage that we discussed earlier. God often uses difficult experiences in the lives of his people to accomplish his purpose. Let's move on to verses 26 through 28.

Then Judah said to his brothers, What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and let not our hand be upon him.

For he is our brother, our own flesh. And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by and they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver.

[ 23 : 50 ] They took Joseph to Egypt. Ishmaelites were descendants of Abraham by Hagar and the Midianites descended from Abraham by his concubine, Katerah.

The term Ishmaelites became a general designation for desert tribes so that Midianite traders also were known as Ishmaelites. It's kind of like saying that Mike is a Delaware Indian and an Oklahoman.

He can be both at the same time. The introduction of the Ishmaelites actually harkens back to an earlier part of the Genesis narrative. Ishmael was the illegitimate son of Abraham who not only was rejected as the promised heir but about whom an ominous prophecy was given.

Genesis 16.12 says he shall be a wild donkey of a man his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.

In addition to the juxtaposition of an obedient son against disobedient ones there's also the juxtaposition of Ishmael's offspring and the offspring of his brother Isaac.

[ 25 : 03 ] The promised seed Jacob has come into the promised land in fulfillment of the covenant that God made with his father and we know eventually that Reuben will become the heir that will carry on the line of the Messiah but at this point in Genesis that fact has yet to be revealed.

Before the promised heir is revealed the favorite son of the patriarch Jacob leaves the promised land and is sold not only into slavery but into the hands of the descendants of Abraham's rejected heir.

All of this has happened while Reuben has been away. Look what happened when Reuben returns. We see that in verses 29 and 30. 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?

Although he was absent at the time of the sale Reuben as the oldest would be held responsible for the treachery so he joined in its cover up. That cover up starts in verse 31 verses 31 through 36 have the final section of our lesson.

In those verses we see the vile scheme. So the vile scheme is your last fill in. That vile scheme is concocted by the vicious sons to explain to their father what happened to the virtuous son.

[ 26 : 32 ] Listen to verses 31 through 36 again. 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 and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son 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 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. Jacob's deception by his sons using Joseph's cloak and a slaughtered goat mirrors the way that Jacob had deceived his own father by using Esau's cloak and two goat skins.

We looked at that last week when we did the overview of Jacob's family. It's kind of ironic isn't it how God turns that around so now Jacob in a sense is a victim of a scheme very similar to what he concocted himself.

[ 27 : 57 ] But we see again here in tonight's verses the callousness of the brothers and that's why I said it's a vile scheme. They knew full well that the tunic was Joseph's.

They were the ones who stripped him of it themselves yet they asked their father to identify it. Keep the word identify in the back of your mind for next week.

In the next chapter Judah is going to get a taste of his own medicine when he's asked to identify some things. That same word both in the English and the Hebrew will come back around.

Back to tonight's verses something else points out the callousness of the brothers. Notice how they refer to Joseph in verse 32. The brothers asked Jacob to identify whether the robe is your son's robe.

They can't even bring themselves to acknowledge that they're related to Joseph too. Last week I misspoke early in the lesson by saying that the brothers hated Jacob when I meant to say that the brothers hated Joseph.

[ 29 : 02 ] However, we see evidence here that the brothers must also have hated Jacob. Not only did the brothers concoct this vile scheme, they let their father believe it and grieve over it for more than two decades.

We're probably safe to assume that if Joseph hadn't turned up later in Egypt that they would have let Jacob go to his death believing that the vile scheme was true and to do that to somebody you must really have to hate that person too.

The brothers stopped short of telling Jacob that Joseph is dead. They let Jacob come to that conclusion himself. Of course, that's exactly the conclusion that the brothers want Jacob to draw and that's exactly the conclusion that they knew Jacob would draw.

How often do you think Jacob thought over and over in his mind if I had only not sent Joseph to look for his brothers would he still be alive? He had to feel like he was responsible in a big way for Joseph's death.

At least what he thought was Joseph's death. Verses 34 and 35 give us a glimpse into how deep Jacob's grief was. The brothers could do away with the preferred brother but not with the love that the father had for the son.

[ 30 : 19 ] So you may have noticed that verse 35 said that all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort Jacob. So how does that square with having 12 sons and one daughter like what we discussed last week and even earlier tonight?

Well, the possibility does exist that Jacob could have had more than one daughter. However, that seems unlikely considering how thoroughly Moses introduced us to Jacob's family in earlier chapters.

The word translated sons and daughters there is a word that can be translated as children and the word also can refer to sons-in-law and daughters-in-law just as Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi, is referenced as a daughter of Ruth in the book of Ruth.

And no doubt we know that the older sons were already old enough to have wives. Verse 36 almost seems like an afterthought, but it's one of the most significant verses in the story.

It says, Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold him, meaning Joseph of course, in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard. The father who picked favorites has had his favorite taken away, and the central character in the narrative has removed progressively further and further away from the land of promise.

[ 31 : 36 ] he doesn't end up not just in another country, but in Egypt. And we know that Egypt is the land that will come to represent oppression and bondage throughout the rest of redemptive history.

As we've worked through chapter 37 during the last two weeks, we've pointed out how Jacob played favorites, and how the other brothers had hatred, jealousy, and even murder in their hearts. That's not the main point though. The main point is not that Jacob picked favorites, or that Joseph's brothers had murder in their hearts. There are actually truths in this chapter that run much deeper, and more importantly, there are truths that point us away from ourselves to a God who saves in spite of us.

Listen to that point again. We need to remember that. There are truths that point us away from ourselves to a God, actually the God, who saves in spite of us.

One of the things that Volz points out about this chapter is that obedience does not guarantee success or ease. The contrast between Joseph's obedience and his brother's disobedience is not the backdrop for a lesson about getting what you want.

[ 32 : 48 ] We'll actually see in Genesis 41 that Joseph didn't have things as good as we might have first thought. We actually will see here and elsewhere that Joseph's obedience is rewarded with hardship.

He ends up in a pit, then in Egypt, far away from the people and the land of promise. We tend to think that everything turned out well for Joseph, but when we get to some of the later chapters, we'll find out that even though he ultimately had a position of power and prestige, his circumstances were less desirable than they first appear.

Just to give you a preview, though, remember this. Joseph was always an outsider in Egypt who never again returned to his homeland alive. The truth is that God's people will suffer.

We know from 2 Timothy 3.12 that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. The lives of some faithful Christians end in martyrdom, and if we fail to read Joseph's story properly, we'll have absolutely no understanding of that reality.

A second thing to note is that God's electing work is not based on man's performance. Joseph may be the star of the show, but he's not the promised seed. Just as his father was chosen when Esau was his father's favorite, Joseph will have to give way to Judah.

[ 34 : 14 ] It's hard to believe right now that Joseph will give way to Judah, but we will see that happen. In both cases, the choice of the promised seeds had absolutely nothing to do with anything they had done.

The Bible makes it clear that the choice of Jacob over Esau happened, even though they were not yet born and had done nothing, either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of him who calls.

And that actually is Romans 9-11. This was true for Jacob, Judah, and every other human being upon whom God's favor has fallen.

The third thing to note from this chapter is that sin makes us blind to our greatest and only hope. Joseph's brothers are first-class sinners.

We've proven that they can do that really, really well, not just in the chapter we looked at tonight, but also the other cross-references we've had. They're murderers, they're filled with jealousy, and jealousy we know is identified as one of the vilest of sins, and that's what led to their vile scheme tonight.

[ 35 : 24 ] However, their greatest problem is that their sin blinds them to their greatest and only hope. Joseph has dreams that point to his ultimate role as savior of his family.

He foresees his elevation to prominence in Egypt, and by extension, his part in delivering his family from famine. However, all his brothers, and even his father at this point can see, is that Joseph's dreams point to his superiority, something that Jacob has conditioned the brothers to resent.

When the other brothers see Joseph, whom God has designated to save their lives walking toward them in obedience to his father, their first inclination is to kill him. The brothers are of a mind to thwart the purpose of God in destroying the life of their younger brother.

That conduct is in direct defiance to the will of God as revealed through Joseph's visions. Reuben's interference stays the executions, but Reuben's actions are more than the actions of someone who's covering his flank.

Reuben's actions are examples of divine providence. Remember, we talked about earlier how God sometimes limits even terrible circumstances to make sure his providence happens, and we see that tonight.

[ 36 : 45 ] God prevented the brothers from killing Joseph to make sure that Joseph wound up where he needed to be. So the brothers, while consciously seeking to subvert God's purpose, actually worked to fulfill God's purpose.

Remember what we said earlier in the lesson, God often uses difficult experiences in the lives of his people to accomplish his purpose. God often uses the difficult experiences in the lives of his people to accomplish his purpose.

Sometimes those actions include the limiting, overruling, and restraining of sin. Joseph suffered tremendously. He didn't get murdered here, but he still suffered, and we should always remember that.

Moses doesn't record what Joseph said or did as the Midianite caravan was pulling away with Joseph on it. We can be pretty sure, though, that Joseph wasn't thinking of his past dreams in a good way if he was thinking about those dreams at all.

Joseph's dreams had become a nightmare, yet God would use Joseph's terrible circumstances to preserve the promised seed of the true Savior of God's people. This is not a feel-good story where the hero returns victorious.

[ 38 : 00 ] This is a tale of redemption in which Joseph pays an unthinkable price for a purpose that's much greater than he is. Consider one more time how the older brothers respond to Joseph when they see Joseph approaching at a distance.

When they see the young man whom God has designated to save their lives walking toward them in obedience to his father, we mentioned how their first inclination is to kill him.

Notice, though, how Joseph's brother's response to Joseph mirrors the response of sinners to Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus comes as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and the ultimate response from most of the people is what?

Crucify him. But in Jesus' case, there was no Judah to calm the crowd and change their minds. Things worked out both for Joseph and Jesus exactly how God intended.

Listen to Romans 5, verses 6 through 11. Those verses say, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

[ 39 : 09 ] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the reminder that even when things seem at their darkest, you are still working in the lives of your people to bring about your purposes. Of course, that doesn't minimize the difficulties that people have, and it doesn't always make it easier to deal with those difficulties, but at least we can rest assured that you are aware of what's happening, and you are orchestrating what's happening to our ultimate good. Always let us keep that in mind as we go through trials. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.