



# Joseph, A Pillar of Grace

A Remarkable  
Journey from  
Pit to Pinnacle

Moses C. Onwubiko

# JOSEPH, A PILLAR OF GRACE

*A Remarkable Journey from  
Pit to Pinnacle*

*by Moses C. Onwubiko*

Note: This book is the third in a series:

*Overview of God's Grace*

and

*Paul, a Trophy of Grace.*

We recommend that you read them all to increase in the knowledge of our Lord and to grow in His grace.

Grace Evangelistic Ministries, Inc.  
Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

“Buy TRUTH, and do not sell it”  
(Proverbs 23:23a).

Indeed, truth (i.e. sound Bible teaching) is hard to come by. Therefore when God, in His infinite grace, leads you to the truth, you are to embrace it and cherish it. You are to hold to it tenaciously. For in it is hidden the capacity to enjoy life, happiness and blessings in time and eternity to come.

Grace Evangelistic Ministries, Inc.  
P.O. Box 111999  
Nashville, Tennessee 37222  
[www.GEMworldwide.org](http://www.GEMworldwide.org)

© 2005, 2007, Revised 2011 by Moses C. Onwubiko. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Scripture quotations (unless otherwise noted) taken from the New American Standard Bible, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)). Words and phrases in brackets are author's amplifications and not part of the original text.

Those noted NIV taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Verses indicated are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C.

Printed in the United States of America

# Contents

Acknowledgments.....	v
Open Invitation .....	vi
To the Believer in Christ.....	vii
Introduction.....	viii
Chapter One: Joseph, The Journey Begins .....	1
Grace .....	2
Joseph’s First Dream .....	4
Joseph’s Second Dream.....	5
The Doctrine of Dreams .....	6
Interpretation of Dreams in the Old Testament .....	7
Chapter Two: God’s Essence .....	9
Omniscience .....	9
Sovereignty.....	10
Veracity.....	11
Omnipresence.....	12
Omnipotence .....	14
Chapter Three: The Grace Furnace of Suffering.....	15
Suffering with Turmoil or Peace .....	20
Types of Suffering .....	22
Self-Manufactured Suffering .....	22
Divine Discipline .....	24
Spiritual Growth Dynamics Suffering .....	24
G3 and Satan Convention Suffering .....	26
Thorn-in-the-Flesh Suffering .....	26
The Suffering of Paul .....	28
What Kind of Suffering Do You Have .....	29
God’s Security System .....	30
Chapter Four: Joseph in the Pit.....	33
Joseph’s Superstructure of Grace-Orientation.....	34
The Plot to Kill Joseph .....	35
Joseph and His Faithful God .....	37
Joseph’s Rugged Journey as a Slave .....	39
Joseph, a Slave to Potiphar.....	42
Chapter Five: God’s Faithfulness to His Children.....	47
God’s Timetable .....	48

Dining in Style in God’s Restaurant.....	49
Joseph’s First Promotion .....	51
Grace-Orientation.....	52
Chapter Six: Joseph’s Temptation and Testing .....	55
Chapter Seven: Joseph in the Grace Furnace of Suffering .....	59
Joseph in Prison.....	61
Chapter Eight: God’s Providence.....	65
God’s Providence in Action.....	66
Joseph’s Humility-Orientation .....	67
Spiritual Failure .....	69
Joseph’s Failure .....	71
God’s Word: The Anchor of His Faithfulness .....	73
The Rainbow: A Reminder of God’s Faithfulness to His Word.....	74
Israel’s Existence: A Demonstration of God’s Faithfulness to His Word.....	75
Israel’s Unrest: Reminder of God’s Faithfulness to his Word .....	76
The Woman’s Indescribable Pain in Labor: A Reminder that God’s Word is Settled in Heaven .....	76
The Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ: A Reminder of God’s Faithfulness to His Word.....	77
Joseph is Remembered .....	78
Chapter Nine: Joseph at the Pinnacle.....	83
Joseph’s Accurate Application of Knowledge.....	84
The Blessings of Suffering .....	86
The Birth of Manasseh and Ephraim More Grace Blessing .....	88
Worldwide Famine in Joseph’s Day .....	89
Chapter Ten: Joseph, A Pillar of Grace .....	91
Joseph’s Grace-Orientation .....	91
Joseph’s Grace Response to a Guilt Reaction .....	93
Joseph’s Celebratory Exit to Glory .....	95
Chapter Eleven: Final Thoughts .....	97

# *Acknowledgments*

May I take a moment to express my deepest appreciation to the board members of Grace Evangelistic Ministries and to the associates and churches who are partners with us in God's service. Your financial and prayer support is, indeed, yielding fruit for the glory of our Almighty God. Your commitment and dedication to our Lord's work is beyond human calculation!

My never-ending gratitude goes to Colonel R. B. Thieme, Jr., for his faithful communication of sound Bible doctrine. Colonel Thieme is a prolific author who possesses a command of the original languages of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. For his perseverance on behalf of our Savior and His Word, I give my heartfelt thanks.

I am also profoundly grateful for the accurate systematic teaching of the late President and founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, for his work on uncovering the truth of the Church Age.

To crown my gratitude, my standing ovation goes to my best friend, the King of kings, Lord of lords, the bright Morning Star, my eternal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His efficacious sacrifice on the Cross, 2000 years ago, has made it possible for me to communicate the Word of God today in this book.

## *Open Invitation*

The information in this book won't benefit you unless you are born again, that is born spiritually. The good news is that you can be born again into God's family at this very moment!

When our Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, He had you personally on His mind. No sin has ever been committed, no matter how horrible, that wasn't poured out on Jesus Christ on the cross and judged (1 Peter 2:24). As the God-Man, Jesus Christ endured all afflictions, insults, and pain so that He might provide eternal life for you. The issue now is: Do you believe His payment for your sins was enough for your salvation?

Every good person sins and falls short of God's perfect righteousness; therefore, God justly condemns everyone (Romans 3:23), and both the good and the bad need a Savior. Regardless of how good or how sinful you have been or how terribly you have failed in the past, you can begin a new life as a member of God's family right now. How? Simply by silently telling God the Father that you are believing in His Son Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. The very second you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you automatically become a member of God's family! Jesus Christ Himself said,

Unless you believe that I am He [the Christ—your Savior], you shall die in your sins (John 8:24b).

The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

For you have been saved by grace through faith, and this [salvation] is not from yourselves. It is a gift from God, not as a result of human works lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

For God loved the world so much that He gave His Son, the uniquely born One, so that anyone who believes in Him will never perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Will you believe in Him now? Faith alone in Christ alone is the only way to have eternal life. You may wish to pause now and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have believed in Him as your personal Savior, then you are prepared to benefit from this book.

## ***To The Believer in Christ***

Because you are a member of God's family, through faith alone in Christ alone, you have direct access to your heavenly Father; therefore, your sins have become a family matter. In order to understand and benefit from reading this book, God the Holy Spirit must control your soul; however, the Holy Spirit can't control your soul if you have any unconfessed sin in your life.

If we acknowledge our sins, He [God the Father] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to purify us from all wrongdoing (I John 1:9).

In confession – by acknowledging your sins directly to God the Father, not to others – you agree with God that your negative thought, word, or action was a sin. God has already condemned it as a sin, and He expects you to admit to Him that it is a sin. Only through confession of known sins to God the Father can you be restored to a proper relationship with Him. As with salvation, grace alone, not your works, restores you to fellowship with God.

When you have no unconfessed sin in your life, the Holy Spirit is no longer quenched or grieved; thus, you are once again restored to fellowship with God and also controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is true spirituality.

*Now in the privacy of your soul, you should pause to acknowledge any unconfessed sin(s) to God the Father so that the Holy Spirit can make the truth in this book clear and effective in your life.*



# Introduction

We are going to embark on a journey that will take us on a trip through Joseph's life and his spiritual heritage. Along the way, we will take a good look at other Old Testament heroes. Joseph was one of many winner-believers—a grace man—a pillar of Grace whose exploits will help us determine if we are glorifying God or not. Before we begin our expedition, we need to ask some essential questions.

*Why do we, today, have the completed Canon of Scripture?* Paul, a New Testament apostle, answers our question like this:

Now these things [Scripture] were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Without these instructions, man wanders in darkness. The Bible is our divine encyclopedia and includes a reservoir of spiritual solutions to every human problem or need. It is the thinking of Christ and contains an abundance of revelation about the Godhead and the divine plan for time and eternity. The Psalmist describes Scripture in this way:

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105).

For our benefit, God breathed His Word into the minds of the human writers of Scripture and, through His Holy Spirit enabled them to accurately exhale, in writing, in the original languages of Scripture. Through His providence, God safeguarded His Word until this very day. Indeed, God in His marvelous grace has provided a history of both loser and winner-believers in the Bible so that we can avoid duplicating the mistakes of the losers—and apply the divine principles of the winners in order to come out winners ourselves. The 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews provides a list of heroes and records of faith credited to their account

*By faith* Enoch [a man like us] was taken up so that he should not see death...

- By faith* Noah...became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.
- By faith* Abraham, when he was called, obeyed...he went out not knowing where He was going.
- By faith* even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life.
- By faith* Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter...considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward...
- By faith* [by means of Bible doctrine in his soul] Abraham, when he was tested, offered Isaac...He considered that God is able to raise men from the dead...
- By faith* Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones (Hebrews 11:5, 7-8, 11, 25-26, 17-29, 22).

The list of Old Testament winner-believers goes on and on! James, the apostle, makes mention of another winner-believer:

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit (James 5:17-18).

### ***A Challenge To Us***

Therefore, since we [the Church Age saints—believers who have a super abundance of spiritual wealth] have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance [every distraction], and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1).

At times, we ponder the impact these great men of the Old Testament could have if they were alive now in the Church Age. We know that at no other time has God given more spiritual blessings than in this

modern period. For the first time in human history God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit elected to make their abode in the bodies of regenerate believers.

That's right—the Creator indwells His born-again creation! Further, we have the enabling power of the Holy Spirit when we have no unconfessed sin in our souls.

That's not all! We have a complete record of God's Word in its original languages, primarily Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. We have systematic, theologically trained pastors who are experts in dissecting the Word of God. We have local churches and access to teaching by sound Bible teachers on CDs, DVDs, MP3s and the internet.

The list doesn't end here! We are blessed with all sorts of devices with which to view and listen to His Word. Take your pick! Even our automobiles are equipped with players so that we can listen while we drive. Some have even downloaded Bible lessons to their iPods so they can listen while walking or jogging. The list of grace assets is inexhaustible!

Because of the extent of our blessings in the Church Age, we must engrave the Words of our Lord upon the door post of our soul:

From everyone who has been given much, much shall be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more (Luke 12:48).

God has entrusted us with much, and He requires much from us. The men of the past had only a little but were able to glorify the Lord as if they had much. We have it all! "To whom much is given..." you can bet, much is required! We can never exhaust God's grace as we will see during our study of the life of Joseph.

## *Joseph, The Journey Begins*

Joseph was his father's favorite son, probably because he was the first son of Rachel, the wife he loved so dearly, and the son of his old age, for Jacob was 90 years old (Genesis 37:3). Jacob had 12 sons who became Israel's 12 tribes, and Joseph was the source of the two northern tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob showed his favoritism by giving Joseph a beautiful coat of many colors. He must have really stood out, and this distinction aroused the envy of his older brothers.

Now Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than all his sons because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. 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 (Genesis 37:3-4).

Talk about vipers! We shall see that his brothers mixed their envy, jealousy, and malice into one evil concoction—a combination that exploded into a burning rage toward Joseph, their younger brother. Apparently, they were all believers in the Lord, but what loser-believers they were – except for Joseph! We know Joseph was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ because of the way God revealed Himself to Joseph, a privilege reserved for believers only. In the old testament God revealed Himself through various means, but salvation in every generation is always the same! The Bible abounds with evidence of those saved by faith alone in Christ alone. Adam and Eve received their salvation through faith in the Lord. Abraham, Joseph's great grandfather, was saved in the same manner:

Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6).

In the same way, Noah "...became an heir of righteousness which is according to faith" (Hebrews 11:7). The book of Hebrews tells us that God "spoke long ago to the Fathers in the prophets in

many portions and in many ways” (Hebrews 1:1). The Greek word *polumeros*, ‘many portions,’ refers to different ways that a thing can be accomplished,<sup>1</sup> including dreams, visions, stars, and angels.

Abraham taught his son Isaac divine principles, and Isaac passed the spiritual baton to his son Jacob who then passed it to his children (Joseph being one of them). Isaac taught Jacob this scriptural principle:

Train a child in the way he should go. Even when he is old, he shall not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).

God, who is always fair, provided Joseph with enough divine information for his spiritual growth. Joseph was positive to the Word of God, which his father taught him daily. He made the *perception and application* of God’s Word the highest priority in his life; therefore, he moved rapidly from spiritual babyhood to adolescence to full spiritual maturity. Remember that Joseph didn’t have the completed canon of Scripture—not even the first book of Moses—nor a trained pastor; he only had his father to tutor him in divine truth!

The success of Joseph’s spiritual life is a reflection of a biblical principle found in the book of Joshua:

This book of the law [the whole realm of Bible doctrine] shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it because then God will make your way prosperous, and then you will have true success (Joshua 1:8).

Divine truth in Joseph’s soul converted his human viewpoint into divine viewpoint and prepared him to victoriously face his coming problems – by means of grace!

## **Grace**

Grace is a favor done without expecting anything in return, the lovingkindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and free-heartedness of the Giver. Grace is God’s *unearned*

---

<sup>1</sup> NET Bible, (Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C., 1996-2006).

*and unmerited* favor toward us. The litmus test of your grace-comprehension is when you finally and honestly conclude that *whatever* comes your way in this life *totally and unequivocally* passes through the pipeline of God’s grace. **I mean everything!** Grace includes, but is not limited to, your physical and spiritual births: The permanent indwelling of the Trinity, spiritual gifts, eternal security, divine discipline, and tailor-made suffering for blessing—even poor health! It is not by accident or mere chance we were born into this unique age with its multitude of grace tools. God gave us these special blessings.

You may be puzzled and wonder, “What has poor health to do with grace?” Poor health is in the category of “all things” that God folds together and turns into intrinsic good (Romans 8:28). Job was a perfect example of this. Think about it:

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job...and the Lord increased all that Job had twofold...blessed the later days of Job more than the beginning...And after this [his unspeakable suffering] Job lived 140 years and saw his sons’ grandsons for four generations. And Job died, an old man and full of days (Job 42:10, 12, 16-17).

Job lost everything, including his health, before he got it all back twofold with a crown of glory on his head and everlasting stars on his shoulders! Without God’s grace permitting his suffering, Job would not have enjoyed a super-abundance of blessing in time much less in the eternal state.

You may be asking, “Why do we need to suffer before God can bless us abundantly?” The answer is in one word, capacity. The spiritual capacity to enjoy life and our blessings is like gold, which has been refined in a furnace.

Behold, I have refined you...in the furnace of affliction (Isaiah 48:10).

James said we shouldn’t complain when frustrations and adversity hit us but rather we should:

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials...and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect [with capacity to enjoy everything in life] (James 1:2-4).

If divine truth is resident in your soul when severe illness or any adversity hits you, your suffering will bring glory to God if you choose to utilize the grace assets God has given to you.

Joseph, as the object of grace, was no exception. God opened his eyes in a dream and showed him the portfolio of blessing and future promotion awaiting him. Joseph hadn't done a thing for God; that's right—not a thing! But God rained grace on him. The fact that Joseph never earned or deserved his future promotion will serve as the foundation on which to build other grace doctrines concerning him.

### ***Joseph's First Dream***

And he [Joseph] said to them [his brothers and parents], 'Please listen to this dream which I have had; for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also *stood erect* [Hebrew: *natsab*]; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and *bowed down* [Hebrew: *shachah*] to my sheaf.' Then his brothers said to him, 'Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?' So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words (Genesis 37:6-8). (emphasis added)

The description of Joseph's dream contains two vital Hebrew words that need our attention: *natsab* and *shachah*. While the NASB translates the Hebrew word *natsab* as 'stood erect,' the verb has different meanings, 'to be firm', 'to be planted', 'to establish', or 'to be in a place of authority'. Thus, we can translate the above verse more accurately this way: "...lo my sheaf was planted..." It is important that we use the word planted because Joseph did not erect his sheaf, nor did the sheaf erect itself. Someone planted it, and that someone was God. Translating *natsab* in the correct manner highlights God's grace in Joseph's future as ruler.

Humanly speaking, dynasty and primogeniture gave Joseph no chance to rule because he was the 11th son. That's right. The 11th

son! His eldest brother Reuben would have had to rule first. Then when he died, the next oldest brother would succeed him, and on and on until the throne reached Joseph. By human viewpoint standards, Joseph was out of the picture as ruler; but by divine viewpoint and God's grace policy, he was in line for unearned and unmerited favor.

The next Hebrew word, *shachah*, occurs 170 times in the Old Testament and is used in the general sense as worship but specifically to bow down, to prostrate oneself (in homage to royalty) as an act of respect before a superior being.<sup>2</sup> It can also mean to do obeisance. In ancient times, the citizens of a state customarily bowed to their king whether in an assembly or one-on-one. These two verses can more accurately be written:

And Joseph said to his siblings, 'Please listen to this dream I had. Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and my sheaf was miraculously planted in an erect position; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf'(Genesis 37:6-7).

Note that Joseph played no part in either making his sheaf stand erect or in causing his brothers' sheaves to bow in homage to his. God's grace brought about both.

### ***Joseph's Second Dream***

Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, 'Lo I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun [Jacob] and the moon [Rachel] and the 11 stars [Joseph's brothers] were bowing down to me...' '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?' (Genesis 37:9-10).

Jacob used the Hebrew word *gaar*, the strongest word for rebuke, in his response to Joseph telling his dream. The Lord used this same word in rebuking Satan. In a more modern translation, Jacob might have said, "Joseph, what is this crazy thing you are dreaming? You must quit eating all that junk food at bedtime!" Nevertheless,

---

<sup>2</sup> *Lexical Aids to the Old Testament*, 7812.



His father kept the saying in mind (Genesis 3:11c).

For a moment assume Joseph's dreams were fulfilled the next day, now pause and list seven qualification that gave him superiority over his 11 brothers and his parents. How many did you list? None, of course! Are you now beginning to see God's fingerprints of grace all over Joseph's life? The same is true about you as you begin to relate to Joseph and see God's grace in your own life. Everything you have and are comes directly down the pipeline of God's grace.

## *The Doctrine of Dreams*

### **Principles:**

- Everyone dreams, whether they are normal or abnormal, believer or unbeliever, moral or immoral.
- The Scripture is silent as to the cause of dreams.
- In Old Testament times, God communicated through dreams to a select few from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 28:12; 37:6) and to few outside His chosen family, such as Abimelech and Nebuchadnezzar (Genesis 20:3; Daniel 2:1-45).
- Today, God speaks to us through the thinking of His Son, Jesus Christ, as delineated in the written Word of God (Hebrews 1:1, 2; Cf: I Corinthians 2:16).
- Therefore, a believer shouldn't draw any conclusions from his dreams. Today, God reveals His plans through the Bible, not dreams.

The word *dream* occurs 74 times in Scripture, 67 times in the Old Testament with most references in Genesis and Daniel,<sup>3</sup> and seven times in the book of Matthew in the New Testament. The Bible attaches no significance to dreams in the Church Age. Because we have the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit and the completed Bible in written form, God doesn't need to speak to us through dreams. You may say, "Well, I have had some dreams that came true." The issue is not in our experience because scriptural truth is never measured by experience as the Bible reminds us:

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 875.

God, *after* He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, [*polumeros*—including dreams and angels] in these last days has spoken to us in His Son [from Christ’s incarnation to the completed Canon of Scripture], whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world (Hebrews 1:1-2). (emphasis added)

We would do well to follow the footsteps of our Lord and the apostles who never made any reference to dreams.

### ***Interpretation of Dreams in the Old Testament***

We need to establish a fundamental principle in the interpretation of dreams: When the symbolism is in the natural realm, the interpretation will be in the natural realm; therefore, when Joseph dreamed of the sun, moon, and 11 stars bowing to him, his brothers immediately knew this referred to their father, mother, and themselves (Genesis 37:9-11). When the symbol is in the human realm as in Daniel 7:8, “eyes like the eyes of man and a mouth speaking great things,” the interpretation is in the spiritual realm.<sup>4</sup> Because Joseph’s brothers understood this principle, they knew that Joseph would have a position of authority over Jacob’s entire family.

---

<sup>4</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, *Zondervan’s Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 224.



## *God's Essence*

At this point, we will focus on particular features of God's essence so we can understand the impact of His plan and purpose for Joseph's life.<sup>5</sup> As a reminder, God's grace takes His entire essence into account—His righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, sovereignty, veracity, immutability, omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. Now we will study the aspects of God's essence that apply specifically to our study.

### *Omniscience*

God's omniscience, the master key that unlocks the events of human history, goes hand-in-hand with His foreknowledge. God knew every minuscule detail of human history billions of years ago! He knew each person's reaction or response to every event as well as all possible decisions and their repercussions. That's not all. God knew every problem, suffering, heartache, disappointment, failure, or catastrophe you would face from the very nanosecond you were born to the very moment when you exit planet earth. The beauty of it all is that God was and still is the Master Choreographer; and He determined how He would use the events of human history, good and bad, to bring about His divine will and purpose.

So what do these things mean to us? In bold letters, **it means that no matter what you experience now or in the future, God has ordained those things to “work together for [your own] good”** as long as you are filled with the Holy Spirit and adhering to His tailor-made plan for your life. David expressed it like this:

O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down and are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

---

<sup>5</sup>Moses C. Onwubiko, *The Biblical Doctrine of Salvation*, discusses God's essence more fully.

*Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it all...Your eyes [omniscience] have seen my unformed substance [embryo, fetus], and in Your book they were written, the days that were ordained [or allotted] for me, when as yet there was not one of them (Psalm 139:1-4, 16). (emphasis added)*

When God, in grace, revealed Joseph's future to him in dreams, He foreknew that those dreams would create animosity among his brothers. He foreknew that their hatred would push them to plot a homicide, and that Rueben would be a witness to it all. This pre-arranged plan would safeguard His promise to Joseph, who had not earned or merited such favor from God. Isaiah phrased it like this:

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8).

No matter how many people plotted against Joseph, God kept His word. Matthew affirmed

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words [including My promise to Joseph] shall not pass away [or go unfulfilled!] (Matthew 24:35).

### ***Sovereignty***

Stated plainly, sovereignty means, 'Everyone to your tents for God has spoken!' That's final. No round-table discussion necessary! God is total sovereignty—no ifs, ands, or buts about it. With one swift stroke in eternity past, God entered into the divine computer every event in human history. Based on this foreknowledge, He orchestrated how He would fulfill His plan. God actually programmed the way He would use man's failures and weaknesses to accomplish His will. Along these lines, the Psalmist sang, "For the wrath of man shall praise You" (76:10a).

How can the evil of man praise God? The Scripture is loaded with evidence of God's use of evil to reveal His majesty. The Pharaoh of Egypt is one example in the Old Testament (Romans 9:17), and Judas Iscariot is an example in the New Testament (Acts 2:23-24). In the course of this exposition, we will see how God uses the evil scheme of Joseph's brothers to transport Joseph from intense suffering to maximum blessing in time.

Two aspects of God's sovereignty:

- God can do whatever He decides according to His eternal council, anytime—anywhere—as long as doing so does not jeopardize one speck of His essence.
- By His own sovereign decision, God determined how He would prepare and use the vessels of honor to His glory and the vessels of dishonor, the wrath of man, to praise Himself.

## *Veracity*

Veracity (truth), the foundation of the integrity of God, holds His being intact like a shell holds an egg together. This means that if God could falter in any way, maybe in His promise of eternal life to someone who believes in Christ, He would no longer be the God of the Bible who we know and trust:

God is not a man that He should lie nor a son of man that He should repent [change His mind with regard to His plan]; has He said and will He not do it? Or has He spoken and will He not make it good (Numbers 23:19)?

Joseph staked his confidence on the veracity of God and His promises.

I believe that Joseph, like his great-grandfather Abraham, knew that even if his brothers mutilated his dead body, God would be able to bring his body parts together, restore his life, and safeguard him until God fulfilled his dreams in detail (Hebrews 11:17-19). I have no doubt that Joseph's confidence stemmed from his father's teachings about God's veracity. As we advance in our study, we will see that Joseph's grasp of the subject of divine veracity explains his maximum poise under pressure. He had absolute confidence in the promises of God, our Father, and so can we!

Without doubt, God will certainly fulfill His plan for your life as long as you remain on His course under His direction. That's point blank truth. Listen to God's words to Jacob:

And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you (Genesis 28:15).

And Luke wrote,

For David, *after* he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep [died] and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay (Acts 13:36).

You, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, will not depart this life a second later or sooner than God has planned. When God is finished with you He will call you home. Until then, you are not going to die—not even in the hands of the worst terrorist imaginable. Ask yourself: Do you have absolute confidence in God’s promises? Do you hold tenaciously, despite all odds, to the fact that God never negates His own Word? Do you embrace His promises tightly? Whether it rains or shines, whether your spiritual journey is smooth or rugged, God will ultimately fulfill His promises—I mean all of them! Wait on the Lord.

### ***Omnipresence***

We tend to forget that God’s presence is everywhere. King David intimately understood this truth when he wrote:

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me (Psalm 139:7-10).

What assurance to know that no matter what your perilous circumstances are, the Lord is with you! In fact, He goes ahead of you which is what Moses says in his final recorded words to Joshua:

And the Lord is the One who goes ahead of you. He will be with you. He will not fail or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed (Deuteronomy 31:8).

### **Principles:**

- God is always on the scene ahead of you.
- He sees all the pitfalls that await you before you get to your destination (Deuteronomy 33:26).

- Because He recognizes all the dangers that await you, He can lead you around or through the pitfalls—as long as you remain under His direction and filled with the Holy Spirit.

These three principles are the core of God’s protection and guidance for your life—through grace. He goes ahead of you to survey and develop strategies for your journey. He knew your every breath from eternity past before time began. The Psalmist gave us this insight:

I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you (Psalm 32:8).

Not only does He counsel you through the Bible doctrine resident in your soul, He keeps His eyes on you every nanosecond of your life. That alone should be your SOLACE! In His watch over you, He neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:3-4).

The Lord is your keeper [Hebrew: *shamar*: to hedge around, to watch as a watchman]; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in [because He is the Master of your journey— He will guide you] from this time forth and forever (Psalm 121:5-8).

This biblical concept was nestled in King David’s thinking when he wrote,

The Lord is my Shepherd [the One who watches over me]. I shall not want [lack anything]. He makes me lie down in green pastures [Bible doctrine]. He leads me beside quiet waters [by utilizing Bible doctrine in my soul through the Mentorship of the Holy Spirit]. He restores my soul [whenever I fail and then acknowledge my sin to God]. He guides me in the paths of righteousness [His integrity] for His name’s sake [because of who and what He is; not because of who and what I am!] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for You are with me (Psalm 23:1-4a).



Joseph understood just as David did that God dealt with him solely on the basis of His grace. And so must we.

## ***Omnipotence***

What God promises, He delivers because He has the integrity and power to do so. He is the Almighty. You may ask, “Why hasn’t God delivered me from my turmoil? Why is He silent? I have prayed again and again for a solution to my dilemma, and yet He remains silent.” You need not be discouraged! I want to underscore this vital point: *God’s omnipotence and faithfulness are not measured in our terms but His.*

### **Principles:**

- God uses every means to accomplish His purpose, and He does so in grace.
- Super-grace suffering develops spiritual muscle, the capacity to appreciate our blessings, so that God can graciously convey to us a super-abundance of blessings both now and in eternity.
- No one, including the humanity of Christ, has ever received a crown of glory from God the Father without an abundance of suffering. No one’s suffering will ever come close to Christ’s.
- Through Bible doctrine learned and applied under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit, we learn to live an abundant life in the midst of suffering. Keep in mind that God permitted our suffering and doesn’t intend to remove it until the right time.

## *The Grace Furnace of Suffering*

No human being wants any kind of suffering. But suffering is inescapable because all suffering is a result of the fall of the first man. Keep in mind that God has the power to stop any suffering at any time anywhere. You suffer because God wants to bless you in a special way that only suffering can produce. We have nine principles that will help us to better understand the suffering that Joseph experienced.

- God is the Master of human history.
- Millions of years ago, God predetermined every circumstance in life—the good and the horrible—to accomplish His eternal plan and purpose. Keep in mind that God is never the source of evil. Our negative volition is!
- God monitors every tiny event in our lives, even the little headaches and frustrations. Not one thing is a surprise to God’s omniscience.
- No accident or bad luck exists in God’s immutable plan. Nothing happens without His permission.
- The foreknowledge of God took into account the simultaneous outcome of events in our lives and now allows them to run their course.
- The sovereignty of God permits all the adverse circumstances that believers in Christ experience.
- God the Father uses every suffering to assist believers in their development of spiritual capacity so that He can deliver His tailor-made blessings to them.
- God has the monopoly on converting a believer’s suffering into marvelous blessing.
- Only a believer who possesses a reservoir of Bible truth (and applies it consistently) can have divine viewpoint, a relaxed mental attitude, and a tranquil soul while God causes “all things” to come together in a sensational way – all because the believer loves Him. We love God if we obey Him by learning

and applying His Word to our thinking. We can't love God or all mankind if we haven't first learned the necessary skills as delineated in His Word.

With these important principles in place, we can now examine one of the most important doctrines in all of God's Word: Grace as a furnace of suffering. When we think of grace, we usually think of a cozy, idyllic experience, but suffering is an essential part of grace, which the life of Joseph demonstrates.

We pray that God will bless us, but when He answers by first preparing us in His furnace of suffering, we pray to get out of it and unfortunately, some believers go to so-called deliverance meetings for help. Ironically, testing in God's furnace is the means of humbling believers and giving them the opportunity to become grace-oriented. Believers awash with Bible knowledge can utilize divine viewpoint in the heat of testing. This was true in Joseph's day and is even truer in our time because we have many more divine assets than the heroes of the Old Testament.

Anyone who thinks that living the spiritual life is icing on the cake is probably not living the spiritual life. Take Job, for instance, who never saw a page of Scripture but had a firm grip on the phenomenal doctrine of grace-induced suffering coming before the blessing:

But He [God] knows the way I take. When He has tested [refined] me, I shall come forth as gold (Job 23:10).

What confidence in his God! The spiritual life is so difficult that we could never accomplish it with human energy but only by total dependency on God's Word and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. That's the way God planned it—*a perfect plan for imperfect man*.

Why did God allow Joseph to go through such long and intense suffering? Why do you suffer even though you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Behold, I have refined you not as silver. I have tested you in the furnace of affliction (Isaiah 48:10).

The word *judged*, translated 'tested', is the Hebrew: *bachar*,

meaning judged through testing to become excellent, the best. The Hebrew verb *tsaraph*, translated ‘refined’ in the NASB, sheds light on suffering as a prerequisite to super-abundant blessing. Literally, *tsaraph* means to purge bronze, silver, or gold through a furnace of fire. These three elements represent the three categories of spiritual growth—babyhood, adolescence, and maturity.

God is fair, and in His fairness, He rewards every believer based on his spiritual growth. The apostle Paul clearly delineated this truth in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15:

Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones [or bronze]...he shall receive a reward [based on the quality of his spiritual life].

Let’s look at the verb ‘refine’ in its literal meaning, using gold as our example. First, a gold miner has to locate the gold. Then armed with his tools, he digs several feet, mixing his sweat with mud as he scoops out earth. At long last, he finally sees a large nugget, but that’s just the beginning of a long process. He washes the nugget with flux to separate it from macro impurities and prevent it from oxidizing in the furnace. After a few more steps, he places the gold in a fiery hot furnace which purges it even more. At long last, the splendor of the finished product emerges in all its glittering glory! I am not a goldsmith, but I do know one thing: Gold goes through intense purging and extreme heat before it becomes a valuable and sought after piece of metal.

Purging, in the process of refining gold, exemplifies the impurities that God in His amazing grace purges from us through suffering. Only through suffering can we become what I call gold-believers. The miner does all the work in producing gold; however, in producing a gold-believer, God does all the work, leaving us with no room to take any credit. Since the fall of man and the subsequent imputation of Adam’s original sin to the Sin Nature in every newborn baby’s body, man is full of impurities, including:

1. *Pride*: This sin was the first ever committed. Isaiah chapter 14:12 describes the pride of Satan as expressed in his five “I wills”— his arrogant declarations of supposed superiority to God.

2. *Lack of Authority Orientation*: Satan succeeded in the Garden in causing the first parents, Adam and Eve, to reject God's authority.
3. *Lack of Humility Orientation*: Self-absorption, a by-product of pride, gives us a built-in predisposition to think we are better than others and don't need anyone, even God, to tell us what to do.
4. *Lack of Grace-Orientation*: We also have a predisposition to totally reject the truth that everything we have or ever will have in this life or in the eternal future comes directly from God, unearned and unmerited.
5. *Lack of Gratitude*: We aren't grateful for all we have because we view ourselves as the author of our success, beauty, health, wealth, intellect, popularity, and talents.
6. *The Drive to Sin*: We are born with a drive to live a lifestyle of carnality, following the world, the flesh, the devil, (Satan and his demons) instead of God.
7. *Self-Dependency*: Man is totally self-centered and wants to show that he is capable of doing everything for himself and that his solutions are the only solutions.

Let me get personal. Assuming you have a choice between:

- Super-abundant blessing accompanied by a God-endorsed/Satan-engineered suffering in time
- No suffering with no blessings in time or eternity.

Which would you choose? Your choice reveals your level of spiritual growth and your thirst to glorify God. A mature believer endures his suffering because he knows that only through trusting God in suffering can he glorify God to the maximum.

Of course, God the Almighty could snap His fingers and remove your suffering—POOF—it's gone! But do you know what follows? Self-destruction! When we take ourselves out of God's plan, we destroy ourselves, eventually dying the sin unto death. Tell me what could surpass God's grace gesture to keep your integrity intact through suffering so that you don't become a loser in time and eternity? I don't know about you, but the Pioneer of our spiritual life, our Lord Jesus Christ, was absolutely content with His God-endorsed, unparalleled suffering. So were the apostle Paul and a handful of other believers in the Bible who gladly endured their

tailor-made suffering. We, too, must reach the level of spiritual maturity in which we are thankful for our suffering.

Sadly, too many brethren teach that suffering is not part of our spiritual life and that believers should never be content with suffering because its presence is a sign of spiritual weakness and backsliding. Victims of this heresy go desperately and tirelessly from one apostate church to another seeking physical deliverance from their suffering, but all to no avail. Clearly, such teaching is contrary to Scripture. The apostle Paul stated:

For I have learned to be content in *whatever circumstances* I am. I know how to get along with humble means [the suffering of poverty], and also I know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the *secret* of being filled and of going hungry, both of having abundance and *suffering* need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:11b-12). (emphasis added)

In truth, the only suffering a believer should not be content with is the self-induced suffering he brings upon himself by taking himself out of God's plan for his life through sin.

We have said it before, but let's underline it this time: Suffering is inevitable for mature believers battling in the spiritual arena. The sooner this truth sinks into your thinking, the better you can handle your suffering. When you believe that suffering is an integral part of your spiritual life, you won't be overwhelmed when it hits you right between the eyes. As the saying goes, *To be forewarned is to be forearmed.* Thus, the apostle John recorded our Lord Jesus Christ saying,

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation [Greek: *thlipsis*: to crush, compress, squeeze, to have grievous affliction or distress], but take courage. I have [already] overcome the world (John 16:33).

The apostle Paul added:

For just as the *sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance*, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ (2 Corinthians 1:5). (emphasis added)

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him [and be eternally saved] but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29).

The moment you declare your allegiance with Christ through faith alone in Christ alone, you become Satan's enemy. He will squeeze the last drop of his sweat just to make your life in Christ miserable. We shouldn't give in to his wish. Unfortunately, Satan is stacking up piles of victims who have retreated to the "Why me?" syndrome. This shouldn't be happening! No believer can afford to try to alleviate his suffering by means of human solutions. Suffering in itself is definitely not a sin; however, suffering produces a chain of sin-reaction if you view it as cursing rather than the blessing God intended.

### ***Suffering with Turmoil or Peace***

Let's back up a notch and take a closer look at the underlying cause of suffering. God in His omniscience knew that after man's fall in the garden, each believer's soul would be a battleground between the Old Sin Nature and the Holy Spirit. Tragically, many believers are unaware of this ongoing battle in the spiritual war. When Satan and his minions ambush a believer with suffering, their aim is always well defined: To invade the soul through the vehicle of the Old Sin Nature, disrupting the ministry of the Holy Spirit through worry and anxiety. They cut off the soul's pipeline of Bible truth by means of fear, which disarms the believer from viewing his suffering—any suffering—with divine viewpoint. If and when they achieve these objectives, their victim is left with the battlefield wound of a stressed-out soul, a depressed soul with an avalanche of human viewpoint solutions. The stressed-out, depressed soul becomes an incubator for all sorts of spiritual maladies—sins of murmuring, mewing, whining, groaning, guilt, self-pity, the "Why me?" syndrome, abusive speech, anxiety, fear, malice, high-powered anger, bitterness, and lack of interest in Bible doctrine and its application. Such a believer can become delusional and irrational and cannot be differentiated from the unbeliever.

If a believer doesn't expel every sin from his soul as quickly as possible through acknowledging them to God the Father (1 John 1:9), their poison can have a detrimental effect on his physical well being.

King David who committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11, 12) had firsthand suffering through self-induced misery garnished with divine discipline.

When I kept silent about my sin, [failed to acknowledge it before God, suffering took hold of my soul] my body [literally] wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand [of discipline] was heavy upon me; my vitality [energy] was drained away as with the fever heat of summer (Psalm 32:3-4).

For Your arrows [of discipline] have sunk deep into me, and Your hand has pressed down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden, they weigh too much for me. My wounds grow foul and fester. Because of my folly, I am bent over and greatly bowed down; I go mourning all day long. For my loins are filled with burning; and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart (Psalm 38:2-8).

There you have it—the description of a soul invaded by sin-induced suffering! But there is another side of the suffering coin—a peaceful soul. A peaceful soul belongs to the believer who refuses to look at his suffering through the magnifying glass of human viewpoint. He doesn't allow suffering to spin off into sins like groaning, and self-pity, which invade his soul. Instead, by using the high-powered magnifying glass of divine viewpoint through the Mentorship of the Holy Spirit, such a believer focuses on divine solutions. Obviously, when we contrast the soul invaded by the Old Sin Nature with the soul occupied by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit-filled believer has the potential to experience:

... the fruit of the Spirit is [unfailing] love, peace, joy [in the midst of chaos], patience [the ability to wait for God as He causes all things to work out for our good], kindness [unhindered unconditional love to others even in the heat of suffering], faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).



## ***Types of Suffering***

All spiritual believers are seared in the white-hot flames of God's Super-Grace Furnace. Many believers forget that suffering is a means of spiritual growth and maximum glorification of God. They get distracted by the heat instead of focusing on His glory. We must suffer if we are to develop spiritual muscle (capacity for life) and the strength to swim in the ocean of God's blessings.

Before we get back to Joseph and his suffering, let's look at the five types of suffering a believer experiences:

1. Self-manufactured suffering
2. Divine discipline
3. Spiritual growth dynamics
4. The G3 and Satan-endorsed suffering
5. Thorn-in-the-flesh suffering

### ***Self-Manufactured Suffering***

Self-manufactured or self-induced suffering is the most painful of all suffering. This type of suffering inevitably germinates as a result of making bad decisions based on our own human viewpoint. When you fail to properly apply Bible doctrine to the circumstances of your life, you make wrong decisions. The apostle Paul, through the mentorship of the Holy Spirit, warned:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for *whatever a man sows, this he will also reap* (Galatians 6:7). (emphasis added)

Paul was repeating a principle already on record in the Old Testament:

For they [carnal believers] sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind [or hurricane] (Hosea 8:7).

Whoever falls into this mud hole of bad decisions climbs out covered in mud. Take marriage as an example; a believer who ignores divine commands and marries an unbeliever suffers horrible consequences too onerous to discuss here.

Abraham and his grandson Jacob further illustrate our point. It's beyond the scope of this study to elaborate on the sins of these two

believers, but we will take a quick look. God promised Abraham a son and when the promise was not forthcoming, according to Abraham's timetable, he listened to his wife's advice and committed adultery with Hagar, his housemaid. This resulted in the birth of Ishmael—the source of the Arab nations! (Genesis 16:1-15). The hostility between Arabs and Israelites is simply because of one man's bad decision. Abraham sowed the wind of adultery and reaped the hurricane of great animosity between the two nations he begat. If he were alive today, he would witness the tragic aftermath of his impatience with God's perfect timing.

The second person in our illustration is Jacob. Scripture reveals that Jacob deceived his aged and partially blind father by pretending to be his elder brother Esau and thus received the blessing due to Esau (Genesis 27:1-29). Many years later, Jacob reaped deceit from his future father-in-law, Laban. The agreement between Jacob and Laban was that Jacob would serve seven years, and at the end of that time, he would marry Rachel, the woman he loved so much. At the end of the seven years, Laban deceived Jacob by giving him Leah in place of Rachel (Genesis 29:1-25). These examples should make us acutely aware that when we sow the seed of deception or willfully commit sins, sooner or later that seed will germinate in self-manufactured suffering.

When suffering is self-induced, the believer should follow precise instructions to turn his suffering into blessing: Isolate the sins that brought on the suffering and confess (acknowledge) them to God the Father. King David did just that:

I acknowledge my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgression *to the Lord*;' and You forgave the guilt of my sin (Psalm 32:5; cf. I John 1:9). (emphasis added)

Then the believer should forget the sins and diligently and daily learn God's Word. If the suffering persists, he should not be disturbed. Rather, by applying the Bible doctrine in his soul to his thinking, he knows that God has forgiven him and that his remaining suffering is for his blessing (Psalm 119:67, 71).

## ***Divine Discipline***

Divine discipline goes hand-in-hand with self-manufactured suffering. When we choose to sow the seed of perpetual carnality, God in return multiplies the pain of our self-induced misery. God's intensification of our suffering is part of His grace policy and unfailing love (Hebrews 12:6). He always deals with us in grace regardless of our spiritual shortcomings. If we are humble enough to listen to Him when He takes us through the grace furnace of suffering, we will achieve the following:

- We will take our spiritual life seriously.
- We will draw closer to God and jumpstart our spiritual growth necessary for super-grace blessing (Hebrews 12:9-15; cf. Acts 20:32).
- Last but not least, when God is through with our discipline, we will think long and hard before we travel that road of sin again!

Before I was afflicted [in the grace furnace of suffering] I went astray [Hebrew: *shagag*: to transgress, to err], but now I keep Your word...It is good [beneficial] for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes [biblical principles]. (Psalm 119:67, 71).

People often ask, "How can I determine if my suffering is related to divine discipline?" The answer is in four words: Divine discipline is unbearable! Why? Because you have blocked the pipeline of divine solution and power with your carnality. Some believers actually commit suicide to escape the unbearable heat of divine discipline.

## ***Spiritual Growth Dynamics Suffering***

This category of suffering is analogous to the academic experience, which is divided into three levels: primary or elementary, secondary or high school, and college or university. In the primary grades, a student receives basic instruction to prepare for advanced learning. He is tested many times to determine the quality of his learning and his ability to handle the next grade. As he advances, the curriculum gets harder and so do the tests. Our spiritual school

system is similar and can also be classified in three levels: babyhood, adolescence, and adulthood. In the spiritual classroom, the Bible is the manual for all levels. God the Holy Spirit is the tutor who works through the human communicator, the divinely-established pastor-teacher. Suffering is the spiritual testing (James 1:2-4).

God the Father administers tests at every spiritual level to determine the amount of His Word we have grasped. For example, the pastor-teacher may enlighten the believer about his love for God as compared to his love for the things of this world. Then, God may permit Satan to remove all the wealth of that believer. The test is to determine his mental attitude during this suffering. Will he remember the divine truth he has learned and remain content, knowing that the Source of all things is eternal and gracious; or will he become disoriented to God's plan and feel bitterness or self-pity? Will he recognize that God has all it takes to replenish those things he lost when the testing is over? Believers face suffering because our moral fiber is refined through the grace furnace of suffering (Psalm 18:30; 119:140; 66:10; Isaiah 1:25, Proverbs 30:5; I Peter 1:7). Suffering for spiritual growth accomplishes the following:

- Suffering deflates our pride and implants the attitude of humility in us.
- Suffering prepares us, not for general grace support, which every believer, winner or loser, receives, but for the super-abundant blessings related to spiritual growth (James 1:12).
- Suffering allows us to be counselors to those sufferers whom God may bring to us (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). We have to be very careful here (Galatians 6:1). We shouldn't take this to the extreme. God never calls any believer to be a counselor or set up offices for the purpose of counseling; however, God may bring a suffering believer to us, and we have the privilege to guide him to the healing well of Bible truth.
- Above all, suffering helps us appreciate the grace of the Most High God!

## ***G3 and Satan Convention Suffering***

This convention is made up of God the Father [the Chief Judge and the Author of the unique plan of human history], the Son [the Sacrificial Lamb, the Pioneer of the unprecedented spiritual life and the believer's Defending Attorney], the Holy Spirit [the believer's Mentor and Energizer in the spiritual courtroom], and Satan [the accuser]. Simply put, the greatest honor God can convey to you in this life is when your name is brought before the G3 and Satan Convention, because this means that God considers you spiritually qualified to be a material witness against Satan's cross-examination. And what happens when you pass? Satan and his minions mourn, and the elect angels cheer whenever a mature believer is called to the witness stand and he passes the test.

In cross-examining a mature believer, Satan is allowed by God to pummel him with different categories and degrees of suffering (Job 1:8). When that believer takes the witness stand against a multitude of flaming darts fired at him by Satan, angels swoop down to observe his every action under intensified suffering. Every believer has only one opportunity on the witness stand in which to glorify God to the maximum and be sworn into the Hall of Fame for those believers who have glorified God above and beyond the call of spiritual duty. There is no other way! So if you are growing in grace and advancing to the mega-gate of spiritual maturity, be watchful because sooner or later you will receive ultimate suffering for maximum glorification of God.

## ***Thorn-In-The-Flesh Suffering***

Thorn-in-the-flesh suffering is a constant mental and physical anguish—a nagging—drip—drip—type of suffering which never abates. It could be a disease or suffering that progresses by degree and without let up. It could be adverse circumstances. Paul described his suffering in this way:

Are they servants of Christ? I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent

journeys, in danger from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my country men, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from those external things there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

Prayer does not cause the removal of thorn-in-the-flesh suffering; however, prayer does strengthen the believer so that he is content regardless of his circumstances. Thus we read,

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God for the peace of God, which passes all comprehension shall guard [protect, garrison, and insulate] your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

When should we stop praying for the removal of our thorn-in-the-flesh suffering?

Concerning this I (Paul) entreated the Lord three times that it [thorn-suffering] might depart from me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you.' (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

There was no ambiguity in God's answer to Paul. It was loud and clear; the answer was, "No." God would not remove the suffering. He didn't need to remove it because Paul had the spiritual strength, garnered from God's Word stored in his soul, to not only endure it but to give thanks for it. We no longer hear God's actual voice as Paul did, but we have something much better. God the Holy Spirit indwells, fills, and guides the spiritual believer who has no unconfessed sin in his soul. That's God's promise:

For such is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us until death (Psalm 48:14).

We can also use spiritual commonsense to modify our prayer. For instance, if you have persevered in prayer for God to remove your suffering, yet the suffering continues, you can change your

prayer and ask, instead, for the grace to surf the waves of suffering with the strength He alone can supply.

### **Principles:**

- God’s promotion of a believer is the monopoly of His sovereign will, purpose, and pleasure.
- His decision to promote a believer to a place of honor is not contingent upon the merit of the believer.
- Maximum realization of God’s blessing is always directly proportional to the believer’s development of spiritual capacity through the learning and application of His Word.
- Whatever this special promotion and blessing may be, a nagging suffering accompanies it to keep the believer humble.
- To remove the suffering is to remove the promotion and blessing.
- God won’t answer a prayer to remove thorn-in-the-flesh suffering. Paul’s prayer for the removal of his thorn-in-the flesh and the negative answer from God illustrate this principle.
- God multiplies grace in super-abundance for the believer who joyfully experiences thorn-in-the-flesh suffering.

## ***The Suffering of Paul***

In our book, *Paul, a Trophy of Grace*, you’ll recall how God promoted Paul (previously Saul of Tarsus, who led a monstrous attack on Christianity) to be the greatest apostle the world has ever known! That’s grace! Paul’s commission to be Christ’s right-hand man for the Church Age came immediately following his salvation—before he had time to learn the plan of God for the Church or even know such a plan existed—much less learn to live a spiritual life. **GRACE**, once again, is capitalized, highlighted, italicized, and underlined! Paul’s exaltation to a place of spiritual honor and his thorn-in-the-flesh were a package, sealed and taped with God’s amazing grace:

But the Lord said to him [Ananias], ‘Go, for he [Paul also known as Saul of Tarsus] is a chosen instrument of Mine to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must *suffer* for My name’s sake (Acts 9:15-16). (emphasis added)

## ***What Kind of Suffering Do You Have?***

You should take time to objectively examine your suffering, knowing that every suffering has meaning, purpose, and definition. The following questions can help you pinpoint the source of your misery:

1. Are you living a lifestyle of carnality (sin)?
2. Are you in God's geographical will for your life? Are you where God wants you to be?
3. Have you been resisting God's plan for your life and doing only what you want?
4. Are you growing spiritually? Are you learning God's Word daily and consistently applying it to your thinking, regardless of temptations to use human viewpoint solutions?
5. Has God promoted you to a place that has the potential for you to boast about your position or spiritual success?

If you answered yes to the first and third questions and no to the second question, then your suffering is probably self-induced with some divine discipline thrown in. If you answered yes to the fourth one, then God designed your suffering to develop your spiritual muscles—your capacity for blessing. Finally, if your answer is yes to the last question, chances are that God has authorized a type of nagging-suffering for your protection, suffering to keep you from becoming arrogant, the greatest sin of all and the basis for all other sins.

The principle is clear: Any suffering which God does not intend to remove, He intends for you to tolerate by means of His divine provision—the Holy Spirit and His infallible Word resident in your soul, combined with prayer for strength. Jesus Christ, our Role Model, did just that at Gethsemane. He prayed, and He was strengthened (Matthew 26:38-39).

The believer under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit rejoices because of his suffering, knowing that it glorifies God and brings him blessing. He knows the full benefit of...

In *everything* [including suffering] give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).  
(emphasis added)



Always giving thanks for *all things* in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father (Ephesians 5:20).  
(emphasis added)

This expression of humble gratitude to God shows the understanding that our all-knowing Father wants only the best for him and gives the best to those who trust Him.

### ***God's Security System***

Because “Satan is the god of this world” (John 12:31), you are living and operating in hostile territory, but our Lord stated, “You are not of this world” and prayed for your protection (John 17). Satan is a fierce enemy—outrageously cunning—pacing back and forth, prowling “like a roaring lion, seeking someone [a believer ignorant of God’s Word] to devour [to put out of spiritual action]” (1 Peter 5:8). What a relief to know that “...greater is He [God] who is in you than he [Satan] who is in the world” (1 John 4:4 cf. 2 Kings 6:8-17). The good news is that God totally encapsulates you in a protective wall of fire (Zechariah 2:5) as long as you reside in Satan’s territory. Satan himself knows that God has provided absolute security for you (Job 1:10). That should be your solace! That’s the beauty of God’s amazing grace!

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, as long as you are learning and applying His Word on a daily basis, you will enjoy God’s maximum security. It’s that simple. No system of sophisticated weaponry, no act of terrorism, no attack by Satan, visible or invisible, not one iota of suffering can pass unnoticed through God’s security and get to you without His sovereign endorsement. Not now, not then, and not ever! He is your personal Shield (Genesis 15:1); however if a flaming dart from the enemy has pierced you, do not fear. Relax. God, who allowed it to pass through His Sovereign security, is at work right now on your behalf! Again, nothing gets by God without His knowledge. There is absolutely no reason to fall apart, hit the panic button, or retreat into self-pity when suffering hits you. Instead, listen to His words, which are pleasant to hear and sweet to taste.

Happy is a man who perseveres under adverse circumstances; for once he has passed the spiritual test, he will receive super-abundant blessing in time, and the crown of life in

eternity, which the Lord has promised to those who *love* Him [those who have acquired spiritual capacity to love through learning and applying His Word] (James 1:12). (emphasis added)

And we know that God causes all things [pleasant and unpleasant situations] to work together for good to those who *love* God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). (emphasis added)

God knows exactly what He is doing in your life; and while you may not be able to fathom all of it, one thing is crystal clear: Bad luck and accidents never occur. If we trust God, He mixes the bad with the good and creates outstanding results! We should face a seemingly bad situation looking around for the good that will follow. Such is our awesome God!

But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exaltation (1 Peter 4:13).

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice (Philippians 4:4)!

We should rejoice in each and every event in our lives, pleasant or unpleasant, because our Father is at work on our behalf 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year! Allow Job's confidence in God to be yours. This was Joseph's confidence as he traveled the rugged road of slavery to Egypt.

But He knows what I am going through; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold [way better than before!] (Job 23:10).

I will strengthen you; surely I will help you; surely I will uphold you with My integrity (Isaiah 41:10c).



## *Joseph in the Pit*

The footprints of God can be seen on the path ahead of Joseph, transforming every dilemma and every attack against him into what would end up being the best situation imaginable. We are caused to stand in awe and reverence of our Father's majesty! His faithfulness was evident from the time Joseph's brothers began to plot his demise all the way to his enslavement—and then during the awkward circumstances that led to his imprisonment in Egypt.

The brother's envy and jealousy boiled within their souls mounting into irrationality and callousness. Mental attitude sins wiped out whatever knowledge of God's Word they might have once had! As a result, they sucked in human viewpoint through the pipeline of the old sin nature. In their corrupt thinking, they rationalized that this might be their only chance to get rid of their younger brother.

Keep in mind that their evil scheme began with a thought—hatred for Joseph. God admonishes believers to guard their thoughts because a thought becomes an action,

For as he [man] thinks within himself so he is (Proverbs 23:7).

Apparently, the brothers feared that Joseph's dreams might come true, but in their ambition, powered by arrogance, they couldn't imagine Joseph having authority over them. So they tried to frustrate Joseph's dreams, as if they could actually alter God's plan. The conniving brothers did not know that God already had a grace solution in place. He deposited their brother Reuben in the right place at the right time, so his presence was not by accident. God would use Reuben to stop the heinous plot to kill Joseph, but He had to permit evil to run its course because to stop it would have been a violation of man's freewill and His own essence. Satan's declaration that God is unfair would have reigned supreme if God had interfered with the brothers' free will.

## *Joseph's Superstructure of Grace-Orientation*

The main thrust of this study is to explore Joseph's grace-orientation and know that Joseph's God is also our God and is always with us in every situation in life. Before human creation, God determined the exact method by which He would convert your suffering into blessing just as much as He did for Joseph. But, listen, these blessings are only for those who love God—those who are on a steady upward move to spiritual maturity, to maximum glorification of God. The Scripture is crystal clear on this issue.

And we know that God *causes* all things [including Joseph's being sold into slavery] to work together for good *to those who love God*, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). (emphasis added)

We can love God only when we know Him, and we can only know Him, through diligent, daily study of His Word under the teaching of a qualified pastor-teacher. This could be face to face teaching, reviewing your notes, reading books, or listening to recorded messages. We must learn God's commands because we love Him only when we obey Him in all things.

From man's point of view, Joseph could not achieve authority over his family (given the order of his birth) but that's exactly the plan God had for him. Joseph probably wondered, "Why me?". This is an important question in the life of a believer when it is asked in humility. Had he been the firstborn, God's promise of authority would have been no big deal. But the 11th son? Unheard of! This was more than likely the basis for Joseph's grace-orientation. My question is this, of all the people in the world, why are you the object of God's grace? Why am I? King David asked the same question:

What is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him (Psalm 8:4 NIV)?

The apostle John said, See how great [how awesome, how inexpressible] a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God! (I John 3:1a).

Down deep in your soul, do you recognize God's grace in relation to who you are and where you are right now? You may say to me, "Moses, I have worked very hard all my life to achieve my success." Oh really? Who gave you the stamina, the intellect, the talents to strive for success? Or you may say, "I was born a genius; that's the key to my success." Sure, you were born a genius, but those good genes were a gift from God. Do you realize that thousands of geniuses, in hospitals around the world, battle cancer and other life-threatening diseases — just like anyone else? Give me one good reason why you are not one of those bedridden geniuses. The bottom line is that you are what you are simply because of God's grace—no more, no less. Until you sear that truth on your soul, you are not grace-oriented. Coming to grips with this truth was a catalyst for Joseph's grace-orientation. What is your catalyst? Your so-great-salvation, the deliverances that God provides in every bad circumstance? The thought that God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit indwell your mortal body? What is it?

### ***The Plot to Kill Joseph***

Joseph, a humble and obedient son, submitted freely to his father's authority.

Then his brothers went to pasture their flock in Shechem. And Israel [Jacob] said to Joseph, 'Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them.' And he said to him, 'I will go.' (Genesis 37:12-13).

So Joseph set out from the valley of Hebron to search for his brothers, not knowing exactly where he would find them. He went to Shechem, and having combed the vicinity to no avail, God intervened.

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 to him, '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 us go to Dothan.' So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan (Genesis 37:15-17).

Did Joseph accidentally come upon this man who could direct him to his brothers? No, God was behind the scenes causing all

things to work together for good as His plan for Joseph unfolded. There are no accidents in God's plan!

When they [his brothers] saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. And they said to one another, 'Here comes the 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!' (Genesis 37:18-20).

Talk about hatred! They were determined to end any chance of Joseph ruling over them. I have said it previously in our study, but it warrants repetition: These carnal believers erroneously thought that they could stop God's plan for Joseph. What a backward thought that was! No human being, no circumstance, no satanic attack, or any sophisticated weaponry is capable of disrupting God's plan for your life. The same facts applied to Joseph. He knew that; but the question is do you?

God allowed Joseph's brothers to start the ball rolling in a sequence of events that ultimately would fulfill His promise to Joseph. The Scriptural truth that God uses even the wrath of man to praise Himself (Psalm 76:10) would soon be evident. Joseph's siblings have just one objective in mind—to rid themselves of their younger brother. All but Reuben, their eldest brother, jubilantly agreed to murder Joseph. He, instead, suggested that they throw Joseph into a pit rather than kill him.

But Reuben heard this plot and rescued him out of their hands and said, 'Let us not take his life.' Reuben 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 (Genesis 37:21-22).

We are looking at a panorama of adverse events which God will turn around and use to transport Joseph to promotion and to develop spiritual muscle (the capacity for life and blessing) through the furnace of testing.

## *Joseph and His Faithful God*

So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the multi-colored that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it (Genesis 37:23-24).

If there had been water in the pit, Joseph would have drowned. Or would he? Remember that God was already in the pit before Joseph reached the bottom. Amazing, isn't it? What a comfort to know that God is at both ends of our sufferings—and all places in between.

What followed is chilling:

Then they sat down to eat a meal (Genesis 37:25a).

Unbelievably, they reclined comfortably as they ate, probably even had a chuckle or two over their “cleverness” in ridding themselves of their imaginary enemy, Joseph. In spite of their colossal crime against their brother, not even one choked on their food or drink. Once again, grace is underlined. They didn't deserve to live, but they continued breathing and eating and laughing.

You may wonder how they dared sit down to eat while their brother, who brought them the food, was in the bottom of a deep pit. What was wrong with their consciences? Each one except Reuben and perhaps Judah had what I call a decayed conscience. Their spiritual lives were bankrupt. Their dastardly deed paints a picture of a believer who refuses to fill his soul with Bible knowledge; therefore, human viewpoint evil permeates the thinking and later spills out into behavior.

The point is that when you, a believer, refuse to apply God's Word on a consistent basis, sooner or later, you will develop a decayed conscience. In this state, no evil practice under heaven is beyond your doing. King David is a perfect example. He committed adultery and murder! You may say, “Well, he didn't personally commit murder.” On the contrary, his indictment from the Bar of Eternal Justice proves otherwise:

Why have you [David] despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the



Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed [murdered] him with the sword of the sons of the Ammon (2 Samuel 12:9).

That's a grave accusation—and we're talking about one of the greatest believers to ever live, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).

Let me be emphatic about this. When you take your spiritual life casually, you are capable of doing every kind of obnoxiously evil deed! We are all at the mercy of the temptation of our Old Sin Nature when we take a break from our spiritual lives. This kind of spiritual maladjustment ought not to exist; but sadly, it does. James' words are brought to mind:

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you [believers]? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust [for what someone else has] and do not have; so you commit murder (James 4:1-2a).

When a believer forms the habit of taking in God's Word on a daily basis, just as Joseph's brothers did under the mentorship of Jacob, but neglects its application, sooner or later, taking in spiritual truth becomes a ritual without reality. Instead of growing spiritually, such a believer slides into perpetual carnality. Consequently, he becomes a vessel for all kinds of evil deeds. Outwardly, he may appear spiritual, but in his soul he is a smelly quagmire of human viewpoint excrement.

Sadly, millions of believers think that the spiritual life is simply attending church to hear God's Word. They may even make it a point to listen to Bible teaching or to go to Bible class whenever the door is open. Taking in doctrine on a regular basis is one necessary side of the spiritual life, but if a believer neglects the other side, the application of doctrine, he unconsciously becomes a walking time-bomb waiting to explode with sin and evil. Remember that application does not mean doing things for God but rather thinking God's thoughts in every situation. That means never feeling the tiniest quiver of anxiety even in the most disastrous situations. When we confidently and happily face adverse situations with thanksgiving, that's when we are executing the golden standard of the spiritual life.

Now, let's get back to Joseph in the pit.

And as they [Joseph's brothers] 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 to Egypt. And Judah [the ancestor of the humanity of our Lord] 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.' 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 is your son's tunic or not.' Then he examined it and said, 'It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.' (Genesis 37:25b-27, 31-33).

The brothers deceived Jacob point blank. About 40 years had passed since Jacob deceived his father Isaac in order to receive the birthright belonging to his brother Esau, and Jacob continued to reap the fruit of his own deception (Genesis 27). We are reminded again, God always keeps His Word!

Do not be deceived. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also [certainly] reap (Galatians 6:7).

### ***Joseph's Rugged Journey as a Slave***

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 (Genesis 37:28).

The moment this transaction was complete, Joseph was on board the grace train of suffering, destination: Promotion and Honor.<sup>6</sup> We can only speculate what Joseph's thoughts might have been as he shuffled in shackles from Dothan to Egypt. Most people would

<sup>6</sup>*Grace News Today*, vol. 28, 4.

bemoan their unfair fate and in self-pity blame God; however, Joseph's mental attitude, when he finally arrived in Egypt, proves that he did none of these. Instead of focusing on the fix he was in, he focused on God's plan for him. Perhaps he meditated on one of his father's lessons about God's faithfulness:

And behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for *I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you* (Genesis 28:15).  
(emphasis added)

How can we be sure that Joseph looked beyond his immediate situation? Scripture is our source of truth that reveals his grace-thinking:

Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am about to die, but *God will surely* take care of you and bring you up from this land [Egypt] to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and to Jacob.' Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, 'God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here.' (Genesis 50:24-25).  
(emphasis added)

Joseph was looking beyond the immediate circumstances of their enslavement in Egypt. (You should look beyond your suffering, too.) Joseph knew that God had a plan of grace for his life, that God was in charge, and that at the right time God would work things out for his ultimate good. Such confidence is a mark of any believer who is close to maturity.

### **Principles:**

- God, the all-powerful, can ensure that none of His Words or promises go unfulfilled. Since a promise is only as good as the integrity of the one who makes it and because God's integrity is flawless, the pillar of His being, we can be absolutely certain that anything He promises, He will deliver.
- No circumstance can bind God who is outside of time and space constrictions and in total control of everything. God knew in eternity past every circumstance He would use to accomplish

his overall plan for your life. What the world calls a tragedy is actually God's vehicle to carry out His long-range plan to you. Joseph's experience as a slave was no exception and a perfect example!

- God monitors every minute detail of all that happens.
- God controls your present as well as your future, weaving unpleasant and pleasant experiences into a splendid tapestry of perfect results!
- God's strategies and tactics are incomprehensible to our finite minds.

We cannot fathom a God who willingly stood by while evil people wished for His Son's death; then arrested, judged, and nailed Him to the cross; or a God who stood by while Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites as a slave; or a God who appears to stand by as your life flips upside down! No wonder He said to Isaiah,

*'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts. For as the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.'* (Isaiah 55:8-11). (emphasis added)

The italicized words ought to produce in you a bedrock of confidence in God's faithfulness! He has said:

He [anyone] who believes [anchors his trust] in Him [should not, cannot, and] will not be disappointed (Romans 9:33b).

So the bottom line is this, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ advancing to the high ground of spiritual maturity, no matter how bleak your situation may appear, look beyond it and see the Light guiding your footsteps:

Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

We need to engrave upon our souls the fact that God's FAITHFULNESS TO HIS WORD is bigger than our dilemma. He assures us with these words, "I will help you" (Isaiah 41:10) and He will not fumble!

God in His matchless grace has the monopoly on converting any tragedy into something really terrific—way better than you can imagine! That explains why the all-wise, all-powerful God could stand by and watch the slave transaction between Joseph's brothers and the Ishmaelites. He knew that He would turn the tables for Joseph into blessings that would exceed anyone's definition of a great ending to such a tragedy. So, my friend, if you truly understand the God of the Bible, there is no room in your soul for self-pity. Rather, you should joyfully give thanks to the Father for every unpleasant circumstance for He is at work on your behalf 24/7; thereby, you fulfill God's command:

In everything [pleasant or unpleasant] give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

In eternity past, God earmarked every tragedy in your life and will lace them into His will (Romans 8:28a).

### ***Joseph, A Slave to Potiphar***

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. And the Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian (Genesis 39:1-2).

From man's viewpoint, Joseph had enough reasons to be bitter toward everyone, including God. Ordinarily, one would expect him to whine and complain. But Joseph had none of these sinful reactions. Rather, in the face of this bleak state of affairs, he remained composed by maximizing the application of spiritual truth in his soul. He was keenly aware that God knew everything that was happening to him. Armed with that reassurance, his soul was at peace.

When you are in a bad situation not of your own doing, what do you do? If hell were to empty itself on you today, how would you handle it? Suppose you are laid off from your job, or you become the object of supreme injustice and even your friends have deserted you, or you lose all your possessions, or a loved one dies, or all of these happen at one time? What thoughts would flood your mind? Your ability to handle the little daily frustrations and disappointments in your life mirrors your spiritual growth and determines your thoughts and actions in times of extreme pressure. This concept disarms the belief that God measures the spiritual life by the number of years a believer has been hearing Bible doctrine. Make no mistake; the ability to apply God's Word to your thinking while under pressure is the only spiritual measurement available to the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to be like Joseph who was relaxed and content to be a slave in his master's house—and his master worshipped idols!

God tells us in Genesis 39:2 that “the Lord was with Joseph,” a theme which runs throughout the Bible: the Lord is always with us. Joseph knew this in spite of never having seen a page of Scripture! He learned every truth that sustained him from his father and grandfather. Sometimes I wonder where Joseph would have been spiritually had he lived in this dynamic age of history where God has revealed everything we need to know (Ephesians 1:3b). We'll never know what Joseph's spiritual status would have been in the Church Age, but Jesus Christ will reveal our spiritual success or failure at the Judgment Seat of Christ to one and all. Our human viewpoint will burn, and our divine viewpoint thinking will remain as gold, silver, and precious stones.

“The Lord was with Joseph” characterizes God's grace toward him. This expression is used throughout Scripture. For instance, the prophet Isaiah recorded God saying,

I am with you...Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10); For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His (2 Chronicles 16:9); and lo, I am with you always (Matthew 28:20b).

This is what we call language of accommodation which God the Holy Spirit uses to explain divine dealings with man in a way we can understand. This expression incorporates many doctrines:

- *Protection:* Joseph had guardian angels by his side 24/7. The Psalmist wrote,

For He [God] will give his angels charge [duty] concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone [or so that you don't have a fatal injury] (Psalm 91:11-12; cf. Hebrews 1:14).

Experientially, we are monuments to God's faithfulness with regard to His protection. Personally, I have had eight nasty close calls—auto accidents—the last one a head-on collision with a drunk driver. Several times, I came face-to-face with death, and yet God rescued me each time. Talk about guardian angels! Talk about grace! And the deliverances from dangers that we recognize are merely a small portion of the total number of times God keeps us secure.

- *Provision:* God supplied Joseph with daily provision. Undoubtedly, Jacob taught Joseph about Abraham, who had assured his confused son, Isaac, that “God will provide” (Genesis 22:8a) and He did provide a sacrifice, and they both returned from the mountain! King David affirmed God's faithfulness:

I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging for bread (Psalm 37:25).

The apostle Paul put it beautifully:

He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely [or graciously] give us all things (Romans 8:32).

I like to explain this concept this way: If someone gave you 100 bricks of pure gold worth millions of dollars (no strings attached), would it be so difficult to also provide a cart to carry it all? God has done the most by providing and judging His Unique Son; therefore, providing your daily provision is nothing to Him. The Lord Himself brings this to your thinking:

Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds [because you possess God's righteousness and life-eternal] (Luke 12:24).

The principle is: As long as the divine plan for your life is in operation, in other words as long as you are alive, God is under obligation to provide everything you need to serve Him; however, He may not give you what you want to accomplish your own agenda. When we work at our own agenda, we drift off course from God's plan.

When it comes to your daily provision, listen to God's Word:

For this reason, I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on (Matthew 6:25a).

God may delay the provision of some of these necessities in order to help us grow spiritually, but at the right time He will provide.

- *Supervision:* God constantly monitored Joseph's daily affairs, ensuring that every unfair circumstance eventuated in blessing because Joseph knew and obeyed all divine commands. God is equally diligent in His care of you. He never takes His eyes off you—NEVER! (Hebrews 13:5).
- *Guidance:* God guided Joseph in all his endeavors, ensuring that He alone was magnified. In fact, God's accomplishments through Joseph drew attention to Him alone. God guides you, too, as long as your soul is not distracted by the details of this life, those material things and successes that the world views as important, even essential. His promise to guide you is apparent in Scripture.

For such is God, our [awesome] God forever. He will guide us until death (Psalm 48:14).

I will instruct you in the way which you should go. I will counsel you with My eye upon you (Psalm 32:8).

- *Success:* In Genesis 39:2-3, we read,



And the Lord was with Joseph, so [as a result] he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and saw that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

God is the source of lasting success in life. The nature of your success will indeed baffle everyone, both believers and unbelievers, because God will be the One causing your seemingly impossible success.

- *Fulfillment of God's purpose for your life:* Nothing can end your life before God's plan for it is fully accomplished. Hardship does nothing but strengthen your life. Tears of sorrow do nothing but water it. Suffering in all its ugliness does nothing but provide you with the capacity to enjoy it. And so we read:

And behold I am with you and will keep [protect] you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you (Genesis 28:15).

## ***God's Faithfulness to His Children***

No matter what your circumstances are, God will never, ever take His eyes off you, not even if you want Him to! That's His amazing grace! In fact, when you arm yourself with the knowledge that the all-wise God, the able One, is at the helm of your spiritual journey, the phrase "God knows what He is doing" becomes your motto!

An unbeliever or carnal believer might look at Joseph's suffering, and conclude that God had forgotten him. However, Joseph himself was solidly aware of the continual presence of God, even in his slavery. There's not one chance in a million that God will take His eyes off you. Not ever! In fact, God had you personally on His mind when He uttered this promise:

**I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU. I WILL NEVER FOR-  
SAKE YOU (Hebrews 13:5c).**

We, as believers in the Church Age, have blessings unknown to any other dispensation. We have the written Word of God (the thinking of Christ), the filling of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the Trinity, and the privilege of being able to go to God in prayer. When we acknowledge our sins to God the Father in the privacy of our soul, we are immediately put back in fellowship with Him. We don't have to scrimp and save to buy animals for sin offerings or adhere to complicated rules of spiritual and physical cleanliness. And that's only a partial list! I can't emphasize enough that God expects us to use all His grace provisions to handle every problem, disappointment, and disaster that Satan hurls at us!

Sometimes, our situations seem to get the best of us and confidence flies out the window, but if we remember to "walk by faith and not by sight," then we have learned something. In particular, we learn that without these adverse situations, we would have had no need to turn to our Father for help. In essence, our worst days are our best days if we cling to Him for deliverance. When it

comes to God's promises, we have everything to gain because "*not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from God's word until all is accomplished*" (Matthew 5:18).

These words were not in print in Joseph's time; yet, he understood and applied the principle and was victorious over his circumstances. God's promise that you "shall never be put to shame" should mean to you that no matter what you are going through, even if it seems that all hope is gone (as it seemed to be for Joseph when he was at the mercy of his brothers), God cannot and will not mishandle His promise to be with you! So take a deep breath, lean back, and reassure yourself that God's promise, His veracity, will see you through even in the darkest hours. This confidence belongs to those who love God, those who have reached or are advancing to the high ground of maximum glorification of God.

### ***God's Timetable***

The Lord literally caused everything Joseph touched to prosper ("the Lord was with Joseph"), but Joseph was still a slave in a foreign country, not the authority over his family as God had promised him when he was 17 years old (Genesis 37:2). We need to understand that God rarely gives a timetable for His promises.

The cliché "God's time is the best time" is accurate, but how often does this truth register in our thinking? He is a God with "perfect timing." I believe that Joseph mastered this concept because Jacob taught him about the long years that passed before God fulfilled His promise to Abraham and allowed Isaac to be born.

Our Father who is all-wise has never been in a hurry with His plan, and we should fall into rhythm with His stride, confidently following Him footstep by footstep, never rushing to get ahead. A few years, even decades, may pass before He makes a new footprint; however, we should be patient because He knows what lies ahead. He knows the right thing to do and the right time to do it. Consider Genesis 3:15 when He promised a Savior for the whole world, a promise He didn't fulfill for several thousand years!

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law (Galatians 4:4).

Consider another case:

Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing’ (Genesis 12:1-2).

God made this promise to Abraham when he was 75 years old but didn’t fulfill it until his 100th birthday—25 years later! God reiterated this promise to Isaac:

Sojourn in this land and *I will be with you* and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 26:3-4).

When Isaac was 40 years old (Genesis 25:20), he married Rebekah, a kinswoman from Mesopotamia (Genesis 24:10). But guess what? Rebekah was barren. Another twenty years passed before God made another footprint, and Jacob was born (Genesis 25:26). We could write volumes on God’s timing, but suffice it to say, that approximately 430 years passed before God carved out the nation promised to Abraham (Galatians 3:17).

### ***Dining in Style in God’s Restaurant***

God is not in the fast-food business—zoom in and zoom out at a drive-thru window for your blessings in 15 seconds or less (so your life will be suffering-free—guaranteed)! God is not a short-order cook you command to hold the onions on your burger! Rather, He is a Gourmet Chef like no other. He prepares delicacies agreeable to any connoisseur’s palate. Those of us who have dined in fine restaurants know the time it takes to serve a delicious meal—certainly much

longer than in a burger joint. Similarly, God took time to prepare the promotion He revealed to young Joseph in two separate dreams.

So, my friend, sit back and relax while your Father prepares your meal and serves up blessings. You might find several palatable things on the menu, such as promotion, provision for a new job, healing of your infirmities, or a spouse who loves you and God. You may be tempted to ask, “How much longer do I have to wait?” The length of time is God’s prerogative. While He doesn’t give us clues, one thing is for certain; He will act at the proper time—never too soon—never too late—but exactly when your blessings have simmered to perfection.

You may ask, “Why is it that the Almighty God, the Sovereign and Omnipotent One who can do all things, anywhere, anytime, moves at such a seemingly snail’s pace when it comes to His plans for our lives or to answering our prayers?” That question was asked by many believers in the Bible.

How long, Lord, must I cry for help? (Habakkuk 1:2, NET Bible).

King David asked:

How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me (Psalm 13:1)?

From Job’s lips, we hear:

Behold I cry, violence! But I get no answer. I shout for help, but there is no justice. He has walled up my way that I cannot pass; and He has put darkness on my paths (Job 19:7-8).

Think about these Bible heroes who were also men with flaws just like we have. Their call for instant help from God didn’t speed up His plan one iota but merely increased their self-induced misery.

Another puzzlement on God’s timetable is the seeming invisibility of God the Father when the Perfect Lamb of God, the God-Man Jesus Christ, screamed on the cross of Calvary:

O My God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest” (Psalm 22:2).

Of course, God the Father answered our Lord’s cry, but not until the right time—after Jesus Christ had received the judgment of our sins. If God delayed answering the cry of the Lord Jesus Christ, the “radiance of His glory, the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:3a), then we shouldn’t expect a rapid V.I.P. response either. God has many reasons to slow down His program for you:

1. Waiting until He has removed all the hurdles that could interfere with your blessing.
2. Testing the level of your spiritual growth through the darkest times of your life. Will you continue to trust and praise Him?
3. Showing you that He is a God of extreme measures. He shows up when all hope is gone.
4. Waiting until you develop spiritual muscle or capacity through the daily intake of His Word and its application under every pressure (Acts 20:32).

We should embrace the words of Jeremiah:

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare [for your betterment] and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

God’s grace calls for Him to give you the best; so be patient when He delays delivery until the perfect time.

### ***Joseph’s First Promotion***

Joseph’s first promotion, while in slavery, came only after the correct “cooking time.”

Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant over the house, and all that he owned he put in his charge (Genesis 39:3-4).

Talk about God’s providence! Talk about grace! The same God who safeguarded and directed Joseph during his difficult journey from an empty pit all the way to slavery in Potiphar’s house is the very God who promoted him in this dark moment. Yes, God

promoted him during his slavery, in a foreign country for that matter! Three important observations have surfaced:

- Joseph displayed an awesome relaxed mental attitude throughout his experiences because he looked unto God who never fails. He didn't know his future, but he was confident that God was faithful and able to take care of him. Faith in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds is all God wants from anyone.
- Joseph's spiritual lifestyle of absolute faith was an excellent testimony about God to everyone around him. The apostle Paul was thinking along that line when he wrote, "You [your lifestyle] are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2). It's apparent that Joseph's master was impressed with Joseph when he made him General Overseer of the affairs of his household. Of course, God is the One who changed cursing into blessing.
- Just as with Joseph, nothing stops God from accomplishing His overall plan for your life. He uses every circumstance—good or bad—to bring His plan to its marvelous fruition.

Joseph's super-structure of grace-orientation undoubtedly led to his undeserved promotion. He was the lowest of slaves and would have been ill-treated and forced to work around the clock performing burdensome chores. However, Potiphar treated him with dignity, almost as if he were royalty. What a deal!

### ***Grace-Orientation***

Grace-orientation comes through spiritual advancement by learning and applying God's Word and then you will recognize the multi-colored coat of grace God has wrapped around your shoulders. Here are five essentials in becoming grace-oriented.

1. *Learning God's Word:* Consistent intake of God's Word is a prerequisite toward being grace-oriented. As you relentlessly avail yourself to the teaching of God's Word, eventually you will saturate your thinking with His essence, His plan, and His policy of grace. This knowledge will bring you face-to-face with the reality that you do not deserve the sacrifice and suffering of

Christ on your behalf. You will realize that apart from God's grace, you would have nothing of value.

2. *Application of God's Word:* Application is the other side of learning. Without application of God's Word to your daily living, an arsenal of unused doctrine in your soul stands to condemn you at the evaluation seat of Christ. You can fight the spiritual battle that rages in your soul only through total reliance on the strength that only He can provide through His Word. As you consistently apply the truth of God's Word to your thinking and actions in every circumstance, your rate of spiritual growth inevitably increases.
3. *Spiritual Advancement:* The level of your grace-orientation depends on your position on the spiritual growth chart. No one becomes grace-oriented overnight. It takes much time and study. You will know that you are growing spiritually when you become more tolerant of and patient with those who don't adhere to your norms and standards and when you view your failures in light of God's grace response to you.
4. *Experience:* Often, realization of the way God rescues you from the bitter experiences in life adds bricks to the structure of grace-orientation in your soul. I don't know about you, but my life history is flooded with all sorts of experiences—some pleasant, others not. In all, I saw God's sustaining power and lovingkindness.
5. *Reflection on God's Grace Toward You:* As you rummage through the chambers of your soul, meditating on your experiences and God's grace solutions to them, you are encouraged to treat others with equal grace. No doubt, the wealth of God's truth in John Newton's soul inspired him to write these words:

*Amazing Grace...how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me...I was lost but now, I am found...was blind, but now I see!*



We can see these components shaping Joseph's grace-thinking. He was left in a pit to die but was rescued. He was sold into slavery but promoted. He was jailed unfairly but elevated to a position of authority and leadership. Let me put it this way: Whatever you face in this life is either by God's orchestration or permission and is designed for your overall well-being. But you have to keep your spiritual eyes open so that God the Holy Spirit can direct your every step.

We learn from Joseph's promotion that God can bless His children in even the most deplorable circumstances. He demonstrated this principle when He caused Joseph to be promoted while he was a slave. It's true that Joseph proved himself to be intelligent and trustworthy, but ultimately, God was the source of all he had!

## ***Joseph's Temptation and Testing***

Testing and temptation are not the same. Testing is from the Lord while Satan is the source of all temptation. Both James and Moses shined light on this subject:

Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone (James 1:13).

I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion everyday, that I may test [Hebrew: *nacah*: to check the quality of someone] them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction (Exodus 16:4).

Testing and temptation began in the Garden of Eden. God planted a tree of knowledge of good and evil to test Adam and Eve's obedience to His authority (Genesis 2:16-17). Satan followed immediately with the temptation to disobey God.

The same happened to Joseph. He passed the mental test of being left in a pit and then being sold as a slave to Potiphar in Egypt. With this success came promotion, and with promotion came an ambush from Satan, the temptation to trust a man rather than God. Word of advice: When you have a period of spiritual success as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, don't be jubilant. Rather, guard your soul carefully because the enemy lurks just over the horizon, perched on the edge and ready to attack a different area of vulnerability!

And it came about that *from the time* he [Potiphar] made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned in the house and in the field (Genesis 39:5). (emphasis added)

Potiphar's monetary blessings illustrate the concept of blessing by association. Joseph, a Godfearing believer, lived with Potiphar;

therefore, God blessed Potiphar because through those blessings, He also blessed Joseph. Similarly, God blessed Joseph's father Jacob and Jacob's future father-in-law.

But Laban said to him [Jacob], 'If now it pleases you, stay with me; I have divined that the Lord has blessed me on your account' (Genesis 30:27).

Blessing by association! What an unfathomable grace gift!

So he [Potiphar] left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there, he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, Lie with me. (Genesis 39:6-7).

Joseph was the embodiment of nearly every woman's dream-man. Not only was he well-built and very handsome, but he was intelligent, humble, powerful, and respected. Now, a beautiful woman offered to sleep with him—Potiphar's wife! She gave Joseph the opportunity to steal gratification for himself, to act as though his future in God's plan had come to a screeching halt. Did he?

But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house and has put all he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and *sin against* [you? No! Potiphar? No!] *God?*' (Genesis 39:8-9). (emphasis added)

We see it in plain writing—Joseph's spiritual life remained intact. His dogmatic response to a great temptation gives us a peek at his soul filled with integrity. We might think that this spiritual victory would have kept Satan at bay for a while. Not so.

And it came about as she spoke to Joseph *day after day*, that he did not listen [give in] to her to lie beside her [in a sexual manner] (Genesis 39:10). (emphasis added)

“Day after day” underlines the issue of spiritual warfare. Spiritual believers are under constant attack from Satan, the world, and the Sin Nature. The elect angels saluted Joseph’s resistance to every temptation and cheered with jubilation. God’s groundwork was already in place for sending Joseph through the grace furnace of suffering for his ultimate promotion.



## ***Joseph in the Grace Furnace of Suffering***

Purging in the furnace of suffering is inevitable for any believer advancing in spiritual maturity. Suffering was inevitable for Job (Job 1, cf. 42:12-16), King David (Psalm 23), the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 11:23-33; cf. II Timothy 4:6-8), and our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, the Lord Himself went through the most intense suffering the world will ever know. The author of Hebrews wrote:

Although He was [God the] Son, He learned *obedience through the things He suffered. And by being perfected [refined] in this way*, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who trust in Him, and He has been designated by God [the Father] as high priest in the order of Melchisedek (Hebrews 5:8-10, NET Bible).

We will experience suffering as advancing believers, but our Lord went through hell on earth to be our substitute. That alone should cause the reverence in our souls to swell and warm by the light of God's majesty. We can say with confidence that since Joseph's soul was saturated with God's Word that was all he needed in order to pass through the furnace of suffering with flying colors. That's all we need, too.

Often when things are rugged, a believer will ask, "Why me? Why am I going through this?" Yet, when things are running smoothly (no potholes in the road) only a handful of believers (the grace-oriented ones) will ask, "Why should I be the object of God's blessings?" Keep this in mind as we are about to visit Joseph in jail and watch him apply the truth of God's Word resident in his soul.

Now it happened one day that he [Joseph] went into his house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. And she [Potiphar's wife] caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me!' And he left his garment

in her hand and fled and went outside. When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, she called to the men of her household, and said to them, ‘See he [my husband—Potiphar] has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. And it came about when he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled, and went outside.’ So she left his garment beside her until his master [her husband] came home. So she spoke to him with these words, ‘The Hebrew slave whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of [rape] me; and it happened as I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled outside.’ (Genesis 39:11-18).

What a fabricator of lies Potiphar’s wife was—a good one, too! But, unbeknownst to anyone, her lie paved the way for Joseph’s promotion—suffering turned to blessing, which would purge him of every grain of arrogance and strengthen him in humility and in grace-orientation prior to the fulfillment of his dreams. Though the road would be treacherous, Joseph would gain much from the wisdom and grace of God who vindicates those who suffer unjustly because of their stance in Yahweh.

Potiphar’s reaction to his wife’s complaint was decisive and swift.

Now it came about when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, ‘This is what your slave did to me,’ that his anger burned [Hebrew: *charah*: to be incensed, to glow with anger]. So Joseph’s master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail (Genesis 39:19-20).

Satan seemed to score another victory. It’s interesting to note that Potiphar had two options. He could have had Joseph hanged, which would have prevented the fulfillment of the dreams, or he could have thrown him in jail. God’s providence always prevails, and so he chose the latter.

The same God, who directed the events back at the pit resulting in Joseph's high position of trust in Potiphar's house, was the very God who prepared a table of grace for Joseph in prison.

But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness [unmerited favor] to him, and gave him favor [Hebrew: *chen*: grace] in the sight of the chief jailer (Genesis 39:21).

We have said it before, but let's say it again, with the words highlighted, underlined, and with double exclamation marks! Nothing Is More Wonderful Than Being The Object Of God's Grace!! Nothing from the hand of man can compare— Not ever!

### ***Joseph in Prison***

Joseph was totally helpless in his dank prison cell. He couldn't bail himself out nor could he escape—even if he wanted to! In this dilemma, our Father's unfailing grace paid him a visit. God didn't immediately deliver Joseph as He could have, but rather He caused the chief jailer to appoint Joseph to be his second in command. In a sense, delivering this promotion was a harder task than deliverance from jail! God has a marvelous sense of humor. You see, God is capable of rescuing you from your trouble just as He is capable of promoting you in the midst of it. The very marrow of the verse we are studying is that God is the subject of each action:

- God was with Joseph (Genesis 39:21a).
- God extended kindness to Joseph (v. 21b).
- God gave Joseph favor [or grace] in the sight of the jailer (v. 21c).

God does all the work because He always treats us in grace. The very moment Joseph firmly grasped the truth, that apart from God he amounted to nothing, his grace-orientation was launched. The same is true of any believer who has an ounce of humility. When you inventory your life in light of God's grace, you understand that without His grace, you wouldn't be alive, much less have material blessings and physical and spiritual success. At that moment, grace-orientation begins to solidify in your soul.

I wish you could see my eyes fixed in love upon your eyes as I make this solemn statement: No created being, human or angelic,



no circumstance, no amount of propaganda, sickness, suffering or satanically engineered assault is capable of ending God's plan for your life as long as you are filled with the Holy Spirit and advancing in the spiritual life! You may say to me, "But, Moses, you really don't understand the enormity of my suffering." You are absolutely right! The only One who does is Omniscient God, and He is the only One who matters!! God never promises us anywhere in Scripture that our Christian journey will be a bed of roses; however, He does promise:

**'I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU'** (Hebrews 13:5c).

King David's life provides proof of God's willingness to keep that promise (Acts 13:36). God never took His eyes off His servant David, not even for a moment. He was always with him through all the ups and downs of the treacherous road he traversed and even in the 'valley of the shadow of death.' God shielded King David from every scourge of the evil one until David finished his responsibilities. Only then, did God call him home. God was with him all the time until he fulfilled the divine plan for his life to the last letter! That's true for us, too. God won't let go of us until we have fulfilled His will for our lives or died the sin unto death because we refuse to obey His will. That's the meaning of God's sovereignty!

I don't know about you, but when God's purpose for my life is complete, I don't want to spend another second on planet earth. So, my friend, if you understand this truth, you will not panic or feel the slightest anxiety even when the storms of life threaten to toss you overboard.

How splendid it is to watch God's faithfulness as His plan for us unfolds and blooms like flowers along a dusty trail! We are soothed knowing that God is at the helm at all times, even in suffering, and that He has supreme veto power when some event doesn't align with His plan for our lives. Satan is acutely aware of this. Are you? If you are, why hit the panic button when turbulence threatens to rattle your world? Of course, the normal physiological response in times of danger is for adrenaline to rise, but we should stabilize our thinking in a flash by latching onto scriptural promises such as,

...The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man [or Satan, for that matter] do to me? (Hebrews 13:6). And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Job latched onto a divine promise when his foundation crumbled beneath him:

But He [the Omniscient One] knows the way I take; when He has tried me [when this storm is over], I shall come forth as gold (Job 23:10).



## *God's Providence*

And the chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible [for it.] (Genesis 39:22).

Yes, Joseph was in charge! God was saying to Satan that He could convert suffering into blessing—anytime, anywhere, even in a prison! Chapter 39 ends with these amazing words:

The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper (vs. 23).

God was responsible for Joseph's success in the most adverse circumstance. Our Father actually unleashed a shower of blessing on Joseph, who was as undeserving as anyone in the human race. That truth should deflect pride from swelling within us and cause us to look at our achievements as blessings of God's grace.

The same Providence that presided over the boy-prince in Jacob's house and shaped and guided his course is the very One "causing all things [including imprisonment] to work together for good." We have heard Romans 8:28 quoted a thousand times, but does its truth circulate in our souls? When things go sour in our lives, can we interpret the experience by the light of this awe-inspiring verse in the infallible Word of God? I mean, when we consider our suffering, do we THINK in terms of divine viewpoint—that God knows what He is doing with us, His earthen vessels? Spiritual life is nothing but THINKING! THINKING! THINKING! We cannot emphasize this truth enough. What we do in the energy of the flesh does not count. It is aligning our thoughts with God's thoughts that counts. This thinking is reflected in our actions which are merely by-products of our thoughts.

We know that God is the Master Choreographer of human history and the Mastermind of the divine plan. He knows when and

how to use circumstances, pleasant and unpleasant, to accomplish His overall plan for our lives. In fact, when we have a handle on this concept, we say good-bye to whining over our bitter experiences. We slam the book shut before we sing the “Why Me?” song. We are completely relaxed inside and out even in the midst of great turmoil. Yes, great turmoil. We cannot be winner-believers apart from having a thorough understanding of God, His perfect plan, and His method of carrying it out. We as believers often hit the panic button during suffering because of our idiotic and stupid forgetfulness of who the Director is.

You and I need to protect ourselves against suffering with grace-orientation. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are growing in grace, do we truly rejoice when suffering knocks at our door? God commands us to,

Consider it all joy [rejoice!]...when you encounter various trials [or suffering] (James 1:2).

He tells us that our endurance in suffering will bring forth a super-abundance of unsurpassed blessing in time and eternity (James 1:4, 12). Joseph was aware of this doctrinal truth; therefore, he was encouraged, motivated, and poised even in prison.

### ***God’s Providence in Action***

Then it came about after these things [Joseph’s imprisonment and promotion in prison] the cupbearer [a palace official who served wine at the king’s table] and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the *same place where Joseph was imprisoned* (Genesis 40:1-3). (emphasis added)

Was it coincidence that these two men were sent to the same prison as Joseph? Or was it God’s providence that worked behind the scenes? We have seen that God uses the seemingly insignificant events in our lives to accomplish His purpose. What we call a

disaster is a tool in the hand of God because God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him. Think back to Shechem when a man found Joseph wandering about looking for his brothers (Genesis 37: 15-16). This same man, who previously overheard the brothers talking, directed Joseph to where they were last seen. Coincidence? No! God's Providence worked in and around every detail. Was it mere chance that the Midianite traders happened to parade by just when Joseph's brothers decided to sell him as a slave rather than leave him in the pit (v. 28)? Was that coincidence, too? No! No! No! Coincidences don't happen in the plan of God!

While God is not the source of evil deeds, He sure knows how to use them to His advantage. Tell me, do you think that Joseph's brothers would have sold him to slave merchants if they had known that Joseph would become prime minister of Egypt, second in command to Pharaoh himself? Of course not! If Satan had known that Job's blessings would double after intense suffering, would he have obtained permission from God to inflict that suffering? That's unthinkable since Satan's plan is to cut us off from God and His blessings. Would Satan have fought relentlessly to have the Lord Jesus Christ crucified if he had known that Christ's spiritual death on the cross would result in unlimited atonement for every member of the human race? No! Never! So, my friend, when suffering comes upon you, do not fret because God is always alert, standing at the ready, waiting to surprise Satan with a fantastic outcome. That's the epitome of God's incomprehensible grace. God's impeccable timing prevented the king from killing the cupbearer and baker, thereby allowing them to be cell-mates with Joseph.

### ***Joseph's Humility-Orientation***

And the captain of the bodyguard put Joseph *in charge* of them, and he *took care of them* [Hebrew: *sharath*: to serve]; and they were in confinement for some time. Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his own dream and each dream with its own interpretation. When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold they were dejected [Hebrew: *za 'aph*: sad or morose]. And he asked Pharaoh's officials

who were with him in confinement in his master's house, 'Why are your faces so sad today?' Then they said to him, 'We have had a dream, and there is no one to interpret it' (Genesis 40:4-8a).

Humility, basically, is a state of mind in which one regards himself as "a nobody" and easily and joyfully submits to all legitimate authority.<sup>7</sup> Joseph's attitude toward those under his authority clearly reveals his humility-orientation. Remember, he was in charge of the prison inmates while being an inmate himself. The English Bible doesn't do justice in translating the Hebrew verb *sharath* as 'took care.' While it can mean to take care, a more accurate translation would be 'to render a high level of service to important people or royal officials.' This term occurs 96 times in the Old Testament, usually to depict servitude in action. For example, in 1 Kings 10:5, a household worker provided service; Elisha ministered to his master Elijah (1 Kings 19:21); King David's servants waited on him (1 Kings 1:15); Amnon's valet served him (2 Samuel 13:17). The word always refers to serving someone of higher rank.

Joseph could have been condescending to the inmates under his authority — after all, he was the boss! Instead, he used humility from his elevated position. Joseph literally served the other inmates as if he were their household servant, much as our Lord served His disciples at the Last Supper. Unselfish concern for the well-being of others is a major component in our grace arsenal. Show me a believer who is consumed with compassion for the welfare of others, and I will show you a grace believer. While Paul wrote this to the Philippians, he also set an example:<sup>8</sup>

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than yourselves; [and] do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4).

You [Ephesians] yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men [his co-laborers] who were with me (Acts 20:34).

---

<sup>7</sup>Moses C. Onwubiko, *Paul: A Trophy of God's Grace*, 41.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 61-64.

Like Paul, Joseph was concerned for the well-being of others. He went to his fellow prisoners in the morning and observed that they were dejected (Genesis 40:6). He watched them as if he were viewing a video. The Greek equivalent *horao* corresponds with the Latin *video*. He was acutely aware of their facial expressions. Joseph could have looked the other way with a who-cares attitude, but the Scripture records otherwise. He asked his fellow inmates “Why are your faces so sad today?” with the intention of rendering assistance. Joseph’s heart melted with compassion for them so he asked:

Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me please  
(v. 8b).

What a wise man! Joseph knew that our Father is the source of all his blessings—including his own ability to interpret dreams. So the chief cupbearer and baker told Joseph their dreams (vv. 9-18), and Joseph interpreted them. We aren’t interested in their dreams as they don’t have any bearing on our study; however, the interpretation of the cupbearer’s dream was favorable, but the baker learned that his death was imminent. Joseph’s interpretations played out just as he said they would. Pharaoh had the chief baker executed on the third day as per Joseph’s interpretation of the dream (Genesis 40:16-20).

## ***Spiritual Failure***

All biblical heroes have lives smudged with spiritual failure because the Old Sin Nature, which we all possess, is the source of temptation and freewill is the source of personal sins. Those great believers occasionally slid down the spiritual hill into a quagmire of sin, but then they recovered and went on to receive above and beyond super-grace blessings. They followed God’s command to acknowledge their sins; and they continued to learn His Word. You may ask, “Why do great spiritual believers, such as Job, Moses, Abraham, Joseph, King David, and the apostle Paul have more potential to hit bottom than other believers?” They are the targets of Satan’s elite warriors. Satan may not bother to attack baby or carnal believers because they are already following his agenda. But he is always vigilant to ambush the “gold-standard believer.” We know this from Satan’s response to the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief



priest, who were calling upon the name of Jesus Christ against evil spirits. To these men Satan replied,

I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?  
(Acts 19:14-15).

In other words, “I am too busy working around the clock to bring ‘gold-standard believers’ down; I don’t have any time to waste on spiritual morons like you. I go after the spiritual giants!” Another reason Satan goes after mature believers is that their failures draw a lot of attention and can be a distraction to baby believers.

We all fail. No exceptions. Some self-righteous believers like to sit high on a throne and judge those who fail. They judge others while ignoring or defying direct orders from the throne of Heaven to judge only ourselves (by recognizing and acknowledging our sins to God the Father). These are self-centered, arrogant believers who are legalistic to the core. They enjoy picking out certain sins which they don’t enjoy, then gleefully condemn those who do them. Whoever succumbs to such arrogance is not worthy of eternal life, but they receive it anyway, as do all believers, because they believed in Christ as Savior. The God of grace always keeps His promises. To judgmental believers, Paul asked a stinging question:

Who are you to judge the servant of another [God]? To his own Master he stands or fails; and he will stand [guaranteed!], for the Lord is able to make him stand [because he has believed in Christ as his Savior] (Romans 14:4).

God commanded through the human author James, the half-brother of our Lord,

Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a Judge of it [God]. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy, but who are you who judge your neighbor [brother] (James 4:11-12)?

Some of us tread on dangerous ground and have become like mini-gods, busybodies patrolling God's territory to judge His servants. Such a lifestyle does not reflect grace-orientation. When a believer fails, no matter how heinous the sin, our priesthood requires that we lift such a person up in prayer before the throne of God's grace, interceding on his behalf. We shouldn't provoke other believers to sin by drawing them into gossiping, maligning, judging, and ridiculing. We shouldn't judge others because we don't have all the facts surrounding their failures. Only God does.

You shouldn't laugh at another believer's failure because you don't have the slightest idea what failure you might commit tomorrow. My friend, don't react dismissively or judgmentally when your brother in Christ fails because you, too, will fail on the spiritual battleground. We all need grace in abundance.

### ***Joseph's Failure***

At one point in his imprisonment, Joseph switched from divine viewpoint to human viewpoint.

Then Joseph said to him [the chief cupbearer], 'This is the interpretation of it [your dream]: the three branches are three days; within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer. *Only keep me in mind* when it goes well with you, and please *do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out this [jail] house*. For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon (Genesis 40:12-15). (emphasis added)

Joseph really missed the spiritual mark at this juncture. As we've seen throughout his adverse experiences, Joseph focused on God, who in His grace rescued him; but here he really snapped. The word translated 'kindness' is the Hebrew *chesed*, meaning an attitude of love that contains mercy, in other words grace in action. Joseph's lapse of faith garnered divine discipline that lasted two more years. He fainted spiritually and focused his trust on man, a sin which carries punitive action from the Bar of Eternal Justice:

Thus says the Lord, ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord.’ (Jeremiah 17:5).

The Psalmist echoed Jeremiah’s words:

Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation (Psalm 146:3).

Joseph failed miserably when he switched his trust from God to the cupbearer and whined about his unjust treatment. Remember that our job is not to say, “Joseph, how dare you switch your trust from God to man?” The good news is that God judges graciously. Joseph clearly failed God at this point, but God didn’t fail him.

As we endeavor to wrap up this awe-inspiring doctrine of grace with focus on Joseph, we consider it vital to study God’s faithfulness. Many theologians and Bible teachers argue about the eternal security of the believer<sup>9</sup> simply because their comprehension of God’s faithfulness is shallow. They rationalize that God would respond to a sinful believer in the same way man does when he is maligned and disobeyed. They ignore scriptural passages like this one:

It is a trustworthy statement: For if [or since] we died with Him [Jesus Christ] we [believers] will also live with Him; if we endure [maybe we will or maybe we won’t, but if we do execute God’s plan for our lives], we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him [fail in our spiritual life], He also will deny us [rewards, cf. I Corinthians 3:11-15]; if we are faithless [Greek *apisteo* = disbelieve, without faith, or unfaithful] *He remains faithful* [He will keep His promise to raise the unfaithful believer to eternal glory on the last day. cf. John 6:39-40]; for He cannot [shall not and will not] deny Himself [become unfaithful or allow your failure to draw Him to your level of unfaithfulness] (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

---

<sup>9</sup>Moses C. Onwubiko, *The Eternal Security of the Believer*.

These ignorant theologians humanize God, reducing Him to their own sinfulness. God's faithfulness is as solid as the Rock of Ages, and our sinful behavior cannot change that. God's faithfulness is based on His veracity. He is absolute Truth, and everything He says is absolutely truthful. In other words, God's faithfulness depends on His essence, on who and what He is, not on anything else.

For the sake of illustration, I want you to visualize God's essence as an automobile engine with a gazillion parts. Picture your favorite car parked in front of your garage, perhaps a shiny new BMW just delivered from the manufacturer. Then, imagine yourself asking your mechanic to replace your brand new BMW fuel injector with an old, defective one. Now try cranking the engine. Of course, your brand-new car won't start because it can't successfully inject fuel to the engine! The failure of only one part disables your exquisite vehicle! That's how the essence of God works. If God should negate His Word or fail to fulfill a promise—just one, His veracity, a component of His essence, would be defective and so would His entire Being; therefore, His faithfulness is glued to His veracity; they are inseparably united. Our entire confidence depends on God's faithfulness. Joseph's hope of becoming Prime Minister rested on God's faithfulness as does our confidence in appropriating divine promises in time and eternity to come.

### ***God's Word: The Anchor of His Faithfulness***

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the prophet Isaiah emphasized God's faithfulness to His Word:

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8).

Today, we might say, "When God speaks, all human or angelic discussion is over!" Because God's Word is perfect, no one should debate, review, or amend it. It will stand holy forever just as He wishes.

The Prophet Isaiah further affirmed:

The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened; and just as I have planned so it will be' (Isaiah 14:24).

God keeps His Word despite varying circumstances. No failure on our part, no circumstance, no sophisticated weaponry, no disease is capable of shortening or altering God’s plan for our lives— not in the slightest! That’s the quintessence of the splendor of God’s integrity!

### ***The Rainbow: A Reminder of God’s Faithfulness to His Word***

Immediately after the flood subsided, God made a covenant with Noah and all generations.

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ‘Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the waters of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.’ And God said, *‘This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations. I set My bow [rainbow] in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud. And I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.’* (Genesis 9:8-15). (emphasis added)

I don’t know about you, but each time I see a rainbow in the sky, I praise God for His awesome wisdom and the beauty of the firmament of His handiwork. More than that, I thank Him for His unsurpassed faithfulness. More than 4,000 years have passed since the flood, and yet God still sends rainbows to remind us that His covenant with Noah still holds true. God keeps His Word! That’s the beauty of His faithfulness! And it’s marvelous to behold!

## ***Israel's Existence: A Demonstration of God's Faithfulness to His Word***

God made an unconditional covenant with 75 year old Abraham to bless the world through his progeny. In Genesis chapter 12 we read:

And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you [anti-Semitic], I will curse. *And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed* (Genesis 12:2-3, cf. Galatians 3:8).

God's unique grace covenant with Abraham was in limbo for over two decades because his wife Sarah, through whose womb the catalyst of God's promise would emerge, was barren (Genesis 11:30). Yes, barren at age 65. To compound the matter she was at the peak of menopause. Simply put, her situation seemed a huge, impassible barrier to the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham; however, God's faithfulness was simply in the test tube stage. Lo and behold, 25 years later, God lifted all her physical barriers of childbirth so that Isaac, the first increment of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, was born (Genesis 21:2-3).

Indeed, Isaac had a similar experience with his own barren wife (Genesis 25:21); nevertheless 20 years into his marriage, he saw the dramatic faithfulness of God when twin boys were born, bringing him great joy (v. 24). Yes, twin boys were born to Isaac and his wife Rebekah after 20 years of marriage. I am telling you that I am totally intrigued by following the trail of God's faithfulness in action. It's a fun experience! It's spectacular! It's exquisite! That's right—it's sensational! And so through Jacob, Isaac's son and the third patriarch, God carved out the nation Israel—430 years from the time He first made His promise to Abraham. But that's not all. God fulfilled His promise to bless the world through Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:8-9, 16), and more than 2,000 years after He made the promise Jesus Christ was born.

The Israelites still await a future in God's plan. The very existence of the Jews, despite consistent satanic assaults against them, points to God's faithfulness. In fact, one Bible expositor aptly

summarizes it like this: “The proof of God’s existence is in one word—Israel!”

### ***Israel’s Unrest: A Reminder of God’s Faithfulness to His Word***

Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples... *Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot*” (Deuteronomy 28:64-65). (emphasis added)

The Jews have experienced this national divine discipline throughout their history. The final blow came in A.D. 70 when God destroyed Judah, the last Jewish priest-nation, just as our Lord prophesied in Luke 19:34-44. Today, Jews are scattered all over the world, and we are acutely aware of their corporate suffering worldwide. God keeps His Word. God is capable of handling the discipline of the Jews. Those who arrogantly try to help Him—through anti-Semitism or any other system—will find themselves objects of discipline as well. What we strive to underline here is that **God’s Word in Deuteronomy is still being fulfilled this very day!**

### ***The Woman’s Indescribable Pain in Labor: A Reminder That God’s Word is Settled in Heaven***

We don’t know with certainty the length of time since God pronounced His judgments on Adam and his wife Eve, but a study of the genealogies of the Bible indicates approximately 7,000 years. At the time, God’s judgment was swift:

To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children’ (Genesis 3:16).

My friend, can you show me a woman in all of human history who delivered a baby without experiencing pain? Even today, women who give birth using pain-numbing assistance, such as the epidural, still experience pain in their labor. Women who are put to sleep for a cesarean section experience tremendous pain upon waking and for weeks afterward. God keeps His Word!

## ***The Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ: A Reminder of God's Faithfulness to His Word***

Simultaneous to the pronouncement of judgment on Adam and Eve, the Lord announced the virgin birth of Jesus Christ:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel (Genesis 3:15).

Several thousand years passed without any sign of the fulfillment of this unique promise, which the Old Testament prophetically reiterated.

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold a virgin will be with a child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

One would think that God's promise through Isaiah was right around the corner, but approximately 700 years passed before God fulfilled it (Luke 2:6-7). God is always faithful, and His timing is impeccable.

### **Principles:**

- God is absolute righteousness, and in Him is no shred of unrighteousness.
- Faithfulness is a component of God's veracity. His holiness demands that He be ever truthful to His Word.
- Unfaithfulness in all its facets is a sin, and if God could be unfaithful, even once, He would no longer be the God of the Bible, and we might as well forget His promise to us of spending eternity with Him in heaven. What a relief to know that He is always faithful!
- A believer needs to be confident in God's faithfulness when he claims any promise in the Bible, such as:

Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be forsaken (Psalm 55:22).



Now, thus says the Lord, your Creator...And He who formed you..., ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they will not overflow [Hebrew *shataph*: wash off, swallow up, or drown] you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...’ (Isaiah 43:1-3).

- Consequently, we are not to panic or faint when God delays fulfilling His promises because He knows exactly what He is doing and the right time to do it.
- Be assured that God’s ultimate purpose for your life will be fulfilled in its totality.
- No spiritual believer can leave this world without first appropriating God’s purpose for his life:

For David, *after* he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep [died] and was laid [buried] among his fathers and underwent decay (Acts 13:36).

## ***Joseph Is Remembered***

With the above principles buried in our thinking, we can move forward to answer the question, did God respond in faithfulness when Joseph failed? We shall allow our doctrinal exposition to give us the answer.

Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him (Genesis 40:23).

We need to know the reason the cupbearer forgot to mention Joseph to Pharaoh. Was he suffering from amnesia or Alzheimer’s disease? Of course, he wasn’t. Rather, the time wasn’t right according to God’s timetable because Pharaoh had no dreams to offer Joseph and Joseph needed two more years of spiritual growth in the grace furnace of suffering. God needed to teach him perhaps the most difficult but important lesson—total RELIANCE, total TRUST in

God in every circumstance of life:

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water [of the Word of God], that extends its root by a stream, and will not fear when the heat [of Egyptian famine or today's economic recession] comes; and its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

O Lord of hosts, how blessed is the man who trusts in You!  
(Psalm 84:12).

Without question, total relaxation of soul and absolute confidence in God in all facets of life are the pillars of spiritual maturity.

Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream... (Genesis 41:1a).

Now it came about in the morning that his [Pharaoh's] spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for *all* the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men [with assurance that he would receive the interpretation]. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was *no one* who could interpret them to Pharaoh (Genesis 41:8). (emphasis added)

Coincidence? Oh, no! Everything in life is under God's control! God was working behind the scenes to help Joseph arrive at His appointed time. Yes, the perfect time!

Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, 'I would make mention today of my own offences...we [the chief baker and I] had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. Now a Hebrew youth [Joseph] was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. And it came about that just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he [Pharaoh] restored me in my office, but he hanged him' (Genesis 9:11-13).

I can hardly control my joy as the Holy Spirit illuminates my mind to behold the awesome glory of our able-God—the God of surprises! When we truly understand that God is in charge and is the Chief Choreographer of human history, we can jump for joy when suffering of any magnitude hits us right between our eyes! We can be assured that God has entered His workshop where HE WORKS ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. He works on our behalf customizing and compressing our suffering so that He can surprise us with His splendid finished product that will compel us to shout, “Wow! What a God we have!”

Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon [Hebrew: *bowr*: cistern]; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it’ (Genesis 41:14-15).

What an opportunity for Joseph to grab a little bit of God’s glory for himself! But did he?

Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘It is not in me; *God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer*’ (v. 16). (emphasis added)

Talk about humility! Joseph never lost focus of the fact that God was doing all the work in his life. He was thinking the same thoughts as the apostle Paul,

But by the grace of God I am what I am (1 Corinthians 15:10).

We want to ask, “Joseph, can we make your spiritual life our own?” Of course we can if we submerge ourselves in God’s Word under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit and apply its truth diligently to our lives. In fact, our spiritual life can be much greater than his because we can secure the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit through confessing all our sins to God the Father. Furthermore, we have the completed canon of Scripture to guide and uphold us. Joseph had neither of these incomparable blessings.

Pharaoh related his dream to Joseph and waited for the interpretation. Indeed, God staged the scene in order to fulfill His promise to undeserving Joseph.

Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same; *God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do*’ (Genesis 41:25). (emphasis added)

### **Principles:**

- God is in charge of human history. Our sufferings are not in charge nor are our circumstances. God alone is in charge.
- God controls all circumstances, and He uses every episode to accomplish His overall plan for our lives.
- No matter what devices Satan uses against us, God is ever-ready to cause a breathtaking result for our own good.
- We have absolutely no reason to fret or hit the panic button when the storms of life threaten to rock our boat.
- As long as we are heavenly minded, God will see to it that at the end of our suffering, we will have reason to look back and smile.



## *Joseph at the Pinnacle*

God enabled Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dream:

The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same. And the seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind shall be seven years of famine. It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance in all the land of Egypt; and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will ravage the land. So the abundance will be unknown because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe. Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means *that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.* (Genesis 41:26-32). (emphasis added)

Do you recognize what really happened here? First, God orchestrated a 14-year long program for Egypt, which consisted of seven years of prosperity and seven years of famine. Second, He caused Pharaoh to have a dreadful dream about His unique agenda. Third, He healed the chief cupbearer of his amnesia, which had caused him to forget to mention Joseph to Pharaoh as Joseph requested. Finally, God summoned Joseph, the spiritually prepared believer, to rise to the occasion, which he did with elegant humility and poise. God's sovereignty is underlined in the last part of verse 32. God determined the matter. God would bring it to pass. It's that simple!

Whenever you find yourself in a tough situation, quickly take inventory of your soul to see if you have deviated from making the perception and application of God's Word the highest priority on your scale of values. If, and only if, you are on course in the spiritual life through the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit and

the filling of the Word of God in your soul, you can cheer because God has prepared for you a glorious future. You might ask, “How much longer do I have to wait for graduation?” That’s a question no human can answer. Joseph was in the Egyptian School of Suffering for 13 years! Our solace is that just as our Father prepares us in grace so when He is finished, He will elevate us to a place of honor.

### ***Joseph’s Accurate Application of Knowledge***

As we study this segment, I want you to meditate on the life of Joseph and God’s faithfulness toward His promise to Joseph. Meditate on the enormous affliction that Joseph went through in the grace furnace of suffering, and above all, the consistency with which he utilized the arsenal of Bible doctrine in His soul to bring glory and honor to his heavenly Father. After all, Joseph’s life wasn’t about himself, but about God and the maximum glorification of God:

Now in a large house [God’s house] there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself [volitional responsibility] from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, [guaranteed!] sanctified [set apart], useful to the Master [God], prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

We know that spiritual wisdom is the accurate application of biblical knowledge. Joseph’s wise advice to Pharaoh stemmed from the reservoir of God’s Word in his soul.

Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh’s authority, and let them guard it. And let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish during the famine (Genesis 41:33-36).

Egypt, a prosperous nation about to face an unprecedented famine, needed an economic genius to face the challenge. Joseph was the man of the hour! Through the armory of spiritual truth in his soul and grace orientation gained through suffering, he had acquired the right ingredients for good leadership. No wonder the Psalmist commented:

Your commandments [the whole realm of doctrine] make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged because I have observed Your precepts (Psalm 119:98-100).

In explaining the dreams, Joseph gave Pharaoh only a scrap of the colossal wisdom he had acquired throughout his life's experiences. This peek into Joseph's soul caused Pharaoh's jaw to drop in amazement! He couldn't think of any man more qualified than the young Hebrew slave. God's timing is always perfect.

Then Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this [Joseph] in whom is a divine spirit?' So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.' And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' (Genesis 41:38-41).

Does the word 'homage' remind you of Joseph's earlier dreams? It should. God caused Joseph to become Prime Minister at this moment because Joseph was thoroughly prepared. God is a God of "right timing." He never hurries. The sooner you have a handle on this phenomenal truth, the better able you will be to wait on God in all circumstances. His grace policy demands that He allot you and me ample time to develop spiritual capacity through varying degrees of suffering. Isaiah the prophet, wrote,

Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who [have grown spiritually and developed spiritual muscles—who] long for Him (Isaiah 30:18).



God waited for Joseph to gain the divine perspective about life before He promoted him. He waited for him to graduate from the ‘College of Suffering’. The same is true for every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s justice demands that He bless the ‘vessels of honor,’ but calamity on top of calamity is necessary to develop spiritual capacity for those blessings. For you to become a gold-standard believer, you must graduate from the ‘College of Suffering’ with honors. God in His infinite grace has made every provision for you to be successful in your spiritual testing. Your responsibility is to accurately use those provisions, especially the filling of the Holy Spirit and the entire realm of doctrine.

### ***The Blessings of Suffering***

Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put the gold necklace around his neck. And he had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, ‘Bow the knee!’ And he set him over all the land of Egypt. It must have been an awesome scene to watch, as the grace-made Prime Minister rode around the nation! Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.’ (Genesis 41:42-44).

Truly, when God’s grace pursues and overtakes you, the world will stand still and watch in awe. Joseph, a foreign slave, reached the very pinnacle of political power in one of the mightiest nations the world has ever known. He received this exalted position through no merit on his part, thus highlighting and punctuating *the principles of God’s remarkable grace program!*

#### **Principles:**

- God in His sovereignty controls the course of human history. Simply put, He is the Lord of history. Nothing happens without His knowledge and permission. God’s authentic signature is on every package of suffering, which He tailor-makes to equip us to face the devil’s world in all its ugliness and evil. God’s power and authority convert the believer’s suffering into a terrific outcome both in time and for eternity.

- What you and I view as suffering is in fact a dynamic tool in God’s almighty hands. He is ever poised to display marvelous results to both the world of homo sapiens and the angelic realm. God’s plan for every obedient believer who is advancing in His plan will inevitably be fulfilled much to Satan’s frustration. A believer who has saturated his soul with God’s Word and whose daily decisions are marked with divine viewpoint will always find himself at the right place at the right time because God in His logistical grace insures that He directs such a believer’s steps. (Psalm 32:8). What solace to know that if your spiritual eyes are 20/20, wherever you find yourself in this life is exactly where God wants you to be until He directs otherwise! (Psalm 48:14).

If your spiritual eyes have the blurred vision of unconfessed sin, you will end up where God doesn’t want you to be, and He will frustrate your human agenda through divine discipline. “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6) until your spiritual eyes are clear and focused by using 1 John 1:9 and then learning and applying divine truth to every situation:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Whenever we find ourselves in uncomfortable circumstances, the following questions apply:

1. *What is the condition of my spiritual life?* If your spiritual life is in limbo, jump-starting it in a hurry should be your utmost priority. You can do so only if you acknowledge your sins to God the Father and make learning His Word your daily priority and lifetime goal.
2. *Am I the beneficiary of God’s promise that “...whatever a man sows, this he will also reap?”* (Galatians 6:7b). It is certain that whenever we sin, we surely reap the consequences at harvest time. For instance, an incorrigible child who disrespects his parents will some day in some way and somehow be confronted with God’s justice. The Bible is crystal clear about this despicable sin:

He who curses his father or his mother, his lamp will go out in time of darkness” (Proverbs 20:20).

This explains the suffering of so many teenagers. If you think you are under discipline, identify and isolate those sins that brought judgment against you, acknowledge them to God (1 John 1:9), forget them, “and press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14). The suffering may linger a little longer, but God will change it into an advantage for you.

It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes (Psalm 119:71).

3. *Do I have an arsenal of biblical promises and principles stored in my soul to deal with my suffering?* If not, you immediately should start learning and applying sound Bible teaching to every facet of your life. Learn to think God’s thoughts continually.
4. *If, and only if, I am the object of suffering for blessing, how am I doing in my spiritual examinations?* If your spiritual life is in order and you have enough inventory of Bible doctrine in your soul, then God has positioned you to be the object of suffering for super-abundant blessing. You will pass His tests only if you apply His Word accurately and consistently to both the disastrous and inconsequential problems of your life.

### ***The Birth of Manasseh and Ephraim: More Grace Blessing***

God extended more grace to Joseph when He gave him two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore to him. Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, ‘For [he said] God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.’ He named the second Ephraim, For [he said] ‘God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction’ (Genesis 41:51, 52).

Joseph's understanding of God's grace never ceases to amaze me. What a believer! When he took inventory of his suffering and promotion, he didn't hesitate for a second to give credit to God who did all the work. Joseph was always in touch with the Source of his blessings (Genesis 40:8; 41:16).

Therein lies the humble soul of a grace believer. Grace-orientation is totally mental attitude. Joseph's grace thinking reached its climax as he named his second son, Ephraim, which means, 'God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.' Again, who says that God can't convert your suffering into something fantastic? God is the expert in rescuing His children from their dilemmas and elevating them out from the midst of their suffering.

### ***Worldwide Famine in Joseph's Day***

And the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do. When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth (Genesis 41:54-57).

God had prepared Joseph, the man of the hour, to deal with the enormous pressures brought on by years of famine. Because of his own intense suffering, he had the capacity to handle the intensified suffering of the nation. Several centuries later, King Solomon wrote,

If you are slack in the day of distress [or adversity], your [spiritual] strength is limited (Proverbs 24:10).

Joseph had a soul filled with spiritual truth; he had absolute confidence in Yahweh; he was calm because he locked his trust onto the Lord of history. This is the epitome of spiritual life.

I have said it before, but it bears repeating: There's no such thing

as an accident in the plan of God. God is Omniscient and knows every detail of the past, present, and future. He uses ‘the wrath of man to accomplish His overall plan’ as exemplified in Joseph’s situation when God brought good out of Joseph’s enslavement. Now, God was prepared to use a famine and economic disaster to bring to fruition His promise to Abraham:

God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years’ (Genesis 15:13).

We have studied God’s faithfulness to His Word, and here we are face-to-face with this same truth, that God keeps His Word no matter what. We should be comforted knowing that time is inconsequential to the fulfillment of God’s Word.

For a thousand years in Your sight are like a day when it passes by or as a watch in the night (Psalm 90:4).

Decades passed before God’s Word to Abraham came to maturation. God used the worldwide famine in Joseph’s day to relocate the Israelites to Egypt, which set the stage for their God foretold enslavement. God uses every circumstance, good or bad, to accomplish His divine plan. What does that mean to us? We should never try to predict our future based on our present circumstances. Rather, we should believe God’s Word and anchor our trust on the pillar of His faithfulness in keeping His Word.

## ***Joseph, A Pillar of Grace***

Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why are you staring at one another?’ He said, ‘Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.’ Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, I am afraid that harm may befall him. So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. Now Joseph was the ruler [actually the Prime Minister] over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land... (Genesis 42:1-6a).

Are you ready for a treat? Then read the next sentence:

And Joseph’s brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground (v. 6b).

Twenty-two years after Joseph’s dreams, God brought them to fulfillment when his brothers finally bowed to him. God hadn’t forgotten Joseph or his dreams! He was preparing Joseph with capacity to receive the homage of his brothers without becoming arrogant or thinking he deserved it!

So, my dear friend, God has not forgotten you. At this very moment, He is preparing you for a brighter future! No human being, no circumstance, no amount of propaganda or hatred toward you can put a dent in God’s plan for your life. Nothing! Not a chance!!

### ***Joseph’s Grace-Oriented***

We have the awesome privilege of a last peek into Joseph’s soul, seeing a man of grace as he showered his callous, ruthless, and devious brothers with GRACE from his own mental attitude.

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, ‘Have everyone go out from me.’ So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it. Then Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph! Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence (Genesis 45:1-3).

Joseph’s brothers were stunned. They couldn’t believe his words. The brothers must have been thinking: ‘We’re toast—we’re dead meat—our lives are over!’ Instead, they received the grace of a man who honored God.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Please come closer to me.’ And they came closer. And he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God [who works behind the scenes] sent me before you to preserve life.’ (Genesis 45:4-5).

God measures the quality of your spiritual life by your consistent application of His Word to every situation in life. He measures you in no other way! You can have a room full of Bibles and doctrinal notebooks, but if you haven’t transferred these doctrines into your soul and applied them to your thinking, moment by moment, then your spiritual life isn’t functioning. Can you take an inventory of your suffering and confidently say:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to them that love God, to those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

As a believer who is advancing in God’s plan, can you look at your dilemma and tell yourself that God is working to bless you at this very moment? Can you rejoice in the midst of horrendous suffering? Joseph assured his brothers a second time saying,

But God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth and to keep you alive by a great deliverance (Genesis 45:7).

What a grace man! In order to further calm their panic-stricken hearts, he repeated his reassurance:

Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt (v. 8).

And we have this beautiful account in Psalm 105:16-22:

And He called for a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread.

He sent a man before them, Joseph, [who] was sold as a slave.

They afflicted his feet with fetters, He himself was laid in irons;

Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the LORD tested him.

The king sent and released him, The ruler of peoples, and set him free.

He made him lord of his house And ruler over all his possessions,

To imprison his princes at will, That he might teach his elders wisdom.

### ***Joseph's Grace Response to a Guilt Reaction***

Guilt is a terrible sin, which drains the vitality of the soul of the believer, turning him into a loser in spiritual warfare. We must deal with guilt as we do all sin, by acknowledging it as a sin to God the Father (1 John 1:9).

A believer who operates on guilt makes no spiritual progress; therefore, he should identify and isolate his sins, no matter how simple or heinous, name them to God, and “..Press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). No sin is too great for the matchless grace of



God! Apparently, Joseph’s siblings lived a lifestyle of guilt because years later,

When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!’ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father charged before he died, saying, “Thus you shall say to Joseph, ‘Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did wrong.’” And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him (Genesis 50:15-17).

No question about it, guilt blurs our spiritual vision, making it difficult to see God’s mercy and grace in action as He forgives our sins and “remembers them no more.” These brothers didn’t realize that Joseph had forgiven them long before they came to Egypt. Why shouldn’t he, since he realized that forgiveness wasn’t about his brothers but about God and His glorification. The brothers were so self-centered they couldn’t recognize that Joseph was a mature believer and that they did not need to fabricate a lie by telling Joseph something their father never said.

You would think that the brothers’ mental attitudes would have changed by now, but they hadn’t. Why not? Because they were not making any spiritual progress! They weren’t studying divine truths or applying them to their circumstances.

But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for...*you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.* So, therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Genesis 50:19-21). (emphasis added)

Joseph, the man of God, had another opportunity to reveal the doctrinal content of his soul to his siblings and the rest of the world. He didn’t try to get even with his evil brothers. Instead, he gave them something they didn’t deserve: Grace in abundance.

You and I should do likewise to anyone who has wronged us or is unworthy of inheritance (divine rewards) in our Father's Kingdom. But remember, we can't give what we don't have. Similarly, if we haven't developed a mental attitude of grace through learning and using doctrine, we will never orient to grace.

### ***Joseph's Celebratory Exit to Glory***

Precious [how awesome, how marvelous] in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones (Psalm 116:15).

If any occasion deserves a display of fireworks, it's the glorious exit of a spiritual believer. The apostle Paul expressed it beautifully:

...Absent from the body and to be at home (face-to-face) with the Lord (II Corinthians 5:8).

O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?...but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:55,57).

What glorious hope! The believer is entered into a place where:

...[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

As Joseph looked forward to his exit from this world, his confidence in God's promise reached its pinnacle. And so we read his last words:

I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob....God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here.

So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt (Genesis 50:24-26).

Joseph so believed the promise of God to Abraham about the promised land that he had his body embalmed. While the Jews were in captivity, Joseph's coffin stood as a monument to God's faithfulness to Joseph and to all who trust in Him. Four hundred years later, the coffin went with the Jews through the wilderness to the promised land where they buried it with honor. Joseph trusted God in all things, and as always God was faithful to honor that trust.

## Chapter Eleven

---

### *Final Thoughts*

As we conclude this mind-stimulating account of grace in the life of Joseph, we consider it of paramount importance to insert the scholastic work of Willmington,<sup>10</sup> who portrayed Joseph as a *foreshadow of the Savior Jesus Christ*.

Both were beloved by their fathers. [Joseph: Genesis 37:3] {Jesus: Mt. 3:17}

Both regarded themselves as shepherds. [Genesis 37:2] {Jn. 10:11-14}

Both were around 30 at the beginning of their ministries. [41:46] {Lk. 3:23}

Both were sent by their fathers to their brethren. [37:13-14] {Lk. 10:13; Heb. 2:12}

Both were hated by their brethren without cause. [37:4-5, 8] {Jn. 1:11; 7:5, 15}

Both were plotted against by their brethren. [37:20] {Jn 11:53}

Both were severely tempted. [39:7] {Mt. 4:1}

Both were taken to Egypt. [37:25] {Mt. 2:14-15}

Both were stripped of their robes. [37:23] {Jn. 19:23-24}

Both were sold for the price of a slave. [37:28] {Mt. 26:15}

Both were bound. [39:20] {Mt 27:2}

Both were falsely accused. [39:16-18] {Mt. 26:59-60}

Both remained silent and offered no defense. [39:20] {Is. 53:7}

Both experienced God's presence through everything. [39:2, 21, 23] {Jn. 16:32}

Both were respected by their jailors. [39:21] {Lk. 23:47}

Both were placed with two prisoners: One later lost, the other saved. [40:2-3] {Lk. 23:32}

Both were highly exalted after their sufferings. [41:41] {Phl. 2:9-11}

Both took non-Jewish brides. [41:45] {Eph. 3:1-12}

---

<sup>10</sup> Dr. H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Guide to the Bible* (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.)

Both were lost to their brethren for a while. [42:7-8] {Rom. 10:1-3; 11:7-8}

Both forgave and restored their repentant brothers. [45:1-15] {Zech. 12:10-12}

Both were visited and honored by all earthly nations. [41:57] {Isa. 2:2-3; 49:6}

What a foreshadow Joseph portrayed! What an honor God bestowed on him, a man who didn't deserve any of his blessings! Through God's Word, his spiritual legacy is still fresh to all believers in every generation.

As we conclude, you should ask yourself these important questions:

1) *Am I a grace-oriented believer?* Here's what the apostle Paul, a grace believer, said having confidence in God's word and maintaining loyalty to truth:

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:11-13).

2) *Are the teachings of the Bible more real to me than the circumstances I face?* The answer can be found in the grace furnace of suffering that our biblical heroes faced. Just as our Lord was with Joseph in the pit, during his slavery, and all the way to the pinnacle; and as He was right in the flames with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the same way He will BE WITH YOU!

*...Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods! (Daniel 3:25)*

*...Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! (Heb 13:8)*

The challenge is for all of us to be able to say with Paul,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing [confidence in God’s promises] (2 Tim 4:7,8).

It all depends upon a daily priority and a lifetime goal of learning the truths of the Bible and applying them to the demands of life.

It’s my prayer that the content of this book will keep challenging you as you travel through a decaying world and press on toward the goal for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. May an understanding of God’s grace serve as your source of spiritual strength and encouragement as you surf through the grace-furnace of suffering. May the application of God’s truth result in a superabundance of blessings for you today, tomorrow, and throughout eternity.

May ‘the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.’

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21).

We invite you to read *Grace News Today*, our bi-monthly newsletter that contains sections on expository Bible teaching, updates on our ministry and information about our FREE publications.



# Grace News Today

An Outreach of Grace Evangelistic Ministries, Inc.

May 2011 - June 2011  
Volume 56

## “Faith Alone in Christ Alone”

**B**ELOVED OF GOD, Greetings from your missionary partners here at Grace Evangelistic Ministries! We make the apostle Paul’s words our own: *[We] thank [our] God in all [our] remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in [our] every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For [we are] confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 1:3-6). **“Rejoice in the Lord always; again, [We] will say rejoice!”** (Philippians 4:4).

What a challenge the Philippian Christians are to us even today! There’s no question in my mind that if there was such a thing as a perfect church in the apostolic era, the Philippian church would certainly have qualified for that distinction. When the apostle Paul contemplated his missionary work, he addressed them as his “*joy and crown*” (Philippians 4:1). They loved the apostle Paul dearly. They made sure that the same truth that had enriched their own lives was available to others. Of these, the apostle testified,

*Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).*

They understood the need to reach out to others. Beloved, on the same note I unapologetically express to you my profound gratitude. You have stood with us to ensure that the gospel of grace, that has brought salvation to you, reaches others. Testimonies are pouring in from around the world. God alone is using us and materials from this ministry, *Riding the Death Train* (our gospel pamphlet) and other publications, to bring many into His Kingdom. We are pleased to share some of these testimonies with those in our e-mail café. You can receive these reports, and also our road reports. Simply request that we include

you on our e-mail café by e-mailing us at [news@GEMworldwide.org](mailto:news@GEMworldwide.org)

We greatly rejoice in what the Lord is accomplishing through you and G.E.M. as we take the good news to those in bondage, one person, one family, and one nation at a time. Many are embracing sound Bible teaching. We close our letter to you, by sharing this e-mail from the President of a Biblical Institute in Congo:

*“True. I have been trying to meditate and find words good enough to express my appreciation for the ministry. But I failed. However, I want to say A BIG THANK YOU FOR YOUR MINISTRY AMONG us here in Bukavu (Congo). In fact, you would not realize how much we have been blessed and brought back to the real foundation of Christianity. The church needs such teaching in order to face the actual situation. This is what I would call revival—going back to the Bible. Apart from teaching and your material at the Bukavu Bible Institute, we are arranging to hold a seminar down the country...to pass on what we have received from God through your ministry.... Grace to you all.”* Rev. Malanda

Please stand with us in prayer!  
Every blessing to you!

*Moses C. Onwubiko*

Moses C. Onwubiko & GEM Team

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Greetings from G.E.M. ....	1
Words of Encouragement ....	2
Doctrine of Grace ....	3
Missionary Reports ....	7
Upcoming Trips ....	9
Letters to G.E.M. ....	10
Please Join Us in Prayer ....	11
G.E.M. Overview ....	11
Contact Us ....	12
Publications Available ....	12

Order your copy today at [www.GEMworldwide.org](http://www.GEMworldwide.org)

**Moses C. Onwubiko** is President and Founder of Grace Evangelistic Ministries, which was established in 1997 as a Bible teaching missionary organization with a main focus on evangelism. Our first priority is to take the grace gospel of "faith alone in Christ alone" to a lost and dying world. Moses has proclaimed the gospel in several countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe and continues to travel anywhere God opens a door.



Photo by: Frank Cricchio

"For by the grace of God, I am what I am"  
(1 Corinthians 15:10a).

By the same token of grace, I will  
accomplish that which the almighty God  
intends for me to accomplish.  
-the author

#### Financial Policy

Grace Evangelistic Ministries does not solicit funding. We believe that God in His grace will continue to meet our financial needs as they arise.

We do not charge for books or audio tapes. No money is requested. When gratitude for the Word of God and understanding of the need to reach unsaved souls with the simple grace gospel and sound Bible teaching motivate you to contribute, you have the privilege of giving and sharing in the dissemination of the Word of God. This is a grace ministry.

**Grace Evangelistic Ministries**  
P.O. Box 17246, Nashville, Tennessee 37217  
[www.GraceMissions.org](http://www.GraceMissions.org)