***Joseph

RV123-01***

We are studying the fifth seal in Revelation 6:9-11. This is segment number four.

**God**

If there is indeed a living, sovereign Creator God, certain conclusions are inevitable from that fact. We must then conclude that this kind of a god has the right to set and to enforce moral standards, and to apply punishments when they are broken, so that one indeed reaps what he sows. If He is the Creator God, He lays down the ground rules. If He is living and sovereign, He can enforce the ground rules that He establishes. We must further conclude that He has the authority, as such a God, if He exists, to decide the principles on which organized societies are to function, and the consequences for violations of God's laws. There is no such thing as doing things in the ways of fallen man.

More and more, I get the feeling today that we must be living in conditions very similar to what it was before the floods, where man was running around, in his arrogance; doing his own thing, according to his fallen nature; scoffing at the one sound of voice of truth that Noah was trying to proclaim; making fun of him; dismissing him as a kook; and, man arrogantly moving ahead and planning his future and society.

But the Word of God says, "You can't do that." If you listen to the political campaigns today, or if you listen to the various vested interests, you shake your head and say, "This is the way it must have been just before the flood when God, in one blow, demonstrated that He is a living, sovereign Creator God, and that He does lay the ground rules and enforces them. We must also conclude that if such a God does exist, that He determines the basis upon which one qualifies for eternal life in heaven or eternal death in hell, and that there are no optional plans of human design permitted.

To escape any of these conclusions, we have to dismiss the existence of a living, sovereign Creator God, and substitute some concept of a God in the form of an impersonal force. So, today you must decide that what you think about God has inevitable conclusions that you cannot escape.

Furthermore, if God is holy, certain facts then becomes self-evident. It is self-evident that if God is a holy person, no unforgiven sinner can spend eternity in His presence. A person must be regenerated spiritually, and he must be justified. He must have his sins not only paid for, but he must have imputed to him the righteousness of God so that he can be declared justified. If God is holy, no sinner without justification can enter heaven.

Furthermore, we must observe that it is self-evident that, since God is immutable, He will never compromise His Holiness (His integrity) with evil. Thus, He will never fail to punish evil. It is inevitable that we face that fact. If He is holy, He will not compromise with evil, and He will not fail to punish it.

Furthermore, we must observe that it is self-evident that God can be trusted to keep His promises to execute His warnings, because He is a God of truth.

In order to escape these facts, we have to change God into some kind of a compromising, evil person who just ignore sin, like grandparents who are prone to overlook the evil actions of their grandchildren because they are so sweet, and so small, and so young. So, instead of dealing with misbehavior, and instead of dealing with the breaking of the rules, they overlook it. That's the kind of a god you have to come up with. You must decide what kind of a God you find in the Bible: one who is holy; or, one who is compromising with His Holiness?

**The Bible**

Furthermore, if the Bible is indeed the revelation of information from God to man, certain things must inevitably follow. First, it must follow that the Bible is without error. If this is God's communication to us, and God is truth, and God is omnipotent, then the Bible has to be without error. And it is utter nonsense to discuss (to even suggest) that the Bible could have mistakes in it. If it does, then you've got a God who is different from the God that is in the Bible.

Furthermore, we must realize that it is necessary that the Bible be understandable in what it demands of man and what it reveals about God's ways, and that nothing is going to be left to human reason to make the determination. If God is speaking to us in a book without error, it must also be a book that we can understand. Of course, that is challenged very much today.

**Accountability**

Furthermore, we must observe that man will be held accountable for the information given in the Bible, whether he knows it or not. That's true of you personally, and that's true of us as a nation. It doesn't matter whether a person doesn't know something that the Bible says. If he breaks the moral code, even if he doesn't know what the Bible says about those things, it is so structured in the universe such that he will bear the consequences of violating that particular concept.

Therefore, it is self-evident that knowing God's Word is a daily necessity for successful living. The alternative is to try to live according to the human viewpoint of the world.

To escape these things, you must view the Bible as a book which contains error; which was simply written by religious men; and, which has no clear interpretation by which to guide us. There are indeed, on these three points, people in our society who take exactly that position – that there is not a living, sovereign Creator God. There is just a force out there, and a force that resides within all of us – an impersonal deity of which we are all apart. They think that there is not a holy God who separates between what is right and what is wrong, and that He acts upon it. They also think that there is indeed no revelation, and that there is no way for us to know what God wants. Therefore, we cannot look in our society and say, "This is wrong, and this is right." We cannot look at a vested interest group and say, "What you want is OK with the Bible," or "What you want is condemned by the Word of God."

**Martyrs**

If we dismiss these, then we have the setting for the antichrist's world, because the antichrist is going to operate on these three delusions about God; about sin; and, about the Bible. Anyone who refuses to accept these falsehoods during the tribulation period will be hated and attacked. Many believers in these truths will be killed as martyrs for Jesus Christ.

As we have seen, John sees such believers in heaven who have been murdered because of their testimony concerning the fact that God is holy; concerning the fact that God will not compromise that holiness; and, concerning the fact that God will deal with man according to the revelation that He has in Scripture. That, in the antichrist world, is going to be received with great contempt and hatred. Worst of all, these people will be hated for their godly lifestyle.

John then hears these martyrs in heaven calling out to God the Father to avenge their deaths. As we have seen, they ask God how long it will be before he is going to bring judgment upon their persecutors. They are born-again people; they are in heaven; they have been made fools of; they have been treated as garbage; and, they are in agony over the fact that they were right; the world was wrong; the world has taken their lives; and, the world is still going on. So, in almost frustration, they're saying, "God, how long before you're going to bring upon these people the vengeance that they deserve?

They address the Father as Sovereign Lord, as the despot of the universe, and as the one who is holy and genuine, meaning that He's the real God. They express their frustration in that plaintive cry: "How long, O, Lord?" That cry has been echoed through the ages by many a suffering saints. We may reassure ourselves that with God, things are not just muddling along out of control. Our God is indeed the despot, the sovereign Lord of the universe, and He's firmly in command. What individuals and nations seem to be getting away with in the face of God and in the face of Scripture is merely a delusion. God has a time schedule, and His vengeance on evildoers is certain. But indeed, there are times in our lives when we wonder, "How long, O, God, are you going to let them get away with it?" How long before God brings down his judgment as per His own integrity?

The guiding principle is to maintain confidence in the Bible, and trust in God to execute justice in our behalf, no matter what is happening to us, and no matter how unfair it may seem.

**Biblical Examples of Suffering Saints**

As we turn to the Word of God, there are many biblical examples of suffering saints. They were people who have wondered how long evil would triumph, and who trusted God's promises and obeyed His Word without compromise in the midst of great personal devastation. These are heroes of faith to encourage us as well as the tribulation believers.

**Joseph**

We now we turn to one great hero, first of all, the hero, Joseph, son of Jacob. Please turn to Genesis 37. This is a splendid example of a person who does right, and he gets clobbered for it; a person who does right, and he gets cut down; and, a person who does right, and he suffers for it. Everybody else is moving along, and things are coming up roses for them, but it's all misery for him. Sometimes you may wonder to yourself, "Is it all worth it? Why am I doing this? Why don't I just compromise a little, and play ball with the other side?" If there ever was such a person, it was Joseph, the son of Jacob.

Joseph, as a 17-year-old boy, was obedient, respectful, and honest with his father, Jacob. Genesis. 37:2 says, "These are the generation of Jacob: Joseph, being 17 years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren. The lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought under his father their evil report."

I've just been dealing with junior counselors in summer camp who are in this bracket of 17-year-old boys. You can have a variety of 17-year-old type of boys. Some are very much like Joseph. They are respectful; they are responsible; they're honest with you; and, they have an integrity. You can also have the type that you have to stay on top of; they don't do what they're supposed to; and, you're not really sure you can trust them. One is a joy to have, and the other is a chore to have. In the case of Joseph, he was a 17-year-old who was a joy to his father. A 17-year-old is moving into the potentials of his young manhood. There are a lot of things he doesn't know; he hasn't had experience; he needs information; he's dependent for guidance upon people he can trust; and, he makes decisions concerning his personal loyalties and his personal character qualities.

Joseph was obviously a joy to his father. He was indeed the child of Joseph's old age. He only had one other boy younger than Joseph: Benjamin. And these two were very special to him, particularly Joseph. It was because he could trust him. So, while he wasn't being ugly toward his brothers, when his father sent him out and said, "I want you to check how your brothers are doing in their work out in the field with their flocks," the boy came back and he was honest with his father and he said, "These are the things my brothers are doing that aren't so good." He reported honestly what was going on. For this, indeed Jacob loved the boy.

Joseph's godly attitudes made him special to his elderly father, who then treated the boy with such favor that it resulted in a hatred of his older brothers. In Genesis 37:3-4, we read, "Now, Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors (or a coat that was ornamented in a variety of ways). And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." The brothers did not have enough spiritual maturity to understand the attachments of this old man for his 17-year-old son, Joseph. Instead, they hated the boy. Joseph added fueled to their hatred by telling them (in his open innocence as an honest teenager) his dreams. The boy had dreams that God gave him because God spoke to people in that time through dreams. And God indicated through dreams that Joseph was ordained one day to be an authority over his parents and his brothers.

Joseph innocently came to them, as you can read in Genesis 37:5-10, and he told of his dreams. He told his brothers, "We were all out in the field, and we were gathering sheaves of grain, and suddenly your sheaves all bow down to mine." He tells his father that he's had a dream that the sun and the moon and 11 stars all bow down to his star. So, even Jacob said, "Are you saying that's your mother and I are going to be subject to your authority?" And the boy is just open; innocent; and, just transparent. He was not trying to be proud, and not trying to dominate – just telling what has happened. For that, he gets clobbered.

Well, the hatred toward Joseph leads his brothers to sell him into slavery in Egypt. They actually wanted to murder him. Genesis 37:19 indicates this to us: "They said one to another, 'Behold, this dreamer comes.'" They have contempt for their younger brother. Verse 26 says, "And Judah said unto his brothers, "What profit is it if we slay brother and conceal his blood?" So, they were actually discussing the fact of killing him. His older brother Reuben was trying to keep the other brothers from doing that, and suggested they throw him into a cistern that didn't have any water in it, hoping to come back later to release him.

However, the whole point is you that have to put yourself in the family of a group of brothers. One is a mere 17-year-old teenager, and the older ones are sitting around planning how they're going to kill him. These were really gross, ungodly men. And for what reason? What has this boy done? This was Joseph's first contact with being treated unfairly with injustice. He had done nothing deserving of that kind of an extreme treatment.

Well, they thought better of murdering him. So, they sold him to a group of Ishmaelites who were traveling to Egypt. They sold him into slavery. Then they lied to their father Jacob about Joseph's disappearance, suggesting that a wild animal had killed him. In Genesis 37:31-33, we read about Jacob's agony over the thought that this boy, who was so precious to him – this blossoming 17-year-old, suddenly, has had his life snuffed out by being attacked by a wild animal.

The brothers themselves had to be terribly cruel to be treating their father in this way – to be putting the old man through such agonies. Jacob, the Scriptures tell us, wept, and he just would not be comforted over the loss of this boy. Indeed, here one can hear the plaintiff cry, "How long, O, Lord? How long are these sons going to get away with that kind of brutality?

Joseph was taken to Egypt, and he is sold to Potiphar, who is an officer in the Pharaoh's military staff. Joseph very soon demonstrated that, in spite of what was done to him, he was not bitter. He did not say, "Well, from now on, I'm going to live like the devil." Instead, Joseph said, "I don't know, God, why this is happening. This is unjust. This isn't fair. I don't deserve this. But I know that you are a God of justice. I know Your Word. My father has taught me. I'm going to stick with the Word of God.

So, very quickly, he becomes the chief steward in the home of Potiphar, to the extent that he is in control of all the possessions, and Potiphar doesn't even pay any attention to anything that's being done. He puts it all into Joseph's hands.

Genesis 39:1-6 tell us about that: "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him out of the hands of the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man, and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. The master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord had made all he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him, and he made him an overseer over his house, and all that he had, he put into his hand. It came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake. And the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in his house and in the fields. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hands, and he knew not anything that he had, save the food which he did eat. And Joseph was a handsome person and well-favored."

**Prosperity**

Here you have the principle again that the ungodly (those who are something less than what God calls upon us to be), if they are associated with a godly person, come into a position of prosperity. How often our children prosper because of godly parents. The kids are bums, and don't deserve it, but God's blessing graces over to them. Here is an unbeliever, Potiphar, who recognizes that there is something special and trustworthy about this boy who is acting upon godly principles, and he quickly puts him into command of his household. Joseph now has suffered the loss of his freedom, but he doesn't compromise and turn against God. He maintains the Bible doctrine principles which his father Jacob had taught him – now so far away from home.

That's tough going for a 17-year-old to have to face. The pagan Potiphar was prospered simply because of his association with a born-again godly Joseph. He was a trustworthy slave. He deserved really good treatment. At first, that appeared to be what he was getting.

**Potiphar's Wife**

However, Genesis 39:6-20, we discover that Potiphar's wife, a liberated woman, cast her eye upon Joseph, who was a physically handsome young man, and sought to engage him in sexual immorality. He becomes the object of her lust. And Joseph gives that tremendous response to her propositioning him. In Genesis 39:9, Joseph says to her, "There is none greater in this house than I. Neither have he (that is, her husband) kept back anything from me but you because you are his wife. How then can I do this wickedness and sin against God?"

This honorable boy (18 years old now) says, "Look at the way I have been treated. Oh, I'm a slave, and I'm a slave unjustly. I am suffering the consequences of my brutal brothers. But I have been treated with kindness by Potiphar. I have been treated with fairness by him. He has honored my integrity. Now you want me to dishonor myself, and to compromise my honor by doing this kind of wickedness to him? Furthermore, how can I sin against God?" And here you again have that principle that all sin is against God.

If Joseph had gone along with this, that would have been sin against Potiphar's wife; sin against Potiphar; and, sin against any number of people surrounding them, but with the Word of God, the sin is always against God. That's why our confession is to God. That's where the correction has to be made.

So, Joseph reveals the real quality of character. As Potiphar's wife points out, she is determined. She is one of these liberated type who is going to persist. We are told in the Word here that she persisted, day-after-day, propositioning and tempting him. But Joseph remains true to God's divine viewpoint standards.

Now, what is he worthy of? He is worthy of commendation? He is worthy of reward for that kind of faithfulness. But one day, Potiphar's wife makes one last pitch, and Joseph uses the principles of James 4:7 in order to protect himself as she grabs him and says, "Nobody's around. We can have a wild time. Let's go. Why do you hesitate?" And the Scriptures tell us that Joseph got up and ran away from her. As she reaches out and grabs him, she grabs his cloak, and he just leaves it behind. In James 4:7, this principle is enunciated for us in dealing with temptations to evil, where James writes, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." And, of course, you should understand that you cannot submit yourself to God unless you know what to submit yourself to.

This is the problem that we have in fundamentalist circles. There's all this call about submitting yourself to God; being faithful to God; and, following God, but the poor idiots out there in the congregation don't know how to follow God because they don't know where God is leading. They don't have the foggiest notion of what God is saying: "This is what I want you to do. This is what I do not want you to do." You cannot follow God unless you understand the principles of doctrine. But Joseph knew them. He had been taught.

So, James says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And when Joseph resisted the devil by fleeing from Potiphar's wife, at the same time, Satan was forced to flee from him.

**Joseph is Imprisoned**

Well, a woman scorned is a very tempestuous potential hazard to the one who is scorned. This woman's scorned retaliated by accusing Joseph of making advances toward her, and accusing Joseph of doing everything what she was trying to do. When Potiphar heard this, he was enraged, and cast Joseph into the king's prison.

Again, I can hear the plaintive cry from Joseph: "O, Lord, how long?" Here again he had done his best. He showed absolute integrity all the way down the line to honoring this man's marriage, and what happens? He gets thrown into prison because Potter does not say, "Let me check the facts. Potiphar does not look at this boy and say, "I've had nothing but integrity and honesty from you. This does not fit the pattern of what you have done. You have established a pattern of performance. You have proven yourself trustworthy. I have to get some more facts about this." But being a pagan, he didn't follow divine viewpoint thinking.

So, in Genesis 39:19, we read, "And it came to pass when his master heard the words of his wife which she spoke unto him saying, 'After this manner, your servant did this to me,' and his wrath was kindled, and Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound, and he was there in prison."

So, now he's been taken by his brothers. He was a clean-cut 17-year-old; unassuming; unpretentious; totally innocent; totally open; and, for expressing what was happening in his personal life and the dreams and so on, he was sold into slavery. He reestablishes himself according to the integrity of God's Word, and again, the result is that he gets thrown into prison where his freedom is even more restricted. The greatest punishment to any human being is to have your freedom taken away from you. Unfortunately, most people in our country don't understand that because they've never had their freedom taken away. When it happens, then the picture will be very clear.

Well, Joseph decided to follow his same pattern. He knew what God has said; he was now in prison; he was going to act according to those principles; and, he became a model prisoner. So, very quickly, in prison, Joseph's divine viewpoint attitudes again caused him to be graced out by God. Notices Genesis 39:21: "But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper (the warden) of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison. And whatever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison did not look to anything that was under his hand because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made to prosper."

So, here Joseph finds himself in prison in the same position that he was in Potiphar's household. Now the warden goes fishing, and leaves the prison to Joseph. All the prisoners are under Joseph's care. Joseph immediately becomes the trustee of the whole group. That must have been humiliating, because most of those prisoners were Egyptians, and this was a Hebrew, and there was nobody on the face of the earth that Egyptians despised more than Hebrews. Later on, when Joseph finally brings his family into Egypt, and his brothers come, and they sit down to a meal, the Egyptians are very carefully put over to eat on one side, and his brothers (the Hebrews) on the other side, because the Egyptians so despise the Hebrews.

So, now we have another situation for this man of integrity. He doesn't have to be watched to do right. The warden turns the jail over to him. God's saint was suffering unjustly, but God was with Joseph to again give him success. Joseph did not turn against God or abandon His Word. He knew that God was still on His throne in heaven.

**The Cup Bearer and the Baker**

We read in Genesis 40 that it so happened that Pharaoh was displeased with his cup bearer, the man that served him his wine, and with his baker, and they were put into prison. These two men were under Joseph's care. It so happened that each of them had a dream. They didn't know what it meant, but Joseph said, "God can interpret dreams, and I'll give you the interpretation. Tell me your dream." The result was that the cup bearer was told that in three days, he would be restored to Pharaoh's service, and he would again take his place as the chief butler of the queen. On the other hand, he told the baker that in three days, he would be hanged, and the birds would feast on his flesh.

Well, three days later, that's exactly what happened. When Joseph gave the information to the cup bearer, he said him, "When you are restored, bring to Pharaoh's attention my circumstances and the injustice under which I am laboring." In Genesis 40:14-15, Joseph says, "But think on me when it shall be well with you, and show kindness unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house." This shows us that Joseph wasn't enjoying his trusteeship in prison. It was an agony. It was a burden. It wasn't a big kick. He was indeed making the best that he could under the circumstances, and God's grace was carrying him through. But he still didn't have freedom.

Verse 15 says, "For indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also so I've done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon." Joseph is aware of the fact that he doesn't deserve the treatment that he had at the hands of his brothers, or that he had at the hands of Potiphar. So, he says to the man, "Remember me when you are restored, and plead my case."

However, verse 23 tells us what happened: "Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." That's another blow. Here was a man who could have done him some good. Here was a service that Joseph had performed for this man. He gave him great comfort, and he gave him perspective on his life. Then what does he get in return? The man ignored him and completely forgot him.

So, Joseph goes on for some time, again with the plaintive cry (we may imagine): "How long, O Lord." It so happens that the Pharaoh then has two dreams, and nobody can interpret the dreams. He has dreams about seven thin cows eating up seven fat cows. He has dreams about seven bad stalks of grain eating up seven good plump stalks of grain. Nobody can interpret these dreams. Then the cup bearer remembers Joseph in prison, and he tells the king about this man who is able to interpret dreams, and that he accurately interpreted what would happen to the cup bearer as well as to the baker. Joseph's accuracy of interpretation by God's revelation impressed Pharaoh, so, Pharaoh orders Joseph to be brought before him.

**Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams**

In Genesis 41:14, we read, "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon, and he saved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "I have dreamed a dream, and there's none that can interpret it. I have heard say of you that you can understand a dream and interpret." And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me. God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Here again you see that, immediately, Joseph could have been tempted to play the game that he had some special powers. That's what all the other magic men in Pharaoh's entourage were doing. But Joseph, never bitter for a moment toward God, understanding that there was a God in heaven, who was ruling, and that the problem was with the people who were mistreating him, immediately says, "Give the credit to God."

**Joseph is Made Pharaoh's Number Two Man**

So, Joseph received the interpretation of the Pharaoh's dream from God; namely, that seven years of prosperous times in agriculture would be ahead, and then seven years of terrific famine. So, Joseph is placed in charge of food storage as the chief administrator over all Egypt.

In Genesis 41:37, we see this young man exalted: "Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand (a sign of authority); put it upon Joseph's hand; and, arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. He made him to ride in the second chariot which he had, and they cried before him, 'Bow the knee,' and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'I am Pharaoh. Without you no man shall lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.'" He was second in command.

Now, that's amazing, because how did Pharaoh know that the dream was true? It was the testimony of the cup bearer that he was going upon, but it was also something that God was triggering in him to put this much authority upon somebody who, the day before, had been an unshaven prisoner down in the king's dungeon.

Genesis 40:6 tells us that Joseph was 30 years old when he was appointed to this position. So, 13 years have passed since he innocently went out to check on what his brothers were doing in the field, and they had sold into slavery. For these 13 years, Joseph had been crying out, "How long, O Lord?"

However, he was to become the savior of his family. It was very exciting for Joseph finally to be vindicated. How humiliating it would had been had he compromised with evil to get along? Have you ever had the experience of finding some problem that comes into your life, and you grouse about it to God; you complained about it to God; you say certain mean things; and, you have terrible mental attitudes toward God in some root of bitterness? Then God comes through, and yet He resolves things for you, and you discover that God was working all the time. Well, you rejoice over the fact of his blessing, and over the fact that He has resolved your problems, but indeed you must then look back with a little humiliation and shame that you abused your heavenly Father in the way you did when you were in the thick of the burden of the problem. Joseph didn't have to be ashamed of how he acted. Now he was number two in the kingdom.

**The Dream was Fulfilled**

Lo and behold, the famine spread seven years later throughout all the land of Canaan, as well as Egypt. In Genesis 42:6, we read that: "The brothers of Joseph came up from Canaan to buy food in Egypt." And lo and behold, what did they do but fulfill Joseph's dream? "Joseph was the governor over the land, and it was he that sold to all the people of the land, and Joseph's brethren came and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth." The dream was fulfilled. Joseph had no idea how the dream was going to be fulfilled, and how his brothers would ever be brought to bow down before him, and to recognize his authority, nor his father. But he knew it would happen.

Here it was. He recognized them. He pretended to be suspicious of them. He asked them about the family. They said they had a younger brother at home, and he demanded in Genesis 42:7-20, we have the record of his demanding that that younger brother be brought to Egypt. The brothers were in agony over what was happening, and they were attributing this to what they had done to their brother Joseph. They never realized that it was Joseph who was before them. But their minds connected and said, "Do you know why this is happening to us? It's because of what we did to our little brother – the cruelty with which we treated him and our father."

Genesis 42:21 says, "And they said one to another, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, and that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear him. Therefore, this distress has come upon us.'" Now that tells us a little bit how the 17-year-old is. A 17-year-old is very tender. He can go to tears. He can go to a great deal of agony. So, here we know that when they were doing this to Joseph, he was pleading with them, "Don't do this to me." He was asking them not to treat him like this.

That is really tough when you see a 17-year-old who is in tears, and you can still be a brute to him. You have to really be some kind of a beast. They remembered that. It was clear in their mind. They said, "It is because we sank so low that this is happening to us."

"And Reuben answered unto them saying, 'Didn't I speak unto you saying, 'Do not sin against the child,' and you would not hear. Therefore, behold, also his blood is required.'" Now Reuben, the oldest one, says, "I told you so, you bunch of ding-a-lings. I told you so. I pled with you not to do this. Now the kid's blood is being held against us, and God is wreaking His justice against us."

In verse 23, the funny thing about this was: "They did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke unto them by an interpreter. So, Joseph is having a little bit of a ball. We have to recognize that. They're chattering away in Hebrew, and he's pretending not to know what they're saying. He's sitting up there looking like a dumb Egyptian, but he's taking it all – in every bit of it: "And he turned himself about from them, and wept, and returned to them again and spoke with them, and took Simeon from him and bound him before their eyes." So for a while, he couldn't contain himself. He was rejoicing in seeing the brothers, but he also had a sense of sorrow over the agony that they were going through, because he knew that what they were saying was false. He was alive, and God had protected him. And what was happening to them was not God's judgment upon them for having spilled the brother's blood, but was God's way of preserving the Jewish nation through this time when it could have been destroyed by the famine.

So, the story goes on that God is actually going to bring blessing because of Joseph's faithfulness to the Word. He tells them to return with the younger brother Benjamin. They do, and again, they bow themselves down before Joseph. In Genesis 43:26-28, they come back with Benjamin, and again they bow themselves down to him, and he asks them about the welfare of their father, and about how everything is going on at home. And, again, the dream has been fulfilled.

Finally, Joseph reveals himself to the astonishment of his fearful brothers. In Genesis 45:3-8, he can't restrain himself any longer: "He said unto them, 'I am Joseph. Does my father yet live?'" And his brothers were struck dumb. They couldn't answer. They were terrified at his presence: "Joseph said unto his brothers, 'Come near to me, I pray you.' And they came here and said, 'I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold unto Egypt." Boy, can't you imagine how those dudes felt now? Their cruelty was without measure. Here is the number two man sitting on the throne, and they knew he was number two. Everybody scurried when Joseph spoke.

Can you imagine what they thought was in store for them? The Egyptians had followed the Assyrian technique which eventually became crucifixion. The early stage of crucifixion was invented by the Assyrians. It was simply to cut a tree down of a certain small diameter; sharpen it to a point; then take a man, with three or four men; just stab him down and impale him on the tree; and, let him die slowly and in agony. The Egyptians had taken over that method. I can just imagine these brothers sitting there imagining themselves squirming on one of those stakes if Joseph chose to have them impaled. They were in real fear.

However, in Genesis 45:5, Joseph says, "Now, therefore, do not be grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sold me here, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and yet there are five in which there shall neither be plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So, now it was not you that sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and Lord of his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." It is great to operate on the principles of the Word of God. When you function on doctrinal principles, God is able to override and to bring blessing. Joseph said, "You were doing an evil thing, but I can assure you that God was controlling all the way. He is the sovereign lord.

So, Joseph sends the brothers back to Canaan to bring Jacob and their families to live in Egypt. God's sovereignty overrode their evil. Joseph did not seek any vengeance for the cruelty which his brothers had brought against them, but he left that vengeance in God's hands. Genesis 45:14-15 say, "He fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin rests upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them. And after that, the brethren talked with him."

Here was this some 30-year-old young man now giving total forgiveness to these brethren who had treated him in such a bestial way. Joseph was still acting on doctrinal principles. He was still treating them according to the grace of the Word of God. So, it was a day of rejoicing, finally, for Joseph's family. When Pharaoh heard what had happened, he graciously told Joseph, "Bring them all here." I just love this passage in Genesis 45:17, as Joseph receives the directions from Pharaoh: "Pharaoh said unto Joseph, 'Say unto your brethren: Do this: Load your beast, and go get you unto the land of Canaan, and take your father and your household, and come to me, and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land. Now you are commanded. Do this. Take your wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also, regard not your furniture, for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

Pharaoh said, "Don't even bother taking that old junk you've got back in the Canaan land. We've got some brand new stuff, and we're going to have a special. You walk in, and you pick out anything you want. We're going to take care of you." That was from the 17-year-old boy that they treated like a dog.

The boy who cried out, "How long, O, Lord?" Well, there comes a time when God's justice is executed, and when God brings about victory for those who have been faithful to the Word. This was a day of rejoicing for Joseph's family, because one godly boy waited upon God to vindicate him, knowing that, in time, he would absolutely do so.

Genesis 45:25-28 tell us about the rejoicing when Jacob heard that his young son was still alive, and furthermore, that he was governor of all the land of Egypt. I don't know how the brothers told that to this old man, because the Scriptures say in verse 26, "And Jacob's hearts fainted, for he did not believe them. This man was old. How could they hit him with this – the excitement to his heart and everything else that might be potential of such an impact? Not only that the boy was alive, but that he was governor of all of Egypt. He knew that the sons had really come off the wall. They had been on the banana tree for sure to be telling him things like that. But finally, they convinced him: "He is alive, Dad. We're not kidding you. The guy is the number two man in Egypt. He runs the whole schmear. Nobody can buy any food, not even the Egyptians, unless he gives the order and confirms the request. He is in charge. And the Pharaoh has said, 'Come down.' He's going to give us the fat of the land."

So, Joseph is the hero faith. He's the pattern for our living by biblical morality and social principles in the midst of Satan's human viewpoint world. We, too, will have our moments when we will cry out, "How long, O, Lord? We have followed the path of integrity, and we don't get the blessing." Those who follow the path of evil are coming out on top. God is our sovereign Lord. He is in control of mankind. He will honor our testimony of God's principles to our society, and that's what we're called upon to do.

This a very difficult time in the history of our nation for us to try to stand up and be the witnesses to God's principles As we stated at the beginning: they don't believe there is such a God; they don't believe that He takes them seriously; and, they don't think that he has a communication to us that is intelligible, and that we can apply to our day.

However, we Christians will not always be treated as fools and as hated dreamers. We will, like Joseph, in time, become the rulers of planet earth. In 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, Paul says, "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matter?" This is reality to the conflict between Christians: Don't you know that we shall judge angels? How much more shall we then judge the things that pertain to this life?"

So, that's the principle. We someday are going to judge the whole world. Of course, we can anchor our confidence to the fact that the Word of God tells us that: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called ones according to His purpose." His purpose is for us to be the rulers of the world. His purpose is for us to take the offense. His purpose is for us to be abused, and to be those who sound forth the Word of God and refuse to knuckle under to the popular movements. May God help us to remember Joseph was the example of a boy who had occasion to cry, "How long, O, Lord?" But he knew that, sooner or later, he would be vindicated? Your faithfulness will be the same.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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