

Jsph 07 – The Ultimate Test - Gen 41:37-57

It is a wonderful (*altho painful*) thing to be "Refined by God"

To learn how to

Stay in the Refiners Fire

Trust that God is at Work

Join God - *by doing what's right*

regardless of the circumstances

& that's exactly what we've seen Joseph do so well

His Refiners Fire started when he was only 17

on the heels of that fateful dream he told his family about

& that dream kicked off an incredible 13 years of Refining

& I'm sure - as Joseph suffered thru one trial after another
that he stopped rehearsing that dream over & over

& he just settled down to serve God,

& to do what was right, regardless of his circumstances

& then - FINALLY - - in an INSTANT (*in our last msg*)

God said - "OK, now you're ready - for the Ultimate Test"

Joseph had done incredibly well - under the Tests of Tribulation
but now comes . . . the Ultimate Test

It IS a great thing to learn how to live IN (& THRU)
the Refiners Fire of Trials & Tribulations

HOWEVER - it's most often AFTER we've been refined by the Trials
THAT we face the Ultimate Test

The Ultimate Test - is when we *learn* to *serve God*
TRULY REGARDLESS of our circumstances →

Truly Regardless of whether
our circumstances are **BAD** - - - or **GOOD !**

The Ultimate Test - Is serving God *faithfully* -
EVEN IN **PROSPERITY** & **BLESSING**

& **that's what** we'll see - in the *Life of Joseph* today

Let's Pray

In one of my **favorite** N.T. **scriptures**
(which I have a good time shaking people up with)

The **apostle Paul** conveyed the **exact truth**
we're going to **see today** in the life of **Joseph**

In **Phil Ch 4** - Paul was **speaking about** God's **Provision** to him

& in **Vs. 11-13** - Paul defines the **greatest lesson learned**
both **IN** - **& out of** - the Refiners Fire

Phil 4:11-13 - ESV

11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Much to the Positive Thinkers dismay

this **VS** is **NOT** about **Winning** every event
Climbing every ladder - & **Achieving** every goal

THIS is the lesson **God** has been **teaching Joseph** for 13 years

Paul says - "I have learned to be content (do what's right)
regardless of my situation

I have learned to follow God when I am **low** -

& more importantly - when I **am lifted up**

I have learned to cling to God when I am in **great need** -

& more importantly - in times of **abundance & blessing**"

Pastor Jeff pointed out **this truth** to us
this week in our **devotions**

& he said **the Key** to *learning this truth* - is the word "**Nevertheless**"
it means "**In Spite of**" or "**Regardless of**"

& one of the **greatest lessons** we can **learn** in this life
is to *serve God* - in the **NEVERTHELESS**

In **Spite of** - **Regardless** of - *Whatever the situation*
LOW or **HIGH** / in **NEED** or in **ABUNDANCE**

May we Serve The Lord - in the **NEVERTHELESS**
May we Serve Him in **Integrity** & **wholeheartedness** →

Whether we are Experiencing **the FIRE** of being
made **LOW** - facing **HUNGER** - or great **NEED** →

Or whether we are Experiencing the **Abounding Blessings**
of having **PLENTY** & **ABUNDANCE** →

Either way - *May we Serve God* - in the **NEVERTHELESS**

THAT - is the lesson for today - **in Joseph's Life**

Guys - **once** we've **been Saved** by Jesus Christ
& He's **picked us up** from the **Mire Clay** & **set us on the Rock**

THEN - the **greatest danger** we face - is **Abundance** & **Prosperity**

Because the **life of Abundance & Prosperity**
is often the **recipe for disaster**

J. Oswald Sanders;

"Not every man can carry a full cup. Sudden elevation frequently leads to pride and a fall. The most exacting test of all to survive is prosperity"

I know . . . your saying . . . "oh come on, just try me
I can handle it . . . just try me - you'll see"

Well - you **may just have to** Believe this one - **BY FAITH** →

We are **much more likely** to *cling to Christ* in **Trials**
than we are - in times of **Abundance** & **Prosperity**

Today - Joseph's time of Refining Trials - **is OVER**

& now we'll see if he can *serve God* (& do what's right)
in **the Ultimate Test** - of **Prosperity** & **Promotion**

Actually - one of the **highest honors** of God in this life
is if He **Makes you ABLE** - to handle **Prosperity & Promotion**

Because God **blesses individuals** - in order to **bless God's people**

That 's what we see **in Joseph's life** - &
That's what we see **in the church today**

God **blesses individuals** - in order to **bless God's people**

& so **the Ultimate Test** IS - - can we handle
God's **Blessings & Promotion** - *w/ Godliness & Integrity* →

So that God can use **us** - **to Bless** *His People*

& we have **a picture** of what that **looks like**
In the *Life of Joseph* today

Scholars & Historians agree

there was **nothing like Egypt** in Joseph's Day

Egypt had all the opulence, wealth, influence & power
that **any kingdom** could possibly **ever have**

& with all that **opulence** & **wealth** came **corruption** & **sensuality**
that would make **Las Vegas** look like an **Amish Farm Town**

& **since God** was going to **promote** Joseph
into this **incredibly worldly kingdom** →

He had to **FIRST** - **seriously refine Him** - which **He has done**

& so now - God **raises Joseph** up to face **his Ultimate Test**

can he Serve God - - in the "**Nevertheless**" →

can he serve God **Regardless** of his **circumstance** - **BAD** or **GOOD**

Joseph's Promotion had come - in an **INSTANT** (*after 13 yrs*)

Joseph had been **called out of Prison**
to **Interpret** Pharaoh's dreams →

& he **gave Pharaoh** some very **wise counsel**
about **how to handle** the coming years of **Famine**

& then we read - **Gen 41:37-44 - ESV**

37 This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?"

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.

40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.”

41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck.

43 And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.

44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”

Now - **if you'll think about it** for just 1 second
you'll have to admit →

This is actually **the Ultimate Test** of Godliness

It is often said;

"Power corrupts, and Absolute Power corrupts Absolutely"

& here - **Joseph** has been given - **Absolute Power**

In an instant he has gone from being **Slave & Prisoner**
to being **set over** the most powerful Kingdom in the world

& **THAT** - is pretty Absolute Power

& for Sinful Man - **THAT** is **the Ultimate Test of Godliness**

Let's see if we can gain some **insight**
into **how** Joseph handled - **his Ultimate Test**

Our **First INSIGHT Begins** in the very next **Vs**

Gen 41:45 - ESV

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

Joseph is given an **Egyptian name** - & a **Gentile Wife**
who is the **daughter of a Priest** - in the city of On

The marriage gave Joseph kind of an **'Upper Society' Family Status**
But that **never even** comes up **again**

EXCEPT in regard to the birth of Joseph's **TWO SONS** -
which is a very, very big deal

Skip down to Gen 41:50 - ESV

50 Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore them to him.

As a **SIDE NOTE** - there is **NO indication** - Joseph ever **got caught up**
in the **Polygamy** & **Concubine** lifestyles - so prevalent

But the **Important Thing** here is - - A **Hebrew** father
names his sons **Hebrew names** that mean **Everything** !

A **Hebrew** name **tells a story** - or it **sets a life's course**
at the very least - it **opens the door** into the **Father's heart**

& **THAT'S** exactly **what the names** of Joseph's **sons** do for us

Gen 41:51 - ESV

51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house."

Manasseh is from the Hebrew word meaning "To Forget"
& the scripture tells us exactly why Joseph named his 1st son

"For God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house"

NOT - *I have forgotten* - NOT - "Now I can get even"
But - *God has made me forget . . .*

But if we read ahead - we see that Joseph
doesn't actually forget the events of his past
or the events of his father's house

Because those events are referenced in the rest of the story

so what does he mean - *God has made me forget ??*
& what can that mean to us - *God has made me forget*

Guys - the reference here is to the PAIN

The HEB word translated "Hardship" means LITERALLY;
"Misery, or Distressing Experience"

In naming Manessah Joseph is giving a testimony

Not that God has made him forget THE EVENTS
But that God has made him forget - THE MISERY

In naming his first son "Manasseh" - Joseph is saying →

'God has made me forget my misery and my distress even in regard to my own family'

& when Joseph meets his brothers
you'll see how incredibly true that statement is

'God has made me forget all my Hardship'

Now - I know the question on your mind;
"God if there's a magic pill I can take to do that, I need a few"

There is NO MAGIC PILL
But there is a SUPERNATURAL HEALING

It's called Divine Forgiveness

& Most often - it is learned
in the Midst of the Refining Fire

The Life of Joseph is A STUDY
of the supernatural healing of Divine Forgiveness

& I promise - it's a subject we'll return to

But for today - we need to know →

The only way Joseph can say
'God has made me forget my misery' - IS →

Joseph had come to COMPLETELY & TOTALLY
Forgive those who had hurt him so bad

& we'll see that clearly as we go on in Joseph's life →

but we can see it *even now*

in the Testimony of the name of his 1st born son

Remember - the OT teaches by PICTURE

what the NT teaches by THEOLOGY

So we see here - the Picture of Divine Forgiveness

in the Life of Joseph

& then we need to "Dive Into" this same subject in the NT

to learn how to actually bring Divine Forgiveness into our lives

We'll talk more about this subject - but for a head start

you can ask for the Forgiveness Messages - **at WBM**

Divine Forgiveness - Divine Forgiveness in marriage

Living in Divine Forgiveness - Forgiveness in the Church

Now - - Just one other thing here →

Mat 18:35 says that our UN-forgiveness will bring

torture & bondage into our lives (*read it*)

& that Torture & Bondage is seen *in the emotions* of

anger, bitterness, resentment, & revenge

& Joseph *had been freed* - Not Only from his Bondage

but also from the Torturing emotions of Unforgiveness

THAT is the result - of Divine Forgiveness

& Joseph is a Perfect Picture of this Divine Truth

But - Divine Forgiveness is **NOT** Joseph's only Testimony
Remember - he had **two sons**

Gen 41:52 - ESV

52 The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Joseph names his second son - **Ephraim** - & says it's because
"God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

The meaning of the **HEB** word is **actually**;
"Twice Fruitful" (the plural form of 'Fruitful')

Joseph says - not only has God made me **"Forget my Misery"**
but He's also made me **"Twice Fruitful"**

& notice carefully **WHERE** God has made Joseph **Twice Fruitful**
He's done it right ***"in the land of his affliction"***

Right in the Midst of his affliction

God has made him **Forget his Misery** - &
God has made him **Twice Fruitful**

How often do we say

God if you could just **Get me out** of this situation,
God if you could just **Get me out** of this circumstance

if you could just **get me over** to the **other side** of the fence
where **the grass** seems so much **greener**

& God's saying *"Well my plan is to make you TWICE FRUITFUL right in the land of your affliction!" →*

*"But **if you want** to run over there, it's OK, I can **start up** the Refiners Fire **over there too**, & we can start this whole thing over again"*

Guys - - **God loves us** enough
to continue His work of refining us - ***Even Over THERE !***

God has now taken away the "**Sting**" of Joseph's **Misery** - &
God has made him **Twice Fruitful** - - **RIGHT** in the land of his affliction

& God **wants to do** the same thing **with you & me**

Psa 30:11

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,

& the "Nevertheless" scripture - **Heb 12:11 (NKJ)**

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

& **THAT'S EXACTLY** what we're seeing - in **Joseph's Life**

When we started - we said there were **2 INSIGHTS** here that **reveal** how Joseph is handling **his Ultimate Test**

For **the second one** - we have to **read the text** to get the big picture

Gen 41:46-55 - ESV

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.

[he began his new position as 2nd in command]

47 During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly,

48 and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it.

49 And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.

[Joseph did what was right - during the years of abundance]

50 Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore them to him.

51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.”

52 The name of the second he called Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

53 The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end,

54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

[for apx 8 years Joseph had prepared for this day]

55 When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to

Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.”

THAT (right there) - is a **huge insight** into
HOW Joseph handled **his ULTIMATE TEST**

For 8 years of Abundance, Prosperity, Fame, & Power
Joseph did what was right - **NEVERTHELESS**
Joseph did what was right - **REGARDLESS** of the circumstance

How do we know that?

because in the 8th year - when the people **ran out of food**
& they **started crying** to Pharaoh

Pharaoh said - ***“Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.”***

That's **the same thing** he was **saying** 8 years earlier
BEFORE Joseph had the Fame, Fortune, & Power

For 8 years Joseph has been running the Kingdom of Egypt
at **30 yrs old** - & w/ all that **Wealth & Power** & his fingertips

& **when the famine hit** - **Pharaoh** had just **as much trust** in Joseph
as he did the day he put him in charge

WHY ?? - because **during those 8 years**
Joseph did what was right - & the Lord was with him

Just like when he was **in Potiphars house**
Joseph did what was right - & the Lord was with him

Just like when he was **in Prison**
Joseph did what was right - & the Lord was with him

Just like now when he's **running the Kingdom of Egypt**
Joseph did what was right - & the Lord was with him

When circumstances were **BAD**
Joseph did what was right - & the Lord was with him

When circumstances were **GREAT**
Joseph did what was right - & the Lord was with him

DO YOU SEE IT ???

Joseph Served the Lord **in the NEVERTHELESS**
Joseph Served the Lord **REGARDLESS** of his circumstances

& **THAT** is an incredible **PICTURE**
of what the Apostle **Paul** teaches in →

Phil 4:11-13 - ESV

11 . . . for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

13 I can do all things [face any circumstance] through him who strengthens me.

THAT - is the **ULTIMATE TEST** →

servng God - with **Integrity** - in the **NEVERTHELESS**
servng God - **REGARDLESS** of your circumstances

Abasing - or - **Abounding**
Being Made **Low** - or - Being **Lifted Up**

Joseph Served the Lord - Regardless

He did what was right, & the Lord was with him

& then - God made him forget the misery of his past

& then - God made him Twice Fruitful - Right in the land of his affliction

AND - on top of all that - God blessed Joseph Greatly

In order to use Joseph - to bless God's people Greatly

Gen 41:56-57 ESV

56 So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.

57 Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

The Refining had been - Extremely Difficult

But The Prosperity was - The Ultimate Test →

& Now - God is using Joseph - to bless even all the earth - WOW!

May the Refiners Fire teach us

to Serve God - in the NEVERTHELESS →

REGARDLESS of our circumstances

Whether BAD - or - GOOD !!

Let's Pray