

UNSHAKEABLE

Title: Part 4 – “Betrayed, Forgotten, and Exactly Where God Wants You”

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So good to see all your faces this morning! How’s everyone doing? Hey would you guys put your hands together and help me welcome everyone joining us online or through our app! We’re incredibly grateful you’re part of our church family. If there are ways we can pray for you or serve you this week, please don’t hesitate to let us know.

If you have a Bible with you or the Bible app on your phone we are going to be in Genesis 50, starting in verse 15 today. We are in the fourth part of a collection of messages called "Unshakeable" which has been teaching us how to have unwavering trust in an uncertain world. Anyone’s world seem a little uncertain this week?

Corrie ten Boom, a Christian writer, public speaker and Holocaust survivor once said this:

"When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer."

Dave Ramsey says, "The only people who get hurt on a roller coaster are those who jump off half way", right? This is exactly what we are going to see play out in the life of an Old Testament man named Joseph who trusted God through a long dark tunnel. Here is how he said this same lesson in Genesis 50:

¹⁵ When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?” [What wrongs... we will unpack all of them, they put the fun in dysfunctional, verse 16] ¹⁶ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷ ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept. ¹⁸ His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. “We are your slaves,” they said. ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, [Here we go, don’t miss this] “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

As I mentioned, over the past three weeks, we've looked at Abraham learning to **let go of control**, Job discovering that **God's perspective is bigger than our pain**, and Mary saying **yes to God's impossible plans**. Today we're going to explore how to build an

unshakeable life by trusting God's sovereignty even when everything seems to be falling apart.

Today I want to preach a message I'm calling:

Betrayed, Forgotten, and Exactly Where God Wants You.

Have you ever felt that way? Like how do you stay steady when everything feels unstable?

I mean in the past 5 years alone we've experienced a global pandemic, economic uncertainty, political division, social unrest, climate anxiety, and technological disruption at a pace we've never seen before. Add to that all of our own personal challenges—relationship struggles, health concerns, career setbacks, family conflicts, coming to terms that once again "next year" will be "our year" for your favorite sports team—it's no wonder that anxiety disorders have increased astronomically!

According to the American Psychological Association, 87% of adults say they feel like they're living through a constant stream of crises. We're experiencing what psychologists call "crisis fatigue"—the emotional exhaustion that comes from dealing with one unexpected challenge after another.

Here's the problem though: most of us, Christian, skeptic, not sure what you are, most of us try to build stability by controlling our external circumstances. We think that if we just plan better, work harder, save more money, eat better and choose the right people to surround us with, we can create a stable, safe, predictable life.

But what happens when the economy crashes despite your careful planning? What happens when you get sick despite taking care of your health? What happens when relationships fail despite your best efforts? What happens when your carefully constructed life gets turned upside down by forces completely outside your control?

That's when you discover whether your stability is built on your circumstances or on something deeper. That's when you find out whether your peace depends on your ability to control your environment or on your trust in Someone who controls everything.

The question isn't whether unexpected challenges will come—they will. The question is: where will you find your stability when the world around you feels shaky?

A couple weeks ago when I was actually writing this very message my world got a little shaky. I was eating dinner with Cheryl and the girls out on our patio when my vision out of my left eye began to freak out. All of a sudden it was like looking at a bright light then

trying to focus on something in the dark. Then these waves started vibrating around the periphery of my vision. I freak out over eye stuff so immediately I began to panic wondering how I am going to work and write and preach and provide for my family if my retina is detaching and I have to be flat on my face for a month! You ever have those thoughts? It turned out to be an ocular migraine and went away BUT it was a reminder that so much of my trust is built on my ability and when that gets shaken, even just a little, that I still have such a long way to go in learning to rest in God's sovereignty.

Jospeh's story that we read the very tale end of from Genesis 50 reads like a masterclass though in trusting God's sovereignty through decades of uncertainty. His journey from teenager to prime minister of Egypt is one of the most remarkable examples of God's behind-the-scenes orchestration in all of human history. **AND** because we actually have so much of his story in Scripture here's the 30,000-foot version. If you want to read this on your own it is from:

Genesis 37-50

But Joseph's story begins with dreams—literal dreams where his family members bow down to him. At 17, he was his father's favorite son, wearing a distinctive coat that marked him as the chosen heir. He had every reason to expect a privileged, comfortable life.

But eventually his brothers' jealousy boiled over like a pot left too long on high heat—one moment it's contained, the next moment it's everywhere, burning and destroying everything it touches. Get this, Joseph's brothers betrayed him, threw him into a pit and left him for dead, felt a little bad, so they sold him to slave traders and told their father he had been killed by wild animals instead. And you thought your siblings were hard on you, right? In a single day, Joseph went from favored son to foreign slave, from comfortable teenager to young man facing an uncertain future in Egypt.

Touch your neighbor and tell them, "That's a bad day." BUT guess what Scripture tells us? Genesis 39:

² The Lord **WAS WITH** Joseph...

AND slowly Jospeh began to see this even in these difficult circumstances. In Egypt, Joseph served faithfully in man named Potiphar's house and was eventually promoted to oversee the entire estate. Sure, he is a slave, but things were looking up. Then Potiphar's wife took a fancy to Joseph and begged him to sleep with her. And you thought "cougars" weren't around until the early 2000's! This is 2,000 years before Jesus! But Jospeh refused to go to bed with her, so she falsely accused him of assault, and Joseph found himself in prison for a crime he didn't commit.

AND guess what Scripture says: (Genesis 39:20-21)

But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord **WAS WITH** him...

Despite serving time for a crime he did not commit, Joseph maintained his integrity and was eventually put in charge of the other prisoners. He actually interpreted dreams for two fellow inmates who worked for Pharaoh, when they came true and they left to head back for the palace, Joseph asks them to remember him. BUT look at what Scripture says: (Genesis 40)

²³ The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

So, Joseph remained in prison, for years! And guess where God was? He WAS WITH him! This is the point where I think I would ask God to go be with someone else, amen? For more than a decade, from age 17 to 30, Joseph's life looked like a series of setbacks, betrayals, and broken promises. Every time things seemed to improve, another disaster struck. If Joseph had been keeping score, it would have looked like God had abandoned him entirely.

But then Pharaoh had a dream that his magicians couldn't interpret. Suddenly, one of Joseph's former fellow prisoners remembered the Hebrew slave who could interpret dreams. Joseph was summoned from prison, interpreted Pharaoh's dream about seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, and was immediately promoted to second-in-command of the entire nation! Now we are getting somewhere!

During the years of abundance, Joseph implemented a plan to store grain. When the famine came, Egypt was the only nation prepared. People from surrounding countries came to buy food, including Joseph's own family from Canaan.

When Joseph's brothers appeared before him, not recognizing the Egyptian official as their long-lost brother, Joseph could have had them imprisoned and punished. And honestly, some of us would celebrate this! Finally, justice is served! But Joseph didn't do this. Instead, he orchestrated a series of events that led to their repentance and ultimately moved his entire family to Egypt, saving them from the famine and ultimately creating the conditions for a family to grow into a nation.

At the end of the story though, Joseph makes one of the most profound statements about God's sovereignty in all of Scripture, let's look at this again:

²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God **INTENDED IT FOR GOOD** to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Joseph had learned something that took him 22 years to fully understand: what looked like a series of random setbacks was actually God's strategic setup for a purpose greater than he could have imagined.

If you are taking notes today, write this down:

God is writing a story bigger than your chapter.

The first thing we need to understand about building an unshakeable life is that God is always working on a story bigger than what you can see from your current chapter.

Joseph couldn't see the big picture from the pit. He couldn't understand God's plan from the prison cell. He couldn't comprehend the purpose from Potiphar's house. Each individual experience seemed random, unfair, or meaningless.

But from the end of the story, everything makes perfect sense. The betrayal that sent Joseph to Egypt positioned him to save his family from famine. The false accusation that sent him to prison connected him with Pharaoh's butler. The years of waiting prepared him for the enormous responsibility of managing a nation's food supply during crisis.

Every setback was actually a setup. Every detour was actually a redirection toward God's ultimate purpose. Every delay was actually preparation for the right timing.

This is how God works! The Apostle Paul reminds the early church of this as they faced their own uncertainties in Romans 8:28:

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Paul doesn't say all things are good—human trafficking isn't good, cancer isn't good, divorce isn't good—BUT he says God works all things together **FOR** good.

It's like a master chef making a complex dish. Individual ingredients might taste bitter, sour, or bland on their own. But when combined by someone who knows what they're doing, they create something delicious and nourishing.

God is the master chef of your life story. He's combining ingredients that might taste bitter on their own—disappointments, delays, even betrayals—to create something beautiful and purposeful that you can't see while you're experiencing the individual ingredients. Does that make sense?

Modern psychology has a term for this: "post-traumatic growth." Research shows that people who experience significant challenges often develop greater resilience, deeper relationships, increased appreciation for life, enhanced personal strength, and more meaningful spiritual connections than those who never face difficulties. We talked about this in part 2 if you want to go back and dig in on our app or website.

But here's the key: this growth doesn't happen automatically. It happens when people find meaning and purpose in their challenges, when they believe their difficulties are somehow part of a larger story that matters.

Joseph found that meaning by trusting that God was orchestrating events for purposes beyond his understanding. That trust enabled him not just to survive his challenges but to be transformed by them.

That's the first takeaway; here is the second:

Your response to setbacks determines whether they become setups.

This is so crucial: Joseph's setbacks only became setups because of how he responded to them. Not everyone who faces betrayal, false accusations, and years of waiting emerges stronger on the other side. The difference was Joseph's choice to maintain integrity, faith, and service regardless of his circumstances.

See in Potiphar's house, Joseph could have become bitter and rebellious. Instead, he worked with excellence and was promoted to oversee the entire household. In prison, he could have become cynical and withdrawn. Instead, he served his fellow prisoners and was put in charge of prison operations. At every stage, Joseph chose faithfulness over bitterness, service over self-pity, and trust over cynicism. These choices positioned him to receive the opportunities that eventually led to his elevation.

Modern research on resilience confirms this ancient Biblical principle. Psychologists have identified what they call "adaptive coping strategies"—ways of responding to challenges that lead to growth rather than decline. These include:

Problem-focused coping: Taking constructive action to improve your situation rather than just complaining about it. Joseph did this by excelling in every role he was given.

Meaning-making: Finding purpose and significance in difficult experiences.

- Joseph trusted that God had a plan even when he couldn't see it.

Social connection: Maintaining relationships and serving others even during personal struggles.

- Joseph helped his fellow prisoners and later reconciled with his family.

Acceptance: Acknowledging reality without becoming overwhelmed by what you can't control.

- Joseph didn't waste energy fighting circumstances he couldn't change.

Hope and optimism: Maintaining confidence that things can improve while taking responsible action.

- Joseph interpreted dreams with hope and prepared for future opportunities.

Spiritual resources: Drawing strength from faith and relationship with God.

- Joseph's trust in God's sovereignty sustained him through decades of uncertainty.

In other words, the people who develop unshakeable trust aren't those who never face challenges—they're the ones who learn to respond to challenges in ways that build character rather than destroying it.

AND here's what this means practically for you today if you are wrestling through your own uncertainty: your current setback might be God's setup for something greater than you can imagine. BUT whether it becomes a setup depends on how you respond to it right now...

Will you choose like Joseph to maintain integrity, faith, and continue to serve God or will you let this setback define you? Will you become bitter instead of better? Will you pull away from God instead of pressing into Him? Will you waste your pain by letting it turn you into someone you're not, OR let God use it to turn you into someone you're meant to be?

Your response to setbacks determines whether they become setups. Pastor Craig Groschel once said it like this:

"You will often overestimate what you can do in the short run, but you will vastly underestimate what God can do through a lifetime of faithfulness."

Amen? Number three:

God's timing is perfect even when it feels delayed.

One of the hardest aspects of Joseph's story is the timing. Why did it take 13 years for God to elevate him? Why did Joseph have to wait so long for vindication? Why didn't God fast-track the process? Have you ever wondered that about your own life?

Here's what I believe: God's delays are not God's denials. Let me say that again. God's delays are not denials. His timing is perfect even when it feels frustratingly slow from our perspective.

Think about what those 13 years accomplished in Joseph's character and competence:

The teenager who started with dreams of grandeur developed the humility, wisdom, and emotional intelligence necessary to lead a nation. The Joseph who entered Egypt was gifted, but immature. The Joseph who emerged from prison, was seasoned and ready for enormous responsibility.

Joseph also learned the Egyptian language, culture, business practices, and administrative skills during those 13 years. He gained experience in household management, personnel oversight, and crisis management. When Pharaoh needed someone to manage a national emergency, Joseph had the exact skill set required.

Joseph's time in prison also connected him with people who would eventually introduce him to Pharaoh. His years of faithful service built a reputation for integrity and competence.

Joseph also developed spiritual maturity. His faith was tested and refined through years of uncertainty. By the time he was elevated, his trust in God's sovereignty was unshakeable.

AND during those 13 years, God was also preparing Egypt for Joseph's leadership, orchestrating Pharaoh's dreams, and setting up the circumstances that would require exactly the kind of leader Joseph had become.

SO, the timing that felt like delay was actually divine preparation. Joseph needed those years to become the man Egypt needed. And Egypt needed those years to be ready for Joseph's leadership.

AND this is a crucial principle for building unshakeable trust: God's timing is always perfect, even when it doesn't match your timeline. What feels like a delay is often divine preparation of you, of circumstances, and of other people who will be part of His plan.

Research on expertise development shows that it typically takes about 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to achieve mastery in any field. Have you ever heard that before?

Malcolm Gladwell calls this the "10,000-hour rule." Well, Joseph's 13 years of varied experience gave him exactly the kind of comprehensive training he needed to expertly manage a complex nation during crisis.

AND that's the takeaway; God wasn't delaying Joseph's destiny—He was actually developing Joseph for his destiny! And that same God is working in your situation right now too!

Alright, last point we learn from Joseph's story:

Trust God's character when you can't see His plan.

The final lesson from Joseph's story is the most important: you can trust God's character even when you can't understand His methods.

Joseph didn't know why he was sold into slavery. He didn't know why he was falsely accused. He didn't know why he was forgotten in prison. He couldn't see the big picture from any of those individual experiences.

But Joseph knew something about God's character that sustained him through the uncertainty: God is good, God is sovereign, and God keeps His promises. That knowledge enabled him to maintain faith even when circumstances suggested God had abandoned him.

This is the foundation of unshakeable trust: it's not based on understanding God's methods but on knowing God's character. When you trust in God's character you don't have to see the whole plan to trust the One who made the plan. Amen?

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way: (Heb 11:1)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

People think faith is just blind optimism. But faith is not blind optimism—it's informed confidence in God's character based on His proven track record.

Joseph had seen God's faithfulness in his great-grandfather Abraham's life, his grandfather Isaac's life, and his father Jacob's life. He had experienced God's presence and guidance in his own life. That history of God's faithfulness gave him confidence to trust God's character even when he couldn't understand God's plan.

SO, how do we take all this and begin to build unshakeable trust in a shaky world? In the time we have left I want to give you five quick strategies for developing the kind of trust that can weather any storm:

1. Keep a "God's faithfulness" journal.

I've mentioned some variation of this each week, BUT document specific ways God has shown up in your life. Write down prayers He's answered, provision He's provided, protection He's given, and people He's sent at just the right time. When you're tempted to doubt His goodness, review His track record in your life.

This isn't just a spiritual exercise—it's neurologically beneficial. Research shows that regularly recalling positive experiences literally rewires your brain for greater resilience and optimism.

2. Practice a long-term perspective.

When you're in a difficult season, regularly ask yourself: "How might God use this experience for good in my life or others' lives five years from now?" This doesn't mean minimizing current pain, but it helps you see beyond the immediate challenge to potential future purpose.

Joseph couldn't see from the pit how God would use his experience to save nations from famine. But maintaining the perspective that God might have a purpose helped him respond with character rather than bitterness.

3. Choose character over comfort.

This is not popular today in our instant gratification world. But in every difficult situation, ask: "What kind of person does God want me to become through this experience?" Then make choices that build the character God is developing in you, even when those choices are harder than the alternatives.

Joseph chose excellence over mediocrity, forgiveness over revenge, and service over self-preservation. Those character choices positioned him for the opportunities that eventually came.

4. Serve others during your setbacks.

One of the most powerful ways to maintain perspective during personal struggles is to look for ways to serve other people. Joseph interpreted dreams for fellow prisoners, managed households for employers, and eventually saved entire nations from famine.

When you focus on how you can serve others during your difficulties, it prevents you from becoming self-absorbed and often connects you with the very people who will be part of God's solution for your situation.

5. Hold your plans loosely.

To quote those great theologians of the 80's... 38 Special, "Just hold on loosely, but don't let go." Some of you have no idea what I am talking about and I... feel sorry for you. BUT if we want unshakable trust then we must be willing to let God redirect our plans when His purposes require it.

Joseph's original dreams were fulfilled, but not in the way he expected. His family did bow down to him, but he had become someone completely different than he was when he first had those dreams.

AND that is the beautiful thing about all of this. God's plans for your life are better than your plans, but they may look very different than what you originally envisioned. Hold your plans loosely enough that God can reshape them without breaking your heart.

Because here is the truth. God is not done writing your story! That setback you're facing right now, that disappointment that feels like it's derailed your life, that betrayal that left you questioning God's goodness—it's not the end of your story, it's the setup for the next chapter?

Joseph couldn't see from the pit how God would use his pain to position him for purpose! He couldn't see from the prison how God was preparing him for the palace! He couldn't understand from his place of betrayal how God was orchestrating his breakthrough! AND you can't see from your current chapter how God is writing your story either!

BUT the same God who turned Joseph's pit into a platform, who turned his prison into preparation, who turned his betrayal into his biggest breakthrough—that God is writing your story too!

Some of you have been asking God "Why?" for years. Why did this happen to me? Why haven't You fixed this? Why does it feel like everyone else gets the breakthrough except me? And God's been trying to get you to ask a different question: "What are You preparing me for?"

Because here's what I know about our God: He doesn't waste your pain—He uses it for purpose! He doesn't abandon you in the valley—He's preparing you for the mountaintop! He doesn't forget about you in the waiting room—He's getting the throne room ready!

Your current setback is not your final destination! Your present struggle is not your permanent situation! Your temporary defeat is setting up your ultimate victory!

The same God who elevated Joseph from the pit to second-in-command of Egypt wants to elevate you from your current challenge to your divine purpose! The same God who used 13 years of difficulty to prepare Joseph for a lifetime of significance wants to use your season of struggle to prepare you for your season of impact!

But you've got to trust His character when you can't see His plan! You've got to maintain integrity in the pit, excellence in the prison, and faithfulness in the waiting room! You've got to choose character over comfort, service over self-pity, and trust over bitterness!

Because the man who was thrown into a pit by his brothers eventually sat on a throne in Egypt! The man who was forgotten in prison eventually became unforgettable in history! The man who lost everything in his youth gained everything in his maturity!

And the God who orchestrated Joseph's story is orchestrating yours! The God who had a plan bigger than Joseph's pain has a plan bigger than yours! The God who worked all things together for Joseph's good is working all things together for your good as well!

Maybe you're here today and you're not sure you believe in God yet, but Joseph's story resonates with something in you. Maybe you've been through experiences that seemed random and meaningless, but you're wondering if there might be a bigger story you're part of. Listen to me, you don't have to have perfect faith to consider this possibility. Joseph's story suggests that maybe your setbacks aren't just random misfortunes—maybe they're preparing you for something you can't see yet. Maybe the pain you've experienced can become purpose in ways you haven't imagined. Lean into that and the God who is at work behind the scenes even now.

I'll close with this. This collection of messages was born out of my own desire to grow in trust. A couple months ago I read this Psalm, and it sparked something in my heart. Psalm 112:7-8 says:

⁷ They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord. ⁸ Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear.

This has been my prayer for each of you!

We've seen that kind of unshakeable trust in Abraham, who learned to let go of control and discovered that God's will is not a burden to carry but a pillow to rest on. We've seen it in Job, who learned that God's perspective is bigger than our pain and that suffering can

be God's tool for transformation. We've seen it in Mary, who learned that obedience is the pathway to freedom and that God's plans are always better than our plans.

And we've seen it in Joseph, who learned that God is writing a story bigger than any individual chapter, that our response to setbacks determines whether they become setups, that God's timing is perfect even when it feels delayed, and that we can trust God's character even when we can't see His plan.

This is how you build an unshakeable life in a shaky world: not by avoiding storms, but by anchoring your soul to the One who controls the wind and waves.

Friend, your life is not a series of random events. It's not a collection of meaningless experiences. It's not a story without an author. God is writing your story with the same care, wisdom, and love that He wrote Joseph's story.

The chapters you're living through right now—even the difficult ones, especially the difficult ones—are preparation for chapters you haven't read yet. Some of you have never surrendered your story to the Author who wrote it. Today could be the day you trust Christ as your Savior and discover that your life has been part of His story all along.

Others of you trusted Christ years ago, but you've been fighting the chapters He's been writing instead of trusting that He knows how the story ends. Today could be the day you surrender your timeline to His sovereignty and find peace in the process He's using to develop your character.

The same God who turned Joseph's pit into a palace wants to transform your story too. But you've got to trust Him with the chapters you don't understand, knowing that He's working all things together for good because He loves you and has called you according to His purpose.

Let's bow our heads and close our eyes. If you're ready to build your life on the unshakeable foundation of trust in God's sovereignty, this is your moment to respond...

[PRAYER TIME]