

imPOSSIBLE – A Visioneering Faith

6/21/20

Hebrews 11:22

Sunday AM

If you have your Bible, I want you to join me in **Hebrews 11** as we continue our study on the heroes of the faith to learn from these *imperfect* people the different facets of faith to help us to live a faithful life.

To be sure, the beauty of these faith heroes is they were no more or less perfect than any of us. They each had their own faith flaws/faux pas – meaning – *They didn't always get it right*. In fact, some of them royally blew it – either *getting ahead of God*, or at times, *getting away from God*. But here's the thing – in the end, when it mattered most – they each trusted God.

This is the heart of faith in God – *the ability to trust in the un-seeable God b/c you know He will be there.*

Biblically speaking – faith is living in the hope of God's promise, presence, and provision knowing it is certain even though it's not always visible/tangible.

Faith is the assurance of things we hope for and the conviction of things we cannot see. Hebrews 11:1

Don't Miss – the critical element of faith is the **OBJECT** of our faith – b/c in trusting God, faith is believing in God not b/c we see Him but b/c we can see the evidence of God. *Like the wind, we can't see it, but we can see its effects – so we know it's real.*

Which brings us to our text and *faith hero* for today. If you'll turn to **Hebrews 11:22** – today, I want to introduce you to possibly the most admired man in the Bible – **Joseph**. His story is found in **Genesis 37-50**.

Most of us have heard of **Joseph**. We've heard of his coat of many colors and prophesying dreams. We've heard how he was betrayed by his brothers then falsely imprisoned for fleeing from Potiphar's wife. But what we may've missed are the essential *faith lessons* he needed to learn to help him to have a forward-looking trust in God and in God's plan. **READ**

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. Hebrews 11:22

W/ all that occurred in Joe's life, the writer of Hebrews focuses on what Joseph was looking towards as He was stepping into eternity – the exodus of Israel back to the Promise land. I believe there are (4) faith lessons he learned along his journey that enabled him to live *looking forward* w/ hope for God's promise.

I True Faith **DREAMS** God Dreams

W/out question, **Joseph was a dreamer** – but if you notice, his dreams were *from* God *for* God's glory.

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more b/c of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun/moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers come and bow down to the ground before you?"

Let me begin by saying that each of us must decide each day how we're going to pursue life. We can live in pursuit of our hopes/dreams, or we can live each day in pursuit of God's will/dream for us.

Jesus invites us in the Sermon on the Mount to *seek first His kingdom and righteousness*. Matthew 6:33

Solomon too urges us to *trust the Lord by not leaning on our own ingenuity/ability – but in every area of our lives, we're to put God's will/Word first so that God can direct our steps in sync w/ His heart for our lives*.

What does this mean? It means ***God's will is God's dream for your life***. It means God often births His will into our lives thru dreams and sanctified ambition.

SEE – w/ **God, to dream is a good thing** – So long as our dream is to fulfill His dream for our lives. In fact, if we're ever going to do anything great in life, it'll require us to dream BIG and to seek God! Our very meaning/purpose comes from pursuing His will and dream for our lives.

Let me quickly explain God's will to you. There are (3) aspects to God's will:

- **PROVIDENTIAL** Will – God's Sovereign Rule
- **PRESCRIPTIVE** Will – God's Word
- **PERSONAL** Will – God's Plan for You

You will never discover God's ***personal*** will for your life until your willing to submit to His ***providential*** will and live in obedience to His ***prescriptive*** will under the leading of the H.S.

Let me show you something cool from Joseph's story – God revealed His will for Joe when he was 17 – but it wasn't until he was 39 that God's will became clear when His brothers journeyed to Egypt looking for help. In b/w that time, he was betrayed/sold into slavery, falsely accused/imprisoned for doing the right thing, and reinstated to the role of Prime Minister of Egypt. Do you think this was by accident? No! It was all a part of God's plan to prepare Joe for His will.

Joe's life teaches us that it's okay, even spiritual, to expect great things ***from*** God and to attempt great things ***for*** God – as we wait on the Lord to lead.

Parents, I truly believe one of the greatest things we can do for our kids is to teach/tell them that it's okay (even essential) that they have a great big vision of what the Lord wants to do in/thru them.

Why? B/c I can say w/ absolute certainty that God has a plan/purpose for each of us. He has a will/dream that He desires to be accomplished in/thru us all. In fact, ***It's God's will is for you to discover/know His will***.

LISTEN – I'm convinced there aren't near enough dreamers in our world – that is, ***there's not near enough people w/ a God-sized vision/desire for His will to be fulfilled in/thru them***. Sadly, too many of us have settled for less than God's best b/c we've settled for our will/dreams thinking they're better and more fulfilling than God's dream/will. But they're not!

Joe got this – ***He had a God-sized, God-given dream***. His issue was when he was young, he wasn't mature enough to handle God's dream/plan. So, God decided Joe needed time/adversity to grow him into His dream for Joe's life – and the same is likely true for us.

You see, God has a big purpose for you and it's more than just getting married and having kids, working a job until retirement, and then golfing/cruising of into the sunset until Jesus returns – although there's nothing wrong w/ golfing/cruising. The simple truth is there's more to life than just living the American dream, taking up space, and then stepping into eternity.

God's *dream* is for us is to know Him/live in Him – so that His love/grace might be unleashed thru us for His glory wherever/however He sees fit to use us.

II True Faith is **DEFINED** by Brokenness

There's an old phrase used to describe Joseph's life – *He went from the pit to a palace to a prison – so that God could move him to His Promise.*

If you know Joe's story, very quickly in life, he found himself in a pit b/c of his brother's hatred/jealousy of him. God used these circumstances to guide his life so that he could help rescue the Israelites in the future. **Meaning** – what man meant for evil; God meant for good. ***But why did God put him in a pit?*** PRIDE!

Pride was Joe's issue – *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.* Proverbs 16:18

W/out a doubt, Joe's arrogance caused him to have a great fall – and he was humbled big time.

In some ways I can see how he got here. He was his daddy's favorite. He was good looking, smart, and spoiled – and most things had been handed to him.

His father even had a beautiful coat made for him just to show him that he was his favorite. And so, to humble him and set him on a right course, God allowed Joe to get thrown into a pit and sold as a slave.

Genesis 37:12-33 recounts the incident. As Israel sent Joseph to check on his brothers – before he arrived, his brothers plotted to kill him, but instead threw him into a pit and sold him to some people headed for Egypt.

God allowed Joseph to be sold off to enter him into a season of humility/brokenness so that he might ***grow up*** and ***grow into*** God's dream for his life.

Lest we forget – God hates pride and will do whatever it takes to purge it from our lives – even allowing us to be thrown into a pit. **Why?** B/c human pride and self-sufficiency is the enemy of God's will/dream for us.

Pride only desires to do it ***my*** way and is NEVER willing or capable of surrendering/submitting to God's way. By nature, we all seek first our will instead of God's will – we all seek a way that seems right to us no matter how contrary it is to God's will/Word.

There are only two classes of people: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those who say, "My will be done." C.S. Lewis

Truth – God can't fully use anyone/anything until it has been genuinely broken and conformed to His will.

Sometimes, God allows, and authors, trips to backside of nowhere to break/humble us so we might become useful tools in His hands – WHY? **B/c God often has to work IN us / ON us before he can work thru us.**

As one who's met w/ such a season of brokenness, I can tell you it's a painful process when God rounds off our hard edges w/ His sandpaper. It's humbling and excruciating but necessary to make us useful to God! **ADVICE** – make sure to learn the lesson the 1st time.

III True Faith **REFINED** in Isolation

For the sake of time, I'm going to make a long story short. Joseph was thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, and sent off to Egypt. B/c of the sovereign hand of God, Joe ended up in the house of a man named Potiphar. Potiphar was an important man in Egypt – and over time, Joe went from a slave to a trusted manager/steward over

Potiphar's affairs. And when everything seemed to be going great, **God took Joe back into the ring of hard knocks for round 2.**

In **Genesis 39**, we see that one day, while Potiphar was out, Potiphar's wife came on to Joe to seduce him – but he refused to dishonor God/Potiphar – and ran. And of course, she falsely accused Joseph, and the next thing you know, Joe is stripped of his position and given a 6x6 prison cell for – **DOING THE RIGHT THING!**

Joe had to think, “Been here done that!” But w/ God, there's a difference b/w being in a pit and being in a prison. God used the pit to *prune* Joe; and the prison to *perfect* him. He used the pit to *humble* him; and the prison to *hone* him. He used the pit to *purge* him; and the prison to *polish*.

LISTEN – This might come as a surprise, but the Christian life really isn't learned from books, Bible studies, or sermons – it's learned/applied in the trenches of life. It's learned on the job thru **trials** and **testings** – that's why James says to *consider it joy when you encounter trials/testing* b/c in these times God builds spiritual muscle to bring us in alignment.

EXAMPLE – We only learn patience by having to wait. We learn love by having to love. We learn meekness by having to harness self-control under His control. Bottomline, *the Christian life is more caught than taught – more walked than talked*. So never be in such a hurry to get out of your prison than you miss the lesson God wants you to learn and live.

Can I offer some advice if you feel God has sent you into a faith prison – **DON'T FIGHT IT!**

LISTEN – (2) Lessons:

- The more you fight your prison/wilderness; the longer God will keep you there;
- Your time in your prison/wilderness is usually proportional to the call God has on your life.

For Moses, it was 40 yrs on the backside of nowhere, while for Joseph, it was 10 yrs in prison. Yet God never forgot/forsook Joe. He just wasn't finished w/ His prep. God had to get him to the place where he was capable of humbly managing Israel's future in Egypt w/out Joe thinking it was all about Joe.

IV True Faith **RISES** to the Occasion

After God finished forming/fashioning Joseph, at just the right moment, God orchestrated circumstances that not only moved Joseph out of prison, but elevated him to the role of Prime Minister over Egypt.

B/c of a dream, Joe was brought before Pharaoh to interpret a dream Pharaoh was having. And there, in God's timing, b/c Joseph had his faith *pruned* in the pit and *perfected* in the prison – God used and blessed him. God honored him and strategically placed him where he needed to be. **This was only possible b/c Joe learned what needed to be learned while in prison.**

During my stint in the prison of God's school of faith, I discovered that had it not been for those challenging time, I wouldn't have had the maturity, patience, confidence, and humility to have been able to handle FBCPTC over these past 9 yrs. But God knew!

The writer of Hebrews wants us to see that by faith, Joseph, believed God for things to come. For even while he was living in the luxury of Egypt as the prime minister, Joseph was a man focused on the future looking ahead to when God would bring the Israelites out of Egypt and back to His promise. This was only possible b/c of the faith lessons he learned along the way. **And the same will be true for us.** If we don't learn, retain, and apply the lesson of faith along the way, we're certain to miss God's best for our lives.

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 to the land He promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” So, Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, ‘God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones from here.’ Genesis 50:24-25

B/c of what he learned along the way, Joseph believed in God’s promise and knew it’d come about, even though he didn’t exactly know how or when it’d occur. Basically, Joseph predicted the exodus 400 yrs in advance, while the Israelites were settled and living comfortably in Egypt – all b/c he was a God dreamer who grew thru God’s purging/perfecting to ultimately live a life of faith that worked and saw the future.

Joseph saw past his Egypt to see God’s promise – he saw past today to see God’s best into the future.