

Introduction: The human condition. Different people will have different ideas about what this means. Is there a general description of people that fits everyone? A phrase I heard over twenty times in high school (from 1967 to 1971) is: man's inhumanity to man. By a show of hands, how many people here have heard this phrase before? *** No matter how good our intentions, no matter how many genuinely good deeds we have done, there is something in every person capable of doing harm to another person. In one of David's *Psalms* he wrote: Even my close friend in whom I trusted ... has lifted his heel against me (*Psalms 41:9*, ESV). David wrote of this human truth twice more using other words and images (*Psalms 38:11; 55:12-13*). Job experienced contempt from his friends (*Job 16:20; 19:19*). The prophets spoke of betrayal by friends and family (*Jeremiah 9:4-6; Micah 7:5-6*). Jesus said His disciples would be handed over to death by family members (*Matthew 10:16-23*); and, He Himself is being betrayed by one of His twelve closest disciples (*Matthew 26:19-24*). There are many more examples of this truth about human nature in God's Word. *** Today's text shows the result of jealousy among brothers brought about by favoritism shown by their father. Israel, chosen by God to be the father of His favored nation, showed special love to the first-born son of Rachel, Joseph. His other brothers hated him for this, and planned to kill him. But they had a change of heart and sold him to Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt (*Genesis 35, 37*). *** God is with those who have been betrayed; and, He is willing to restore betrayers who repent and turn to Him (*Genesis 45-50*). Our *Genesis* chapter this morning teaches us of the special gift of grace God gave Joseph.

Joseph finds grace when unjustly imprisoned

I. Joseph receives grace as a slave until his master's wife traps him and lies to her husband, but while in jail

Yahweh gives him grace with the jailer. (*Genesis 39:1-23*)

- A. While Joseph works as an Egyptian official's slave, Yahweh is with him and prospers him and he becomes overseer of the household. (*Verses 1-6*)
1. Joseph was taken down to Egypt and Potiphar bought him from the Ishmaelites. (*Verse 1*)
Slave: Because of his brothers' inhumane jealousy, Joseph is a slave three hundred miles from home.
Potiphar: Potiphar was the chief over all the guard of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.
 2. Then Yahweh was with Joseph, causing him to prosper in his master's house, and his master saw because Yahweh was with him, He caused all he did to prosper, then Joseph found favor in his eyes and he made him overseer of all he had. (*Verses 2-4*)
Presence: The promise that reveals the heart of the Covenant God's relationship with His people is He will always be present with them, even in the most severe circumstances.
Prosperity: Yahweh caused Joseph to prosper. He fully accomplished every task assigned to him.
Finds grace: And as a result of excellently doing all he was assigned, he found favor (grace) from Potiphar. Because our human nature is flawed, our grace is works driven. But the cause of Potiphar's grace was the free grace of The Covenant God. **Joseph finds grace when unjustly enslaved.**
 3. From the beginning of the time the Egyptian made Joseph overseer, Yahweh blessed his house and field because of Joseph, so he knew nothing but the food he ate. (*Verses 5-6a*)
Blessing: Yahweh's blessing includes both prosperity and peace.
NOT need to know: Because Potiphar could see and feel the blessing of Joseph he trusted him and did not need to know any details. He was fully pleased with Joseph and his work. **Joseph finds grace when unjustly enslaved.**
 4. And Joseph was handsome of form and appearance. (*Verse 6b*)
Handsome: This description of Joseph uses poetic repetition. The feminine form of handsome was used of his mother Rachel (*Genesis 29:27*). Seeing them from head-to-toe gave people delight. In Boomer vernacular The Holy Spirit is saying, Rachel was a 'looker'; Joseph was a 'hunk'.
- B. The official's wife lusts after the handsome Joseph, but he rightly refuses her until she traps him and lies to her husband. (*Verses 7-18*)
1. Then it happened, his master's wife lifted her eyes to Joseph and said to him 'come lay with me' and he refused saying 'my master does not know with me in the house, all he owns is in my charge, he has held back nothing but you, his wife, how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' (*Verses 7-10*)
Lusting wife: It was inevitable for a pagan woman, where intercourse is part of worship, to see Joseph's form and to lust after him.
Joseph's refusal: Joseph's response shows moral strength coming from his humility to God and man. He will not betray his master's trust in him because he has experienced God's grace and is determined to avoid all wickedness in God's eyes, even when she pursued him day-after-day.
 2. Then one day he went in the house to work and she was alone and caught him by his garment and said 'lay with me'; but he left his garment in her hand, fled and went outside; and when she saw he had left his garment, she called the men and said, 'look, he has brought this Hebrew to make sport of us, and he came to me to lie with me and I cried in a loud voice and he fled. (*Verses 11-15*)
Trap: Joseph had carefully avoided being alone with her but on this day, in her lust, she trapped him.
Awkward escape: He obeyed God by immediately refraining from sexual immorality to maintain his consecration to Yahweh (*1 Thessalonians 4:3*). However, his execution was awkward and she had his robe in her hand.
Lie: Frustrated and angry at him, she lied about both his intentions and hers concerning 'sporting'.

3. She placed his garment near her until his master came home, and she told him ‘the Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came to me to sport in me, and as I lifted up my voice, he left his garment and fled outside. (*Verses 16-18*)

Joseph’s master: She had a plan to make her husband, Joseph’s master punish him when he returned from serving Pharaoh.

Shorter lie repeated: She gives him a shorter version of the lie she told to the other men-servants.

- C. The official throws Joseph in jail; but, Yahweh is with him, reaching out in His love giving him grace with the jailer. (*Verses 19-23*)

1. As his master heard his wife’s words, ‘this thing your slave did to me’ he was angry, took Joseph and put him in the prison where the king’s prisoners were bound, he was there in prison. (*Verses 19-20*)

Anger kindled: Literally, his anger was hot and his nostrils flared.

Joseph in jail: So now Joseph is a slave who is also in jail.

2. Yahweh was with Joseph, and showed him steadfast love, and gave him grace. (*Verse 21*)

Presence and LOVE: Just as Yahweh was with Joseph in the early days of his slavery, so He was with him in the prison. Joseph got to experience the strong, life-sustaining LOVE of Yahweh in prison.

Gift of grace: Yahweh gave Joseph the gift of grace in the eyes of the ruler of the prison.

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3. And the ruler of the prison gave Joseph authority over all the prisoners so Joseph was the doer of all that was done there; the ruler saw to nothing under Joseph because Yahweh was with him, and what he did Yahweh was making it prosper. (*Verses 22-23*)

Joseph did jailer’s work: The jailer had it easy because Joseph was doing all his work for him.

Application: Fellow disciples of Jesus, let us all be like Joseph and seek God for what He wants done here and now, and pray He would help us do all the work He wants us to do.

Prosperity: And because Yahweh was graciously with Joseph, everything prospered, and the jailer could get credit for it.

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II. Jesus gives His disciples a promise and a command concerning persecution. (*Matthew 5:11-12*)

- A. They are blessed should they be persecuted or should people falsely speak evil against them for His sake. (*Verse 11*)

1. You are being blessed when they may reproach you and they may persecute you. (*Verse 11a*)

Blessing promised: Jesus is promising a continual blessing to His followers.

Two harsh actions: The blessing is for whenever they may be reviled and treated with hostility.

2. And when they may say all evil against you falsely because of Me. (*Verse 11b*)

Speak evil: Those who hate Jesus and His followers are often accusing His followers of things that are not true.

Jesus’ sake: Contrary to human nature, Jesus promises blessing to His disciples when people falsely say evil things about them, calling them out in public with insults and persecuting them because, as His disciples, they are fully committed to living for Him and doing His will to His glory – for His sake.

Those persecuted for Jesus are blessed

- B. They must rejoice and be glad in this since their reward is much for so were the prophets persecuted. (*Verse 12*)

1. You must be rejoicing and you must be exceedingly glad. (*Verse 12a*)

Two-fold command: During the persecution and evil speaking, disciples of Jesus must continue to rejoice and continue in exceeding gladness. This too is contrary to human nature. It can only be done through the faith of Jesus and in the power and love of The Holy Spirit He has given to His disciples.

2. Since your reward is much in the heavens. (*Verse 12b*)

Much rewarded: God in heaven is giving their reward. Of the three superlatives over what is expected (much, more and most) this is the least, but it is much.

3. For so they persecuted the prophets, those being before you. (*Verse 12c*)

Previous prophets: Jesus puts ordinary disciples of Him on a level with Jeremiah and Isaiah, prophets who told of His coming. Both suffered ridicule and persecution. Jeremiah was put in prison (*Jeremiah 37:14-21*) and placed in a waterless cistern until Ebed-melech (an Ethiopian servant of king Zedekiah) rescued him (*Jeremiah 38:6-13*).

Isaiah may have been sawed in two with other persecuted men of God of whom the world was not worthy. (*Hebrews 11:32-27*)

Those persecuted for Jesus are blessed.

Conclusion: Joseph finds grace and prospers as a slave in Egypt until his master’s lusty wife traps him and lies to her husband who throws him in jail. But, even in jail Yahweh is with him, extending His strong LOVE to Joseph and giving him grace with the jailer.

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Nineteen hundred years later Jesus promises a blessing to those persecuted for His sake and commands them to rejoice in this since they will be rewarded as the persecuted prophets of old.

Those persecuted for Jesus are blessed