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Genesis 38 - 39



Genesis - Steve Gregg

In "Genesis 38-39", Steve Gregg discusses the interruption in the story of Joseph by detailing the story of Judah's family and Levirate marriage, emphasizing the value of children in Hebrew culture. The chapter also highlights the integrity and conscience of Joseph when he resists Potiphar's wife's attempts to sleep with him, resulting in him being falsely accused and thrown into prison. Throughout the story, the message is clear that God is with Joseph wherever he goes, regardless of his circumstances or location.

Transcript

In Genesis 38, we have an interruption of the story of Joseph, which began in the previous chapter. And we got Joseph sold into Egypt at the end of chapter 37, and in chapter 39-1, the story of Joseph resumes. In the meantime, we have this parenthesis about Judah, and it's not entirely clear chronologically when this story fits in.

What seems clear is that the book of Genesis is going to be dominated from this point on with the story of Joseph. And before getting too enmeshed in the plot, the author wants to make sure that we know some things about what happened in the family of Judah. Some of these things may have happened earlier than the events we've already read.

Because it's impossible that everything we read of in chapter 38 would happen, for example, during the years that Joseph is in Egypt. For one thing, Joseph is in Egypt at age 17, and he's elevated to power at age 30, and that's 13 years later. And then the brothers go down to Egypt like seven years later, after the seven years of famine.

And then they come down and move there probably the following year. So the number of years between Joseph being sold into slavery and his brothers actually moving down there to Egypt is something like 22 years or something like that. Now during that 22 years, it's impossible that everything in chapter 38 could have occurred.

For one thing, because Judah has sons, they grow up, they marry, and eventually there's a lifetime there of young adults. So some of this may have begun shortly after they came back into the land of Canaan. And some would even say that this story begins almost immediately after they've returned from Padnerim.

But that it hasn't been told yet because the story is narrating Jacob's story, not Judah's. And now it can narrate Joseph's story, but Judah's got to be fit in somewhere, so it's fit in here. But at the very least, we should not assume that this entire story takes place during the time frame that Joseph is in Egypt.

It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers and visited certain Adolamite, whose name is Hira. And Adolamites, they were in the land of Canaan. Adolam was the area where David had fled from Saul, and he had stayed in the cave of Adolam at one point.

And so it was that region, this Adolamite named Hira had taken Judah in. We don't know on what terms. Judah came from a wealthy family himself, but if he went and stayed with an Adolamite, it might have been sort of like how Jacob stayed with Latham.

You know, kind of, I'll stay with you and I'll work for you for my hire. But why Judah would need to do this, we have no idea. He was also from a wealthy family, but if he left his family and lived separate from them, he might not have had any wealth with him.

And it would appear that his departure from his brothers on this occasion would have been somewhat deliberate then because he didn't want to be with them. But we don't know why. Maybe because he wasn't as corrupt as they were, and he did want to get away from the family.

Although he wasn't completely away from the family because he was involved in the whole story of Joseph being sold. Anyway, Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and went into her. So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Ur.

She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. And she conceived yet again and bore a son and called his name Shala. He was at Chezeb when she bore him.

Then Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn. So some time has passed. He's gone into the land of Adolam, and he has found a wife.

This may have taken him a few weeks or months or a year or so. Then he's had three children. That would take another probably three years in all likelihood.

So he's got three sons. And now some time has passed. How much time? We don't know.

But he's taking a wife for his oldest son. His oldest son could have been as young as 13 or 14. Sometimes people get married that young, but it's not known.

In any case, he took a name for a wife for his son, and her name was Tamar. But Ur, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord killed him. We do not

know how he came to his end.

He might have died in a tragic accident or might have died in his sleep or might have died with some sickness. But it was understood it was a fitting end to such a wicked man. Now, it does seem like he probably was not 13 years old at this time, because a child that young, although he's technically a man, would hardly be expected to have such a reputation as a wicked man as to require God to slay him.

So it would seem he might have been older. But after the Lord killed him, Judah said to Onan, the next brother, go into your brother's wife and marry her and raise up an heir to your brother. Now, this arrangement was later codified into law in the time of Moses.

It was called the law of leverage marriage, where if a man would die childless and had left a widow, the widow could bear a son for her deceased husband by the next brother, the nearest kin to her husband. And in fact, it was not only could she was required to. There is required to be this brother taking his own deceased brother's wife so that there could be something very close to his brother.

You know, his brother's wife and his brother's brother are about as close as you can get to having a child that would be long to the deceased brother. And it was mainly for the inheritance rights. So there would be someone to inherit the brother's goods.

And so this, although it was a law later in Moses, it apparently was a custom of the of the land at that time. And so Onan was told to go in and marry her. But Onan knew that the heir would not be his.

And it came to pass when he went into his brother's wife that he emitted on the ground left. He should give an heir to his brother and as he practiced deliberate withdrawal so that he would not get the woman pregnant. And we're told that he did this because he did not want to give an heir to his brother.

Now, his brother was a very evil man and Onan may well have thought, who needs to perpetuate the name of this evil man? I don't want to give him an heir or he may have been a fairly evil man himself. Onan and just selfishly didn't want to do any favors for his brother's memory. And since he wouldn't get an heir out of the deal, he just didn't want to cooperate.

In any case, it says the thing which he did displeased the Lord. Therefore, he killed him also. Now, this story is sometimes used as a apologetic against using birth control.

It's about the only place in the Bible that ever mentions birth control, deliberate birth control. People in old biblical times didn't usually want to control conception. They wanted to have as many babies as possible as a status symbol to have children.

So you don't really have people in those days practicing birth control, except in a case

like this where it's not going to be his kid anyway. And he basically has no love for his brother. So he wants to prevent conception.

So it's the only biblical case known of someone taking steps to prevent conception. And some people say, well, see, God killed the guy for it. So that shows what God thinks about birth control.

I'm not sure that that's a fair inference. I mean, certainly God was unhappy with this man and killed him. But we can't say for sure it's because God is in principle against birth control.

He might be, but you couldn't prove it from this story. Because obviously this story had another element involved. In addition to practicing birth control, there is the reason why he did.

His refusal to give an heir to his brother. That is his refusal to do his duty to his brother. That un-brotherly attitude is no doubt what offended God.

Now what God may think about birth control is a separate issue. We may not be able to say. And there certainly are people who feel strongly that birth control is wrong.

The Roman Catholic Church thinks that way. And so do a number of people I know in the homeschooling community who feel that it's wrong to practice birth control. I myself have never been able to say that it's wrong.

Although my wife and I never wanted to practice birth control. Like the people in the Bible, we wanted to have as many kids as we could. So we couldn't understand why someone would wish to use birth control.

But that didn't mean that I felt that it was wrong. My own thoughts were the Bible says children are a blessing from the Lord. And blessed is the man who is a quiver full of them.

As far as I know, God's right. Even if we're wrong about this. So I'd rather agree with God than with people, you know, who don't agree with God.

So I just assumed, well, God said it's a blessing to have a quiver full of kids. If I had, if I was at war and was allowed to have a certain number of arrows or as many as I wanted. How many would I want? I'd want as many as I could get.

Because it says as arrows in the hands of a mighty man. So are children of the womb. And that's why it says a man's blessed to have his quiver full of them.

So a man at war is certainly blessed if he's got no shortage of weapons. No shortage of ammunition. And that's what the Psalm 127 says about children.

Also, we were informed pretty much by the many places in Scripture that say that God opens the womb and God closes the womb. Now, these may be special cases when the Bible says God closed that person's womb or opened that womb. But the impression is certainly given that the Hebrews believe that God is sovereign over whether a child is conceived or not.

And God decides whether a womb will be opened and a child will be conceived or a womb will be closed and a person will be barren. So those things made us feel like, well, we can trust God about that. If God's going to be sovereign in the matter anyway, why fight against God? After all, if birth control was the will of God, we thought he should have come up with some better way of doing it than the available options.

Because all the available options are, first of all, ineffective. And secondly, either uncomfortable or have other problems. Like the pill, obviously, often will abort a fetus.

The pill does not always prevent conception, but it does prevent the fetus from implanting in the uterus. And therefore, it may conceive, become a baby, and then be spontaneously aborted by the pill. So, I mean, if God really thought birth control was a great idea, he should have given us some form that either did not inhibit the enjoyment of the procreation or else that was effective without causing possible abortions and things like that.

It certainly looks like birth control is a human idea, not God's idea. And that doesn't mean it's a sin. There's lots of things that are human.

Cars were a human idea, not God's idea, too. And I drive a car, so I'm not opposed to... I can't say that because something was man's idea that it's a sin. And I never have believed that it's a sin to use birth control.

My thought about it has always been this. If one say, is it a sin to use birth control, my question would be, what is the reason for wanting to? Because many things might be neutral things, but they could be virtuous or sinful depending on what motivates you to do them. Offering animal sacrifices was a good thing in general, but it's an evil thing when it's done with an evil motive, the Bible says.

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. How much more when he does it with an evil intent? So a thing that is in itself not evil can be an abomination to God if there's a motivation that God does not approve of. It always seemed to me that if I didn't trust God in the matter or whatever, that that was probably something that wouldn't please God.

I felt like God's faith pleases God. And so we always wanted to... I'm glad, frankly, that we didn't use birth control. People sometimes think if you don't use birth control, you just be overrun with kids.

We hoped so, but it isn't so. My wife and I only had four together and we were married 20 years and we wanted to conceive every year. God's the one who opens and closes the womb.

So it would have been not our wishes to spend extra money and difficulty in controlling conception. But that's a different issue than the morality of it. I don't think it's correct, as some people think it is, to use this story to say that God is against birth control.

That does not compute here. That's not all that is involved here. Certainly God is unhappy with this man.

And in fact, he's unhappy with him for preventing conception. But it's not an ordinary situation. It's a situation where he's preventing conception because of his dislike for his brother and his refusal to do his duty.

And no doubt it is that motivation that is so displeasing to God. So God killed him too. Verse 11.

And then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown. For he said under his breath or secretly, lest he also die as his brothers did. Judah seems to think maybe there's a bit of a curse on this woman or something.

Whoever marries her dies. Now, the Bible tells us they died because of their wickedness. But Judah perhaps didn't see that.

He just saw that he married off two sons in a row to her and they both died prematurely. Apparently very prematurely. And he's only got one son left, so he's not so sure he wants to take a chance with him.

So he used the excuse that Sheba is too young to get married. I mean, Shelah, excuse me. Shelah is too young to get married and that she should wait.

She should go home to her dad until he's old enough. Well, he was putting her off. And even when Shelah grew older, Judah didn't give him to Tamar.

So Tamar went and dwelt within her father's house. Now, in the process of time, the daughter of Shewa, Judah's wife, died. And Judah was comforted and went up to his shepherds.

When it says he was comforted, it just means he'd spent his time in mourning the dead and had come around to a place where he was now not continuing to mourn and grieve. And it came time to shear his sheep at Timnah. And so he and his friend Hira the Adolamite went to shear the sheep.

And it was told to Tamar, saying, look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear

his sheep. So she took off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown and she was not given to him as a wife.

So she put it together that she was not going to have a child ever if Judah had his way. And that was something a woman did not want to be resigned to. A woman did not want to be childless in that society.

And Shelah was her only choice. She couldn't marry some other man because she was technically betrothed to Shelah. If she married someone else, that would be adultery.

And yet Shelah looked like it was not going to be given to her. So she looked like she was going to be a perpetual widow unless she took matters into her own hands. And she was very crafty here, clever.

When Judah saw her, she was dressed like a harlot and her face was covered. So he didn't recognize her, didn't recognize her without her widow's clothes on. And it says, then he turned to her, by the way, and said, Please let me come in to you.

For he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. So she said, What will you give me that you may come in to me? And he said, I will send you a young goat from the flock. And she said, Will you give me a pledge until you send it? Then he said, What pledge shall I give you? And she said, Your signet and your cord.

The signet ring would be that which was distinctively his. No one else could have it. It was used to seal documents and so forth that would prove they were authentically his.

And the cord would be a chain around the neck that had some kind of an amulet. Also something probably very much personalized. The important thing was that she get something that he could not later deny was his.

Something that was obviously identifiable with him, and unmistakably so. So she asked for these two things. And she said, And your staff that is in your hand.

Often the staff was not just a stick, but it had often been carved distinctively. Rich men like to have their staff, their walking stick carved up with some kind of an animal's head or something at the top of it. Or something that was also distinctive.

Then he gave them to her, and he went into her, and she conceived by him. Though he didn't know that initially, of course. So she arose and went away and laid aside her veil and put on her garments of her widowhood again.

And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend, the Adolamite, to receive his pledge from a woman's hand, but he did not find her. Then he asked them into that place saying, Where's the harlot who was openly by the roadside? And they said, There

was no harlot in this place. And he returned to Judah and said, I can't find her.

Also, the men of the place said that there was no harlot in that place. And Judah said, Well, let her take them for herself, lest we be ashamed. For I sent this young goat and you have not found her.

Notice, I've done, I did my part. She's not there to receive it, so let her have the signal. I can get another one.

Lest we be ashamed, I think, means he doesn't want to make a big issue out of it. Now, apparently going into a prostitute wasn't considered in that society as maybe shameful as it would in a Christian land. I mean, he's openly, you know, looking for the harlot to pay her and so forth and asking the neighbors if she's around.

And yet it's not entirely without stigma because he felt like if if if they made a big deal of it, it would bring some kind of embarrassment. So so he lets it go. And it came to pass about three months after that, Judah was told, saying, Tamar, your daughter-in-law has played the harlot.

Furthermore, she is with child by harlotry. Now, this doesn't mean that it had been discovered that she had impersonated a prostitute. When I say she played the harlot, it might sound like to us like it means she's that woman that was impersonating a prostitute that you slept with.

Played the harlot just means that she has been unfaithful. It's an idiom. If someone plays the harlot, that just means they have been unfaithful to their husband.

She was promised to Shula. Therefore, he was her husband and she'd been unfaithful because clearly she was pregnant. And so Judah said, bring her out and let her be burned.

Now, this sounds extremely hypocritical on his part, obviously, since he was not exactly behaving morally either. According to the standards of the time, though, there was a difference between what he did and what she did. Because he was not married, he was a widower.

And he had slept with a woman who presumably was not married either. Therefore, what he did would be called fornication. Not a good thing, still shameful, but definitely in a different class than cheating on your spouse.

She had cheated on her husband, Shula. Sheila, excuse me, Shula was Judah's father-in-law. No, she cheated on Sheila.

And so that was adultery. Adultery was punishable by death. Fornication was not considered to be an honorable thing to do, but it was not the same as cheating on a

marriage vow.

And so for her to be burned would be customary for a person who committed adultery. Whereas if he had been discovered as having slept with a harlot, that would not be considered a burning offense. Nor would the harlot herself be considered to have done something worthy of death.

Because the assumption is the harlot is not a married woman. If she's not violating a marriage vow somewhere and he's not, then it's not the same thing in the mind of them. And so when she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law saying, By the man to whom these belong, I'm with child.

And she said, please determine whose these are. The signet, the cord and the staff. So Judah acknowledged them and said, OK, I get it.

She has been more righteous than I because I did not give her Sheila, my son. And he never knew her again. It came to pass at the time for giving birth that behold, twins were in her womb.

So it was when she was giving birth that one put out his hand and the midwife took a scarlet thread and bound it on his hand saying, This one came out first. Then it happened as he drew back his hand that his brother came out unexpectedly. And she said, How did you break through this breach be upon you? Therefore, his name was called Perez, which means a breach and not breach in the sense that we normally think of a birth, but that somehow he had broken through whatever barrier there was to being the firstborn because the other one had been technically out of the womb.

At least his hand had been first. Now, that was an extremely rare thing for a hand to come out first and then go back in. I don't know.

We got a midwife. I don't know if you've heard a case like that. I've never heard of cases like that.

But it's a pretty thing. A pretty unusual thing. It's almost supernatural.

I think it's as if God is doing the same thing here as with Jacob. He saw that the younger will serve the elder. He lets the he let there his hand come out to be established as the firstborn.

But then Perez comes out first and certainly Perez is going to be the one who is significant and gives rise to the Messianic line. So again, God chooses the one who is not the firstborn. After his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand and his name was called Zerah.

Now, chapter 39, Joseph had been taken down to Egypt and Potiphar, an officer of

Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian brought him from Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. And that, of course, is just the same information we had in the last verse of chapter 37. So we picked up that story where we left off.

Yahweh was with Joseph and he was a successful man as slaves go. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian, and his master saw that Yahweh was with him and that Yahweh made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his side and served him.

Then he made him overseer of his house and all that he had, he put in his hand. So it was from the time that he had made him overseer of the house and all that he had that Yahweh blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake. And the blessing of Yahweh was on all that he had in the house and in the field.

So he left all that he had in Joseph's hand and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. And Joseph was handsome in form and appearance, which was in a sense his downfall in this particular case. Because, well, we find out how that became a problem in the next verse.

But before we get to that verse, I should just mention that we see a pattern in Joseph's life. And that is that he's diligent and honest and it's hard to find good help. And so he rises quickly to the top of the servant pool in the household.

The other servants are probably Egyptians or Canaanite pagans. Joseph is a conscientious believer in Yahweh and has integrity as well as good wits about him and competence. And therefore, Potiphar can spot a man who stands out among the servants as someone far better to put in charge of things.

And so he put Joseph in charge of the other servants in charge of the household in general. He made him like second in command in the house. Eventually, when he's thrown in jail, Joseph rose to that same position in jail.

And later he received that same honor in Egypt. Can't keep a good man down, I guess, because he was really his competence, his diligence and his honesty. Just made it almost impossible for him not to get noticed and not to be promoted.

And Potiphar's house, the Egyptian household, was blessed under Joseph's management. Potiphar got richer. Now, what Potiphar had done was he made Joseph a steward.

The word steward is not used here, but that's basically what it means. He was over all his house. And yet Joseph was still a slave.

Now, as the steward of the house, you can be sure that Joseph ate well and slept well and comfortable bed and wore fine clothing. The servants in a rich household would wear fine clothing. He probably rode in a chariot when he had to go do business for his master

around.

He lived almost like a free man. He was like a, you know, like an executive who's managing a company or an estate. And he's very successful, so the estate prospers under him.

Now, Joseph would therefore appear to be a very rich man, but he was actually a slave. He didn't own anything. He didn't even own the clothes he wore.

He didn't own anything because slaves don't own anything. It was all his master's stuff. But he managed it for him, and that's what a steward is.

And that's, of course, the image that the Bible uses in the New Testament for Christians. We're stewards of God's things. So whatever we have, we might we might appear to be wealthy.

We might appear to be, you know, comfortable and we might be all those things. But none of those things are really ours. They all belong to our master.

And just like Joseph, his obligation was to make his master rich, not himself. And so he used all of his abilities to enrich his master, which is what a steward does. A steward, because he doesn't own stuff and because he is a slave, because he's owned by his master.

A steward doesn't build up his own empire. He builds up his master's empire. And so the Christian who manages his own or her own time and money and affairs and so forth is doing so to build up the kingdom of God and not to build up their own interests.

And that's what Joseph is a model of. It's like a model Christian, as it were, and that he did recognize his duties as a steward were to make his master rich. And that's what happened.

His master became rich. Now, it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph. And she said, lie with me.

I mean, she was blunt. Now, he was a servant in the household. She was the mistress of the house.

So she may have just felt that she could just command the servant to sleep with her if she wanted to. It's even possible that her husband was a eunuch. It's not certain, but high ranking government officials in those days often were eunuchs.

Kings would make their officers and their house, their servants and so forth eunuchs. That is, they'd castrate them for a number of reasons. One, especially if they were going to be around the king's harem, they were not going to be tempted if they were made eunuchs.

But even if they were not going to be around the king's harem, if a man is a eunuch, he's going to be less distracted by women in general. And he'll be able to focus more on his duties. And so lots of times, those who are in high positions in the pagan world, in the government, were made eunuchs.

And if Potiphar was a eunuch, then his wife was simply a prop, really. I mean, she was there for looks. She was eye candy or whatever, you know, and she was there just to be a prop in his household rather than an actual partner.

I'm not saying that this is necessarily true, but it's not uncommon that this could be the case. If so, then she might have been, you know, obviously, though married, she may have had to be celibate. She may have even gotten used to sleeping with the servants.

Who knows? I mean, she might not be able to sleep with her husband, so she might sleep with servants. I don't want to read too much into it, but she seemed to think she could just walk up to this servant, Joseph, and say, come on, sleep with me. And that he would do it.

But he refused and said to his master's wife, look, my master does not know what is with me in the house. And he has committed all that he has into my hand. There's none greater than me in his house.

Nor has he kept back anything from me, but you, because you're his wife. How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? Now, notice, you'd think he was saying, how can I sin against my master when he's been so good to me? He's put everything under my hand. He's given me everything.

How can I sin against him who's been so generous to me? But Joseph is not thinking that way. After all, if he said, how could I sin against my master as you are suggesting that I do? She might have had some convincing arguments. Well, he won't know.

It's not going to hurt him, you know. And if he was a eunuch, especially, she could argue that, you know, well, what's he care who I sleep with? You know, I mean, I mean, if he makes the issue, I'm not going to sit against my master. Then there might be some kind of strong arguments that might persuade him from his resolve.

But if he says this is a sin against God, well, no arguments can be made to make that right or even sound right. It can't seem right to sin against God. And Joseph shows that he's unlike the other servants, that he has a conscience toward God.

His integrity in this matter certainly speaks of his general integrity, which is no doubt what made him such a good manager of his master's goods and a trustworthy servant. He would not even succumb to this seduction. And by the way, remember what Joseph's situation was.

He was 17 years old. He was in his prime as a young man. He was far from home.

There were no prospects for him to marry. And therefore, celibacy looked like his lot in life. And there was no one there to keep him accountable to the ways of God, because everyone who knew God was over in Canaan and he was in Egypt.

He was among pagans. The Egyptians were known to be very promiscuous people. Certainly, if he could have reasoned, if I do this, no one's going to condemn me for it.

I mean, except maybe the master, if he finds out. But I'm sure the wife's not going to tell him. But in other words, there's the social pressure.

There's not the restriction of, you know, fellowship with like-minded people. He's really in a situation where the pressure is on in a way that more than most of us ever have known. And yet he remembers God.

He says this would be wickedness and sin against God. So it was she spoke to Joseph day by day. And he did not heed her to lie with her or to be with her.

Now, think of how hard this was. He was in that household for life. If you were working at a job, receiving unwelcome advances from a co-worker or from a supervisor, and you didn't like that harassment, you could leave the job, find another job.

You wouldn't have to come to work the next day. You could just say, hey, if you're not going to stop, I'm going somewhere else. He didn't have that option.

He was owned. He was part of the household. He was the furniture.

He, as far as he knew, was going to be in that house for the next 80 years. Every day. And this temptation did not let up.

Day by day, she kept coming. Imagine him thinking, you know, how long can I bear up under this? And that's a good question. He did maintain his integrity, never did succumb.

But it is hard to know how long he could bear up under it. Maybe forever. Maybe not.

But God didn't make it last forever. He ended up going to jail, which doesn't sound like an improvement. But really, maybe it is.

It got him out of her house. You know, it got him away from that continuous temptation. Maybe God knew that, you know, if he keeps getting bombarded like this day after day after day after day, I mean, over the years, who knows? Maybe he'd succumb, but he didn't.

And God allowed him to get out from under that pressure. And it says, verse 11, But it happened about this time when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of

the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me. But he left his garment in her hand and fled and ran outside.

So it was when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And it happened when he heard that I had lifted up my voice and cried out that he left his garment with me and fled and went outside.

Now, here she apparently decided that she's never going to get through to him because she ended her options here. I mean, if he had fled, she could have just said, Well, there'll be another day, you know, I'll keep at him till I erode his resolve. But she had apparently decided it's all or nothing this time.

Either I'm going to drag him into bed, or if I fail, I'm going to give up on him and I'm going to send him to jail. I'm going to report him and get rid of him, basically. I mean, she couldn't hope that by making this false charge that she's going to still have him in the house from then on to keep at him.

She was putting all her eggs in one basket this time, thinking that it was going to maybe work, and it didn't work. And so she just, you know, if she just was lusting after him, it seems like she would have just said, Oh, well, I'll send his robe back to his room and tomorrow I'll try again. Someday I'll get it.

But she was clearly angry at him. I mean, she wanted to punish him for scorning her. I don't know if it was Shakespeare or who that came up with that saying, Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.

It's not in the Bible. Some people think it's in the Bible. It's not, but the story is in the Bible.

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. And basically, she was scorned by him. It wasn't just that her sexual appetite was left unsatisfied.

It's that her pride was insulted. He just was not interested in her. And so she was angry and she just decided to punish him.

So she decided to falsely accuse him of an attempted rape. So she kept the evidence with her until her husband came home. It says in verse 16, kept his garment with her.

Then when Potiphar came, she spoke with him with words like these saying, The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to mock me. So it happened as I lifted my voice and cried out that he left his garment with me and fled outside. So it was when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him saying, Your servant did to me after this manner, that his anger was aroused.

Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. Now, it seems obvious that Potiphar didn't believe his wife. It's true he was angry, but it doesn't say he was angry at Joseph.

If he had believed her story, he would have killed Joseph. A slave would not survive trying to rape his master's wife. If Potiphar believed for a moment that his wife was telling the truth, he would have hanged or executed Joseph and he would have been totally within his rights.

He was angry, but I don't think he was angry at Joseph. He put Joseph in a position where Joseph could have, as prisons go, a cushy life. He could rise to some degree of prominence there.

He put him in the king's prisoners' prison, which is probably, I mean, it's hard to know whether that was a more ugly prison or a more cushy prison. You know, a country club prison like they have for politicians who go to jail now. It's hard to say, but one thing is clear.

The fact that he didn't kill Joseph on the spot means that he didn't believe Joseph was guilty. And why should he? He knew Joseph's character. He knew Joseph was honest, and he probably knew something of his wife's character, too.

She might have been having affairs with other servants over the years, and he might have well known about it. It might have been something he didn't care about. Or if not, he at least knew any woman who was trying that hard to seduce a servant could not pretend to be a woman of really good character in general.

And I'm sure that he knew that his wife was more likely to lie than Joseph was. I'm sure that when he confronted Joseph with the thing that Joseph was, he said, hey, it didn't happen, I didn't do that. I mean, and he was angry, but I think what he was angry about was that he now, he couldn't ignore his wife's request.

That would be too great an insult to not only his wife, but free people everywhere. That a free woman has accused a slave of trying to rape her, and her husband ignores it, says, ah, I don't believe it. That would be an insult to his wife.

And so he had to get rid of Joseph. But he didn't do it the way that you'd expect. He didn't kill him, he put him in jail.

And his anger, no doubt, was angry at his wife, or at least at the circumstance that deprived him of such a servant who had given him such prosperity. And that this thing coming up had ended that season of prosperity for him. That's what I think he was angry about.

So he put him in the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But verse 21,

Yahweh was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and he gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison.

Whatever they did there, it was his doing. So he had the same position in the prison that he had in Potiphar's house. He was a slave, but he became the chief slave.

He's a prisoner, but he becomes the chief prisoner over all the others. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's hand. Now, this tells us something about accountability.

There's a lot of preaching these days about the need for accountability in the church and so forth. There's no reference to it in the Bible. In the Bible, there's no reference to people being accountable to a pastor or anything like that.

But because of some terrible scandals that arose in the 1980s, with some high-profile television evangelists that really embarrassed the evangelical world, the spokesman for evangelicalism had to respond in some way. And what they said was, there's not enough accountability here. If there's more accountability, these things wouldn't happen.

What's accountability mean? Well, in many cases, they meant you've got to have organizational oversight and so forth. But actually, the televangelists who sinned actually were part of a hierarchy of organization and technically could be said to be accountable. But real accountability is in the conscience.

I remember I was at a church in McMinnville where the pastors and the elders always talked about the need for accountability. In fact, they felt like I wasn't accountable enough. I had a board of directors running the school, but we only met once a year.

I mean, they were my friends and so forth, and they felt like I needed to be much more accountable to the elders of their church for some reason. And I wasn't very much. I mean, I was friends with them, but they were into a shepherding situation where they felt like they had to oversee every little thing, and I didn't agree with them.

And they said that I was not accountable enough. But then one of their elders, who was talking all about accountability, was exposed as having had two affairs with one of the church over a period of eight years while he was being accountable, while he was on the eldership. He'd had two eight-year-long affairs with married women in the church.

He was exposed. And I thought, well, there's accountability for you. I haven't had any affairs, and I'm not accountable to an eldership.

I'm not accountable like they were. He's accountable, and he's sneaking. But see, if you're accountable to God, that's the only accountability the Bible talks about.

The Bible says each of us will give account of himself to God. Now, there is a place for accountability. I would think of voluntary accountability if someone feels that they're weak in an area and they feel like, you know, if I don't confide in someone, I'm going to just fall all the time.

This is a weakness of mine. Then if that's the case, I think that accountability is a good thing. But to just have everyone made accountable to someone in some kind of a flow chart or a hierarchy is not anything that the Bible ever recommends.

In fact, the Bible says other things. If you read the books of Chronicles about David gathering the money for the building of the temple, it talks about the men he gave it to. It says no account was expected of these men because they were faithful men.

It says that a number of times. If you look up the word account in a concordance, it says these men did not have to give an account to anyone because they were faithful men. And that was understood in old times.

If you find a faithful man, you don't have to keep him accountable because his own faithfulness keeps him. He's accountable to his own conscience and to God. Joseph was accountable to God.

He did not compromise even when no one was looking, even when he could get away with it. And he was so faithful that Potiphar had put him over everything so that Potiphar didn't even check on him. Potiphar didn't even know what he had owned.

All the records were with Joseph and he didn't even edit or audit his books. And likewise in the prison, the leader of the prison liked Joseph so much and trusted him. He didn't even care what he did.

Just do what you want. And it says he didn't even look into anything that was under Joseph's hand. Why? Because Yahweh was with him and whatever he did, Yahweh made to prosper.

That is, whatever Joseph was doing was working and he was a good man and could be trusted. And so wherever he went, he was given almost carte blanche, even in dungeons and in slavery, even in the institutions of no privilege. He was given the greatest privilege of any among them in that his character shines.

His character made a place for him, for his promotion. And it seems like everything, of course, the next thing we find is he gets elevated in the government of Egypt similarly. And there's a pattern there.

But see, the pattern is always this. Yahweh was with him. Yahweh made everything he did to prosper.

But the reason Yahweh was with him was because of his integrity, because of his character, because he was a good man. Yahweh blessed what he did. And when he goes into Potiphar's house, we read Yahweh was with him.

When he goes to prison, he says Yahweh was with him. And Stephen makes that point about Joseph in Acts chapter 7, when Stephen is trying to rebuke the Sanhedrin for almost idolizing the temple and thinking that God only lives in the temple. Stephen's sermon, his basic message is God does not live in temples made with hands.

But he illustrates from Israel's history a different place. Like God spoke to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia. Well, that's not Jerusalem.

But God was there in Mesopotamia talking to Abraham. And he mentions that Joseph was sent into Egypt, but says that God was with him. Again, the point is he wasn't in Jerusalem, but God was there in Egypt with him.

Because God is everywhere where God's people are. God dwells where his folks are and not in a geographical spot or building. And that's what Stephen was making a point of.

And he draws from these statements in Genesis that wherever Joseph went, the Lord was with him. And he was not even in the promised land. He was in a pagan land, but the Lord was with him there too.

And we're going to stop there because we got a little bit of a late start. And it's running late now, so we're going to... .