

**Genesis in Biblical Perspective :
The Gospel of Christ from Genesis –
The Life of Joseph #3—The Authentic Prosperity**

Genesis 39

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

In this study on Joseph we are going to look at the home of Potiphar. We will take a look at Joseph in Potiphar's house. We'll start by looking at Genesis 39:1–6a which says

[1] Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. [2] The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. [3] His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. [4] So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. [5] From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. [6a] So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

May God bless His Word to the hearts of His people.

In this last week I was given a list of churches and pastors and I was asked to evaluate them for a television network that is beginning. They are trying to decide who to put on it. Out of the 100 churches I found myself struggling to recommend the preaching in these large churches, noting that what had been sent to me were that they were large therefore that must be a successful church. Hardly a week goes by that someone gives me a book written by some of the pastors of those churches and they ask me "Pastor, what do you think of this book?" As I read it I see that it very clearly falls into a category that has swept not the liberal church or the cults but the evangelical church. It falls into that category called the prosperity gospel. It is a preaching that says that Jesus saves you but that's not the big deal. The big deal is that when you come to Jesus by faith, you may claim health, wealth, power and prestige. You may name it and claim it if you have enough faith.

I went to one of these churches websites. God's will is that every believer should become whole, every believer healthy, every believer successful and prosperous in every area of life physically (health and wealth) as well as spiritually but because of sin, the lack of belief, not every believer realizes this in their stay upon the earth but that shouldn't prevent all believers from seeking this fullness that Christ has provided from the cross. The notion is that it is also called positive confession that here are these things that God wants you to have and if you believe and confess it then you may possess it. If you will believe it, you will receive it. Faith has become an instrument that allows God to give you all of these things and if you don't get them then the problem is not God. The problem is your lack of faith.

I have been given the books and I am responsible as a pastor to address those. This prosperity gospel has become the chief export of the church to South America, to Africa as well as sweeping the evangelical church today. I will tell you at the outset that I despise it. I have no doubt there are well meaning believers and even pastors caught up in it but I despise it because of what it teaches, what it says about the cross of Christ, what it promotes and most of all I despise it, with Paul, I would declare it's not merely an aberration but it's another gospel. If anyone comes preaching another gospel let it be anathema.

One text that is used is the one I have read for this study. It is the text that in most translations as in the English Standard version uses the word successful but in many other like the New American Standard version uses the word prosper. Jesus said in John 10:10 *[10b] I came that they may have life and have it abundantly*. What does that mean? It must mean abundance in things, right? What is the Gospel and if Joseph is prosperous then how does prosperity fit in the Gospel? Is there a prosperity gospel? It is not easy for me to deal with this. In my heart and life my desire is merely to exalt Christ but I know that there are false teachers and I know Israel kept getting in trouble because of false prophets. I believe the church is in trouble today because of false teaching at the core, not fashionable cultic heresies. At the core, what is the Gospel of God?

Let's take a look at Joseph. In the last study he was being pulled along by a chain. Can you imagine wearing the coat of privilege in a family and the next thing you know for a few pieces of silver and going from exaltation to humiliation and put in a pit? Then you are sold out of pit to Ishmaelites and now you're being pulled by a slave rope and chain hundreds of miles and you've now been deposited in a pagan country in a polytheistic nation. You are in this little strip of the Nile River Valley and you have fallen into the hands of a powerful man who serves under the reign of Pharaoh whose name is Potiphar. You have been bought and brought to serve as his slave.

I realize you know the rest of the story of Joseph and it's hard to read this without already knowing the rest of the story because this man who went from the privileged position of a son, to a pit, to Potiphar's house, then to prison and then

will end up in the penthouse of Pharaoh. Could you forget that for a moment? Go with me, with Joseph those hundreds of miles being dragged with that rope and chain and now sold as a slave. I would have called for a pity party about this time. God why have You abandoned me? God why have You deserted me? God I thought You loved me? God is this the way You treat me, Your child? God, how could this happen to me? I'm sure many of you are far more mature than me but I confess that it what I would have done. I would have been in depression, self-pity, felt deserted, and felt abandoned not only by my family but by God Himself.

Joseph did not feel this way. Let's look at the situation and his response. Here he has landed in this pagan arena as a slave in Potiphar's house. What is his response? He becomes a Christian slave. He brings to the task of being a slave all that it means to be a believer. I know I just deport New Testament language but as a believer and one who has trusted in Yahweh, he now brings the claims of Yahweh and Jehovah in his life to the task of being a slave. He brings industry, ingenuity, initiative and in fact he is such a good slave, they take him out of being a field hand and put him in a house. In fact, they put him over the entire house and all that Potiphar thought about was 'when is the next meal?' He didn't think about anything else because Joseph as a slave, with a Christian world and life view, settled in God and not self-pity, with the joy of the Lord coming right through his slavery, brought a testimony that was just unbelievable. That's Joseph in his situation and his response.

Then Joseph encounters temptation. What will be his response? Let's look at the text. Genesis 39:6b–10 says

[6b] Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. [7] And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." [8] But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. [9] He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" [10] And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.

Here Mrs. Potiphar sees a handsome slave who is obviously gaining popularity all around, who is bringing the success of God's hand and presence even into the house of Potiphar, and she looks at him and decides she wants him. Here is Joseph who had been under the siege of Satan through disloyal brothers selling him out for twenty pieces of silver, in slavery of the Ishmaelites, now bought and brought coming under the siege of Satan through the instrumentality of a powerful, conniving woman and the temptation of sexual immorality.

What is Joseph's response? There are four things to point out here. One, he says "I will not violate the charge that has been given to me. Everything has been

put in my hands. My master trusts me. I will not violate what he has entrusted to me for I will be a good steward.” Two, he says “I will not violate the covenant of marriage. You are his wife and you belong to him. He belongs to you. You do not belong to me.” Three, he says “I will not sin against my master. This man who has imprisoned me, holds me in slavery, I will not sin against.” Four, he says “I will not sin against my God. I will not do this wickedness that would violate the stewardship of my vocation, the sanctity of marriage, my master’s trust in me and I will not violate my God.” She assaults him day after day with these temptations and Joseph has no ability to leave because he is slave so he can’t be free of her but he attempts to answer and the result is his new situation and his final response. Where does this act of righteousness get him? Genesis 39:11–23 says

[11] But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, [12] she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. [13] And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, [14] she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. [15] And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.” [16] Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, [17] and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. [18] But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.” [19] As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, “This is the way your servant treated me,” his anger was kindled. [20] And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. [21] But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. [22] And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. [23] The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed (prosper).

Now Joseph is in a new situation. The woman cooks up the evidence, brings an accusation that is unjust and takes the evidence to Mr. Potiphar who we now find as Mr. Gullible. Mr. Gullible believes her and with a kangaroo court the judgment is passed and Joseph is sent off to prison. Now what is Joseph’s response? My response in this situation would have been “Oh Lord, here I am being faithful to You, now look what it got me! Not only was I a slave but now I’m a prisoner.” That is not Joseph’s response. Joseph does not lose happiness over happenstance for he brings the joy of the Lord into every circumstance. I can

almost hear Joseph now “Oh I guess Yahweh has a prison ministry for me” and Joseph begins a prison ministry that we will look at in the next study.

Here we see how the hand of the Lord continues to be with him. God’s hand was with him as a privileged son, in the pit, in Potiphar’s house and the Lord was with him in the prison and the Lord prospered Joseph. What is that prosperity? We live in a broken world and there will be times that you will be deserted and forsaken. You will face difficulties and brokenness throughout all of life. What is the promise of the Lord and what is it that Joseph is shouting out to us about Christ in us? Let me give you five things.

The first one is the foundation of Gospel prosperity. I didn’t say the foundation of prosperity Gospel but a Gospel prosperity. The foundation is simply this; it said five times in the text that ‘the Lord was with him.’ It wasn’t that the circumstances were going his way or that his bank account was increasing. The prosperity of Joseph was simply this; whether at home or in a pit or in Potiphar’s house as a slave or in a prison the Lord will never leave you nor forsake you. The prosperity of the Gospel work in the life, not a prosperity Gospel, is that when God’s name and Joseph’s name are mentioned in the text they are mentioned together in the text and it’s repeated in verse, 2, 3, 5, 21, and 23 that ‘the Lord was with him.’

He had not a religion, but he had a personal relationship with the living God and note the careful choice of the word. It doesn’t say that Joseph stayed with the Lord but it says the Lord was with Joseph. This isn’t a Horatio Alger story of luck and pluck but this is a story of God’s grace laying hold, taking hold and putting a grip on a man and taking him through the brokenness, traitoriness, and disloyalty of this world but the living God does not forsake him. God is with him and that is all that matters to Joseph, not his situation or his garments or the acclaim or his position but his relationship with the Lord God for God was with him.

The Lord has established this relationship and Joseph enjoys a personal relationship with the living God that is vital for it’s an overcoming relationship. Slavery chains can’t stop it. Prison bars can’t stop it. The sides of a pit can’t stop it. This relationship is vital, overcoming and visible. In the text it says Pharaoh says ‘the Lord is with you. There is something different about you.’ This relationship is also verbal. Joseph says ‘I cannot sin against my Lord.’ He is owning his relationship not only vitally and visually but verbally. He is confessing his Lord. This relationship is also victorious because it is not stopped by the moment, the situation or the deceitfulness and treachery of others.

It even shows up in evidence. Joseph manifests the presence of God by his industriousness, his integrity, his selflessness and his consistency. Note that wherever he goes something happens. He is not moving by happiness and happenstance. He is moving with the joy of the Lord. Here is the abundant life. It is not life that is determined by circumstances but it is life that is overcoming in every circumstance and in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through

Christ who has loved us. Here is the evidence. Here is a man of God who knows the love of God and the Lord is with him. Nothing can separate him from the love of Christ, not famine, nakedness, sword, principalities, height, death, treachery, prison, or slavery. Christ is at work in him. He knows that work is within him so it shows up in his work, not simply his joy but in his work.

Joseph your calling is to be a slave. Okay I'll be a Christian slave. I'll be a believer who is a slave. He gets noticed and they think we need to keep promoting him up the rank of slaverydom, whatever that means. The more I give him the more it blesses me. There is something about these believers. He is so industrious, has so much integrity, initiative, so trustworthy and honest that all I have to do is worry about where my next meal is coming from. What's for supper? Maybe that was because Potiphar was a winsome kind of guy. No, for when Joseph goes into prison the keeper of the prison thinks with this guy around I don't have to worry about anything. This guy isn't a prisoner. This guy changes everything around here. It's amazing what happens to the work ethic of believers when they don't worship their work. They use their work to worship God. It is amazing what happens when they do their honest work no matter what it is, heartily as unto the Lord.

That brings me to a warning about the Gospel that brings this kind of prosperity to a living, vital, visible, verbal relationship with the Lord because this text is also used to teach not a Gospel that brings the prosperity of an overcoming life like God's grace over our sin but this passage is used in the incessant, contemporary drumbeat version of a prosperity Gospel that makes no sense from the Word of God. Jesus says He has come so that we might have life and have it more abundantly but He is not talking about the absence of clouds in our skies. He is not talking about the fact that Christians don't get sick or don't die. He is saying that no matter what comes in life that He'll not leave you nor forsake you. Romans 8:32–39 says

[32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is not Christ that gives us all, it is Christ that gives us life so all that we have is now Christ's. Look at history. Go look at the life of the early church in Hebrews 11.

Read about the believers in the Old Testament and the New Testament. They were killed. Go read church history. Read about Latimer and Ridley in their 70s dying for Christ. See the missionaries taking the spears to reach the Auca Indians. See the five women left without husbands and then see 80 percent of those Indians come to Christ within a generation. It doesn't make sense when you look at the history of the Gospel and the history of the church. It is not the size of our bank accounts or the fact that we were always rising up in positions of prestige that attracts people to Christ. It is in our suffering that people see the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not in our triumphalism but in our humility. It is in the triumph of Christ in us in a broken world using broken instruments like us and that is what the history of the church and Gospel has shown.

Look at the context here. How can you read a prosperity Gospel here? Yes Joseph prospered but he is still a slave. He is still a prisoner. His prosperity was not the removal of injustice. His prosperity is that chains and bars did not stop the joy of the Lord showing in his life. Biblically what is being promised in this prosperity Gospel? In the whole prosperity Gospel the notion is adversity is a lack of faith and prosperity is the evidence of strong faith. The Bible tells me that God actually blesses us with adversity. Adversity is not judgment. Sometimes adversity is blessing. James 1:2–4 says *[2] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4] And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* Neither is prosperity the hand of God's blessing always.

Why does the Psalmist say "O God why do the wicked prosper?" Is God blessing them? Many times prosperity is the warning where God gave them over. You want these idols? Then I'll give them to you. Prosperity can be discipline and judgment. Adversity can be blessing. God's hand works in various and glorious ways but it always works in one direction and that's the Gospel. The Gospel isn't Jesus went to the cross to give you your idolatry. The Gospel did not come to affirm covetousness. In fact, look at the warnings throughout the Scripture. Jesus said in Matthew 19:24, *[24] "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* I warn you not to be lovers of money for it is the root of all evil. It is not these things that make our life.

I want to be clear here. I am not saying that riches are sin. In fact when I see people with many resources my heart goes out to them because to whom much is given much is required (Luke 12:48). There were 10 talents, 5 talents and 1 talent. The question is not the resources you have. The question is how did you

get them? Why do you have them and do they have you? The problem is not a life that has been entrusted with riches but the problem is as one pastor said, is if you die rich. The problem with the man with one talent was that he buried it. If God has given you something in this life use it, don't die with it so that a scorebook is put up in the obituary. You are to use it because that's why God gave it to you.

I pray for people to have productive jobs and for people to get well but I also know that God takes people through the failure of a company, a job, a body and that's not God withdrawing for that is God taking you through something. God in the Gospel has not promised you cloudless skies and an unbroken world. He has promised you the power of His presence. The Gospel is that God in Christ has reconciled you to Himself, He is with you and He will never leave you nor forsake you. I am yours, you are Mine and I sing over you. That is the Gospel and I can't preach to you any other Gospel but that Christ is enough. It is not Christ plus...health or Christ plus money or Christ plus power or Christ plus prestige. I have only one Gospel and that is Christ is all, in all and through all and to live is Christ.

I have the Gospel that I saw in the deacon in Uganda. I would see him show up every day for the meetings with his only coat carefully cleaned, only shirt, only tie, only pants and those scuffed up shoes cleaned off of that Ugandan dust and no socks. Before I left I gave him a shirt wondering how my shirt was going to fit him, I gave him socks, a tie and I said to him "I want to give this to you." He said "Praise the Lord, I know just who needs this." That is the Gospel of prosperity. It's not about me and what I have. It's about the Lord and what He is giving to me to go through me.

I want to give you this encouragement. The Gospel of prosperity makes a lot of sense as Jesus the Genie where I'll rub with my faith that I'll enable Him to give me the idolatry of this world but the Biblical Gospel does not come by intuition or naturally for it comes supernaturally and it comes by revelation. That's why at Briarwood what was begun almost 50 years ago must be relentlessly, passionately and without distraction continued to equip Christians to make disciples with the Word of God who think Christianly and if God has us in a difficult spot He hasn't abandoned us. He is there with you. He will take you through that. It is not the things of this world that you have that measure God's blessings, it is what God is doing with you in this world in every situation that declares the power of the Gospel of grace in Jesus Christ. In every small group, every congregational community, from this pulpit, in every family, in every devotional life, it must be Christ and Christ alone. We must passionately and relentlessly commit ourselves to it.

I have one observation. The Gospel of God produces the prosperity of Christians who make a difference. I like to call them thermostat Christians, not thermometer Christians. They are not thermometer Christians who use Jesus for the values of

this world. I know many of my brothers and sisters have been caught in this that is not the Gospel and I know many are well meaning in it but that is not the Gospel. The prosperity Gospel says my faith enables God to give me the things of this world and if I don't have them then the problem is my faith. The Gospel is this. My faith doesn't enable God. God enables me by the power of the Holy Spirit to believe Him. God in Christ sends the power of the Holy Spirit and frees me from sin, myself and this world and it invites me not to grab more of the world in Christ, but it invites me to die to myself, sin and the world and the Holy Spirit enables me to believe in Christ and Christ is sufficient. I need no other, only Him. It is those lives that turn lives around and nations around.

Thermostat Christians change where they go, just like Joseph changes pit, Potiphar's house and he changes a prison. He is not a thermometer that reflects conditions that he inherited. He is a thermostat that changed everything everywhere he went. That is what God does with the power of the Gospel. My family, my home, my church, my community all will change with the power of the Gospel.

This past week when I was home on a study sabbatical I met a gentleman who wanted me to be on a television program. The issue they were discussing was the moral decline of the nation. He said to me "Harry if you could do one thing what would it be?" I said "I would try to win someone to Jesus and disciple them." He said "I know you do that but what would you do to change the nation?" I said "I would try to win someone to Jesus and disciple them." Jesus doesn't change cultures. He changes people that change cultures. Prison changed when Joseph showed up. Potiphar's house changed when Joseph showed up because of what God's grace did in Joseph.

So here is the takeaway of the transforming truth. A Gospel life of prosperity is the result of God's presence and measured by the imperfect yet growing triumph of God's grace over sin in our life and the inevitable impact of our passionately enjoying God – You're enough! It is not You and my health or You and my successful business. You are enough. It is that Gospel of the prosperity of an overcoming life of sin in this world that Jesus brings with His presence.

I despise the prosperity Gospel. I despise the prosperity Gospel because of what it is doing in other countries as we export it. I despise it because of what it is doing racially. I despise it because of what it is doing in the economically oppressed, all in the name of Christianity, but I want to preach the true Gospel of Jesus that in Christ you can be delivered from your sins and made right in Him. Come and die. Come and know Him that He is enough.

I saw it in these past two week when I came back. I saw it with a man who watched his wife, in God's sovereignty, face a terminal illness and go home to be with the Lord. I saw him grieve with the hope of Christ and joy in the Lord. It wasn't that we didn't believe enough for her to get healed. Sometimes God does

that miraculous healing but there was the power of the Gospel. I saw the power of the Gospel when just a few days before I saw not a man with his wife, but I saw a wife with her husband and trust God's providence as He took him home. I saw it with an elder in this church who got the sentence of a terminal illness, sought God to intervene miraculously, God said 'no' and the elder said 'Thy will be done, not my will be done.' I said while he could barely breathe about another elder in this church who had made a great movement on one of his heart issues which was the sanctity of life and here's a man who is moment's away from eternity and as I shared the victory of what this elder had done in the area of the sanctity of life, he throws up his hands and says 'touchdown Jesus!'

That is the Gospel of prosperity. That's the Gospel that brings us with victory over sin, death, hell, grave and the world. That's the Gospel I saw in a man in Charlotte who came around the corner, saw a wreck, walked up and saw his daughter dead. He picked her up lifeless in his arms. He wept and I sat with him and we wept together with no words for hours. Then I saw him go get in his car, go to the hospital where the girl who was driving the car where his daughter was killed was in the hospital but had survived. I saw him hug her, her dad and her mom and said "I'm so grateful you're alive." There was no bitterness. That's the Gospel at work. It is at those moments I see the power of the Gospel.

It was in 1969 when I saw an elder lose his wife at age 39 with four little girls and I went up to him and said "I'm so sorry." He said "I know God is doing something. Harry, what she has I wouldn't take away from her." I saw the flag of Christ rise over sin, death, hell and the grave. I didn't go outside to see what kind of car he was driving. It wasn't how much money he had in the bank. The Lord was with him and I saw that and I didn't have that and that's what I needed and wanted. *[25] Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you* (Psalm 73:25). Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. Thank You for the imperfect yet growing testimony of Joseph and the same thing we see in so many around us. God, would You do this work in our lives? As a pastor my heart aches when I see Your people subtly and deceptively attacked with that which is not the Gospel. O God my heart is inflamed when another Gospel but the Gospel of saving grace in Jesus Christ who delivers us from our sin and all our fears, when I see that Gospel being polluted. God I ask you to please take me home before I ever would prostitute that Gospel. I care not about numbers and I care not about prestige. God for Your people, protect them with the love of Christ in which Christ is there all in all and do a great work in them. Father, please move in Your church and most of all move in us that we might serve You. God, we are humbled because we're not with You but You came to be with us and therefore we can walk with You and that's enough. There is no one in heaven but You. There is nothing on earth but You, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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