

The Pit is Part of the Fulfillment of our Dreams.

(A message to help us realize that the difficult times in life are there to prepare us for what God is wanting to do through us in the future).

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Dr. Ian F. Loughor-Clarke, Pastor
admin@haenertsburgchristianchurch.co.za

Main Scripture:

Genesis 45:7 (NIV)

⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.^a

Introduction:

Well good morning to you all and to all those viewers on YouTube and those that are listening on iTunes or podcast. It is such an honour and privilege to have you connecting and sharing this time with us.

There are 50 chapters in the book of Genesis and 13 chapters are given to the life of Joseph, meaning that there is great significance and God is wanting us to learn some lessons from His life. We have been exploring his life for a few weeks.

This is the 5th sermon in our series on the life of Joseph and we are going to be richly blessed as we study God and His Word once again. Please can I ask that you subscribe to our channels, so you are notified when a new video is added? Then if you miss a sermon you can just quickly catch up.

This morning my title is: The Pit is Part of the Fulfillment of our Dreams.

Genesis 37:19–28 (NIV)

¹⁹ “Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. ²⁰ “Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”

²¹ When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. “Let’s not take his life,” he said.

²² “Don’t shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don’t lay a hand on him.” Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

^a Or save you as a great band of survivors

²⁵ As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?
²⁷ Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.

²⁸ So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels^a of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

1. In our dreams we never see a pit?

Genesis 37:5–8 (NIV)

⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ 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.”

⁸ His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Do you see here with Joseph that the conception of the dream is absolutely awesome? With this there was tremendous excitement and zeal, but, and here is where the big but comes in, which none of us anticipate. He never dreamt about the pit or his slavery or him being thrown into prison. We believe it is just going to be plain sailing and fall into our laps. Let’s be honest, do you believe that Joseph would have shared this dream with anyone if he had known that he would almost be killed and then betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery. If taken a step further, do you think he would have shared it with anyone if he thought that he would spend years in prison for something that he never did? Somehow I think not!

You see from the conception of our dream to the fulfillment, God is normally silent. If God had to share the different things we were going to go through I guarantee you that we would run in the opposite direction. We can clearly see this with Jonah when he runs in the opposite direction because he knows that if he goes to Nineveh and tells them what God says they will listen and God will show them mercy and he did not want this to take place.

I personally have come to learn in life that there is no gain without pain.

We need to realise that, for us to see our dreams being fulfilled, we will land up in the pit of life. I do not know what the pit might be for you, but I know it will come. These different trials, tribulations and hardships that we have to go through and endure have a reason and we will have a look at that just now.

Can you believe that it took 13 years for the dream to start falling into place and only at the age of about 24 was it completely fulfilled? Well if you know Jesus and the fact that Joseph is a shadow of Jesus, it makes it very easy because we should all know when God started his earthly ministry. That is correct he was 30 years old and had been separated from his precious father 13 years before when he was a teenager of 17 years. Jesus also started His earthly ministry at the age of 30 years.

^a That is, about 8 ounces (about 0.2 kilogram)

2. Why did he end up in the pit?

Who of you would like to tell us why you think he ended up in the pit of life?

Genesis 37:2 (NIV)

²This is the account of Jacob.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

Now at the outset you can see that Joseph grew up in a dysfunctional home and certainly not in a Christian home that was just amazing like some of us. Do you remember he worked 7 years so that he could marry Rachel and the father deceived Jacob and substituted Leah, Rachel's older sister? How many of you would work for 7 years for your wife? Man O man I don't think many men would do that today. Then he has to work another 7 years to get the woman he wanted, who was Rachel. This is now pushing it a little far. So, he basically worked 14 years of his life before he could get the woman of his dreams. Now, here is a very important lesson that we have to learn: what you sow you will reap. Remember that Jacob deceived his father and stole the birthright from Esau. Then the principle of what goes around comes around came into play. Then Jacob ends up having to work 7 years to marry the woman that he desires. How sad is this, but shows you that, what you sow you will reap. He deceived his father and then came his turn, where he was deceived by his father in law. Even though he moved to another country this principle still got him.

Jacob was married to two sisters, Leah and Rachel that were both infertile. Now because of this they offered up their servant girls so that they could become surrogate mothers for them, which is often found in the Bible. Can you imagine having to take care of four wives how difficult and dysfunctional this must have been. One is already a handful! Only joking. Can you just imagine how busy this poor man must have been? I think I would have run away.

Now you must understand that there are now 12 children in this household, from different mothers and then to add insult to injury, Joseph is favoured by his father Jacob, because he was born from his favourite wife Rachel. Remember she was the woman of his dreams. Then, because he was not patient he takes matters into his own hands and has 3 children with the servant girls. This is not Joseph's fault that he was treated with special love and affection above his other brothers. This flaw in character was in his father not him. Now do you understand why Jacob favoured Joseph? Not that it was OK or acceptable, but it was clearly the case in this home.

Now can you just imagine why the other brothers felt that they were less loved by their father than Joseph. They were just as much Jacob's children as Joseph, yet he gets treated better than them and this would not just have caused tremendous hurt, but anger, resentment, bitterness and evil thoughts in the other brothers. Eventually this clear favoritism took a concrete form when Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colours or a richly ornamented robe. The other brothers probably got underpants, so you can imagine they were hurt. So, you can imagine what this would have caused in the hearts of the other boys. Do you think they did not discuss this with each other and tell each other how much they hated all the other brothers? By the way Leah had 6 sons and 1 daughter.

Genesis 37:4 (NIV)

⁴When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

On top of this Jacob abused Joseph, by expecting him to spy on his brothers and taught his son to be a little tell-tale. We see that he came and gave Jacob a bad report about his brothers and this would have just taken it over the edge because no brothers like a tell-tale in the family.

Then to add insult to injury when he already knows they do not like him he goes and shares a dream with them. This just totally tipped things over the edge. They questioned if he thought that he was going to rule over them and then, all this was just too much.

Like I mentioned last week we need to be wise with who we share our dreams and certainly not just anyone and, most certainly, not someone that is hostile towards you.

These are all some of the reasons that Joseph landed in the pit and most of it was not his doing or his fault, but it was done to him because of jealousy, hatred and anger.

You might land up in the pit or prison of life in your situation due to nothing of your own doing, but one thing we need to know that, no matter where we find ourselves in life, God is with us. Just because of unfair treatment from others does not mean that you are not in the will of God. It just means that you live in a broken and sinful world and it gives God an opportunity to show Himself strong in your life.

Then there are other times that we are in the pit of life or in prison because of our own doing and we need to take responsibility for that but also remember that it need not be the end, but rather the beginning.

So, if you are in the pit at this point or moment in time do not become disillusioned but look to God so that you can begin to believe again.

Remember that sometimes for God to get us where He wants us in life and so that we can accomplish our dreams, we need to land up in the pit so that He can eradicate any pride, arrogance and self-entitlement mentalities. It is when we are in the pit that God is able to do His greatest work in our hearts and lives because we are vulnerable and will allow Him to have final say in our lives and mold us to His liking.

3. How did he feel in the pit?

One of the great things about being in a pit or prison experience is that we begin to question and ask things that are very pertinent to life and does not happen unless we are in that place.

I tend to find that the time that we grow the most in life, is when we are in the pit or the valley of life and not on the mountaintop. The most important thing when it comes to our pit experience is that we run to God and the tragedy is that most times when we are not in the pit we tend not to run to God.

Sometimes when we are in the pit the first thing that we feel is sorrow for ourselves and our situation. Eventually as we become more mature and time goes by and we become wise we forget about ourselves and we start to ask what we can learn from this experience or situation.

Holding onto feelings of indignation, irritation, anger, rage, malice, bitterness, resentment, hatred, retaliation, revenge, vengeance, murder and the like are foolishness and gets us nowhere. May we

allow God to do what he needs to do in our lives and do it quickly so that we can be removed from the pit and be used for His glory!

Colossians 3:8–10 (NIV)

⁸ But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Losers focus on what they are going **through**,
Champions focus on where they are going **to!**

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4. What should our reactions be when in the pit?

Most people resort to the following:

Pleading and begging.

Crying.

Screaming.

Swearing.

Fighting and hitting things.

Trade agreement.

Manipulation?

Philippians 4:4 (NIV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Sometimes in life we allow our emotions to get the better of us and we are directed and led by emotions as opposed to the will and the ways of God. Sometimes we scramble and look for solutions in our own strength and try to change the situation and sometimes it's to no avail.

God wants us all to get to the point that, no matter what happens around and about us, we remain godly and able to rejoice because we know that He is with us and in control. This is obviously easier said than done, but this is a maturing journey that all of us in life must learn.

May we ensure that every situation that we find ourselves in, our reactions, whether in the pit or on the mountaintop of life, God comes first and He always gets the glory no matter what the situation.

5. Was he going to stay in the pit?

Remember that I said that our focus must never be on the pit, but rather on the Palace because that is our destiny.

In a sense we determine whether we are going to stay in the pit or not and this is based on our attitude.

Genesis 39:6-15 (NIV)

⁶ So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, ⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

⁸ But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹ No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" ¹⁰ And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

¹¹ One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. ¹² She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

¹³ When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, ¹⁴ she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. ¹⁵ When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

How long do you think he would have stayed in prison if he did not know the King of ages?

Can you tell me what it is that caused him to be removed from prison?

So, if he did not know God then he would possibly have remained in prison till his death.

Sometimes it depends on our attitude whether we get out of the pit or not, but more importantly it is who we know. Joseph knew God and He was with Joseph and gave him the ability to interpret dreams. If it were not for this gift given to him by God, he would have never got out.

If you are in the pit of life this might also help:

1. Set goals and make plans.
2. Focus on being out of the pit.
3. Express gratitude for life.
4. Learn from your past.
5. Seek advice, help and support.
6. Keep your mind and self-busy.
7. Keep trusting and hoping for change.

We must never allow the pit to stop us from believing the promises of God in our lives. Remember we are highly favoured of God when we stay faithful and dedicated to Him. Don't allow the pits of life to stop you from believing that He wants to bless you and prosper you.

If you never felt Pain, how would you know that I'm a Healer?
If you never went through Difficulty, how would you know that I'm a Deliverer?
If you never had a Trial, how would you know that I'm a Comforter?
If you never made a Mistake, how would you know that I'm Forgiving?
If you never were in Trouble, how would you know that I will come to your Rescue?
If you never were Broken, how would you know that I can make you Whole?
If you never had a Problem, then how would you know that I can Solve them?
If you never had known Suffering, then how would you know what Jesus went through?
If you never went through the Fire, then how would you become Pure?
If I gave you All things, how would you Appreciate them?

If I never Corrected you, how would you know that I Love you?
If you had all Power, then how would you learn to Depend on me?
If your life was Perfect, then what would you Need me for?

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You might be in the pit of life now, but become determined to get out with the help of God.

6. Can you be grateful for the pit?

Genesis 45:2–7 (NIV)

² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance."^a

Joseph was 39 years old when he saw his brothers, for the first time in 22 years, from when they sold him into slavery. Can you imagine the full dream did not just take 13 years when he became the overseer of Egypt for Pharaoh, but actually about 24 years later when his father came to Egypt and bowed down before Joseph? Joseph at that point must have been about 41 years of age when his brothers came to Egypt for the second time. The whole world owed their lives to him, because of who? God, because God gave him the dream and he acknowledges that it was because of God that the events of his life took place as it did. Can you understand how loved, honoured, respected and revered Joseph must have been by the entire world at that point? Remember that dreams are not fulfilled overnight, but, many times, sometimes take decades.

Joseph, I'm very sure, was very grateful for the pit because this ensured that he was unfairly imprisoned but, in the end, it put him in a place where he could be found and interpret Pharaoh's dreams. In the beginning, however Joseph might have wanted to kill Potiphar's wife because he was lied about and falsely accused and imprisoned, but in the end, it worked out for the good of Joseph because he loved God.

Remember, after interpreting the dreams, Pharaoh immediately put Joseph in charge of everything and was 2nd to Pharaoh in the land. Have you ever thought about it that he could have put Potiphar's wife to death immediately, yet you never see any vengeance from his side. How many of you would have thought that now is my opportunity and I'm now going to get her back and put her to death or in prison?

Do you know that Joseph's father gave him a coat and his brother ripped it off in **disgust?**
Then Potiphar gave him a coat and his wife ripped it from him in **lust**.
Then when he was exalted by Pharaoh, he was given a coat in **trust**.

How did Jesus go to the cross and what happened?

^a Or save you as a great band of survivors

Do you think he now has another coat?

We need to learn to give thanks in all circumstances and even for our pit experiences, because that is why God was able to accomplish certain things in our lives and hearts.

7. When in the palace never forget the pit?

Revelation 2:5 (NIV)

⁵ Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

It takes tremendous maturity and spiritual strength not to become proud and arrogant in life when you end up in the Palace of life. I think, by this stage, all the pride and arrogant self-entitlement that was rooted in Joseph had been stripped away by his difficult pit experiences in life.

Joseph remembered where he had come from and how God supernaturally took care of him and lifted him up out of prison. This was done because of the favour of God and because of his mercy and kindness. Joseph was able to show mercy and grace and kindness to those who so terribly mistreated and abused him, because He saw the hand of God all over His life and acknowledge this fact.

When he met his brothers instead of having them put in prison or killed, he cries over them with great joy and happiness, because he was able to see them all safe and sound. He even goes a step further and gives them Goshen, which is the best part of the land in Egypt. He repaid evil for good and may we all learn to do the same.

May we never forget from where we have come and where God has taken us and always give Him the glory no matter what stage of life we may find ourselves in.

Psalms 23:4–6 (NIV)

⁴ Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,^a
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD

Re-Cap:

1. In our dreams we never see a pit?

^a Or *through the darkest valley*

2. **Why did he end up in the pit?**
3. **How did he feel in the pit?**
4. **What should our reactions be when in the pit?**
5. **Was he going to stay in the pit?**
 - a. Set goals and make plans.
 - b. Focus on being out of the pit.
 - c. Express gratitude for life.
 - d. Learn from your past.
 - e. Seek advice, help and support.
 - f. Keep your mind and self-busy.
 - g. Keep trusting and hoping for change.
6. **Can you be grateful for the pit?**
7. **When in the palace never forget the pit?**

Amen

CLOSING:

I would like to pray for those that are now in a pit and battling. God wants to help you so that you can see things from His perspective.

Come forward and let us minister to you.

******* Let us pray! *******

Amen.

This sermon was preached by Dr. Ian Loughor-Clarke at Haenertsburg Christian Church on the 22nd July 2018. (c) Dr. Ian F. Loughor-Clarke, Haenertsburg Christian Church.

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