

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 12: "Fruitful in the Land of My Affliction"

(Genesis 40-45)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand that if we are faithful and obedient, God will consecrate our afflictions for our good.

Breck England: "What we call the Old Testament, Jesus referred to as "the law and the prophets." **The Lord intends everything in the Old Testament to bring us to Christ.** As our goal in life is to "come unto Christ and be perfected in him" the **Old Testament becomes a precious and invaluable guidebook** for us" (*Meridian Magazine*, February 2014).

2 Nephi 2:2: Nevertheless, Jacob, my first-born in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; **and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain.**

1. Joseph interprets the dreams of the butler, the baker, and Pharaoh. Pharaoh makes Joseph ruler over all Egypt. (Genesis 40-41)

Joseph's involvement in dreams:

- Genesis 37:7: All the sheaves bow down to Joseph's sheaf of wheat.
- Genesis 40:10: Butler's dream—vine, three grape clusters, pressed into a cup for Pharaoh. He will be freed.
- Genesis 40:16: Bakers dream—three baskets of baked goods on his head; birds eat them. He will be hanged.
- Genesis 41:2-4: Pharaoh's dream of 7 fat kine and 7 lean kine; the lean kine eat the fat kine.
- Genesis 41:5-7: Pharaoh's dream of 7 fat corn ears and 7 lean corn ears; the lean ears eat the fat ones.
(7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine are coming.)

George A. Horton, Jr.: "Dreams once again became a pivotal point in Joseph's life... Pharaoh also had dreams; can we doubt that they were to prepare a people for a coming calamity? **They revealed God's hand at work in the affairs of men** in order that **he could perform his will in their behalf.** Pharaoh's dream was a small but integral part of the unfolding drama in the history of Israel as foreseen before the foundation of this world by an all-knowing Heavenly Father. **Since the beginning, he has had purposes and designs for his children, a mission for Israel, and a special call for Joseph**" (Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3: Genesis to 2 Samuel* [Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985], 68).

Challenges and trials faced by Joseph:

- After Joseph received the coat of many colors, **his brothers "hated him"** (Genesis 37:4).
- Joseph was **cast into a pit** by his brothers (Genesis 37:22).
- His brothers conspired to kill him and then **sold him as a slave** instead (Genesis 37:18-28).
- In Egypt, Joseph was **sold to Potiphar**, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard (Genesis 39:1).
- When Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce Joseph, he was arrested and **thrown in prison** (Genesis 39:20).

Joseph was a type of the Savior:

- Joseph was the favored son of his father, as was Jesus.
- Joseph was rejected by his brothers, the Israelites, as was Jesus.
- Joseph was sold by his brothers into the hands of the Gentiles, as was Jesus.
- Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, the price of a slave his age. Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave his age.
- In their attempt to destroy Joseph, his brothers actually set up the conditions that would bring about their eventual temporal salvation. Jesus, by his being given into the hands of the Gentiles, was crucified and completed the atoning sacrifice and became the Deliverer for all mankind.
- Joseph began his mission of preparing salvation for Israel at age thirty, just as Jesus began his ministry of preparing salvation for the world at age thirty.
- When Joseph was finally raised to his exalted position in Egypt, all bowed the knee to him. All will eventually bow the knee to Jesus.
- Joseph provided bread for Israel and saved them from death, all without cost. Jesus, the Bread of Life, did the same for all men.

2. Joseph makes himself known to his brothers and forgives them. (Genesis 42-45)

Neal A. Maxwell: "One deeply admires those wronged who, nevertheless, go on doing that which is right, refusing to become offended or bitter. Let others charge God foolishly (Job 1:22); these faithful souls are magnanimous and forgiving, as was a generous Joseph in Egypt to his erring brothers: "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:6). **Such Saints fashion forgiveness where others would revel in resentment!**" (*Ensign*, May 1983, 11).

Arthur R. Bassett: "History would search far to find another scene so filled with human feelings as that of Joseph listening to his brethren (who were unaware that he could understand them, since he had always spoken to them through an interpreter) speak of their punishment for having sold their brother into slavery. Joseph responded with sternness, as God must sometimes do with us, but when one sees him **moved to tears** on two occasions--to the point that he must leave the room to hide his face from his brethren--one senses **the depth of his Christlike love, filled with forgiveness for the truly penitent.**

"I respect our father Joseph for many things--for his faith, his virtue, his knowledge, his temperance and patience, and for his godliness. **But most of all I respect him for his brotherly kindness and love.** These are his most godlike attributes; these are his touch-point with the Savior and his touch-point with us, his posterity. **These are the attributes we should attempt to emulate** as the grandchildren of this model of Christian excellence; one of the greatest men this world has ever produced, **a father who taught all of his posterity what it means to truly know Christ**" ("Joseph, Model of Excellence," *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, 13).

D&C 64:8-11: My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened. Wherefore, I say unto you, that **ye ought to forgive one another**; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. **I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.** And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.

President Joseph F. Smith: "I feel in my heart to forgive all men in the broad sense that God requires of me to forgive all men, ... to this extent I bear no malice toward any of the children of my Father.

There are those— **and they abound largely in our midst**, who will shut their eyes to every virtue and to every good thing connected with this latter-day work, and will pour out floods of falsehood and misrepresentation against the people of God. **I forgive them for this**" (October Conference, 1907).

D&C 58:3,4: Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation. **For after much tribulation come the blessings.** Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand.

Romans 8:28: "And we know that **all things work together for good to them that love God.** . . ."

Psalms 27:14: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart."

3. How have negative experiences in your life later been turned to blessings??

Brother Todd A. Britsch illustrates an important principle that Joseph lived by: "It is important to know that God's promises of the ultimate triumph of goodness and righteousness are valid. I would like to illustrate this point with an analogy from football.

"A few years ago, before the time that all BYU games were televised live, I landed at the Salt Lake airport just as a BYU 'away' game was concluding. I rushed around the terminal until I finally found someone who could assure me that we had won, although by a very close score. That evening, after returning to Provo, I went downstairs to watch the replay of the game on KBYU. My demeanor was amazingly serene. When we fumbled or had a pass intercepted, I hardly reacted. My wife could even let our children get around me. Usually I feel obligated to help my brethren in striped shirts by pointing out their errors in judgment. **But on that day I remained absolutely calm.**

"The cause of my improved behavior was obvious: **I already knew the outcome of the game**--BYU would win. It is amazing how that knowledge changes things: running backs can fumble, linebackers can miss tackles, and offensive guards can blow blocking assignments. But when we know the final score, such things can be endured.

"We also know the final score for the history of this world and for the life of the righteous. **The Lord and his people will triumph.** It is true that the sorrows of this world and the strength of Satan's forces will win a number of the skirmishes. Satan and his followers, as well as the natural circumstances of mortal life, will inflict many bruises and win many battles. **But God, who knows the end from the beginning, has promised that those who serve him will receive the fullness of his blessings. When we realize that righteous living puts us on the winning side, we can learn to trust him during trying times.**" ("Trusting God When Things Go Wrong," September 30, 1997)

We must allow God to do things in His own way and at His own time.

1. Joseph's righteousness is clearly demonstrated by **his access to the Spirit.**
2. We ought, by our devotion to the Lord and principles of his gospel, **to make things better** wherever we may be.
3. God is often invisibly at work in our lives even though we may be certain that He has forgotten us. **Part of the principle of faith in Jesus Christ must be faith in his timing**, and also the conviction that **he loves us** and has our best interests at heart, **whether we can see him at work or not.**

Elder Marlin K. Jensen: "Discerning the "overruling, almighty hand" of God . . . is not always easy. **Only he knows the end from the beginning and has all things present before him.** If he can make provision for a needed second set of plates hundreds of years before Martin Harris's misfortune, who but the most spiritual knows at any given moment where he may be taking us? My own feeling is that it might be well for us to remember that although God's children are very important to the accomplishment of his purposes, we often are not unlike the young children at an amusement park who drive those little centrally controlled race cars that travel a circular course on a metal rail with their wheels several inches off the ground. The young, excited drivers furiously pump the gas pedals and spin the steering wheels, fully believing they are having some influence, but the cars go at a speed and in a direction that are largely determined by park management!" (*Out of Obscurity: The LDS Church in the Twentieth Century* [29th Annual Sperry Symposium], 2,3).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks: "**The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing.** If we can truly believe he has our welfare at heart, **may we not let his plans unfold as he thinks best?** The same is true with the second coming and with all those matters wherein **our faith needs to include faith in the Lord's timing** for us personally, not just in His overall plans and purposes" (Dallin H. Oaks: *Even As I Am*, 93).

D&C 122:5-9:

5 If thou art called to pass through **tribulation**; if thou art in **perils among false brethren**; if thou art in perils among **robbers**; if thou art in **perils by land or by sea**;

6 If thou art accused with all manner of **false accusations**; if thine **enemies fall upon thee**; if they **tear thee from the society of thy father and mother** and brethren and sisters; and if with a drawn sword thine enemies **tear thee from the bosom of thy wife**, and of thine offspring, and thine elder son, although but six years of age, shall cling to thy garments, and shall say, My father, my father, why can't you stay with us? O, my father, what are the men going to do with you? and if then he shall be thrust from thee by the sword, and thou be **dragged to prison**, and thine **enemies prowl around thee like wolves** for the blood of the lamb;

7 And if thou shouldst be **cast into the pit**, or into the hands of **murderers**, and the **sentence of death** passed upon thee; if thou be **cast into the deep**; if the **billowing surge** conspire against thee; if **fierce winds** become thine enemy; if the **heavens gather blackness**, and all the **elements combine** to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very **jaws of hell** shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that **all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.**

8 **The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?**

9 Therefore, hold on thy way, and the priesthood shall remain with thee; for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; **therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever.**

Elder Richard G. Scott: Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously. **When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more.** He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, understanding, and compassion, which polish you for your everlasting benefit. **To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain.**

While you are passing through [your trials], the pain and difficulty that comes will continue. **If all matters were immediately resolved at your first petition, you could not grow.** Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. **They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love** ("Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17).

Respond to these four questions to help you think about how adversity has shaped your lives.

- What are some of the trials you have faced in mortal life?
- What lessons have you learned from life's trials?
- If you could live your life over, what would you change about the way you dealt with your trials?
- How could you have taken better advantage of life's experiences?