

# Restoring my Soul

A five day devotional guide

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## RESTORING MY SOUL

*A five day devotional guide*

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## God's sovereign election

*Election* refers to everything that God has sovereignly chosen for each person. This includes their God-given *name* and the *works* which He has planned for them to do. In scriptural terms, a person's 'name' simply signifies the truth of who God intended for them to be as a son or daughter of His. All the elements of a person's name and works have been meticulously considered by God. This intricate plan is the unique predestination that He chose for them, from before the foundation of the world. God has proclaimed the name and works of every individual, and inscribed that word in the Lamb's book of life. His word concerning their predestination is forever settled in heaven. This is true for every person.

God's predestination for a person is unchangeable. This is the meaning of the verse, 'For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable'. God does not regret His choice, and He does not doubt that what He has chosen is the very best for each of us! The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all involved in fashioning each person's predestination. The apostle Peter explained that this predestination is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. We are sanctified to this predestination by the Holy Spirit. And Jesus Christ makes us sufficient for this predestination by the sprinkling of His blood. As we fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are made adequate to make our calling and election sure.

The principle of election is revealed in the account of Esau and Jacob. The Scriptures clearly explain that God's word concerning their predestination was proclaimed to their mother, Rebekah, before they were born. Why did God speak about what He had elected for each of them? He did so, in order that *His sovereign choice* for them would come to pass.

### References:

Eph 1:4  
Rom 11:29  
Jas 1:17

1Pe 1:1-2  
Gen 25:23  
2Pe 1:10

### Further Study:

Romans 9

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

## Choosing what God has chosen

Throughout the account of their lives, we observe that God's election was a major issue and point of contention for Esau and Jacob. Esau did not accept the sovereign choice of God for his life and, instead, tried to obtain the blessing of God according to his own definition. Even though Jacob appreciated God's choice and plan for his life, he did not trust that God would bring it to pass. Instead, Jacob tried to obtain the blessing of God by his own endeavours. Esau and Jacob needed to meet the Lord personally in order to resolve the issue of election.

We honour God by choosing what He has sovereignly chosen for us. We are strengthened in faith to gladly accept His predestination for our lives, recognising the many precious thoughts that He has for each of us. We present ourselves to do the works of righteousness that He has prepared for us in Christ Jesus. This is what it means to 'make our call and election sure'. The apostle Peter emphatically encouraged every believer to structure their Christian life upon the sure foundation of God's call and election. And he made the point that, if we do this, we will never stumble.

Our election is not based upon our natural capacities, our family lineage, or our achievements in life. Nor is it based on our expectations and ideas of how God could promote us, or how we could 'promote' Him. Election is God's sovereign plan for every individual. And this was finalised before we were even born. We could ask ourselves the question, 'Why did God choose *that* for me?' Well, He just did! The more important question is, 'Am I going to accept that?' We will be blessed by God as we accept His election upon our life.

**References:**

Psa 139:17-18

2Pe 1:10

Rom 4:19-20

Eph 1:3-4

Eph 2:10

**Further Study:**

Isaiah 64

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 6

## Esau rejected God's election

Esau rejected God's sovereign plan for his life. At first, when we look at the account of Esau in the Scripture, we can think that he simply made a silly decision to sell his birthright, and that we are not susceptible to that kind of whimsical behaviour. He sold his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew! Surely, we wouldn't do the same. However, the Scriptures teach us that many are defiled because they follow the way of Esau. Even if Esau had gained the whole world, what benefit would it be to him if he lost the blessing of God that is only received by choosing God's election?

If we do not honour God's call upon our life, we fall under the judgement of God. This is why the Scripture records, 'Many are called, but few are chosen [or elect].' Many people do not honour God's purpose for their life. These ones are not predestined to damnation. Rather, God gives them the liberty of choice, and their choice has eternal consequences. Every individual is accountable before God for how they respond to His election concerning their life.

Jacob was recovered to God's plan for his life by accepting, and submitting to, the chastening hand of the Lord. Jacob loved the spiritual blessing of God and sold everything to possess it. However, the Lord sought to reform Jacob's motivation toward the blessing and election which He had chosen for him. The Lord personally confronted him in order to change his nature. And when Jacob had wrestled with the angel of the Lord, he then received the blessing. Thus, the principle of election was established by God with Jacob. In contrast to this, Esau despised his particular calling and never found recovery. It was for this reason that God declared, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated'.

### References:

Heb 12:15-16

Mat 16:26

Mat 22:14

Rom 9:13-14

Isa 45:4

Isa 41:8

### Further Study:

Genesis 32

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 7

# The older shall serve the younger

God had chosen a specific predestination for Esau and a specific predestination for his brother, Jacob. The Lord spoke of this in His word to their mother, Rebekah, while the boys were still in her womb. The Lord declared, 'The older shall serve the younger'. Esau was to serve his younger brother, Jacob. This was the predestination that God had sovereignly chosen for Esau. And blessing would have been found by Esau if he had accepted God's sovereign choice for him. This predestination was confirmed by Isaac when he blessed Esau concerning the things to come. Isaac said to Esau, 'Indeed I have made him [Jacob] your master ... and you shall serve your brother'.

It is important to recognise that the predestination that God had chosen for Esau was not based on any of Esau's actions or responses throughout his life. His predestination was *sovereignly* chosen by God, before the foundation of the world. And it was declared to his mother before he himself had done anything good or evil.

Each of us must measure ourselves to the unique calling of God for our life. Although we do not have the capacity within ourselves to fulfil the Lord's calling, we have the dignity and freedom to choose how to respond to His command. We need to make a deliberate choice to live according to God's definition about who we are, and what we are to do. This is only possible as we meet the Lord and receive from Him the enabling capacity to fulfil our predestined name and works. We demonstrate that we have accepted the Lord's call as we embrace our predestination and fulfil the works that God has chosen for our life. We are blessed as we take hold of the Lord's sanctification for our life.

**References:**

Php 2:13  
Gen 25:23  
Heb 11:20

**Further Study:****Daily Proverb:**

Genesis 27

Proverbs 8

## Esau's desire for validation

As he grew up, Esau incorrectly assumed, and expected that because of his position in the family, the inheritance of the firstborn would be given to him. He was the firstborn son to Isaac. From Esau's perspective, according to family lineage, the right to the inheritance and blessing was his. He did not acknowledge that God predestined the firstborn blessing to be given to his brother, through election.

When we look at the Scriptures in more detail, the contributing factors underlying Esau's mistakes become clearer. When Esau was born, his appearance was 'like a hairy garment all over', and 'so they called his name Esau'. Esau's name literally meant 'hairy'. It is probable that Esau's condition was related to a genetic defect of some kind – a physiological syndrome of excessive hair growth that continued throughout his life. We can recall that when Jacob deceived Isaac, the skin of young goats was placed on his hands and neck in order to mimic the feel of Esau's hairy skin.

Imagine the chronic humiliation that Esau would have felt throughout his life, having this condition. He had been 'labelled' according to his genetic disorder and he would have been excessively self-conscious of how he looked. People's reactions to his unusually hairy appearance would have, undoubtedly, caused Esau to become even more insecure about his weakened state. Esau's insecurity about his physical abnormality may have been the unspoken motivation for him to 'prove himself' through his exploits in life. The Scriptures record that he was 'a man of the field', and 'a skilful hunter'. Perhaps these well-developed pursuits were nothing more than a means to find a sense of self-validation.

**References:**

Gen 25:23-27  
Gen 27:3, 16  
Isa 59:2

**Further Study:**

Acts 8

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 9



## Esau became weary

There was obvious relational contention and strife within the household of Isaac. Jacob had clearly secured his mother's approval and attention. Esau gained his father's approval and attention – seemingly because of Isaac's particular love of game meat. This may have been a momentary fulfilment of Esau's desire for affirmation, and a brief reprieve from his weak and disadvantaged state. This constant drive to prove himself and to gain approval, caused Esau to become 'weary'.

Esau had become weary in life. He was unresolved regarding his physical abnormality. His struggle to gain recognition through his own pursuits was tiresome and somewhat unfruitful. According to his perspective, life was not turning out the way that he had hoped. His hope of a successful life was not being realised, and his heart had become sick. He was evidently depressed.

As a result of his insecurity and depression, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of red lentil stew. Although we read that Esau sought food from his brother because he was weary, it is unlikely that Esau was so physically famished that he was at risk of dying. Rather, he was depressed and weary in his soul, and this depression caused him to lose sight of the importance of his natural birthright. Thus, he sold it.

Jacob took advantage of Esau when he was in a disadvantaged position. He took the natural birthright from Esau through manipulation and trickery. Not only this, but Jacob later took the blessing from Esau as well, again through manipulation and deception. This happened when Jacob colluded with his mother to deceive Isaac and steal the spiritual birthright. When Esau realised that he had been taken advantage of by his brother, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry. Esau's tears were due to the sense of loss that he was experiencing, and the injustice of the situation.

### References:

Gen 25:28-32

Pro 13:12

Gen 27:34,38

Gal 6:9

Heb 12:3

### Further Study:

Isaiah 40

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

## Ancient hatred

After despising his birthright, Esau still demanded a blessing from his father. This demand, and the bitterness in his heart, was based on his perspective and claim that he was 'more righteous' than the one who had sinned against him. Esau viewed himself as the victim of Jacob's opportunistic and deceitful behaviour. Jacob had unfairly gained an advantage over him. Esau could not understand why Jacob had been rewarded with such blessing and advancement. As an angry victim of his circumstances, Esau allowed bitterness to take root in his heart. So, 'Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him'.

Amazingly, Isaac did bless Esau! And Isaac confirmed Esau's predestined work to serve his younger brother. In truth, Esau would have found blessing and rest if he had carried out his predestined work. These were the 'good works', sovereignly chosen and prepared beforehand by God for Esau to fulfil.

However, Esau's bitterness meant that he was unable to abide in the blessing which had been given to him. Instead, Esau's hatred of Jacob only increased, and he sought to kill his brother. He would have viewed the murder of Jacob as the execution of justice. This same root of bitterness corrupted Esau's family lineage for thousands of years. The Scriptures describe this as an 'ancient hatred' against God's covenant people.

Esau did not accept God's sovereign choice concerning his life. Nor did he appreciate the call of God upon his brother. Esau despised the election of God. It was for this reason that the Lord declared, concerning Esau, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated'. Does this mean Esau was predestined to failure? Certainly not. Esau was given the dignity of choice. Yet, he failed to simply choose what God had chosen for him.

**References:**

Gen 27:34,39-41  
Eph 2:10  
Mal 1:2-3

**Further Study:**

Hebrews 12

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 13

# Pursuing sanctification and peace

We read in the book of Hebrews that we are to ‘pursue peace with all people and the sanctification without which no-one will see the Lord’. How do we diligently pursue our sanctification? We eagerly receive the word of God which defines our predestination. And then, with the measure of faith that we have received from God, we simply present ourselves in the context in which our sanctification will be proven. As we present ourselves to do the works which God has given for us to do, our sanctification is progressively obtained. This means that we grow in the knowledge and expression of our sonship, as we continually prove the will of God through offering. The will of God is our sanctification.

Peace is given to us in the word of God, and it is also an outcome of sanctification. Conversely, constant agitation is evidence that we are unresolved concerning the call of God. If this is the case, we will have undoubtedly begun to pursue an alternative image of who we think we are. This doesn’t necessarily mean that we are eccentrically pursuing fame and riches. An alternative image can be as simple as our own perspective of life. For example, we may view ourselves as being disadvantaged in some way. However, this is not God’s view on the matter. God desires to deliver us from our perspectives, which are not according to the predestination that He has chosen for us.

We diligently seek after ‘peace with all people’ by appreciating the predestination of each one of our brethren. This does not mean that we impose our perspective of another person’s predestination upon them. Neither do we impose our perspective of ourselves on others. This only leads to argument and comparing ourselves among ourselves. Sober judgement, which means rightly thinking about yourself and others, results in works that multiply God’s life by the revealing of another person’s name.

**References:**

Heb 12:14

Rom 6:19

1Th 4:3

Luk 9:46-48

2Co 10:12

1Th 5:6-8

**Further Study:**

Romans 12

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 14

# Not falling short of God's grace

It is important that we look carefully into the face of Jesus Christ, lest we fall short of the grace of God. The grace of God enables us to grow in our sanctification as a firstfruits Christian – that is, in our slavehood, priesthood, discipleship and sonship. If we fall short of the grace of God, it means that we have stalled in one of these aspects of our life. We are not maturing as we should, and have begun to draw back from the context of offering.

God only gives grace for us to fulfil the works that belong to our name. He does not give grace for us to pursue any other image of ourselves. If we are living according to a perspective of ourselves which is other than the truth of our predestination, we will, by necessity, revert to our fleshly propensities in an attempt to obtain the blessing of God. Like Esau, we can be highly motivated to be successful in our pursuits as a means of personal validation. Furthermore, we can seek the affirmation of others as verification of our good intentions. However, all of these efforts only result in further dystrophy. Instead of finding contentment, as we had hoped, our heart becomes disappointed and depressed.

Further to this, when we fall short of the grace of God, we are in danger of allowing 'a root of bitterness' to spring up in our hearts. A root of bitterness is the fruit of longstanding offence and unforgiveness. This may be the result of injustice, or perceived injustice, that we have encountered in life. A root of bitterness will affect our emotional wellbeing, and will, invariably, impact on our relationships. The Lord desires to deliver us from unforgiveness so that we can seek to restore relationship with the ones whom we think have mistreated us. Also, we must realise that even if we have been subjected to injustice, that has not changed our election at all!

## References:

Heb 12:15

1Ti 6:6

Pro 13:12

1Pe 2:20

Eph 5:8-10

## Further Study:

Luke 6

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

# Finding repentance

The book of Hebrews warns us that Esau sold his own birthright for a single meal, and became immoral and godless. Immorality and becoming godless are indicators that a person has fallen from the grace of God and has allowed a root of bitterness to corrupt their mind. Instead of the hope of their sonship being an anchor for their soul, they have begun to trade their inheritance to pursue their own fleshly expectations in life. They sell the treasure of their sonship for worthless things. This indicates their deceived state. Immorality is an attempt to build up one's own identity by taking from others. Being 'godless' means to have a complete lack of regard for what God has spoken.

The Lord desires to deliver us from our fleshly expectations and pursuit of worthless things, and to restore us to the truth of the word that He has spoken concerning us. This requires us to find godly sorrow that leads to repentance. Esau was unable to find a place of repentance because he did not mourn with godly sorrow.

Godly sorrow leading to repentance is foundational to our recovery to the pathway of sanctification. If we allow the word of God to expose our motivations, we realise that we are completely unable to fulfil the will of God by our natural capacities or fallen mechanisms. Rather, we need to meet the Lord and be delivered from our *perspectives, propensities, unforgiveness and expectations*. God is faithful. He will enable His plan to come to pass in our life. And He will deliver us from our propensity to try to obtain the blessing of God by our own means. As we negotiate the issue of election, He is able to recover each of us to the pathway of sanctification.

## References:

Heb 12:14-17

Gal 4:9

2Co 11:3

Act 20:21

Pro 2:10-12

## Further Study: 2 Corinthians 7

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 16

## The visions of Joseph

Joseph was the youngest of eleven sons, and he demonstrated a competence and an initiative beyond his years. Not only this, Jacob loved Joseph more than all his brothers, and demonstrated this special affection by making a colourful tunic for him. Surely such expressions of overt favouritism were wrong, even in ancient days, and such parental bias worthy of a sibling uprising!

And if things weren't already difficult enough for his brothers, they became even worse. One morning, after waking, Joseph shared a dream with his whole family; a dream in which his brothers (represented as sheaves) bowed down to him as a sheaf standing upright. In a second dream, he described the sun, moon and eleven stars, all bowing again to him. This dream depicted his parents bowing down, along with his siblings, provoking even Jacob to rebuke his favourite son for his words.

Although his dreams were poorly received, Joseph knew that they were from the Lord and that they revealed God's purpose and plans for his life. Through them, Joseph was being personally invited to choose what God had chosen for him. What Joseph didn't know was how and when these plans would be fulfilled.

During the next phase of his life, Joseph encountered three specific events that trained and established him in God's call for his life. Even though he'd heard the call of God, Joseph was sown into a context where he had to prove God's will through suffering. This began when his jealous brothers took matters into their own hands and overpowered Joseph. A last moment reprieve saw them commute their intention of murder to a life of servitude, by selling him as a slave into a foreign land. We could liken this action to a kind of death – being thrown into a pit, just like a seed going into the ground to die.

### References:

Psa 105:16-19  
Act 7:9  
Joh 12:24

1Jn 2:12  
Joh 7:3-5

### Further Study:

Genesis 37

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

## A slave and prisoner

Having been sold into a life of servitude by his brothers, Joseph began serving as a slave in Potiphar's house. Rather than sulking and resisting the shackles of his circumstances, Joseph received them as from the hand of the Lord, and 'the Lord made all that he did prosper in his hand'. Soon after, he was appointed as overseer of the house. The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake. Unfortunately, things turned sour, and Joseph was falsely accused by his master's wife and placed into prison.

Although his circumstances seemed to go from bad to worse, Joseph continued to demonstrate that he was a man who feared the Lord. While in prison, Joseph again found favour in the sight of his master, the prison keeper, who committed all the prisoners into Joseph's care. While he was serving two of the king's servants, he had cause to interpret their respective dreams. Upon interpreting one dream, which would eventually see the butler restored, Joseph made a request, 'Remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. *For I was stolen ... and I am innocent.*'

It soon became apparent that Joseph had been forgotten by the butler, and that his opportunity for justice had been lost. In fact, two years would pass before the butler remembered Joseph to Pharaoh. Finally, Joseph was summoned to Pharaoh's court to interpret his troubling dreams. He demonstrated the fruit of wisdom and discernment by interpreting Pharaoh's dream, and then proposing a plan to preserve the nation of Egypt during the season of leanness. The advice was deemed 'good' in the eyes of Pharaoh and his servants, and he immediately set Joseph 'over all the land of Egypt'. Here, we see the dramatic elevation of Joseph to a place of oversight, with authority. We observe Joseph as a firstfruits coming up out of the ground.

### References:

Mat 5:16  
Php 2:14-15  
Gen 40:14-15

Gen 41:41  
Jas 1:18

### Further Study:

### Daily Proverb:

Genesis 39

Proverbs 20

## Joseph and his brothers

Joseph had chosen what God had chosen for him and, at an appointed time, God placed him in authority over all of Egypt. He remained patient concerning his dream of saving his family and feeding them, knowing that the will of God would come to pass at the appointed time. While Joseph was overseeing the distribution of food during the famine, his ten brothers appeared, seeking food at the request of their aging father, Jacob.

We know that the call upon Joseph's life was according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. But Joseph proved that he was the elect of God by the choices he made in the circumstances of his life, despite the personal cost. This was clearly demonstrated when, after several interactions, he revealed himself to his brothers and forgave them. But, much more than this, he ministered to his brothers so that they would be recovered to the name and destiny that God had for each of them. God had called and chosen them to be the firstfruits of the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel.

Joseph held no resentment for the evil actions of his brothers because he understood that he had been sent before them to preserve life and 'to save their lives by a great deliverance'. Even though his brothers meant to cause him harm, Joseph understood that God had chosen a specific pathway for him to walk, for their good. God appointed Joseph to be fruitful in Egypt, flourishing in a foreign culture. He was sent before his family so that, at an appointed time, he would be in a place of authority to make room for them and for all of their flocks, to be preserved within the choicest land of all of Egypt. He was appointed to feed them and to save them.

**References:**

Gen 41:57

Gen 43:4-5

1Pe 1:2

Gen 45:5-8

Gen 50:20

**Further Study:**

Genesis 42

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 21



# Joseph was a firstfruits

The principle of firstfruits is revealed through the life of Joseph. Joseph, a fruitful son in his father's house, was, figuratively, sown as a slave into the ground when his brothers threw him into a well and then sold him as a slave. 'Buried' in captivity, he endured a series of unjust circumstances; yet, through them, he continued to prosper. At an appointed time, Joseph surfaced from the hidden place of his captivity, bearing the fruit of God's chastening, with new life, a new office and a new authority. As a sanctified son revealing the will of God, Joseph was anointed for his priestly service, which was to minister reconciliation. This was more than simply forgiving his brothers and then offering them safety and food during the famine. Joseph gave them the bread of life, enabling them to be restored to the will of God.

Like Joseph, we who are born of God are to be joined to a process that results in our sanctification. This process is like being sown into the ground in the same manner as a seed. As we join Christ's death, crucifying those things that prevent us from attaining our sanctification, He gives us His life. This transfer of His life to us, as He takes our sin upon Himself, proceeds as we continue to offer ourselves in the circumstances of our life. As we endure tribulation because of His word, we are transformed. Through this process, we bear the fruit of our sanctification, resulting in eternal life.

Through His word, God gives us faith to participate in offering. As we continue to receive God's word, we will be motivated by a spirit of faith to present ourselves as a living sacrifice, according to our sanctification. We are then activated as ministers of the New Covenant, reconciling others to the will of God in the same way that we have been established in the will of God.

**References:**

Heb 12:11,23

Joh 12:24

Rom 6:22

Jer 2:3

Jas 1:18

**Further Study:** 1 Corinthians 16**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 22

## Sown into the world

Every son of the kingdom is likened to a seed. Filled with the potential to bear the fruit of God's life, according to the sanctified expression of their name, sons of the kingdom are sown into the field of the world, just as Joseph was. For fruit to develop, a process, which requires certain conditions, must take place. The life of Joseph illustrates these conditions, and includes a death, a burial, and then a resurrection. Jesus said, concerning this process, that 'unless a seed falls into the ground to die, it abides alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit'.

For fruit to come forth, death is essential. For a Christian, death means surrendering control of our own life and submitting ourselves to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Joseph's 'death' came at the hands of his brothers, and resulted in him being sold as a slave into Egypt.

Despite the great betrayal by his brothers, Joseph kept faith with the word of God's call, and accepted his unpleasant circumstances as being the will of God. This was demonstrated by his willing submission to his foreign masters. Joseph flourished in the context of his service, and his masters were blessed by his service. This is because he trusted God and gave himself steadfastly and faithfully in the contexts in which he found himself. Consequently, he was entrusted, in each context, with authority from his masters.

Christ desires to do the same with us. He said to His disciples, 'No longer do I call you slaves, for a slave does not know what his master is doing'. We note that slavehood is the starting point for us. As we are proven in our sanctification as slaves, then Christ calls us His 'friends'. The transition from 'slave' to 'friend' is when Christ makes known to us what He hears the Father saying about our name and works as a son of God.

**References:**

Joh 12:24

Isa 53:10

Psa 25:14

Rom 6:4

Col 2:11-12

**Further Study:**

John 15

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 23

# Trained to bear fruit

For many Christian people, the idea of being trained to serve God seems appealing. But God's training comes through chastening. As Paul taught, 'Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines'. Therefore, as we submit to His hand and to the circumstances that He leads us through, we can be trained according to our sanctification, so that we might fulfil the will of God. God invites every son to walk this pathway, so that a harvest of sanctified sons might emerge to His glory. To understand the pathway to firstfruits, we are helped by a curious passage in Leviticus which describes how a fruit tree matures to become a firstfruits.

Gardeners will tell you not to let fruit trees bear fruit in their earliest years. Instead, it is necessary to pluck off the blossoms, or the fruit, so the tree will thrive and bear more abundantly in the seasons to come. As noted in the book of Leviticus, the Lord said that if any tree did come to bear fruit in its first three years, the fruit was not to be used in the service of either God or man. They were to dispose of the fruit. However, what was borne in the fourth year was to be holy (a firstfruits) to the Lord. It was either given to the priests, or eaten before the Lord with joy. After the fourth-year harvest, the fruit belonged to the owner of the tree to do with as they pleased.

By this definition, the fourth season of a fruit tree is the season of *firstfruits*. It's not that fruit wasn't evident in the three previous years, but, in order to maximise the capacity of the tree, and to generate the best quality fruit (long-term), the tree was pruned to promote fruitfulness. Jesus described this principle, saying, 'Every branch that does bear fruit, He [the Father] prunes to make it even more fruitful'.

**References:**

Heb 12:6,11

Mat 22:14

Joh 15:2

Eph 6:4

**Further Study:** Leviticus 19**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 26

## Fruit that remains

The ‘pruning’ of a person when they are bearing fruit can seem harsh, perhaps even unfair. But ‘no discipline [or pruning] seems pleasant at the time, but to those who have been *trained* by it, it produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness’. ‘Training’ here speaks of a willingness to receive the cut of the cross that is purging, cleansing or pruning any element in a person that hinders the bearing of fruit. The Father, who is the Vinedresser, chastens those whom He loves, in order that they might be trained according to their sanctification, which is His will.

As He did with Joseph, the Father will use the real-life circumstances of our lives to train us. As we submit ourselves as slaves to our various ‘masters’, we will be pruned and purged of any hindrances to our sanctification. The emerging fruit in our lives will begin to reveal the will of God, our sanctification.

In Joseph’s life, there were three specific seasons, or contexts, in his captivity, which produced fruit in his life. However, the fruit of these three contexts were not ‘eaten’, or used, to benefit Joseph personally. Instead, he was pruned on each occasion. This included being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, being falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, and being overlooked and forgotten in prison by the butler’s failure to honour his promise.

God chose Joseph and ‘appointed him [in the fourth season] that he should go and bear fruit and that his fruit would remain’. Joseph was no longer being pruned. His faithful submission to the discipline of God had trained him in the way of his sanctification. He was now able to offer the fruit of his life, which was holy and acceptable, and was his spiritual act of worship. The fruit was no longer stripped from his branches, as it had been in previous seasons. The fruit was able to feed and benefit others as a source of blessing.

### References:

Joh 15:3,16

Heb 12:11

Pro 11:30

Mat 5:14

Php 2:15

### Further Study: 1 Corinthians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 27

# Accepting our brothers

Choosing what God has chosen, and accepting what He has chosen for another person, is the key to how we must respond to His call upon our lives. Sometimes, the issue of election can become confused when we make comparisons with the unique call of God upon another's life. An important implication to consider is the possibility that God has chosen a sibling, or close friend, to be a messenger of God to us in the coming years. The action of bowing down to Joseph was nearly too much for his older brothers to bear. But it's no different from the call for all Christians to submit to those in the household of God, who are sanctified to lead and give direction, regardless of their personal relationships.

This can become complicated when we choose to remember all the foibles and failings of a sibling or close friend. The danger with this approach is that it can cause us to refuse what God has chosen for them. Joseph's brothers rejected him, unaware that God had predestined him to feed them, save them, and reconcile them to the will of God. Likewise, if we refuse our brethren whom God has appointed to feed us, then, we too, will refuse the bread of life that proceeds from the mouth of God.

The apostle Paul picked up on this when reminding us that 'we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time, we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Him now!' To know a man 'after the flesh' is to know him by the outward events and circumstances of his life: his wealth, social status, achievements, culture and knowledge. But we who are in Christ no longer live this way. We now see one another as new creation sons, and affirm the truth of each person's name in the Spirit, as the evidence that we are true worshippers.

## References:

Jas 2:1-4

Rom 9:12

Rom 2:1

Rom 14:4

Joh 4:24

## Further Study: 2 Corinthians 5

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 28

## Contrary circumstances

The apostle Peter wrote, ‘Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you’. The story of Joseph causes us to consider how we approach, and participate in, the contrary circumstances in life. God uses real-life pressures to process us, bringing our coping and survival mechanisms to the surface, so they can be removed. As we stay in place, and are joined to Christ, we will be conformed to His death. The outcome is that these projections, which act as an alternative to our sanctification, can be crucified, giving us clarity about who we really are.

Staying in place (abiding) through the difficult circumstances of life, is only achieved by the faith that God supplies by His word. When we receive His faith, we have capacity to join His sufferings. When we join them by faith, participation in the sufferings of Christ is the means by which we can be delivered from living by fleshly principles, thus enabling us to fulfil God’s will, and not our own. We are enabled to do the will of God, however unpleasant it is. We are no longer tempted to author an alternate will, because we’re being delivered of our desire to do what seems right in our own eyes.

In Joseph’s life, there were several times when he was unfairly treated. On every occasion, Joseph proved that he feared God more than man. We know this because, at no point, did he remove himself from the process or react to his circumstances. Joseph never became a victim of the circumstances. This is because he knew that ‘the Most High God rules in the kingdoms of men’, and that nothing could harm him or come against him. As he lived in the fear of the Lord, and accepted his circumstances as from the hand of the Lord, he continued to prosper.

### References:

Mat 13:20-21      Dan 5:21  
1Pe 4:12-14      2Ti 2:11-12  
Heb 12:11

**Further Study:**      Philippians 3

**Daily Proverb:**      Proverbs 1

# Sown into the world

It is the will of God that every son will come to fruitfulness. This means that they will grow in their sanctification, and bring forth fruit according to their name. As it was for Joseph, so it will be for us, so that 'after *we* have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called *us* to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore *us*, secure *us*, strengthen *us*, and establish *us*'. This means that God is faithful to establish us according to our sanctification, as we remain faithful in the sufferings that refine us.

Joseph was established and sovereignly placed by the Lord as the overseer of food distribution in Egypt. He was appointed in this way so that he would come into direct contact with his brothers as they came looking for food. God produced in them the need for food, because of the famine, and placed Joseph in their path to be the only one who could meet that need.

As He did with Joseph, the Lord is giving us the bread of life to feed those who are hungry. Although our natural eyes may not yet see it, there is a famine in the land, and God is producing a cry in the heart of men that they would come looking for us. He will place us, too, in the direct pathway of those who are seeking life. As soon as their storehouses of grain run dry, people will seek for the bread we have.

The Lord desires to send you ahead, to be established and trained in the works of your name, so that you might feed and sustain the weary one with a word. You will go down into the ground and, like a seed, 'die' among those with whom you've been sown. But as you endure by the faith of God, He will raise you up and bring others with you, in your 'sheaf'.

**References:**

IPe 5:10

Eze 47:12

Amo 8:11-12

Isa 30:20-21

Isa 55:1-3

**Further Study:**

John 6:22-71

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 2