



# Adventures in Bible Study

## Joseph's Rescue Operation

The story of Joseph found in Genesis, chapters 37-50, is one of the most fascinating and moving stories in the Bible. It is a story of love and hatred, tragedy and victory. It is a story our world desperately needs to hear.

Joseph was the 11th of Jacob's 12 sons, but he was the eldest son of Rachael, Jacob's most beloved wife. The other sons were born to Jacob's three other wives. "The sons of Leah were Reuben (firstborn), and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; the son's of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant were Gad and Asher." [Genesis 35:23-26](#).



The story of Joseph really begins with the birth of his brother Benjamin, for Rachael died giving birth to Benjamin ([Genesis 35:16-22](#)). After this tragic event Jacob poured all of the love he had felt for Rachael on Joseph and Benjamin, but especially on Joseph. Today we would say he spoiled those two sons. Jacob even made a coat of many colors for Joseph which was usually reserved

for the wealthy, or dignitaries ([Genesis 37:3](#)). Understandably this led to jealousy in the hearts of the other sons, which eventually became hatred.

Joseph's older brothers sold him as a slave to Ishmaelite traders who in turn sold him to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guards in Egypt ([Genesis 37:12-36](#)). After being falsely accused of immorality by Potiphar's wife Joseph was put in prison where he remained until he was miraculously called upon by Pharaoh to interpret his dreams ([Genesis 39-41](#)). Joseph said the dreams of Pharaoh were a message from God that a severe famine lasting seven years was coming upon the land. Pharaoh then appointed Joseph to prepare for the famine.

During the famine Joseph's older brothers came from Canaan to buy food. After testing his brothers to determine if they were repentant for selling Joseph as a slave, and their jealousy toward Jacob and Benjamin, Joseph revealed his true identity. Then Joseph's brothers sincerely expressed their sin and sorrow of heart over what they had done, and Joseph freely forgave them. Joseph



also made provision for his entire family so that they could survive the famine ([Genesis 42-45](#)). Because of Joseph not only his family, but whole nations were spared. ([Genesis 41:57](#)). Incredibly, Joseph harbored no bitterness toward his family. He said, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." [Genesis 50:20](#).

In the same way Jesus has come to this world to provide salvation so that no one need perish. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." [John 3:16](#). In the time of the famine all anyone could do is go to Egypt and simply accept the food and the terms for obtaining that food. So it is with eternal life. There is nothing we can do to obtain it ourselves. All we can do is accept it by the terms God has provided.

In Romans 3:10 the Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." You have probably heard people say, "nobody's perfect". That is for sure. The word "righteous" means good. Nobody is thoroughly good. Everyone makes mistakes ("Oh no!"). [Romans 3:23](#) says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The glory of God is His character ([Exodus 33:18-34:7](#)). We all fall short at times. During our school years we may not be chosen to play on ball teams, the boy or girl we adore doesn't want to be our special friend, or we didn't make good grades. As adults we may not get the job we applied for, our spouse may divorce us, or we didn't qualify for the loan we were hoping to get. The Bible says none of us is "good enough" to qualify for eternal life because there is *none* righteous, and we *all* have sinned.

Hang on, because it gets even worse than that, but it will get much better. In **Jeremiah 13:23** it says, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.” Many people think that if they just try hard enough, or learn to be good enough that they will be in heaven. This verse says it is impossible for us to ever be good enough. We don’t have the ability to make ourselves good. Our New Year’s resolutions don’t get carried out, and our promises are too often like ropes of sand. Even when we succeed in doing something fairly decent by the world’s standards the Bible says our deeds are still not good enough by heaven’s standards. “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” **Isaiah 64:6**. Our righteousnesses, or good deeds, are like filthy rags. It should be abundantly clear by now that there is nothing we can do to earn a place in heaven.

The obvious question is, “who then can possibly be saved?” Fortunately our salvation is not a matter of how good we are, but of how much God loves us. In **Romans 6:23** the Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal

life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Notice the Bible says we do earn something, but that something is death! The *wages*, what we earn, is death. But the *gift* of God is eternal life. Here is another encouraging verse: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” **Ephesians 2:8-9**. Eternal life, heaven, is a *free gift*. We cannot earn it or deserve it but God gives it to us through His Son.



The reason God gives us eternal life is because He loves us so much. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” **John 3:16 & Jeremiah 31:3**. Most of us are amazed God can love us that much because we are too well aware of our sins and mistakes. We are amazed because everything we know on this earth is conditional love. People love us as long as we perform the way they want us to, but if we mess up then those relationships are often broken. When we go to school we earn our grades. When we sit on the lap of Santa Claus as children we get the candy cane if we have been good, and he is making a list of our deeds and checking it twice. Then our families and spouses often do not understand us or love us the way we need to be loved, and we have difficulty loving others as well. So, it is not surprising when we hear that God loves us even though we are sinners that we have a hard time accepting it. But that is what the Bible says: “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die,

but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” **Romans 5:6-8**.

God loves each one of us so much that He is not willing for anyone to miss heaven (**2 Peter 3:9**). We receive the gift of eternal life when we confess our sins and accept Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord. When we have Jesus we have eternal life. “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” **1 John 5:12**. He is waiting now to hear your prayer. Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me.” Why not accept Jesus today with His forgiveness, eternal life, and lordship over your life. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **1 John 1:9**.



If you are unsure how to ask God for forgiveness and eternal life the following prayer will guide you. If you pray this prayer with sincerity you can be sure God has heard and accepted you.

## Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

I know that I am a sinner and I confess my sins to you (confess very specifically to God). In Your Word you promised that if I confess my sins You would forgive me, therefore since I have confessed my sins to You I believe You have forgiven me. I now choose You as my Savior and Lord. Please give me the gift of eternal life You have promised us through Jesus Your Son. Thank you for forgiveness! Thank you for eternal life! I believe it is so not because I feel it, but because you have promised.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Welcome to the family of God! If you have sincerely prayed the preceding prayer your sins are forgiven and you have eternal life. You may or may not have felt anything special when you prayed the above prayer. Either way, do not depend on feelings, but only on what the Bible says for, “we walk by faith, not by sight.” **2 Corinthians 5:7**. Trust God’s word, not your feelings. Sooner or later your feelings will follow your faith. Review this Bible study often over the next few days and continue to be thankful for what God has done for you.