



*The Spiritual Metallurgy of a
Marvelous Life*

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Making Joseph

“The Spiritual Metallurgy of a Marvelous Life”

“I am Joseph.” Those words left his audience dumbstruck. His brothers thought they had seen the last of him. They betrayed him and sold him and last saw him being lead away by slave traders. They ignored his pleas and the “*anguish of his soul*” (Gen. 42:21). They carried his bloodied coat back to Jacob and told everyone he was dead. They spoke of him in the past tense and as “one” who “*was not.*” And now years later, they trembled in the presence of this powerful Egyptian, and could hardly believe their ears when they heard the words “*I am Joseph.*”

It was as if one had risen from the dead. For them it was judgment day. Had they gotten justice, they would have gone to the gallows or at least to the galley of an Egyptian slave ship. Instead, they found grace. How a young Hebrew should rise to such unheard of heights is the story of a long remarkable journey. And yet every soul is on the same journey. The things that made Joseph what he was that day were the same things God uses to take every soul from where he finds it to where He wants it to be.

By the time he said “I am Joseph” He had been refined many times over and heated by the fires of adversity to take out the dross. He was no longer the inexperienced and helpless lad his brothers remembered. Now he was a man. But more than a man, he was a man of God. He was precious. Joseph was a work of grace and a work of art. Psalm 100:3 is the testimony of every soul that has ever triumphed and “overcome the world” by God’s grace. The Psalmist said “*Know ye that the LORD is God, it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*” How does God make a man like Joseph? What is the secret of such a life? The secret is in a mysterious refiner’s fire, a fire that burns and is not consumed. The refiner’s purpose is to melt the ore, separate the dross and bring out the best. God is a consuming fire.

Deep Mines

Like the steel beams that frame a skeleton of an office building giving it shape and strength, a man's character is the core of his spiritual constitution and what he really is. It was the invention of steel that allowed engineers to build tall buildings called "sky scrapers" that would without their metal innards collapse and fall in on themselves.

So too in life, some men seem to rise higher than others. Some touch the heavens and transform the skyline by their presence. Such men, large in spirit, cause us all to "look up." Joseph was such a man. Some men are spiritual sky scrapers. They brush by the gates of heaven when they walk. Some lives rise briefly, only to be blown over with the first strong wind. And some, because they are not built on a solid rock, fall down when the floods wash away their feeble foundations. Joseph's life was built on a rock.

How Joseph came to be the man we know is a fascinating study of character development. God has graced us with a step by step account of this man who became so mighty. By the time he spoke those words "I am Joseph," he was much more than he was. He had been redeemed, and he had become refined. His life is a study of spiritual metallurgy.

Men have gone down into the mines to extract riches from the bowels of the earth in an attempt to make their lives better since the beginning of time. Metallurgy is the science of working with metals. God has filled the earth with these fascinating elements which have enriched the lives of man. God knows where the most precious metals are. He is both Maker and Master. He is the Great Refiner. Mining the ore, finding it, freeing it from the rock, and refining it is an art.

There are deeper mines from which men get mettle rather than

metal. These hold rich spiritual veins of character, integrity, reverence, and courage to name just a few of the most precious and rare ones today.

Joseph lived a life and left a legacy that still towers over most. The lessons he left are edifying to men and woman alike, for they offer to all who seek it, an apprenticeship in a kind of metallurgy [my word] of character and inner strength.

Three metals played a significant part in the development of his life and every spiritual life. Each captures in their uniqueness a certain element and quality required for getting the most out of life, being our best, and becoming the success God intended each of us to be. Silver, Iron, and Gold mines punctuate the path of Joseph's Journey. They mark the progress of every Christian soul on his way to God's Ivory Palaces.

The first stage of this life is silver. Every life is precious and valuable. Each spiritual life begins with faith. *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen."* Joseph believed what God put in his heart. Joseph had faith. Joseph's early life became difficult only when he tried to share the *"things not seen"* with those who did not see them. He was sold for twenty pieces of silver. Being sold, his dreams must have been dashed and his believing heart broken.

The second stage of life is iron. This is the hard part of life. While silver is gentle and delicate and speaks about life's dreams and wishes, iron speaks about life's work. Iron is a hard thing. Psalm 105:18 tells us Joseph's feet were laid in irons when he became a slave.

The last stage of Joseph's life and development was golden. Around his neck he wore the chain of gold (Gen. 41:42) placed there by the most powerful monarch on earth.

The very metals that marked Joseph's journey through life and punctuated his spiritual progress, if used incorrectly or not refined rightly, can ruin a man as much as make him. Mettleurgy [my word] is a spiritual science. Giving some men gold when they need iron will send all the faster to hell. Only God knows how to bring things to a boil without burning them. Only God knows those hearts that long to be close to him and care not if being closer means being lifted up or being brought down.

Many see traces of Jesus in Joseph. They see Christ in his being hated by his brethren, and being sold for a hand full of silver, and then too in the iron, oh yes, there was the iron. Daniel saw the iron in the feet of Rome and we see the iron in the Roman spikes that were driven into his blessed hands. All this seems more than a coincidence. The sacred text is a rich mine, too deep to for any of us to exhaust. We shall follow one vein only. There is enough wealth in it to meet our needs today.

How does God make a man of mettle? How does God take all the ill will and evil of human nature, and even from the ashes of disappointment "work all things together for good?" Joseph's life is a the best commentary on Romans 8:28 ever written. It is my prayer that someone feeling forsaken, or forgotten, someone perhaps finding himself "in irons" will be richer for reading about Joseph.

Silver

The first stage of life is for dreaming. No one dreams more than a seventeen year old. When we meet Joseph he is seventeen. When we are seventeen we all dream great dreams. Life is filled with possibilities and we are full of potential. When we are young we have no trouble with believing that “nothing is impossible.” Dreaming is what young people do best.

There is a thing called “child-like faith.” Joseph had it. He was a believer. Joseph seemed to believe, not only in God, but in everyone, even in his brothers. That was a mistake. Our faith must be in God alone. God alone is Reverend (Ps. 111:9). Our dreams as well as our faith must be discriminating.

Here lies the danger. If youth is full of potential, and dreams are full of possibilities those dreams are, too often, too full of self. This is the problem with dreams. God has given us the gift of dreams, and in our dreams “nothing is impossible.” Rocks can cry and cows can fly easily in our dreams. Many of our dreams however, are best left in the bedroom, for it is in everyone’s best interests if cows remain on the ground.

Some men have discovered ways to catch their dreams and night visions and carry them through the dawn into the day. Some men seem to have discovered the secret of “making their dreams come true.” One man’s day dream, however, is sometimes another man’s nightmare.

The important thing about dreams is in divining them properly, or as we say today, interpreting them. The secret of making your dreams come true is found in Scripture. The test of a dream must be found in the text. “*For with God, nothing shall be impossible*” (Lk. 1:37; 18:27). To leave out the “*For with God*” is the surest way to end up with a nightmare.

Even at seventeen Joseph had a heart for God. The God of his dreams was the God of creation, not some figment of his imagination. The surest way to success in life is to get your dreams from heaven. When we fill our hearts with God and God's word, the Almighty fills our heart with his thoughts, and thoughts are what dreams are made of (Prov. 23:7; Ps. 119:11, Isa. 55:7-11). If your dreams come from God, they cannot help but come true. *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"* (John 15:7). If this does not sound like your dreams coming true, I don't know what does.

Everyone dreams. No one dreams better than the young. It is only after we try to talk of our dreams to others that we notice that there are many who would gladly "clip our wings." The more Joseph spoke of his dreams (those things that filled his heart) the more his brethren hated him (Gen. 37:8).

This stage of life, as I said, was silver. Ecclesiastes speaks of life as a silver cord and death as the "silver cord being loosed" or broken. Sin brought death. Sin is the reason that silver cord will break. Sin ruins all our dreams. Satan is called a "destroyer." He has destroyed a million dreams. Every divorce is a testament to his treachery. Many a bride and groom has seen their dream become a nightmare of bitter divorce because of sin. When that happens, their faith in each other can only be repaired by their faith in God.

No child ever dreamed of being a drug addict, no entrepreneur wishes for bankruptcy. The penitentiary is not a young man's dream come true. No, these are the leftovers of broken dreams. These are all the result of people trying to do the seemingly possible and the clearly impossible on their own and without God.

The answer to sin and all the sorrow caused by sin is the Savior. The answer for sin is not in Joseph but in Jesus. He knows all about our dreams. *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that*

they might have it more abundantly.”

When God puts a dream in our heart he will make it come true. Joseph wore his coat of many colors. This coat was given him by a father that loved him. Our heavenly Father loves us more. The LORD also wants us to put on his custom made will for our lives. While he wants us to dream dreams, we need to be careful not to wear our heart on our sleeve, or to cast pearls before swine. Watch out for dream killers. They are everywhere.

“Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams” (Gen. 37:20). That “evil beast” is sometimes Satan and sometimes sinful human nature.

“... We shall see what shall become of his dreams.” That was what most were thinking when they put Jesus on the cross. That was what most were thinking when they mocked his words. His brethren, the Jews, hated him for his words and they delivered him up for envy (Matt. 27:18; Acts 7:9). Envy is always ready to kill someone else’s dream. Envy stripped Joseph of his beautiful coat and threw him into a pit and then all his dreams seemed to be sold at auction for twenty pieces of silver.

As the last silver coin was counted out, a chapter was closed on Joseph’s life. A new chapter was to begin. In a moment a boy can become a man. Such a moment is usually a moment when some dream is shattered. Salvation requires this broken heart. Our childhood usually disappears in some hour of disappointment or loss. Our innocence is often left in the bottom of some pit where we learn the hard way not to have faith in the goodness of man, nor to have faith in ourselves. “There is none good no not one.” Only God is good.

Dreaming involves faith. Our faith must not be in ourselves. Our faith must not be in others. Our faith must not even be in faith itself. Our faith must be in God and in God alone. Our faith must be in His words. *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”*

Someone took Joseph’s freedom away, but no one could steal his faith. Joseph kept dreaming. One day he would help others with their dreams (Gen. 40:12). The Silver days of youth were gone. The day would come when others would come to him with their dreams, and Joseph having studied the hearts of men, would be able understand and explain what they mean.

“I have heard,” said Pharaoh later in Joseph’s life, *“you can understand and interpret dreams.”* Joseph’s answer was one of spiritual maturity. *“It is not in me,”* he said, *“God shall give an answer”* (Gen. 41:16). In Joseph’s early life he dreamed, but he didn’t quite understand how to interpret those dreams. Because he saw others bowing down to him, (as he explained it) it may have appeared that he was the center. God must be the center and the source of all our dreams. When God is the center it is well with our soul. It does not matter if we are knocked from the stage into the orchestra pit. The music plays on. We merely play a supporting role. Christ is the Star, the Bright and Morning Star. Christ must be the center. In and on the first chapter of life we must find faith, faith in God. In the next chapter we must find hope.

Iron

The melting point of silver coin is 1,615 degrees F. The melting point of iron is 2,802 degrees F. Iron is hard. Here God turns up the heat. These were the hard years for Joseph. The Psalms tell of them. *“Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron.”* Every life knows its sorrows. Every life has its hurts. The story of Joseph in jail has been a gift from God to encourage many others who have found themselves like Joseph, misunderstood, misrepresented, and seemingly misplaced in some prison, having been locked away in some situation that is unjust. The iron years were to both build and expose a godly character and a pure heart, without which no man shall see God (Matt. 5:8). The silver years are full of wonder. The iron years are full of work. I learn several important lessons from the iron years of Joseph’s slavery.

Little did Potiphar realize that when he bought Joseph, that God came with him. Immanuel came into this world of pain to save us. Immanuel, of course means “God with us.”

In the first stage of life we find faith. In this second and difficult stage we need to find hope. Faith and hope are both gifts of God. It is the “Christ in you” that is the “hope of glory.” While it is sad to see a child without the faith that says “with God, nothing is impossible,” it is sadder still to find a man without hope. Faith makes all things possible. Hope makes all things bright. When a man loses hope, he is hopeless. Every soul that ever committed suicide did so because they lost hope. When hope is gone there seems to be nothing left to live for. Keep hope alive. No matter how dark the night, hope allows us to wait and “wish for the day” (Acts 27:29).

Ecclesiastes teaches that as long as there is life there is hope (Ecc. 9:4). I believe that is true because hope is the last thing to die. We are also told in the book of Ephesians that unbelievers are without hope because they are without God in the world. The

unbeliever thinks “hope” is in being optimistic. The biblical meaning of hope is more than this “wishful thinking.” It is a certainty or an assurance that God has everything under control, and that God will keep his word.

Paul encourages believers who are facing the trials of persecution to be “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer” (Rom. 12:12). Perhaps you are going through some iron period of your Christian life. Perhaps you feel stripped of your dream, sold down the river, or locked in irons by circumstances that are at best unfair. Perhaps you, like Joseph, passed the test of temptation and lost your freedom anyway. His first coat was torn from him by violence. The second was lost by virtue. It is better to lose your coat than your virtue. Should we suffer for doing good, let us learn, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake (Phil. 1:29).

How does a prisoner behave in prison when God is with him?

- 1) **Be Happy.** “*Wherefore look ye so sad today?*” (Gen. 40:7). Don’t worry, be happy! Joseph had lost his freedom, but not his joy. In fact, we suspect he was not looking at what he had lost as much as what he had not lost. In his mind “looking so sad” must have seemed inappropriate. If we dwell on what we have lost, or failed to gain, or think about our misfortune or the injustice someone has done us, we too will be a sad soul. Joseph would have none of that. He was the very sunshine in that dark place. Remember the Word of God, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.”
- 2) **Help Others.** “*...and he served them....*” Joseph was a servant in prison or out of prison. If you wait for others to serve you, you shall have a long wait. If you wait for others to serve you, you will be of all persons, most miserable. Make your situation into a ministry. The hours must have moved much faster as

Joseph forgot his troubles and listened to the woes of others. Light a fire in someone else's heart and you yourself will be warmed.

- 3) **Keep hope alive.** Remember His words. Remember His promises. Joseph did not forget God. God did not forget Joseph. The butler may forget us, but not God. Joseph had an invisible cell mate in that prison. Just remember that when you go to some jail for doing good, God will go with you. *"the LORD was with Joseph"* (Gen. 39:21).

Spiritual maturity is not learned from books. Neither is it learned upon the lap of luxury. Joseph, as a child was spoiled. Jacob loved him more than all the others. If Jacob had had more wisdom he would have not so singled out his beloved and made him a target of envy. Joseph would have to learn some things, like many of us, the hard way. We all have our iron years. A great life must know the gentle things of delicate silver, but it is in the furnace of adversity that iron is forged, and it is in such a fire that strength of character is refined.

Had Joseph come to Egypt without first going through the pit, he would have undoubtedly been unprepared to face its opportunities and dangers. Providence drew a path right through the middle of Pharaoh's prison. Joseph needed to be there as much as Jesus needed to "go through Samaria." Are you "going through" something right now? Are your feet hurting with fetters? Do you find yourself in "irons?" Rejoice, God is working. He is "working all things together for good." God has a plan for your life.

When life seems unfair look at Jesus. Our Savior also was once arrested, wrongfully tried, falsely accused, and unfairly condemned. When I am unjustly treated, I can be consoled by the fact that, with Jesus, I am in good company. No wonder Paul could sing in the Philippian jail. "In his presence is fullness of joy."

The two on the road to Emmaus had not only lost faith, they had also lost hope. They were sad until the resurrected Christ revealed himself to them. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Lk. 24:26). If Joseph were a New Testament character he would say it this way, "Jesus is not finished yet. They may have crucified him, but it is impossible to kill the truth. The truth will rise again." Even Jesus felt the iron. The way of the cross leads home.

Gold

“Follow me,” said Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Most of the roads over which we follow him are steep, and narrow, and potholed. The Way will ultimately lead to a place where the streets are paved with gold. We will never truly enter into our reward in this life, but even here there is a golden stage of victory in the spiritual life.

One day Joseph exchanged his chain of iron for a chain of gold (Gen. 41:42). In the first stage of spiritual development we need faith. In the second we need hope. In the third we need love. Love keeps us from becoming bitter. This is the hardest lesson of all. This is the law of Christ. *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”* (Matt.5:43-44).

Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you is the Golden Rule. This was Joseph’s most golden day. He had the opportunity to “get even” with his brothers for years of pain and sorrow. Now the tables were turned and his dream had come true. Joseph remembered his dream (Gen. 42:9). His hungry brothers had come from their famine stricken land seeking bread. The lad who once wore the coat of many colors was now wearing gold. In his hand he held his brother’s lives. He had become all powerful. Only a heart of gold could have done what he had done. He had mercy on them.

Mercy is not mercy if justice is not first allowed to pass judgment. The problem with the false mercy of our day is that it is dispensed freely to those who never even feel the guilt of their sin. That is not mercy at all, that is indulgence. Indulgence is not the road to heaven. It is the road to hell. Before his brother’s conversion there must come conviction.

We can only imagine the terror that filled the hearts of these proud Hebrews when the awesome and strange Egyptian made an announcement that must have sounded like thunder on Judgment day, "I am Joseph."

In a moment all their sins against their younger brother must have rose up in their minds from the dead. They were speechless (Gen. 45:3). So it will be for every sinner on Judgement Day. Every sinner will be speechless (Titus 1:11).

We have begun to enter the golden stage of our spiritual journey when we learn to forgive. How? You say, "I have been so hurt." Another says, "I have been so wronged and so wounded, how can I forgive?" When we realize that the iron was all part of God's plan to forge a steel frame of character, then it will be easier. When we realize that it is the iron and the steel that allows God to lift us up, we will say with the Psalmist "*it is good that I was afflicted*" (Ps 119:71). Joseph calmed his repentant brother's fears by saying, "*You meant it for evil, God meant it for good*" (Gen. 50:20). Of all the gifts of God this is the most precious. Even Paul said, "*these three remain faith, hope and love but the greatest of these is love.*"

Refined

One would have to be blind to not see Jesus in Joseph. May others see Christ in us. There is one final lesson to learn about becoming what God wants us to be. This is found in the iron years in Potiphar's house.

Potiphar saw something special in Joseph. That is why he purchased him. He had no idea who he was, but the Bible tells us that he saw that the "*LORD was with him*" (Gen. 39:3). That business transaction he made in the slave market was the best he ever made in his life.

- 1) First he wanted someone to help him. That is why a man takes a servant. He needs help. Many people meet Jesus in a similar way. There is "something about him," although they might not have come to saving faith they believe Jesus can "help" them. Many people think that they can somehow "use him" to make their lives easier or better. At least that is how it was with Potiphar.
- 2) Then he did something remarkable. He made him Overseer. Jesus must be more than a servant. We must make him Overseer. That is real trust. You can trust Jesus.
- 3) He put everything into his hands. "All that he had, he put into his hand." (v.4). Everything. Some never have faith real enough to put "everything" in his hands. We should give him our heart, our health, our wealth. We should give him all our dreams, ambitions, and aspirations. We need to give him our time, our talents, our thoughts. Then too, of course, our sins, our fears and our cares, everything. He knows what to do with each. That is faith.
- 4) He left it there. "He left all that he had" (v.6). It is not enough to put it there, we must "leave" it there. Sometimes we sneak

back trying to retrieve what we have given. Leave it there. Have you forsaken sin, confessed it, given it to Jesus? Leave it there.

- 5) He worried about nothing. *“He knew not ought what he had.”* In other words, Potiphar did not worry about a thing. He had entrusted Joseph with everything. Joseph was in charge of the house and of the household, the money, and the management of everyday affairs. So it should be with us and Jesus. We should not have a worry or a care. Joseph even decided what Potiphar would eat. We should allow Christ to set before us what he wills. Whatever the dish, whatever the cup, we can trust him.
- 6) He was righteous. *“Joseph was a goodly person.”* Potiphar’s wife saw his outward appearance for he the Bible says was “goodly” or handsome. Not only was he “goodly,” he was “godly.” We can trust Jesus with those things we love most. Our wives, our children, every atom of our lives. He will never fail us or disappoint us.
- 7) Notice, God blessed Potiphar *“for Joseph’s sake”* (v.5). Because he trusted Joseph with everything, God blessed Potiphar. If God blessed a heathen for trusting Joseph, how much more will he bless us for trusting Jesus?

Put everything into his hands. But wait - notice that those hands are scarred. Those wounds were caused by our sins. Before he came to save us (die for our sins), for thirty three years, his hands were without marks. Now they are scarred. “He was wounded for our transgressions.” Once we trust him with our sins, we can trust him with everything.

May we place all we have, and are, and hope to be into his loving hands and look forward to the day we see his blessed face and hear

him say, "I am Jesus."

Conclusion

God is working. God is still saving souls and making men. May we trust in the silver works, the iron works and in the gold. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," wrote Paul to the believers at Ephesus. Peter warned the church of the trials to come (1Pet1:7). They are to refine. Job felt the fire also. He said, "*But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*" Job 23:10.

"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years."

Mal. 3:3-4

Dear Lord, I bow before your name and sing although the flame rises up beneath my feet in trials and troubles sore. And should I suffer loss, may I see it all as dross and trust I am by grace not less but more.

