

# ***WILL GOD TURN THIS EVIL TO GOOD, GEN.50***

You'll Get Through This #6

◆Intro: You may object to this whole series we've been going through. We've called it, "You'll Get Through This" after the title of Max Lucado's popular book and we've been looking at the life of Joseph. But, you may assert that it isn't necessarily true; maybe we don't all get through this, whatever this is. We aren't all Josephs who get to be princes and have all our dreams come true. We don't all go from prison to palace. You could voice this objection, and you would be right. In a very real sense, there is much this side of heaven that we don't "get through" and it isn't alright, happy, and neatly wrapped up like an episode of your favorite TV show.

◆The Bible agrees with you. Take the famous Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11. On the one hand it lists great people of history who got through a great many precarious situations:

- ◆By faith, Abraham was given offspring at the age of 100 years old.

- ◆By faith, Jacob blessed Joseph's sons as two of his own, and they would be tribes of Israel.

- ◆By faith Joseph spoke of the Exodus from Egypt someday.

- ◆By faith Moses led the people out.

- ◆By faith a prostitute, Rahab, becomes a member of Israel while everyone around her dies.

- ◆Gideon who routed thousands with hundreds makes the list.

- ◆Samson who killed hundreds single-handedly makes the list. A regular Rambo, or Hulk if you prefer.

- ◆David conquers all of Canaan.

- ◆Daniel survives lions.

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- ◆ Rach, Shac, and Benny survive a furnace. They got “though this” in really amazing ways.
- ◆ But on the other hand, some didn't. Listen to the latter part of Hebrews 11.
  - ◆ *“...But others trusted God and were tortured, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free. They placed their hope in the resurrection to a better life. Some were mocked, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in dungeons. Some died by stoning, and some were sawed in half; others were killed with the sword. Some went about in skins of sheep and goats, hungry and oppressed and mistreated. They were too good for this world. They wandered over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. All of these people we have mentioned received God's approval because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised.” Hebrews 11:35-39, NLT.*
  - ◆ Not exactly a celebration of success or “getting through it” as we might commonly think. They didn't receive what they were waiting for.
  - ◆ Which group do you identify with. I hope that you have Daniel, and David, and Joseph experiences in your life, moments and inexplicable events that prove to your soul that the heart of God in Heaven is deeply aware of you and operative in your life. I have as have many of you. But I'll wager that like me, you have had plenty of the unexplained, troubling, and just plain sad-endings too.

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◆ So can we really say, “You’ll Get Through This?” And what does it mean to get through it anyway? Will the evil we face in life really be turned to good?

◆ **1. As a Christian, my trials are part of my perfection.**

◆ A. Remember Jacob? Once again, as I’ve pointed out before, this narrative is “Jacob’s account” (37:2) God is making Jacob’s family into the nation of Israel. Twelve unruly boys, birthed from one man with four different women, will become tribes of the nation through which God himself comes to earth! Talk about a twist in plot! God is making something of Jacob, the “deceiver”. He is becoming Israel, “wrestles/interacts with God.” Jacob is being perfected.

◆ B. Remember Judah? Chapter 38 took us on a little rabbit trail away from the Joseph camp for a while as Judah, we learn, decides to visit a prostitute who is really his daughter-in-law. When she’s late term and showing the scandal erupts and Judah decides she gets to be executed for fornication, but then she proves that he is the father, and he is stopped short in his tracks, guilty.

◆ This is the same Judah who’s idea it was to sell Joseph with hardly a thought of the pain it would cause his dad! But by the time we see him in Pharaoh’s court with Joseph, he’s pleading for the life of Benjamin, offering to go to jail, and be Joseph’s slave so that Ben can go home and father Jacob won’t be devastated by losing both sons of his beloved wife Rachel. Look...

◆ ““And now, my lord, I cannot go back to my father without the boy. Our father’s life is bound up in the boy’s life. When he sees that the

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boy is not with us, our father will die. We will be responsible for bringing his gray head down to the grave in sorrow. My lord, I made a pledge to my father that I would take care of the boy. I told him, 'If I don't bring him back to you, I will bear the blame forever.' Please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I cannot bear to see what this would do to him.'"

Genesis 44:30-34, NLT.

◆ Turns out this act of selflessness is the drop that broke the damn of Joseph's emotion and in tears he reveals that he is their brother!

◆ Judah has become a prefiguring of Christ! A man of compassion, willing to take the blame of another to let that person live. In so doing he prefigures another person who will come from his own line. For Jesus is not a descendent of Joseph, but of the line of Judah. As Jacob said before he died...

◆ *"The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will obey." Genesis 49:10, NLT.*

◆ A prophecy of the Messiah. And adulterous, brother-selling man becomes one willing to sacrifice his own freedom for another's. Judah is being perfected.

◆ B. What about Joseph? That tattletale who becomes a providing big brother to the boys who tried to kill him. Do you see? Joseph too prefigures Christ.

◆ Joe wept over his family; Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

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- ◆ Joe was promoted to the highest place; Jesus was raised to the right hand of God.
- ◆ Joe spoke to the king for his family; Jesus is our advocate with the King of Heaven
- ◆ Joe still wanted to be family with people who betrayed him; Jesus still wants to be family with us! people who sin and walk away from him.
- ◆ Joe was willing to suffer for a greater good; Jesus was willing to die to give the world life.
- ◆ The trials in “Jacob’s account” developed people like God, who suffer to provided for others. And that’s also what God does in us in our trials.
  - ◆ *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2-4, NKJV.*
- ◆ Did you know God has a design for you? A path for you. If it were not so, all of us would be clones. We’d look the same, talk the same, walk the same, like the same things, be talented in all the same ways. But we are not. That’s because you are a unique creation of God. Now to paraphrase James word on it is, “think about your struggles as a joyful thing even though they don’t feel joyful because God is making you into the full you, and that will be good.
- ◆ So are we really getting through this? As a believer, indeed we are. But this whole life may be for us what we have to “get through”. But get through it we will, for there is more life coming. That brings us to point 2.

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## **◆2. As a Christian, my faith is key to my endurance.**

◆“Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”” Genesis 50:24, NIV.

◆The prophecy to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is coming true. They have entered a foreign land where they will, God said, become slaves for 400 years! The clouds are forming in the distance! Many of them will not receive the promise in this life. But what do you see of Joseph. Joseph in faith (says the book of Hebrews) sees that God’s story goes on, even after my life is over. Yes we will get through. We will get all the way through on to a perfect life. This is the promise of God, and his very great delight.

◆A. The perfection of Jacob, Judah and Joseph in Genesis is really a story of faith-formation. They had to live in trust that something ultimately good was on the way because of their God.

◆Is it rational to trust God even when we do not fully understand what he is doing? One of the most illuminating answers was put forward by the Oxford philosopher Basil Mitchell in his celebrated parable of the resistance leader.

◆Imagine you are in German-occupied France during World War II and you want to join the resistance movement against the Nazis. One evening in the local bar a stranger comes up to you and introduces himself as the leader of the local partisans. He spends the evening with you, explaining the general requirements of your duties, giving you a chance to assess his trustworthiness, and offering you the chance to go no further. But his warning is stern: If you join, your life will be at risk. This will be the only

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face-to-face meeting you will have. After this, you will receive orders and you will have to follow them without question, often completely in the dark as to the whys and wherefores of the operations, and always with the terrifying fear that your trust may be betrayed.

◆ Is such trust reasonable? Sometimes what the resistance leader is doing is obvious. He is helping members of the resistance. "Thank heavens he is on our side," you say. Sometimes it is not obvious. He is in Gestapo uniform arresting partisans and—unknown to you—releasing them out of sight to help them escape the Nazis. But always you must trust and follow the orders without question, despite all appearances, no matter what happens. "The resistance leader knows best," you say. Only after the war will the secrets be open, the codes revealed, the true comrades vindicated, the traitors exposed, and sense made of the explanations.

◆ Os Guinness adds, "The parable of the resistance leader is an apt picture of the ... dilemmas of faith in a fallen world ..... Evil is not a problem because God is too small, though doing his best, but because God is so great that we cannot be expected to know what he is doing."

◆ B. Do we have good reasons to trust the resistance leader? Yes we do. There is plenty of evidence that there is a Creator who made a fantastically beautiful world. The very fact that we recognize evil at all, points to the existence and reality of beauty and good. On top of that, there is plenty of evidence that this Creator is both a good God and a sovereign God, that is, as we've seen earlier in this series, he rules righteously even over our badness. He is not thrown by our mis-pitches. His plans are not blotted by

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our spills. He is not confused by our inconsistencies. He is not foiled by our foibles.

◆ Look at Joseph's tale. His brothers intended to end him. They got rid of the nuisance. But God used it anyway to save many people from death by starvation. By comparison, Satan was surely delighted with Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross, but God used a cross to cross out the sins of the world!

◆ Faith in the resistance leader is the key. There is a God. That God is on my side!

◆ Just as the brothers could look to Joseph the prince and rest in hope of provision because they were family with him, so Christians can look at Jesus and say, "Father, I don't understand everything that you're doing, but I trust that you are good and that you're on my side."

◆ *"God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." James 1:12, NLT.*

◆ Remind yourself, Christian, you are a brother/sister to the son of God!

◆ *"Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." Hebrews 2:11, NIV.*

◆ **Conclusion:** Why can you and I be OK even when life isn't? How can we consider trials of many kinds a joy? Because Christians know their life is headed to a good place. And they will arrive there.



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◆ Many years ago the last of a generation of aboriginal people converted to Christianity was on his death bed and called for the current missionary. He said he had a story to tell that unless he told it, it would go down to the grave with him. He said that when the missionaries first came years earlier, the village leaders decided to test them. So they slowly poisoned all of them, men, women, and children, over many years until they died. Then he said this: "It was when we saw how Christians died, that we decided we wanted to live like Christians."

◆ Those workers of God did not get to see the results of their lives. What they got was poisoned to death. But they died in hope anyway. They died happy, hopeful people. They died with faith. You see folks, you are the living examples of the reality of the Gospel. Your faith that God will "get you through" is in fact what in turn helps others to "get through this" too.

◆ "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:3-9, NIV.