

# **The Promise of God's Deliverance**

## **Acts 7:9-22**

Good morning,

I grew up in former communist East Germany. In 1985, my mom gave birth to me at the age of nineteen. Shortly after, my parents got divorced, and my mom got together with another man.

A few years later, I became the brother of two younger sisters. One day, their father got so drunk and mad that he pushed my mom through a closed glass door onto the balcony.

She ended up in a hospital, and I ended up living with my grandma for a while, not knowing what had happened until way later.

Soon after, my mom, my two sisters, and I moved into a women's shelter until she got together with yet another man who became our dad. At that time, I was seven years old, and my sisters were four.

Around 9 years down the road, my mom and step-dad split up permanently, because he had cheated on her for the second time.

At that time, I was 16 years old, and through a miracle, I became friends with an American missionary couple who lived in our neighborhood, in East Berlin.

In 2002, after many conversations and genuine loving care from their side, my siblings and I gave our lives to Jesus.

Five years later, I came to a point in my life where I was living for myself rather than for the Lord. In that time, one of my sisters introduced me to this mother-daughter street evangelist duo from the US.

We all became good friends, and I ended up serving alongside them here and there. After many prayers, conversations, and genuine loving

care from their side, I rededicated my life to the Lord and joined their ministry full-time in 2010.

We got to serve Jesus as street evangelists all over Europe, China, Taiwan, and many more places to reach the people with the Gospel; all Glory to God for that.

I have been married now for fourteen years to the daughter of this duo, my beautiful wife, BreAnna. Kim, her mom, my mother-in-law, is also present here this morning.

Honestly, I didn't feel like God had ever left me, but in retrospect, I know I ran away from Him and got trapped in things I could not get out of myself!

He delivered me from the bondage of sin and essentially of myself. God is so faithful. Once you're His child, the child of a perfect father, He will never leave you nor forsake you.

**Please keep that in the back of your mind** as you open up your Bibles with me to the book of **Acts chapter 7**

### **I. God delivers Joseph. Read *Acts 7:9-10***

Read ***Acts 7:9-10***

Let's recap what we heard so far about Stephen.

1. *Stephen was a deacon appointed by God through the apostles*
2. *Stephen was a man full of the Holy Spirit, Faith, and Power, and did wonders and miracles among the people*
3. *Stephen was accused and questioned by the High Priest of speaking blasphemously against country, temple, Moses, and God himself.*
4. *Stephen defended himself by relating God's gracious plan to his accusers from scripture.*

We heard the beginning of Stephen's defense last week, and that's where we will continue today.

Joseph is one of the sons of Jacob. Jacob had two wives, and with them he had twelve sons, including Joseph. Jacob was also called Israel.

Remember the story in **Genesis 32**, where Jacob wrestled with God all night. He refused to release him until God blessed him. God touched Jacob's hip and dislocated it. What a blessing!

In utter pain because of his dislocated hip, Jacob says this in **Genesis 32:26b** *"... I will not let You go unless You bless me!"*

God reaffirms his blessing in **Genesis 35:10**, *"And God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.' So He called his name Israel."*

The name Israel in Hebrew means "He who strives with God" or "God prevails".

Jacob became Israel, and with that, the father of the nation of Israel. His twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel. But Joseph was still his favourite son, so Jacob gifted him the coat of many colours.

We read: **Genesis 37:4** *"But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him."*

Read **Genesis 37:5** *"Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more."*

If you have had siblings growing up, have you ever been jealous of them? Has either of your parents ever favoured your sibling over you? They got something, and you went, "Man, I wish I had that!"

We hear these words from our kids sometimes. “That’s NO fair! Why does he get that? Why can she do that and not I? No fair!”

Jealousy in your kids isn’t something that you can fully prevent, but as parents, we should try to be fair to all of our children.

Joseph was the only one who received the coat of many colors. Then he received dreams from God, which showed Joseph as ruler over his whole family, and Joseph was naive enough to tell them all about it. Now his brothers truly hated his guts.

His oldest brother, Ruben, intervened and managed to convince his other brothers not to kill him. Still, they schemed about what else they could do to Joseph.

Read ***Genesis 37:27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.” And his brothers listened.***

Read ***Genesis 37:28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.***

**There in your notes:** It might look like a horrible thing that happened to Joseph, ending up in a foreign country as a slave, but Stephen tells us that “...***God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles.”***  
***Acts 7:9-10***

They went back to their father, Israel, and told him that Joseph had been mauled by a wild animal, and as “evidence,” they showed him the coat of many colors, which was dipped in goat's blood.

***There in your notes:*** You might not have been treated this way by your family or friends. But being betrayed or being written off hurts the most from the people closest to you.

In **Genesis 39**, Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh. In that time, God was with Joseph and blessed him.

Read **Genesis 39:2** ***"The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. "***

Later in the chapter, Potiphar's wife tried to entrap Joseph, but He did not fall for it. Joseph ran away from her. She accused him of having tried to rape her. Even though Joseph was innocent, he ended up in prison. Again, God was with Joseph and blessed him!

Read **Genesis 39:21** ***"But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.***

Read **Genesis 39:23** ***"The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper."***

When you find yourself in trouble outside of your control, as a child of God, you can be sure that our heavenly Father will take care of you.

In **Genesis 40**, Joseph interpreted the dreams of two prisoners. One of the prisoners was restored as Pharaoh's butler and promised Joseph that he would make good mention of him to Pharaoh. The butler forgot all about it, and Joseph stayed in prison for two more years.

In **Genesis 41**, Pharaoh had the same dream two nights in a row. Not one of Pharaoh's magicians or wise men was able to interpret it. That was when Pharaoh's butler remembered Joseph, and then he was brought before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams.

**There in your notes:** God had gifted Joseph the interpretation of the dreams and set him up for success.

The God of Israel was showing Pharaoh that He was about to bring about a famine across the whole land, after seven years of plenty.

## **II. God promotes and blesses Joseph. Read Acts 7:11-16**

Some time had passed since Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. Let me fill in some of the blanks.

Pharaoh and his servants were amazed by the wisdom and said this in **Genesis 41:38** "...*Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?*"

**Genesis 41:39** *Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you."*

**Genesis 41:40** *You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you."*

Pharaoh made Joseph second in command and took the signet ring off his hand, and gave it to Joseph. This meant that Joseph had the official signature and authority of Pharaoh in his hand. Whatever Joseph said would happen. What a promotion!

On top of that, Joseph received a new name or title from Pharaoh called Zaphenath-Paneah.

Biblicaltraining.org wrote this: *"Zaphenath-Paneah: (the one who furnishes the sustenance of the land)*

*The earliest known attempt to translate the name is that of Josephus, who stated that it meant "the revealer of secrets".*

***There in your notes:*** *The most widely accepted explanation of the name is ... "the god speaks and he lives."*

This name or title is an honor that is to our God, who is alive, active, and speaks!

Joseph got to work and prepared the whole nation for the upcoming famine. He used the seven years of plenty to store up grain in the storehouses of every city.

In the meantime, Joseph had two children with his wife, Asenath. Their two sons were called Mannasseh and Ephraim.

Read ***Genesis 41:51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."***

Read ***Genesis 41:52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."***

***There in your notes:*** God not only delivered Joseph out of his brothers' hands, being in slavery, and out of prison, but promoted him over all of Egypt and blessed him with two sons and the job of saving the land of Egypt and the small nation of Israel from starvation.

Joseph was walking with his physical and spiritual eyes wide open and recognized God's working in his life. Let us be more like Joseph.

Let us open up the eyes of our heart and look to Jesus, and recognize Him for who He is and for what He has done and is currently doing.

In ***Genesis 41 and 42***, the famine had spread across the whole earth, and Joseph's brothers, who were also out of food, went to Egypt because they heard, there was grain for sale.

*Guzik wrote this: "Famine is not a good thing, but God used it. God can and does use material need and lack in our lives to get us to do things we normally would never do. Normally, the brothers would never go to Egypt, but need drove them to Egypt."*

Joseph's brothers came bowing before him, not knowing who he was. But Joseph recognized them, treated them as strangers, and spoke roughly with them. He goes so far as to accuse them of being spies.

*Guzik wrote this: "Joseph did this guided by the Holy Spirit. Remember what they said of Joseph in **Genesis 41:38** "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"*

***There in your notes:** This wasn't revenge or twisting the knife. It all could have been very different, but God planned it this way not only to save them from famine but to rightly restore the relationship with Joseph."*

The Bible is full of drama, action, and cliffhangers.

Joseph sent his brothers back, but kept his brother Simeon with him as leverage, so they would have to return to him.

Time went on, and the famine was still in full force. The only way they could return to buy more grain was by bringing their youngest brother Benjamin, who wasn't part of their first journey to Egypt. Israel didn't want to let him go, but in the end, he agreed.

Now they were all back in Egypt. Joseph kept testing them a bit more. They got Simeon back, but now they had to leave the youngest brother, Benjamin, behind as leverage until they had brought Israel to him.



At this moment in **Genesis 45**, Joseph finally revealed his true identity to his brother and said this in **Genesis 45:5** *But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.*

Read **Genesis 45:6** *For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.*

Read **Genesis 45:7** *And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*

Read **Genesis 45:8** *So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

We also read a bit later in **Genesis 45:15** *“Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.”*

The brothers went back to their father and reported to him all that had happened. Israel was so happy that his son Joseph was alive that he left with all of his people and belongings to Bersheeba, where he offered up a sacrifice to the God of his father, Isaac.

God spoke there to Israel in **Genesis 46:3** *So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there.*

**Genesis 46:4** *I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.”*

God was with Israel and blessed it with the promise of Abraham. God also told him that he would live to see Joseph and later die in Egypt.

Then they all left for the promised land of Egypt.

*C.H. Spurgeon wrote this: "It was, therefore, a memorable spot in the history of his family, and it was just then a turning-point in his own career, and therefore it called for special waiting upon the Lord."*

**There in your notes:** *He was to break new ground, and enter upon a way which he had not trodden heretofore; and so we read that he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac."*

In **Genesis 47**, Israel's family settled in the land of Goshen, given to them by Pharaoh

Years later, Israel died, and according to **Genesis 50**, Joseph and his brothers buried Israel in the cave that Abraham had purchased in the land of Canaan. After that, they returned to Egypt.

### **III. The Time of Promise. Read Acts 7:17-22a**

What was the promise God made Abraham?

Read **Genesis 12:1** *"Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you."*

Read **Genesis 12:2** *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.*

Read **Genesis 12:3** *I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

God was with Abraham and blessed him.

God's promise ago has finally come to fruition as the descendants of Israel slowly but surely grew into a large people group.

Read ***Exodus 1:6 And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation.***

Read ***Exodus 1:7 But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.***

**There in your notes:** Throughout scripture, we see time and time again that God is faithful to his promises. He is a way maker and a promise keeper.

After this generation, a new Pharaoh came into power who did not know about Joseph and his family.

The Israelites were enslaved and treated very harshly by Pharaoh. He made them build two cities. Even in all the Pharaoh's bondage and hardship, they still became more numerous. Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill all the newborn Hebrew boys.

Now, Moses was born in the midst of that. He was hidden for three months until it was impossible to keep him hidden any longer.

Remember the story of Moses' mother, from ***Exodus 2:4 took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank.***

His sister was watching for what would happen to the basket.

Pharaoh's daughter found the little boat with baby Moses in it and took him in as her son. She let his mother nurse him until he was weaned.

That day, God, through Pharaoh's daughter, saved Moses. Also, God held the wild creatures in the Nile River away from that little basket.

Remember what happened when Jesus was born.

An edict went out from King Herod to kill all the firstborn males. God appeared in a dream to Joseph and told him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt.

God protected the prophet Moses and our Savior Jesus Christ from being killed as a baby, because of the plans that He had for them.

**There in your notes:** With the help of God, Moses saved the nation of Israel from the bondage of slavery to Pharaoh. Jesus, our savior, being God in flesh, saved all of humanity from the bondage of slavery to sin.

Moses was not only one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, foreshadowed the one true Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would one day come and die for the sins of all humanity.

#### IV. Conclusion

When we read these Old Testament stories, we are first and foremost looking for the characteristics of God. God is faithful, He is the way maker, the rescuer, the savior, the promise keeper, and truly the light of the world.

God never changes. If He delivered those whom God called His own in the Old Testament, why would He stop at you? If you are truly a child of the living God, chosen and saved by grace, alive and breathing, then He still has a plan for you here on earth. Would He suddenly change His mind and not deliver you?

***There in your notes: James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."***

***Malachi 3:6 “For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.”***

***Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”***

Has God ever delivered you out of trouble like Joseph, Moses, or Jesus?

I want us to distinguish between self-inflicted trouble and trouble that is out of our control.

Let's say I was late on a payment, and now I have to pay interest on the payment. That's what I would call self-inflicted trouble. That is a lesson that God gladly has me go through and learn from until I get it.

But there are troubles in life that are outside of our control. Those can be lessons of loving disciplines from our heavenly father as well.

But sometimes they are not lessons at all but simply tragedies!

We live in a fallen, sin-stricken world, and bad things happen all the time to God's children. Accidents happen. Cars crash, trains derail, airplanes crash, and people die. All the time.

Most of those are outside of our control. As believers, we would think that God can and will save us from those troubles.

If you are a loved one who was left behind after a death, God might not spare you the pain, but He can use it to show us His tender care and love first for us. And then, if you let Him, He might even use you in other people's lives to show them Christ in their pain.

Here in **Acts 7**, Stephen was in trouble himself. He was accused of blasphemy against almost everything that the religious leaders held in high esteem. That's why we read of his defense in the first place.

God ultimately delivered him out of that situation, but in a very different way than he would have thought. Stephen most likely did not wake up that morning thinking it would be his last day.

Later in the chapter, we read that Stephen became the first martyr of Jesus Christ, being stoned to death by the religious leaders.

Did God not deliver him? Isn't He now in the presence of God?

Another fact of life and the Bible is that our days are numbered.

Read ***Psalm 139:16 "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them."* (NKJV)**

In the NLT, it says it this way: ***Psalm 139:16 You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. (NLT)***

Our bodies are fragile and vulnerable. Since the fall, we're not able to live in these bodies forever. Eventually, we will all physically die. Some sooner, and some later.

Read ***Psalm 39:5 Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. (NKJV)***

But there will be a new body after the resurrection. The thing that we ultimately long for is eternity. God made us to be eternal souls who will live forever.

Where will you spend eternity? It's totally up to you. Either you will spend eternity in God's loving presence, where the streets are paved with gold, where there will be no more dying, suffering, and crying.

Or you will spend eternity, forever apart from God, in the place that was reserved for Satan and his demons. We call that Hades or Sheol. And that place will be full of darkness, a fiery furnace, and gnashing of teeth; there will be no rest, comfort, or peace for anyone there.

**There in your notes:** The fact is that God has not only promised but also provided the ultimate deliverance for us. God in person, born as Jesus Christ, is the one who stepped into the gap.

To be in God's presence and live, you have to be perfectly righteous, without blame or sin.

God changed Jacob's name and his identity forever. He made him the father of the nation of Israel. And out of the line of His offspring would one day come the Saviour of the world who would die on the cross for you and me.

I wish all of us, me included, would be as persistent as Jacob. He recognized God's presence and did not let go of Him until he was a man with a new name and a new identity.

If you have listened to anything I said this morning and you are kind of on the fence about this whole Christianity thing, or if you have walked away from the Lord, either way, I say this to you:

God is reaching out to you right now. Recognize that you need Jesus Christ to save you from yourself, the slavery of sin, and eternal separation from God the Father. Wrestle with Him, talk to Him, cry out to Him, and He WILL give you a new name, a new identity in Him. God will make you a new creation in Christ.

Read **2 Corinthians 5:17** *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

Read **2 Corinthians 6:2** *“For He (God) says: “IN AN ACCEPTABLE TIME I HAVE HEARD YOU, AND IN THE DAY OF SALVATION I HAVE HELPED YOU.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”*

Don't wait any longer for the best decision you can ever make, that sets you up for the best relationship you could ever have, a relationship with your creator, with your perfect father.

If you are a true follower of Jesus Christ, born again and surrendered to His will, I say this to you:

God is reaching out to you right now. Recognize that you need Jesus Christ to save you from yourself, the slavery of sin, and eternal separation from God the Father. Cling to Him, talk to Him, cry out to Him, because He has given you a new name, He has given you a new identity in Him. You are a child of the living God. God has made you a new creation in Christ.

God loves you so much and has you here for a reason. You are here not only to hear these words but to respond to them with an action. Do something. Say yes to Him today, because Jesus gave His life for you on the cross and rose from the grave on the third day to prove to us that He truly is God!

He is alive today and loves you so much. He will never leave you or forsake you. He is better than anything you've ever wanted.



Go down: Dad left, but now reconciled; God saved me with messed up background God the Father will never leave or forsake

Worship team, prayer in the back, etc.