In the Hour of Trial

I. Introduction
   a. Our congregation is experiencing a great amount of trial
      i. Nearly every household is enduring some kind of affliction
      ii. If you are not, you’re probably looking over your shoulder for what may be coming
   b. If Satan loves to see the people of God suffer, then he must be pleased with the current state of things

II. KEY THOUGHT: Joseph is an example of what to expect when going through a great trial

III. What to Expect
   a. Expect to experience great loss
      i. Loss of loving father
      ii. Loss of home
      iii. Loss of liberty
      iv. It is hard to imagine a young man losing more than this in one day
   b. Expect to be greatly disappointed by those close to us
      i. Betrayed by brothers
      ii. Acting in ways that could not be imagined
      iii. They were having their own hour of trial, and they did not pass this test
   c. Expect for reality to mock our desires and dreams
      i. In Canaan he had dreamed of having power and importance (Gen. 37)
      ii. Now he rules Potiphar’s house, but he is a slave and a stranger (Gen. 39:2-5)
   d. Expect to undergo extreme temptation to sin
      i. It is hard to imagine a more flattering inducement to sin than what Joseph faced (Gen. 39:7-10)
      ii. Temptation while enduring suffering is the test within the trial
         1. It determines whether we will suffer with integrity
         2. Or suffer in guilt
      iii. Joseph passed the test
   e. Expect any unrighteousness on your part to only multiply your misery
      i. “How could I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”
      ii. Joseph knew that seeking consolation in his suffering through sin was the worst thing he could do
      iii. Compare Job (Job 2:7-10)
         1. Curse God and die!
         2. “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?”
      iv. And David
         1. He knew his suffering was due to sin
   f. Expect any righteousness on your part to be punished
      i. He did not sin with Potiphar’s wife
ii. But he gets thrown in jail (Gen 39:17-20)
g. Expect to make progress, only to be knocked down again
h. Expect to only have control of your words and deeds
   i. In the hour of trial, we have no control over our circumstances
      1. If we were in control of our circumstances, it wouldn’t be a trial
   ii. Sometimes we have only limited control over our thoughts and emotions
      1. We have to think about many things that are unpleasant
      2. We naturally feel horrible about our losses and disappointment
   iii. We are not told almost nothing about Joseph’s thoughts and feelings only about his words and deeds
i. Expect to suffer alone
   i. Who was with Joseph? No one
   ii. He was totally isolated from human sympathy
j. Expect to not be suffering alone, but towish you were
   i. What’s worse than suffering alone?
   ii. To be comforted by companions that only make the suffering worse
   iii. That was the situation with Job
      1. Job 16:1-3
      2. His helpers weren’t helping!
k. Expect to be afflicted in body, spirit and mind
   i. When one member suffers, all members suffer with it
      1. A health crisis can lead to a crisis of faith
      2. A great disappointment in a personal relationship can lead to physical illness
      3. About as soon as we say “At least I still can do this…” or “At least I still have this…” we may experience additional loss
   ii. Joseph suffered
      1. Extreme physical hardship
         a. Young slaves were not treated gently or fed well by slave traders
         b. Prison conditions have never been placed of health and comfort
      2. Extreme mental anguish
         a. Betrayal
         b. Disappointment
         c. Loss
      3. Extreme spiritual testing
         a. His faith in God was being put to the test
         b. His faithfulness to God was being put to the test
l. Expect for others to have much more concern for their own problems than for yours
The butler and the baker

1. He noticed their troubles
   a. Why are you sad?
   b. But they didn’t notice his
2. He heard them and helped them
   a. But they didn’t ask to hear his story of suffering

It can comfort us in our trials to be of help and comfort to others

1. But sometimes that is not appreciated or reciprocated
2. That might add to our burden

Expect to have promised help fall through

1. The butler immediately forgot who had helped him in his time of suffering
2. The butler was restored in days
3. Joseph remained in prison for years (Gen. 40:14-23)

Expect your hour of trial to last a long, long time

1. Even a short trial can be excruciatingly severe
   1. But when day after day, week after week, month after month and year after year the burden of suffering continues and is not relieved
   2. That is indeed a severe trial
   3. That is the type of trial that Joseph suffered
2. Joseph
   1. He was a young man (17 years old) when he was sold into slavery (Gen 37:2)
   2. He is thirty years old when he gets out of prison (Gen. 41:46)
   3. And it is another nine years before he gets to see his family (Gen. 45:6)
   4. His hour of trial was about 23 years
3. We need to be prepared to suffer long so that we do not faint and lose heart if our trial lasts a long time

Expect your help to come from God

i. God had been helping all along
   1. Preserving Joseph’s life from the hand of his brothers
   2. In Potiphar’s house (Gen. 39:2-5)
   3. In prison (Gen. 39:21-23)
   4. The Lord was with him!
ii. Now, Joseph was brought before Pharaoh, interpreted his dream and became the second ruler of the land in one day (Gen. 41:14-16, 39-41)
iii. God’s help arrives
   1. By His power
   2. According to His wisdom
   3. In His time

Expect to have to forgive the undeserving
i. His brothers end up groveling at his feet begging for mercy (44:18ff)

ii. If Joseph had been harboring resentment and bitterness toward them, it would have been nearly impossible to forgive them

iii. But on the contrary he was eager to forgive them

iv. He was ready for them to change

q. Expect to be changed by trial

i. Joseph learned some things
   1. About himself
      a. He could never have known what he was capable of enduring
      b. He found out that there are things more important than wielding great power and influence
   2. About God
      a. He can comfort us in our suffering (Gen.
      b. He can use the worst circumstances to bring about great good for many (Gen. 45:5-8!!)
      c. He can make a time of great trial to change me for the better
      d. He never leaves us or forsakes us

ii. His greatest desires had changed
   1. Before he may have wanted rule and authority
   2. Now he only wants to have his family restored to him

r. Expect to discover that you are not alone in your suffering
   i. Jacob had been severely grieved (Gen. 37:32-35; 42:36-38; 47:9)
      “few and evil have been the days of the years of my life”
   ii. His brothers were suffering severe guilt (Gen. 42:21-23; 50:15-18)
   iii. The world was suffering famine
   iv. We are not alone either (1 Pet 5:6-11)

IV. Conclusion
   a. A time of trial is a time of testing
      i. Not of God
         1. It is not a test of God’s love
         2. It is not a test of God’s wisdom
         3. It is not a test of God’s power
         4. God will always pass the test
      ii. Of us
         1. of our faith
         2. and our faithfulness
         3. Do we trust in God’s love, wisdom and power enough to make it through?
   b. A time of testing has two conflicting purposes
      i. Satan wants to defeat, weaken and destroy us
      ii. God wants to perfect, establish, strengthen, settle and exalt us
      iii. The result depends on our response to the trial
   c. All the trial in our congregation
d. INVITATION