

LXII. Genesis in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of Christ from Genesis
“The Life of Joseph #6—A Man For All Seasons”
Genesis 41:33–57
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In this study we'll finish Genesis 41 in the study of the life of Joseph. Joseph has come out of prison, interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, then there was the seven years of plenty and then the seven years of famine and now Joseph assumes in confidence based upon His revealed will what Pharaoh ought to do and he speaks us – this prisoner in the palace of Pharaoh. Genesis 41:33–36 says [33] *Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. [34] Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. [35] And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. [36] That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Have you ever been in a position where you are witnessing an accident about to happen? I was coming home with my son from a conference I was doing. My son was young at the time and we were I-75 heading back to Chattanooga. I saw a car starting to move and I could tell the driver was falling asleep. I knew what was coming and I could just see the peril of the moment. Sure enough, an accident occurred and it was rather a traumatic moment so we stopped to help. When I'm reading this text in Genesis 41 that's what I feel. Joseph is in peril.

The tenth book in the book of Genesis is the book of Jacob and it focuses on the life of Joseph. It has now brought us from Joseph's favorite position into slavery to Potiphar's house, false accusations, prison and now he has come into the house of Pharaoh to interpret his dreams and he is about to get a promotion. He had everything, then nothing and now he is about to get everything. He was on the bottom and now in the space of a few moments he is about to be at the top. In one single bound he is moving from the pit of a prison into the pinnacle of a palace. I'm sure that Joseph had no idea that when he shaved, cleaned himself and put the best clothes on he could go into the presence of Pharaoh that he wasn't coming back to that prison, much less than staying the night in the palace as the Prime Minister of Egypt.

What is so perilous about that? What will he do now? We have been astounded, amazed and absolutely overwhelmed at his faithfulness, integrity, his steadfastness under adversity, forsaken, falsely accused, suffering and humiliated. We have been astounded at this Gospel character manifested in the life of Joseph in the midst of everything that has come against him in adversity. Certainly, when he was sold into that pit that was the first point of peril so what would the favored son do when everything was taken from him and all was lost? What would he do next? That has been answered. Whether in the pit, Potiphar's house or in the prison he was a life changing leader who changed everything

because he refused the luxury of self-pity and in selflessness, full of the presence of the Lord five times it says the Lord was with him and he made an impact wherever he went.

Now we come to perhaps an even more perilous moment. Now he has everything and the only person in the world he can't tell what to do is Pharaoh. Everybody else is going to be at his command. This doesn't happen overnight but in about an hour. He has power, possessions, wealth, influence and everything. Now what will happen to him?

It is like a perilous moment when a starving man has had nothing to eat. I have read accounts lately on men who have been prisoners of war in WWII and when they saw them emaciated they gave them food and said "Don't let what we brought you to eat to sustain you, kill you." You can't over eat or over drink. What will Joseph do now that everything is at his disposal? Will what he hasn't had that he now has, kill him? I have seen this. I have seen people in a walk with the Lord where God has blessed them, worked in their life, then He exalts them to positions of influence and the things that come with positions of influence become more important than the relationship they had with the Lord. I have seen this and then the child devoured the parent because that became more important than their relationship with the Lord. What will happen to Joseph?

I'm going to divide up this text and the first part that I've already ready is Joseph's proposal. God has revealed that this is going to happen now what are we responsible to do? When I know God's Word I'm supposed to responsibly plan my life in conformity to God's Word and then as God works I am content with God's secret will as I build my life upon God's revealed will. Remember in Joseph's time they didn't have a Bible yet but according to Hebrews 1 God speaks through visions and dreams and Joseph has made this clear. God has revealed to you Pharaoh that this is going to happen so he tells him to be responsible.

Here is a plan for you. Number one, you have to have a leader if you have to have a plan. So get a leader. Secondly, here is the plan that you need to make sure is in place. It's a national emergency so we need a temporary 20 percent tax. You need to bring in all the grain during the years of plenty then we'll have something in the years of famine and we'll be able to get through it. There is novel idea where the government is not in debt but actually saving for the people. Here is statesmanship, here's a plan and get a leader. He says when the plenty comes save because the famine is coming. Note Joseph's absolute confidence that God will fulfill what He has revealed.

Remember that 13 years ago God gave Joseph two dreams and they haven't been fulfilled yet but he has not lost confidence. Joseph everyone will bow down to you, including your brothers and parents. He has been in prison and slavery. He has been doing the bowing yet he does not lose confidence in the Word of God. In light of what God has revealed, make a plan Pharaoh, and here is what we need to do. That is Joseph's proposal so now let's look at Joseph promotion and Pharaoh's response.

Genesis 41:37-45 says [37] *This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants.* [38] *And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?"* [39] *Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.* [40] *You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you."* [41] *And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."* [42] *Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on*

Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. [43] And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. [44] Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." [45] And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

So in Pharaoh's response he promotes Joseph. Notice the assessment Pharaoh makes. He turns to all his wise men "Joseph is right, can we find a better leader in all the land than this? Joseph I'm going to make you the leader to enact the plan because I don't have anybody as wise and discerning as you." Pharaoh had not taken a course in the doctrine of the Trinity yet. He had no concept of One God who dwells in three Persons. Joseph had the chance to promote himself when he went before Pharaoh to interpret his two dreams but he didn't. He said the dreams were from God and God provided the interpretation and obviously his comment has hit the mark in Pharaoh's heart because a pagan king is going to make a comment that will be consistent with everything we'll learn about the doctrine of the Trinity from the Word of God that in this believer dwells the Spirit of God. The fruit of that Spirit is at work in his life. The Spirit of God is at work in Joseph's life so he is wise and discerning. He is selfless and not self-promoting. Pharaoh says "I don't have anybody like this."

I just wrote a book on this. We need Christian leaders in positions of influence not only in the church but from the church into the world. We don't get there by self-promotion. We get there through faithfulness and with faithfulness even the world and its chaos, hunger and despair will look and say "We don't have people like that. Will you come lead my business." "We are tired of politicians, we need statesmen." Statesmen live for the next generation. Politicians live for the next election. We need some people that are going to think for the people. Joseph was exalted from his humiliation, not by self-exaltation but as the Word of God says, when you humble yourself God will exalt you at the right time.

In his exaltation or elevation at this moment, from being a slave and prisoner all the way up to this pinnacle of the palace and prime minister, a couple of things happen to affirm this publically that were done to him. Joseph didn't lay out this plan. Pharaoh came up with this idea. If I'm going to put you in this position, number one I'll give you some accoutrements. I'm going to give you my signet ring. Secondly, you're going to wear the chain of regal majesty so that when people see that gold chain they know that you represent the kingship of Pharaoh. Number three, I have some fine linen clothes for you to wear. Fourthly, he gets the second chariot. In our age that would be like getting Air force Two. Then he had an inauguration and an investiture with a parade. When you parade through in that chariot, with that signet ring, in those clothes and that gold chain the command will go out to bow the knee. I think this is a dream come true. God had revealed it and now it's coming. Everyone is starting to bow and in not too many years it will be even his brothers and family.

Then Pharaoh wants to Egyptian-ize him a bit but giving Joseph a new name. The name he gives Joseph means revealer of God and preserver from God. It is an Egyptian name but a Biblical concept. It is Joseph's calling to be a preserver based upon God's revelation. He also gives him a wife from Aristocracy. So here this man out of the

prison is now elevated to these positions. What will Joseph do at this moment? He won't change vocation for he'll just change location. He will still serve the Lord. Let's look at the description of this from the text.

First, think about this. How long ago was Abraham's promise when he got a piece of the land? It was 13 years. How long had it been when Jacob was told by God 'I will be with You,' get his wife and get back to the land? It was 13 years. There is something about this 13 years in the patriarchs. I don't know exactly what it is but I just wanted to show it to you.

Genesis 41:46–57 says *[46] Joseph was thirty years old (13 years ago when this all started) when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. [47] During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, [48] and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. [49] And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.*

[50] Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. [51] Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." [52] The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

[53] The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, [54] and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. [55] When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do."

[56] So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. [57] Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

Here is the leader. The leader has a plan and amazingly he works the plan. Many times we plan the work but don't work the plan. In fact he works the plan with great energy. As Joseph did this in the past with all that he did from prison, Potiphar's and slavery the same thing happens here. He doesn't change vocation, he just changes location. Everyone begins to trust him and he changes everything around him. He becomes not only a preserver of Egypt, of his own family, of God's nation but he becomes a preserver that impacts the entire known world at that time, because he is faithful.

He also shows the real mark of a leader. In this one book it says that leaders need to do MBWA which stands for management by walking around. That's what Joseph does. He doesn't just stay up in the palace with all the comfort. He leaves the palace, leaves Pharaoh and three different times in the text it says he went out throughout all of Egypt. He went out to where the people were hurting, needed help and where his officials were working I'm sure to make sure they were honest and weren't keeping bread or money for themselves. In other words, he was engaged in the leadership of what was taking place.

He showed not only energy and diligence to plan the work and work out the plan but in the midst of it he had two children. He gives both of them Hebrew names and both of those names reveal something to us about the sufficiency of God. The first one was named Manasseh which means 'God has made me forget.' I'm not living in the past and even in all that adversity and all that has come against me God is enough. He has made me forget. His second son tells us something about the future. Here is a land that has done injustice to me (Joseph) from the moment I came but I give praise to God because now God is using me to bless the people in the land of my adversity. I not only have the gift of forgiving and forgetting but I have the gift by the presence of God of fruitfulness to those who abuse me. In the land of adversity I will be able to show the grace, mercy and kindness of my God. His second son was named Ephraim, which meant "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Then Pharaoh responds. When the famine hits everything is in place. Egypt comes, the world comes and Pharaoh says "Go to Joseph." Do you know how wonderful it is to have good help? He has good help. I was listening to R.C. Sproul on his series of the life of Joseph and R.C. says "I wish you could get good help. I'm looking for good help for I'm looking for someone to run Legioner Ministries and I'm going to pay them over \$200,000. It will be worth it to me if they can run it and I can be freed up to do what I need to do." Then he said "A man came to me and said 'I think I'm the guy, what's the first thing you want me to do?' Go raise \$200,000." Here is a man, just like Pharaoh, the prison keeper and Potiphar, can trust. Go to Joseph. The believer even in the midst of Egypt is able to be trustworthy and the unbelievers can see it and know the presence of the believer makes a difference.

Here are a couple of takeaways in conclusion. I want to give you three of them as we walk through this perilous moment. One of the things that allows Joseph to be consistent whether he is in adversity or prosperity is that Joseph has what we understand today through the New Testament, the mind of Christ or a Christian mind but to have a Christian mind we need the supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit. All truth is God's truth. All of God's truth is rational and logical. It makes sense but all of God's truth is not simply rational or logical because it comes from God the Infinite One, it is supra-rational and supra-logical.

For instance, God tells me that I have not because I ask not. So I'm supposed to understand that God works through prayer but then I begin to understand that God isn't dependent upon prayer although God has ordained the means of prayer. I want to put this in terms of motels. When you walk into the motel of theology you need to ask God for not a single occupancy room but a double occupancy room. It's not for comfort. It's for grasp and comprehension.

For instance, I want to learn about Jesus. He is 100 percent God and 100 percent man. Now that makes sense when I understand I need a man to redeem me but I need God to come in the flesh. I need one who is God Man but One Person with 200 percent natures, how can that be? I want you to meet my God. My God is a glorious God. He dwells in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit but He is One God. He is not One God with three uniforms. He is One God who dwells in three Persons and He is not three Gods. God moves through praying people but it's not my prayers that change things for it's God who changes things through a praying people.

When you have single occupancy what happens is always theological error. We grab hold of one thing and we forget that which God puts on the other side of the coin. The one clearly here is adversity. God brings difficulties to people when He disciplines them. So I begin to theology of adversity that says God disciplines through adversity. Over here God can bring blessings to people and He brings prosperity. So if I have something then that must mean I'm doing pretty good and God loves me. If I don't have something and I have adversity then that must mean that God is judging me. Certainly God can bring adversity for discipline and God can bring prosperity for entrusting blessings for you to use them but when you read the Bible you find out that sometimes God gives adversity not out of discipline but out of love because He's preparing you. Sometimes He gives prosperity, not out of blessing, but out of judgment for He gives them over to their idols.

When you have a one occupancy mind you tend to come up with things like the prosperity gospel or you come up with things that you think you have to do something to earn God's blessings instead of living for the Lord in the merits of Christ. Here is the sovereignty of God. Glorious doctrines like predestination are attached to that. Over here God reveals that not only is He sovereign but I'm responsible and what I do counts that's why there is a judgment seat and I'm really a free moral agent. It doesn't mean my will isn't free for it's in the bondage of my sin but I'm making choices in my life and my choices count and I'm accountable for them. Yet God is sovereign who knows the end from the beginning and so how do I put those two things together?

Single occupancy minds either become Armenians where God's sovereignty is at the disposal of my choices or they become fatalists where since God is sovereign it doesn't matter what I do so I'll just be passive and that shows I really believe in the sovereignty of God. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit opens our minds for double occupancy. As you grow as a Christian you begin to see these things as Isaac Watts said in one of his hymns that glorious truths melt into the heart and what seemingly is contradictory becomes gloriously liberating. So that we know God is sovereign and that adversity is at the hand of the Lord.

Joseph, just because he was a prisoner, he did not discount the revelation of God's revealed will. So when Pharaoh had a dream and he told him what was going to happen he knew God's Word would succeed because he had not interpreted adversity as the failure of God or the failure of himself to accomplish these things. He understood that his God was working. Here is the role of adversity and here's the role of prosperity and it's multifaceted. Here is the sovereignty of God and when I know what God's sovereign will is, here is my responsibility and the plan and depend, trust and be content in the Lord. So he had this double occupancy mind.

What is the result? Here is a man who stands courageous for the Lord and is merciful even through pagan unbelievers for he's going to feed them. The ministry of mercy is always downstream from people who know their God intimately and accurately. Now you see mercy flowing to Egypt, to the family of God, to his own family and mercy flowing to the whole world. Why? It is because here is a man whose mind does not take God's Word and then fit God into his mind but he is constantly being challenged in his mind to be faithful to God's Word and believe and trust the whole counsel of God.

The alternative is mechanistic Christianity. Like, here are my three statements about God, my three statements about life and my six steps to go do this. You have to

know God's Word and the God of the Word and have His Spirit in you. That's why Pharaoh understood. Here is a man that told me what God has declared and then he has come up with a plan that is responsible. This is man who doesn't have a mind like the people in my world. This man had a different mind. This man must have the Spirit of God at work in his soul, mind and heart.

Here is a second takeaway. When a Christian mind is at work, then that leads to Christian character that is always built upon this understanding that God is enough. For us who have the New Testament fleshing it out for us, Christ is enough. Circumstances do not dictate our character they reveal it and become the opportunity to refine it. Joseph, the favored son, gets thrown into a pit now here's an opportunity to find out what is in Joseph's heart. Joseph gets put into Potiphar's house, we find out what's in his heart. Will we falter? Yes and that becomes an opportunity to repent and be refined. Now Joseph moves from adversity and humiliation to exaltation and prosperity and we're about to find out what's in his heart. We found out that his circumstances don't change him. God uses him to change the circumstances because circumstances don't make his life. The Lord is his life and that's enough.

I want to speak from heart to you. I like you live in a broken world. Some of you have experienced brokenness far beyond what I have experienced but I know the answer to you is the same to me. All that we want or think we need or desire we don't have. Lord, I need this, I need that. God is going to use all of these things to refine us but what we don't have that we think we need should never paralyze us or send us into spiritual depression. I understand the difference between clinical, physical and spiritual depression but it shouldn't send us into spiritual depression. Not only do we not have what we think we need when we think we need it but many times we have been given by God good gifts and then we lose them. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. We lose a business deal, a child, a job, a home, a parent, or a spouse.

I know these are difficult days because we're made to have relationships and made to make impact and when those things happen it causes a great amount of reflection and thought. There is the onslaught of grief. What is the answer when what we think we need is not been given when we think it should be given and what we have been given we lose which all of us will lose what God has given? Our answer in our broken world is the same as Joseph's in his world. Joseph lost his family, his home, his freedom, his position and his dreams, even the ones that God had given him. He was a slave and a prisoner. Joseph seemingly had lost everything but Joseph had not lost the Lord. The Lord was with him and the Lord had not lost him. He loved him and that was enough. That's why Joseph is the same in adversity and prosperity. That's why he is a God honoring change agent leader who is faithful, trustworthy with integrity in adversity and prosperity. It is because the Lord is enough.

Let's look at Habakkuk 3. I have a friend in the ministry that has said many times that what has kept him moving forward is this passage that was read at his wedding. Here Israel has looked around and said that it is not like it used to be and here is what the prophet says. Habakkuk 3:17– says [17] *Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, [18] yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. [19] GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he*

makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. (paraphrase – choir leader, make a song out of this.)

We are going to sing this to the praise of God that God is enough. This God who has given us good news of salvation, His Son, forgiven us of sins, given us heaven, eternal life and the Spirit of God for I've given you all of that but even worship that or make your joy there. I AM your joy. The greatest gift of the Gospel is not the gifts of the Giver but the Giver gives Himself to us and that meets every hope, need and desire. Even when those good things that He has given me are not there or have been lost to me, the Lord is enough. Even when I'm in the midst of adversity the Lord is enough and that's the insurance that when prosperity comes the Lord is still enough because we did not live for adversity or prosperity, so whether we're in adversity or prosperity the Lord is our life and He is enough. It is this glorious truth that has been revealed that keeps us from paralysis and that keeps the children with a relationship with God His blessings from becoming the dragons that devour us for we stay fixed on Him.

Here is one final thought. The life of Joseph has set up for us a snap shot of Christ. Wherever we place our hope in life other than Christ is idolatry. Don't make heaven idolatry. Don't make marriage idolatry. Don't make your spouse idolatry. Anything that you have put your hope on in place of Christ or Christ I'll take You if you add this, is idolatry and it will fail us and be shown as toys of dust and when it fails we will be overwhelmed with discouragement, despair and paralysis, but if the Lord is yours who never leaves you nor forsakes you, then it is that Lord that Joseph portrays to us and the Lord is enough.

Joseph is a marvelous portrait of what Paul says to Timothy when he says "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." Joseph is a marvelous model of the power of God's grace to produce character that stands in adversity and prosperity and that points even pagan kings to the Lord and changes everything that is around him. While Joseph is never identified in the New Testament as a type of Christ, it is inescapable that this narrative is put together that we might get at least a snapshot of Jesus. We already have gotten a little snapshot of Moses. Moses with his wisdom is going to rise up in Pharaoh's sight and lead the people to their land. Joseph is kind of pointing towards Moses and beyond that he is pointing to Daniel who will rise up with wisdom against Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon and lead the people back to the land. While Joseph is pointing to Moses and Daniel to get the people ready for that, he is also pointing us to Jesus so that we see the One who made Joseph and the One who makes Joseph one in Him. It is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

I won't go as far as A.W. Pink for I read his book on this passage up to this point. He said there were 101 ways that Joseph points you to Jesus but I didn't think I had enough time to cover the 101 ways he did this but clearly you can see the similarities. By age 30 he was enthroned, blessing the world, gathering his people, preserver, humbled, suffering servant, exalted and I can even see all that. Here is the one I want you to think about in closing. When the famine hit the world and they came to Egypt, Pharaoh said "Go to Joseph." Our world is in a famine. It is searching. Maybe it's the next elected official or the next game or the next toy or the next Olympics. There has to be something that will give me hope and meaning. There is a famine of hope and meaning and we following Pharaoh's lead say not to Joseph but "World, go to Jesus!"

Jesus will not just give you bread, for He is the Bread. He'll not just give you life, for He is Life. It's not just survival with Him but it's thrival with Him. He will make you more than a conqueror and it won't be adversity and prosperity for nothing can separate me from the love of Christ – height, depth, famine, nakedness, peril, sword – my Savior is enough! Come to Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Take these moments and speak to our hearts, I pray. If you today have not come to Christ this invitation is for you. Go to Jesus for there is bread from which you'll never hunger, fruit of the vine from which you'll never thirst. Say 'Jesus I know I'm a sinner and I want to put my trust in You. I come from the wilderness and famine of this world to You.' Lord, as You speak to the hearts of these Your people, I am so amazed that at what I see in Joseph I see in so many of their lives but O God, may we not rest here. May we go out throughout the land just as Joseph did for we don't have to wait for the world to come and send them to Jesus for Jesus has sent us to them to show and tell that He is enough. Thank You Lord Jesus for I pray this in Your Name, Amen.