

Living by Faith in a Sin-Cursed World

Joseph

Genesis 45:5-8; 50:20

Some hopes purposes and reasons for this series

- How Christians should live in a sin cursed world
- Living in a sin cursed world is hard
- Encouragement, instruction, example, exhortation

Christians who know their God in difficult times will trust him and be faithful to him.

- This means that there are Christians who don't know God like they should
- And as a result in difficult times don't trust him like they should and aren't as faithful as they should be

When you know the Lord—that he is sovereign over all things—this helps you have a **faith-in-God** view of things rather than a **fatalistic, victim** view of things

Each message in this brief series will focus on different aspects of living by faith in a sin-cursed world.

The focus of this message is **understanding the fact** of God's providential control of circumstances in a sin-cursed world for the fulfillment of his sovereign purposes.

Providence is God's **directing everyday life** toward his **desired/intended** ends and purposes.

➔ God's providential control of a sin-cursed world fulfills his perfect plan.

1. Joseph's Blessings (in a Sin-Cursed World)

17-year-old Joseph (37:2) had...

- 1) A loving father
- 2) A comfortable living
- 3) The blessing of being in a family God promised to greatly bless (land, descendants, blessing)
- 4) The prospect of a significant future (two dreams)

And then what happened to Joseph?

2. Joseph's Troubles in a Sin-Cursed World

1) Family

- His dad loved him more than his brothers, 37:3
- Hated by his brothers, 37:4
- Envied by his brothers, 37:11
- Brothers, motivated more by greed than murder, sold him into slavery and lied about his death, 37:26–27, 31–35
- Taken by slave-traders to Egypt, 37:28 (away from his family, the promised land, blessing)

2) A slave in Egypt

- A laboring slave in the house of Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer and captain of the guard, 37:36; 39:1

- Had some prosperity and success (as much as a slave could have), 39:5
 - Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce Joseph and so against God, 39:7–12
 - Potiphar's wife slanderously accused Joseph of attempted rape, 39:13–18
 - Potiphar believed his wife and threw Joseph in prison, 39:19–20
- ➔ In all this remember that Joseph is entirely alone. He has no family, no church, no support group; no Bible or pocket NT. **Nothing** except for what he knew about the Lord from his dad's teaching; that's it.

3) A slave in prison in Egypt

- Had some prosperity and success (as much as a slave in prison in Egypt could have), 39:22–23
- Helped a prominent man in Pharaoh's court, but he forgot about Joseph, 40:23
- Joseph would spend two more years in prison, 41:1 (so 28 years old, cf. 41:46)

So far Joseph was...

- (1) almost murdered by his own brothers
- (2) sold into slavery by his own brothers
- (3) taken from the promised land to Egypt because of what his brothers did
- (4) tempted by Potiphar's wife to gratify his physical urgings and get some kind of revenge against Potiphar
- (5) falsely accused of a terrible crime, unable to defend himself
- (6) imprisoned for years and seemingly forgotten
- (7) experienced toil, sorrow, and affliction (cf. 41:51–52)
- (8) 13–14 years, from 17 to 30 years old

“Where is God?”

“Why has he forgotten me?”

“Doesn't he see and care?”

“What about his promises?”

“What about those dreams?”

How would you feel?

How would you act, respond, choose, think?

How would you feel and think about your brothers?

How would you feel and think about God?

Now, let's consider where God was and what God was doing, keeping in mind that more than likely these things were not immediately known/recognized by Joseph until later on....

3. God's Providential Control in a Sin-Cursed World

1) Joseph's family

- His dad's preferential love of him and sending Joseph to look for his brethren (giving the opp for bro's hatred to result in action → slavery → Egypt → salvation)
- Brothers' envy and hatred of Joseph
- Brothers' greed greater than desire to kill

2) Joseph as a slave in Egypt

- Ishmaelite slave traders just happened to pass by right at that moment

- Slave traders just happened to sell Joseph to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer and captain of the guard
- The great blessings that came through Joseph's oversight of Potiphar's house
- Potiphar's wife was controlled by her sinful, sensual attraction for Joseph → slander → imprisonment → butler and baker → Pharaoh's court
- Potiphar believed his wife rather than Joseph

NB – God sovereignly allowed sinners' evil feelings, assessments, and decisions, working through such to accomplish his plan and purposes (we will see this again later on [Rev 17:17])

3) Joseph as a slave and prisoner in Egypt

- Prison keeper was favorable to Joseph

NB – Joseph learned tremendous administrative skills in Potiphar's house and in the prison that the Lord used to fulfill his promises to preserve the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

- The butler and baker offended Pharaoh and just happened to be put in “*the place where Joseph was confined,*” 40:3
- The butler forgot about Joseph

4) Joseph as second in command to Pharaoh

- The butler remembered Joseph right at this point, when Pharaoh had dreams none could remember
- Pharaoh, not knowing or caring about the true God and his promises (Pharaoh was god on earth to Egyptians) but only his empire's survival, appointed Joseph second-in-command
- The seven years of plenty and famine happened exactly as Pharaoh dreamed

➔ Saving in productive times is not the norm, but rather indulgence and spending more. God's wisdom through Joseph then, at the right time, resulted in saving Israel, for all other lands were destitute from the famine, 41:56-57

- Jacob happened to hear there was grain in Egypt
- Joseph's brothers bowed down to him and he remembered his dreams, 42:6, 8

➔ It was probably at this point Joseph started to connect the dots, thinking back on his dreams, enslavement, Potiphar, false accusation, prison, the butler and baker's dreams, Pharaoh's dreams

God sovereignly and providentially accomplished his purposes not just despite but through numerous aspects of a sin-cursed world:

- 1) Jacob's preferential love
- 2) Brothers' hatred and greed
- 3) Ishmaelite trader's slavery
- 4) Potiphar buying slaves
- 5) The lust and lies of Potiphar's wife's
- 6) Potiphar's injustice
- 7) Pharaoh's peeve with the butler and baker
- 8) The butler's forgetfulness
- 9) Pharaoh's “divinity” that gave him absolute authority
- 10) Severe famine

11) Joseph's toil and affliction, 41:51-52

How can you know that God worked not just despite but through a sin-cursed world? Because Joseph said that God sent him to Egypt, and that though his brothers meant evil against him "God meant it for good," 50:20

4. God's Presence with and Blessing of His People in a Sin-Cursed World

1) The Lord was with Joseph, 39:2, 21, 23

- Never a time or circumstance when Joseph was "on his own," even though he felt abandoned
- Never without God's care and protection, even though he felt otherwise
- Always in the middle of God's will, even though he didn't understand it

2) He was a successful man, for the Lord made everything he did to prosper, 39:2, 3, 23

There's a lot not said here that we should try to unearth to see and understand God's providential control:

- Joseph's attitude and work despite being a slave
- Joseph's administrative abilities both under Potiphar and the keeper of the prison
- The Lord caused Joseph to find favor in the sight of both Potiphar and the prison keeper, 39:4, 21
- Things involved with Potiphar's house: fields, flocks, servants and staff schedules and issues, water, food, entertainments, finances—"the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand," 39:3
- Things involved with a prison: food, water, prison guard rotations, prisoner issues, prisoner sentences (and punishments?), finances—"whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper," 39:23

5. Joseph's Faith in God in a Sin-Cursed World

This message aims primarily and understanding and knowing that circumstances are not out of control, independent happenings, but ultimately are guided by God to accomplish his purposes and plans.

Yet Christian you must see that Joseph's faith in the true God, even though he was largely in the dark until later, controlled his life:

- 1) He refused to sin with Potiphar's wife
- 2) He trusted in God to give wisdom regarding the dreams of B&B and Pharaoh
- 3) He praised the Lord through his sons
- 4) He did not turn from the Lord but trusted in him
- 5) He loved and did not hate his brothers

➔ Difficult circumstances are no excuse for faithless living—Joseph worked hard, refused temptation to immorality, did not harbor ill-will (Job 1-2 will focus more on this)

6) He recognized God's providence, 45:5-8; 50:20

Joseph viewed and understood everything that happened to him from God's point of view

- He didn't blame his brothers
- He didn't blame the slave traders, Potiphar, or anyone else

Genesis 45:5-8

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. 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. 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. 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.”

Genesis 50:20

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Note also what the Lord later said in Psalm 105:16-22

Dear friend,

- nothing is random or happenstance
- no one but God has absolute freedom
- God is sovereign over human hearts

➔ You must bow to this God, the Lord Jesus Christ, submit to him, repent of your sins before him, fall humbly before him, and beg him to save you from your sins!

Dear Christian, as you live in this sin-cursed world with its pain, injustices, grief, separations, loneliness, horror, and suffering, in your pain and hardship you must understand and know that God does work all things together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to his purpose, knowing that no one and nothing can separate you from his love.