

Perhaps you have never heard of this... (I must admit that I only became aware of it - this week)... but March 9<sup>th</sup> (every year) is National "Get over it day." ... Yes... March 9<sup>th</sup> (which is quickly coming upon us) was specifically chosen because it is smack-dab in the middle... between Valentines Day and April Fools day.

Letting go and moving on is a difficult... painful process. ... Bad relationships... bad decisions — we tend to revisit the moments when we were *not-so-smart* (or when others were not-so-smart)... beating ourselves up for our mistakes... or blaming others for the ways they've hurt us. That's why a fellow by the name of Jeff Goldblatt (several years ago) started... what he hopes will become a movement — "Get Over It Day."

The idea behind "Get Over It Day" is simple: all of us have something — an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend... a difficult family member... stressful school... home... or work-related issues... fears and insecurities... embarrassing moments... friendships gone bad... and so on. ... "Get Over It Day" motivates people to use sheer will-power... and move on — no matter how deep the scars. ... Goldblatt's website even sells "get over it" products and provides helpful hints like this one: *"If you're not sure what you have to get over, just ask your friends what they're tired of hearing you complain about."*

"Get Over It Day" (as a popular movement) hasn't really taken flight... and I think I know why. It is because simply using sheer will-power is not very effective. ... If merely telling ourselves to "get over it" was a useful strategy... we could close down a lot of mental institutions and greatly

reduce the number of psychologists and counsellors. A lot of pharmaceuticals and chemical dependencies would fade away.

So... I can not envision myself embracing this movement... and perhaps you too might shy away from this over-simplified way of dealing with our life's most troubling struggles. ... (It really is not all that helpful.)

But let me propose something else... and have you evaluate it with me. ... I think this might be more useful. ... It is based on the narrative we have been studying in Genesis... concerning Joseph. ... As we return (this morning) to this familiar Bible account... let me ask that you look at it with me... through the lens of a better principle... that I believe Joseph teaches us... for how we might more effectively deal with our own struggles in life.

(Here it is!) ... Victory... in every struggle of our life... will always begin with our losing one - particular - battle. ... .. That battle is the battle for sovereignty in our life. ... .. LISTEN! God owns that role. "Who will be sovereign?" Will we wait on the Lord?... OR... Are we going to try to stay in control and force the outcome that we want?

We have seen how Joseph's right answer to the question of "*Who will be sovereign*" has taken him through unimaginable struggle after struggle. And it comes into an even clearer focus in today's passage. Joseph has submitted to God's sovereignty... even when he could not see any possible good in what was happening to him.

Last week... (where we left off)... Joseph was down in jail... forgotten... forlorn... and forsaken. ... (And as we observe in today's passage)... all of this was happening to him for God's purpose in his life. ... In the chapter

before us we will see that Joseph is released from prison when he interprets the dreams of Pharaoh. ... He is made overseer over the entire land of Egypt. ... (Isn't it so true)... that if we could recognize God's hand in our devastating moments... it would give us a different outlook on life?!

God is at work in each of our lives... using the most trivial... and the most important... the most likely... and the most unlikely circumstances... - to develop us for **His** purposes... even though it may look like Satan's evil is the only winner. ... In Genesis chapter 39... Satan used Potiphar's wife... and in Genesis chapter 40... he used Pharaoh's chief butler. ... Satan used Potiphar's wife to put Joseph into the dungeon... and Pharaoh's chief butler he used to keep him there (through the butler's ungrateful negligence.) But ... God was at work behind the scenes. ... His finger was guiding all the springs of the vast machine of circumstances... and when the due time had come... He brought forth the fully developed man-of-His-purpose.

Controlling the circumstances is completely God's prerogative. ... *He is above all...* and can use all... for the accomplishment of His grand and unsearchable designs. So... this morning we see how God intervened. He moved **providentially**.

It is important for us to notice... that Joseph pulled **no** strings. ... He had tried that once - with no success. (The butler forgot him. ... The days... the weeks... the months... and the years came and went with monotonous regularity... and Joseph remained buried in prison.) ... (Remember!)... Joseph had **already been forgotten** by his brothers... forgotten by that evil woman... (who had lied and destroyed his character and career)... he was

forgotten by Potiphar... (who had owed him so much)... and forgotten by the butler. ... Joseph was forgotten by **all** - except God! ... And through each of these snubs - Joseph learned (well) Who was sovereign. ... (They were lessons of learning... to submit his plans to the Lord's plans.)

### **Genesis 41:1-8**

We really should go no further without recognizing... *the perfect timing of God!* ... Not a moment too soon... not a moment too late... but in the very fulness of time... God acted. ... Pharaoh was ready... his dreams saw to that. ... Joseph was ready... twelve years of learning to trust God's sovereignty saw to that. ... The butler was ready... enough time had passed for him to speak of his imprisonment without fear.

Twelve years is a long time to us... but it is nothing to God.

### **Psalm 90:4 (ESV)**

*For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.*

God had not forgotten Joseph. He was working according to His perfect timetable.

So... after 12 years of being a slave and a prisoner in Egypt... God caused Pharaoh to have two dreams... on the same night... dreams that completely flabbergasted him and his magicians.

Egyptian Pharaohs... (supposedly gods themselves)... were thought to live on the edge of the divine realms. ... So their dreams were given special weight of importance. But **these** dreams were baffling to them. ... However

there was one thing... that they did understand. They had come as a pair... which signaled their importance and certainty.

The dreams so stunned Pharaoh that the narrator uses the word "*behold*" six times (in the Hebrew) to indicate the king's astonishment. (Now if you are reading from the ESV... as I just did... you will only count the word "*behold*" twice. ... However the Hebrew author... in making his point... used it six times.) All these occurrences of "*behold*" demonstrate that Pharaoh was quite shaken. He was literally *tormented* by them.

Knowing that there was some significance to them... he called for all the magicians and wise men to come to the palace court. ... He told them his dreams... but not a single one could interpret the dreams - not a *single one* could tell Pharaoh what they meant.

It is really surprising that the wise men could not interpret (or make up their own creative meaning) to the dreams. ... But Pharaoh's smartest men could not figure out what to tell Pharaoh to calm him. ... "*Just give him something... anything!*"

(But here is what I think happened.) ... All indications point toward God's *blocking* the minds of the Egyptian magicians. God was working behind the scenes to work things out for Joseph and the saving of the entire Hebrew nation... therefore... the minds of the interpreters were somehow *confused*.

We see this elsewhere in Scripture. God has the power to make men ineffective... (the power to block their abilities)... so that the door will be opened to show what *He* can do. ... Several times this was true in Daniel's case. ... It was also true in the case of Christ. ... For example... the woman

who spent all that she had on physicians... but could not be healed... then she came to Christ... and was healed (Mark 5:26ff).

What we see here... is that God had awakened in Pharaoh a tremendous sense of an imminent disaster... all ramped-up to a feverous pitch... by the failure of his magicians. ... God awakened in Pharaoh a dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the "experts" (the magicians.) ... This now made Pharaoh receptive to whatever his cup-bearer might have to say. ... The stage had been fully set for the entrance of Joseph.

Standing near Pharaoh's throne was Joseph's old friend - the cup-bearer. ... He (no doubt) had listened keenly to the story of the dreams... and watched with curious eye... the self-assurance... of the wise-men... then their bewilderment... and finally their outright fear and embarrassment.

Suddenly it all came back to him! He saw himself back in prison... (the place he tried hard to forget.) Perhaps he dreaded to have his mind go back there... but the memory persisted. ... His dream and the dream of the baker... would not leave him alone... nor could he get out of his mind the Hebrew slave who had ministered to him with such kindness. ... *"Oh! What was his name? ... Com'on think! ... Think! ... Oh Ya'ah..."*

### **Genesis 41:9**

Pharaoh probably understood him to be recalling the misdeeds that had landed him in prison. ... But the plural "my offenses" may also include his sin against Joseph... in forgetting Joseph's rather emotional plea... to remember him before Pharaoh.

### **Genesis 41:10-13**

It was a fairly accurate account... except that the cupbearer... like any good (two-faced) politician... did some selective editing. ... He neglected to mention that the young Hebrew actually claimed to have no power in himself to interpret dreams... He neglected to say that Joseph's power to interpret came from his Hebrew God. ... You see... Pharaoh (himself) was considered to be a god incarnate. The butler would not dare suggest that Pharaoh was weaker than the Hebrew God.

### **Genesis 41:14**

Hebrew men... in contrast to Egyptians... wore beards. ... So in a flash Joseph was shaved... sanitized... - well... Egyptianized(!)... and presented to Pharaoh. ... The young Hebrew had gone from the pit to the palace in an instant.

Once his name was brought before Pharaoh... things moved very quickly. We can picture the scene. There was Joseph in his prison garb... bustling to and fro on his many errands as righthand man of the prison governor. ... It was just like any other day... But suddenly his name was called... and the jailer was before him. *"Quick, off with those clothes. Here, wash yourself, shave off that beard. Put on these robes. Hurry man, the pharaoh wants you!"* ... .. *"The pharaoh wants me? - Whatever for?"* ... .. *"I don't know, something about a dream. Hurry, man! Do you want me to lose my head?"*

(Just stop for a moment and consider something with me!) Our most important opportunities may come when we least expect them. ... Joseph was brought hastily from the dungeon... and pushed before Pharaoh. ...

Did he have time to prepare? ... Yes ...and no. He had no warning that he would be suddenly pulled from prison and questioned by the king. ... Yet we see that Joseph was ready for almost anything... because of his right relationship with God. ... It was not Joseph's knowledge of dreams that helped him interpret their meaning. It was his knowledge of God. ... Be ready for opportunities by staying close to God. ... Then... when He calls you to a task... you'll be ready. ... Be in submission to God's sovereignty (submit your plans to His) – even if it seems you are unjustifiably in prison.

### **Genesis 41:15**

So Joseph... arrayed in court robes... was hurried off to Pharaoh. On the throne before him was a man with keen... penetrating eyes... bare... muscular arms... regal nature and a proud disposition... a man wearing the double crown that for a thousand years had symbolized the union of Upper and Lower Egypt. ... Such was the pharaoh... a man supposed to be god... (the incarnation of Ra.) ... Joseph looked at him as he sat there upon his throne.

*"My dreams, young man, you can interpret them? ... I've heard that you can"* demanded the awesome king.

The all-important moment had come. ... What a moment for Joseph to take the credit. ... How Satan must have whispered in Joseph's ear... *"Now don't blow it, man! Don't be preaching to this fellow about God. Remember he's a god himself and a mighty powerful one. He'll have your head off... as soon as look at you... if you insult him before all these people."* But Joseph had not been in God's school all those years for nothing. Joseph learned to

submit to the sovereignty of God. ... .. " *Young man, can you interpret my dreams?*"

Pharaoh praised Joseph ... but Joseph will praise God. ... If Joseph was not submitting to the sovereignty of God... he would be primarily concerned about gaining his personal freedom and exoneration. ... But Joseph's main concern was to honor God - the other matter could wait. ... In spite of the great injustice he had suffered... he was still more concerned about the pre-eminence (the sovereignty) of God.

### **Genesis 41:16**

"*Not me!*" — "*It is not in me!*" And then he directed Pharaoh away from himself to "*ha Elohim.*"

Joseph was all steel. To Pharaoh's face... Joseph asserted that his God was superior to... (and sovereign over) the gods of Egypt. ... Joseph's theological proclamation rose high... and into the face of this worldly power. "*ha Elohim* will do what you and your gods could not do. Joseph even punctuated it by using the definite article "the." The God (ha Elohim) will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

Then... as Joseph proceeded to interpret Pharaoh's dreams... he became even more God-centered. ... Joseph invoked God at the beginning... in the middle... and then he punches it home (one more time) at the end. Joseph was being very clear to Pharaoh that the One True God controlled their very existence... in opposition to Egypt's false gods.

### **Genesis 41:17-32**

Joseph has calmly announced to the supposed “god incarnate” of Egypt that the future is out of his hands.... Pharaoh cannot affect the future. Nor can he **resist** the future... that God will bring."

(LISTEN!) You and I may never have to say this to a world leader's face... but we better have a strong conviction that it is true. ... **Kings do not make history.** ... Rather... God uses them to **effect history.** ... Isaiah said the same thing about a Babylonian king (King Cyrus.) Isaiah said the pagan king was brought to power to bring about God's purposes for His people.

**Isaiah 45:4-7 (ESV)**

*<sup>4</sup> For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. <sup>5</sup> I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, <sup>6</sup> that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. <sup>7</sup> I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.*

Kings do not **make** history—they only **serve** history... as Jesus would declare in his answer to Pilate's question: "*So Pilate said to him, ‘You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?’ Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above’*" (John 19:10-11).

So as you watch the news during these highly **polarized** political times... remember **this!** ... When evil politicians thumb their noses at justice... and millions cheer them on — when dark and powerful leaders prevail with seeming **impunity**... and righteous people are engulfed by the night. ...

Remember that these politicians do not make history... but rather God **uses** them to effect His purposes.

(But getting back to our passage)... Joseph (next) went beyond giving an interpretation... to something Pharaoh did not ask for. Joseph crossed over from being the *interpreter* to Pharaoh's **advisor**. ... Once again... this took exceeding faith and courage. Joseph spontaneously throws himself... with all his heart... and with all of his simplicity and practical good sense... into the great national emergency... which was before his mind. ... It was un-asked for... but not un-accepted.

### **Genesis 41:33-37**

Fascinatingly... every aspect of Joseph's plan called for dynamic *action*. And here is what fascinates: Joseph's dynamic call to action was based on his knowledge *of what God was about to do*. ... So we see that the knowledge *of what God is going to do*... is **not** to produce passive resignation... but aggressive *action*. ... (LISTEN!) ... The knowledge of God's purpose... is not the **end** of human planning and action... but the **beginning** of it. ... The fact that God has set the future... is a mighty summons for us to *get busy*!

Today it is precisely **this**... that undergirds the tremendous energy of world missions. ... We know how history is going to end — it will end with people redeemed from "*every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages*" (Revelation 7:9). ... So we *pray*... and *give*... and *go!*

Prophecy is not given to satisfy mere *curiosity* but to sanctify our *conduct*. As an example... Take a look at...

## 2 Peter 3:10-11

After Peter predicted that *"the heavens shall pass away... the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:10), he then exhorted *"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be"* (2 Peter 3:11).

So when Joseph told of the years of plenty and also the years of famine... he exhorted Pharaoh to act upon two main duties. ... Joseph's demeanor... his skill at interpreting dreams... and his wisdom in finding a solution to the problem of the famine... all impressed Pharaoh... and convinced him that Joseph was the man to accomplish those duties.

## Genesis 41:38-41

What are we to make of his life and his ultimate triumph? ... It would be nice to say that it proves... that all our lives will turn out with that kind of triumph... if we are as faithful as Joseph. ... We know... however... that Christians get martyred... most Christians never become rulers... and many will suffer much... and receive little (or no) earthly reward. ... Yet... Joseph's remarkable life does teach us several things. ... In closing... I will point out just two.

**First**... God... Himself... not the triumphs associated with this world... is the greatest possession of the Christian. ... Joseph ended up with a great and wonderful position of worldly status... but the greater thing... he had all along... a relationship with God. ... We saw that Joseph was content **wherever** he was... because of his relationship with God. ... And so can we.

**Second**... God has the power to use His servants - as He wills. In Joseph's case... it was to serve God and men... by saving Egypt and Israel from utter devastation. ... In our case... it may be to simply help a person here and there as we minister to them. ... But no matter our call in life... we are to submit to God's sovereignty. Abandon your own plans for His.

God has the **power** (and I am certain - the **desire**) to use us in marvelous ways. ... But we must make ourselves available to His sovereign use... even if it means temporary hardship. ... He will not force us to serve Him. We must believe Him... obey Him... and follow Him with all our hearts. Then we will be available for God to use us. And He will: God will pour His power into our lives... using us to help and minister to a lost and dying world.

Robert Dick Wilson was one of the great professors at Princeton Theological Seminary in the late 1800's. He was a scholar on the Hebrew Bible. ... One of his students had been invited to preach in Miller Chapel twelve years after his graduation. ... Old Dr. Wilson came in and sat down near the front. ... At the close of the service... the old professor came up to his former student... cocked his head to one side in his characteristic way... extended his hand... and said:

*"If you come back again, I will not come to hear you preach. I only come once. I am glad that you are a big-godder. When my boys come back, I come to see if they are big-godders or little-godders, and then I know what their ministry will be."*

His former student asked him to explain, and he replied...

*"Well, some men have a little god, and they are always in trouble with him. He can't do any miracles. He can't take care of the inspiration and transmission of the Scripture to us. He doesn't intervene on behalf of his people. They have a little god and I call them little-godders. Then, there are those who have a great God. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. He knows how to show himself strong on behalf of them that fear him. You have a great God; and he will bless your ministry."*

He paused a moment, smiled, said, "God bless you," and turned and walked out. .... [ PAUSE ]

Are you a "little-godder" or a "big-godder"? So much rides on your answer to this question.

"Big-godders" (like Joseph) see the only way to deal with life struggles is to have our big God be sovereign in our life... including the times when we cannot see any good in our future.

"Little godders" can have March 9<sup>th</sup> to look forward to – Happy get-over-it-day!