

Genesis 41:1-57

"God's Providence Prevails"

From a position of utter desperation to unparalleled exaltation in a matter of hours... That's the sum total of Gen 41. How many of you realize that even when it seems like life's circumstances are careening *out* of control; God is still very much *in* control?

This Ch takes Joseph out of prison & places him at the pinnacle of power over all of Egypt; the earth's super power of his day. & It happens so fast it makes your head spin; it's like you don't even have time to process it. One minute you're in jail, just a forgotten, forsaken prisoner w/no hope of parole & out of nowhere you're yanked out of prison & placed on the seat of power next to Pharaoh himself who declares himself greater than you only in regard to the throne. **Outside of that, you have his signet, you have the gold chain around your neck, you have your own royal chariot, everybody is bowing to you & nobody does anything in the entire nation unless you say it's ok... From humiliation & desperation to exaltation at break neck speed...**

Or so it seems; the truth is (as we know) that before the exaltation came literally *years* of preparation (we'll talk a bit about that); but when it was time for things to be put in place we see the prevailing providence of God at work. **The same is true for you & the same is true for me. You may not see God at work, you may not sense God at work, but He's there. He's never left you, He's never forsaken you & when the time is right His providence will prevail in your life. You wait, you watch & you'll see.**

As we fall back into the flow we last left off w/Joseph sitting helplessly & hopelessly in jail. He'd been falsely accused of rape, sentenced (it seems) to life w/out the possibility of parole. As time went by (we don't know how much) 2 guys from the king's court found themselves in the same prison, Pharaoh's butler & baker. Long story short they each had a dream & it freaked them out. **Joseph could see they were troubled so he asked them what was up. They said, "We've dreamed a dream & we're worried about the implications." He says, "Hey, interpretations belong to God, tell me your dreams & let's see if God reveals something to us." The butler tells him his dream & Joseph says, "Here's the interpretation, in 3 days you're going to be restored to your former position & you'll stand before Pharaoh as you previously did. But listen, when you get there put in a good word for me because I'm here for no wrong doing either."**

The Baker (hearing the good news) tells Joseph *his* dream & Joseph says, "Here's your interpretation; in 3 days Pharaoh is going to cut off your head, hang your body on a tree & the birds are going to eat your flesh."

Lo & behold it happened exactly as Joseph said it would only when the butler was restored he forgot all about Joseph & didn't say a thing to Pharaoh. Notice Ch 41:1

Vs 1-7

Note the time frame. This happened *2 full yrs* after Joseph interacted w/the butler & the baker & interpreted their dreams. Joseph has just been forgotten & forsaken in prison.

How easy it would be to lose heart as a believer. You've sought to honor God your whole life & your situation just keeps going from bad to worse. He probably thought that the butler was a "God send" & that finally he'd be out of prison having made a connection w/one of Pharaoh's main men. But a few weeks go by, a few months go by, *2 yrs go by* & you're still just sitting there in prison... How easy it would be to give up, to give in, to think that God had just abandoned you; but Joseph didn't do that.

How many of you realize that God operates in an orderly fashion & He has a "divine timetable" through which He orchestrates the events of our lives? Jesus acknowledged God's sovereign timing on a consistent basis. Read the gospel of John. You'll read the phrase, "My hour has not yet come" (or things to that effect) over & over again. But when it was time for Him to die for the sin of the world we read where Jesus said, "*Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,*"¹ The bible teaches that God sent Christ *into* the world at the appointed time, that He *died for the world* at the appointed time. That He'll *return to this world* at the appointed time... God doesn't act arbitrarily; He doesn't shoot from the hip or move randomly. He's very orderly; He moves intentionally & w/perfect timing.

Now some of you may be going through a difficult time in your life; you're wondering where God is or how He could let this happen. God hasn't abandoned you, He's preparing you for the plan that He has for you. You say, "What is that?" I don't know. I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future 😊. I know the thoughts that God thinks toward you, thoughts of peace & not of evil. You may not see it presently but eventually (maybe not even in this world) you'll see it work for your eternal good & God's eternal glory.

There's a reason that Joseph wasn't given a release *2 yrs* earlier. *Circumstantially* it's because the butler forgot about him. *Providentially* (according to God's sovereignty) it's because God was holding him there for this moment. Had he been released *2 yrs* earlier he prolly would've just headed back to the land of Canaan, he would've went home.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 17:1]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But now he's where God wants him to be in order to save the nation of Israel & ultimately preserve the coming of J.C. into the world by keeping his family alive.

Pharaoh has a dream. He's standing by the Nile & there are some cows standing in the river (much like the wade out into ponds around here). 7 plump, great looking cows come up to graze in the meadows & then 7 gaunt/boney, diseased looking cows come up & stood by the good looking cows. Then the 7 diseased/gaunt looking cows devour the good looking cows & he wakes up in a cold sweat; it was weird.

He has another dream, a stalk of wheat pops up out of the earth & has 7 great looking heads of grain on it. Then 7 thin, messed up by the east wind heads sprang up & devoured the 7 good looking heads & again he wakes up in a cold sweat, there was just something disturbing about these dreams. It wasn't adding up.

Vs 8-14

Here's the main thing I want you to glean from this section of scripture; when your spirit is "troubled" (Vs 8), who you "call for" or "call upon" makes all the difference...

I think it's interesting that Pharaoh is here being humbled & forced to realize that even though he may be a "world power", he really doesn't have any power at all unless God gives it to him. Pharaoh has no idea what's going on w/these dreams & he never will unless God chooses to reveal it to him. So, no matter how high one may climb on the rungs of world power, all are still subject to God, *He's the One who is in control.*

Now the magicians/wise men of Egypt were no slouches, to this day scientists are still trying to figure out how they did the things they did architecturally, they studied the stars, lunar cycles, they were more advanced as a society than was any other culture of that day. Perhaps you remember that Moses would have a run in w/the magicians of Egypt as well... Also a time would come when another guild of wise men in *Babylon* wouldn't be able to interpret a king's dream & God would use another Hebrew slave by the name of ... Daniel to demonstrate that regardless of how powerful a nation might be, it is still not beyond God's sovereign control.

But back to my main point, when he called upon those whom he knew in the world (regardless of how highly they were esteemed, their education etc) they couldn't help him. They didn't have any words that would benefit him, not really. But as we'll see when he turns to the man of God (the lowly believer in their midst) it will make all the difference. Why? Because Joseph knew something they didn't? No. Because the God Joseph served knew something they didn't.

Pharaoh is sitting there all frustrated/exasperated, no one can help him; then the butler's all, "O snap! I remember now. Hey, there was a guy in prison, a Hebrew who was there when you put me & the baker there. We each had a dream & *he* interpreted it & everything happened exactly like he said it would..." Pharaoh says, "Bring that guy here immediately." & In Vs 14 we read that they brought him *quickly* out of the dungeon, he shaved his beard, changed his clothes & there he is before Pharaoh.

All these yrs he'd been beaten down, held back, treated wrong; now out of nowhere, in a matter of moments he's yanked out of prison & stood before the President of the U.S. Listen, it's during those times that we think God isn't doing anything that He's liable to be doing the most important thing: developing our character, transforming us into the image of Christ. Preparing us for His plan for us. God's perfect timing requires our patience...

Joseph would've been satisfied getting out of jail 2 yrs ago. But now God is getting ready to something exceedingly, abundantly beyond all he could ever think. It's amazing what a difference a few hrs can make in a person's life. Yrs of preparation lead to instant exaltation... notice.

Vs15-16

Underline Vs 16. "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." It blows our minds & refreshes our hearts to see how Joseph handles this. Pharaoh gave him a golden opportunity to glorify himself, "Well, I've been known to interpret a dream or 2 in my day..." As far as Joseph knew this was his 1 & only shot to stand before Pharaoh, to make an impression, yet he didn't plead his case, he didn't draw attention to himself, he *glorified God*. He's standing there witnessing to the most powerful man on the planet!!!

He's careful to note that there's nothing of himself that will aid Pharaoh in any way. It's *God's* work in his life that's gotten him to that point & he was careful to note that (as we'll see, more than once). Listen, as a children of God we do well to take the platform He gives us to *glorify* God in what we do. When you get recognized for your accomplishment, do you draw attention to your hard work or God's grace at work in your life? Joseph was careful draw attention & give credit to God. Who holds the answer to life's perplexities? It's not in me; it's not in you. God will give the answer that brings you peace.

Vs 17-24

Now we're seeing more details of the dreams. When the boney cows ate the fat cows, they themselves did not become fat. They stayed all gaunt & emaciated.

Vs 25-32

Notice the patter of “2’s” in Joseph’s life. He had 2 dreams, he met 2 dreamers in prison, Pharaoh now has 2 dreams. & Joseph says that the dream was repeated (different dream same meaning) because God was confirming or establishing it as from Himself. We might say that it was established by 2 witnesses (Deut 19:15). The repetition also installed in Joseph a sense of urgency, “God will shortly bring it to pass.”

He says that God has shown Pharaoh what He’s about to do. Why? More than likely because he’s in a position to prepare for it & more specifically because God is moving heaven & earth to keep the nation of Israel preserved so that Messiah can come at the appointed time... 7 yrs of unparalleled prosperity followed by seven years of unparalleled problems. Famine so severe that the days of prosperity will be swallowed up & forgotten; it will force people from all over the world to come to Joseph to be saved.

Here Joseph receives a word of knowledge (information he couldn’t possess apart from a supernatural revelation from the Lord). Now he follows it up w/a word of wisdom.

Vs33-36

Check it out, God’s revelation demanded a response. This is exactly what the word of God does in all of our lives. God didn’t give us His word so we could win Bible Trivia games or impress other people w/what we know. The Word of God has been given to us as something we need to *respond* to, it’s a call to action. When God reveals something to us, somehow gives us illumination, or revelation in His word, it should always lead to some kind of application. James said that like this, “*...be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*”² Write it down, look it up, Matt 7:24-27

There was a reason for this revelation (we mentioned it a minute ago). Therefore there was to be some preparation for the coming crisis. Use the fat yrs to prepare for the lean yrs.

Joseph said, “Find a wise & discerning man, impose a 20% flat tax over the entire nation for the next 7 yrs. Build storehouses in every city & when the famine hits you can use those areas as distribution centers throughout the land so that we don’t perish when times are tough.” Again God’s revelation demanded application, a call to action.

Note, what we believe about the future determines how we’ll live in the present. Now on a practical level (as we spoke Wednesday evening) a lot of people are worried about the future so they plan ahead, get life insurance, car insurance, home owners insurance etc...

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Jas 1:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But the real question should be, if we go through these extreme measures to prepare & plan for the things of this world (which are temporary), what are we doing to prepare for eternity? What kind of insurance are we putting in place to secure our eternal state? If we haven't yielded our lives to Christ, if we haven't placed our faith in Him, we're not prepared...

God has given us the revelation of His word, we're sinners in need of a Savior. What's the application, what's the call to action, the appropriate response? Repent of our sin, receive J.C. surrender to Him & we will be saved by Him.

Vs 37-45

Remember when we talked about God's timing? Peter said it in a single statement when he said, *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,"*³ 13 yrs in the making, now Joseph has gone from the prison, to the pinnacle of power (really over all the earth).

Here's what I want you to see; Joseph could've easily buried his talent (his God given gift) having been in prison, forgotten, disheartened & disillusioned He could've refused to engage & help people w/that which God had given to him because he'd been burned more than once, he'd been faithful & look where it had gotten him. But had he done that he'd never have stood before Pharaoh.

Some of you have been hurt by the church (or people in the church) because of that you don't want to engage anymore, don't want to use your God given gifts to help others. Learn the lesson from the life of Joseph. Bless the body & build up the fellowship. You're burying your talent & you never know when the "butler" is in your presence; God wants to exalt you in due season but you've buried your talent & opportunity passes you by. Invest your talents, stir up your gifts, let God use your life; He will honor your faithfulness.

Joseph was faithful w/a little & now God has entrusted him w/much. Don't despise the days of small things, promotion doesn't come from the east or from the west or from the south, but from the Lord. God has said (1 Sam 2:30), "...those who honor Me I will honor,". This is the 1st mention in your bible of the Holy Spirit recognized as being upon a man. There was something different about Joseph & Pharaoh noted it; it was the Spirit of God in his life. It didn't matter if he was in obscurity or seated on a high platform even internationally, Joseph was faithful & God honored it.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Pe 5:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Check it out, God called Joseph into government work ☺. & Many (including his whole family) would be saved because of it. Sometimes as believers we can get the impression that the ministry is the pinnacle calling upon a person's life. The truth is that the best thing for you is that which God has called *you* to, regardless of what it is.

Vs 46-49

Again Joseph was faithful to the task committed to his trust. Notice that he was faithful to whomever he was attached to (his dad, Potiphar, Pharaoh). Because he knew that God was in control & moving in his life. He could be faithful trusting that God's sovereignty was at work. Be faithful to your employer, God is able to raise you up, move you on, promote you or whatever. Trust in him & do right by them (be good to them, faithful & trustworthy).

Vs 50-52

We love this. Joseph had 2 sons by his wife & he named the 1st one Manasseh, which means "forgetful/forgetting". He was able to reconcile all the grief, all the hurt, all the pain w/the greater picture of God's plan. He was able to release the bitterness & the grudges because He could see that God had been at work.

You guys we could spend significant time here. Some people can't ever release their past, they hang on to the hurts, they grow bitter & hold grudges & therefore they lead a crippled life. Paul told the Philippians, "...one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,"⁴ Listen to me, if you can't come to the place whereby you can *forget* that which is behind you, *forgive* those who have hurt you, than you cannot reach *forward* to those things which are ahead of you & you will not be *fruitful*...

Joseph laid aside his prison garb & was given a new robe; fine linen, a new life. Because (by God's grace) he was able to forget, he was able to bear fruit (Ephraim/fruitful). The order of the names is significant; we can't be moving forward in a fruitful manner as long as we're living in the past. Even in the land of his affliction God caused him to bear fruit. God wants to work healing in our lives; bring forth fruit in the midst of our affliction. We've got to learn to forgive even as God in Christ forgave us; move forward that you might be fruitful to the glory of God.

Vs 53-57

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Php 3:13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What do we see here? Joseph was the one w/the bread of life & people would come from the far reaches of the earth that they might find life through him.

Have you been noting the parallels between Joseph & Jesus? Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."*⁵

We've probably noted a dozen or more ways in which we see Jesus in Joseph as we've studied his life. Here are a few more; he was made a servant. He was tempted severely, but didn't sin. Falsely accused. Made no defense. Cast into prison, and numbered with transgressors. Endured unjust punishment from Gentiles. Associated with two other criminals; one is pardoned and one is not. The butler & the baker handled the bread & wine (elements of communion); it was 3 days before their case was resolved.

He showed compassion. Brought a message of deliverance in prison. Wanted to be remembered. He was shown to have divine wisdom. Recognized as having the Spirit of God. Betrayed by friends. Glorified after his humility. Honored among Gentiles while still despised or forgotten by his brethren. Given a Gentile bride. Was 30 years old when he began his life's work. Every knee was made to bow before him. He became the only source of bread for the world. The world was instructed to go to him and do whatever he said to do. & He warned of coming tribulation & gave instruction on how to avoid it.

I don't know what's going on in your life; be patient God's preparing you; His providence will prevail & He'll be glorified in your life...

Prayer Points:

God You've exhorted us, encouraged us & challenged us today; change us by Your grace & the power of Your Spirit. Help us to decrease that Christ might increase in our lives. I pray that anyone here who may be bogged down by the past would find healing in You today. We humble ourselves under Your hand, be glorified in our lives.

God wants to be glorified in your life, that starts when you *give Him* your life. God has loved you w/an everlasting love. Jesus hung in open shame upon a cross for you. He shed His blood & died for you that you might find everlasting life, the forgiveness of sin in Him. Believe on the Lord J.C.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 6:35]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.