

FROM THE PIT TO THE PALACE

The Sovereignty of God
in the Life of Joseph

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Redeemer Church of Piketon, Ohio

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Adapted and edited from five sermons preached by Pastor Jason Boothe at Redeemer Church of Piketon, Ohio. Spoken repetitions, service transitions, and transcription errors have been revised for reading. The chapters retain the series' pastoral and doctrinal emphasis.

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible (KJV). The Scripture text is in the public domain in the United States.

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About This Book

This book brings together five sermons on Genesis 37 preached by Pastor Jason Boothe at Redeemer Church of Piketon, Ohio. The messages follow Joseph from the ordinary responsibilities of his father's household through betrayal and the journey into Egypt, then consider the way his history directs our attention to Jesus Christ.

The title looks toward the larger purpose revealed in Joseph's life. The main exposition remains rooted in Genesis 37, with later passages tracing the preservation of the covenant family and the glory of Christ, the greater Joseph.

Each chapter begins with its primary Scripture passage and includes additional full-text readings from the King James Version. The discussion questions invite close reading, doctrinal reflection, and personal application. They may be used individually, with a family, or in a Bible study group.

The pastoral voice of the sermons has been retained while the spoken material has been shaped for sustained reading. Read with an open Bible, take time over the quoted passages, and bring the questions raised by the text before the Lord in prayer.

May these pages encourage a deeper confidence in the God whose purpose stands, whose grace saves sinners in Christ, and whose hand holds His people through every trial.

God's Great Purposes through Ordinary Circumstances

GENESIS 37:1-4

¹ And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

² These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

⁴ And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

The Lord at Work in an Ordinary Life

When we enter Genesis 37, we come to one of the most familiar accounts in the Old Testament. Many of us remember Joseph's coat of many colours from childhood. We remember the jealous brothers, the empty pit, and the caravan carrying a young man away from his father's house. We may also remember the astonishing end of the story: the young shepherd eventually stands before Pharaoh and receives authority over Egypt.

Familiarity can cause us to pass too quickly over the suffering between those scenes. The colourful coat attracts our attention, but the account also contains deep family resentment, deliberate cruelty, and a father's grief. Scripture tells us the truth about these

people. Their lives were as real as ours, and the pain they inflicted upon one another was real as well.

The great subject before us is the sovereignty of God. Through the circumstances of Joseph's life, the Lord reveals the certainty of His purpose and the faithfulness of His care. Events that appeared confusing to Joseph were already serving the wisdom of God. The brothers' intentions were wicked. The Lord's purpose was holy. Every stage of the journey would unfold within His providential government.

Joseph could not see this entire picture. When he rose to carry out his father's instructions, he had no knowledge that his life was about to change so violently. He did not know that he would be seized by his brothers or taken into another country. He could see the responsibility immediately before him. God knew the whole road.

Beloved, this is where the account begins to speak to us. We confess that God is in control, and we sincerely believe that confession. Then something happens that we did not anticipate. A carefully made plan collapses. A conversation brings painful news. Suddenly the truth we have readily affirmed becomes the truth upon which we must depend.

We find ourselves asking where God was when everything changed. The testimony of Scripture directs us to His continuing presence. Our circumstances have changed; His faithfulness remains. Joseph's experience invites us to learn that truth in the ordinary pasture before we consider it in the darkness of the pit.

EPHESIANS 1:11

¹¹ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

The words "all things" reach into the details of life. The Lord's purpose encompasses the events we gladly welcome and the circumstances we struggle to understand. His government extends

to the unnoticed duties of an ordinary day. Nothing in the life of His people escapes His knowledge or falls beyond His keeping.

The Burdens That Grow with Us

As we grow older, life often becomes more complicated. A child may find the greatest trial of the morning in sitting quietly through a sermon. Adults sometimes smile at that struggle, although we remember how long those minutes once seemed. A child depends upon someone else to provide food, clothing, and transportation. Much of the weight of life is carried by loving hands the child scarcely notices.

Adulthood brings responsibilities of its own. We go to work, meet the needs of a household, and discover that the bills will keep arriving. No one told us how enduring a correspondence we would have with the electric company. We make our plans around the expectation that we will be able to work and provide.

Then a shoulder is injured. A leg gives way on a slippery surface. A job we thought secure suddenly disappears. Illness interrupts the routine upon which the family depends. Questions that once belonged to other people become our own: How will we meet these obligations? Who will help us? How long will this continue?

The increasing weight of life can make the world seem unstable beneath our feet. Even ordinary duties may feel overwhelming when weakness is added to them. A person who has always taken care of others may suddenly need care. Someone accustomed to giving answers may have no answer for the difficulty now facing the family.

The doctrine of providence meets us in those very circumstances. God has appointed the days of His people, and He remains faithful throughout them. He knows the burden that others cannot see. He understands the fear beneath our carefully composed expression. His care reaches the place where our strength has come to an end.

PSALM 46:1

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

We should receive this word as a promise to be trusted. The Lord is present with His people in trouble. Our weakness does not exhaust His strength. Our confusion does not bewilder His wisdom. He carries His children through seasons in which they cannot imagine how they will take another step.

This does not require us to pretend that pain is pleasant. A difficult diagnosis remains difficult. Loneliness is still lonely. The believer may acknowledge the full weight of the trial while asking God for strength to endure it. We may pray, "Lord, I know that You are with me. Help me to trust You through this storm."

Over time, those prayers become part of our testimony. We look back upon circumstances we once thought unbearable and recognize that the Lord sustained us. We remember the provision that came, the friend who stayed, or the strength that was sufficient for that particular day. Our understanding may remain incomplete, yet we have learned something precious about the God who keeps His people.

A Shepherd in His Father's Household

Genesis introduces Joseph as a seventeen-year-old young man feeding the flock with his brothers. His work belonged to the daily necessities of his household. Animals required care. The family's livelihood depended upon that care. Joseph had responsibilities, and those responsibilities occupied his days.

A shepherd's life involved labour and watchfulness. It placed a young man among the ordinary demands of weather, pasture, and the needs of the flock. We should allow that simplicity to impress itself upon us. The future governor of Egypt is first presented in the work of a family shepherd.

At this point, Joseph's visible circumstances offered little indication of the influence he would one day exercise. He belonged to a household, served under his father, and worked beside his

brothers. Yet the Lord was already governing the life that would become an instrument of preservation for that same household.

The hidden years of a servant's life matter to God. We often measure significance by public recognition. A task seems important when someone applauds it or when its results become immediately visible. The Lord's purposes reach far beyond that narrow measure. He prepares His servants in places where very little appears to be happening.

Perhaps you have struggled through a new responsibility at work. In the beginning, every part of it seemed difficult. You wondered whether you could learn the routine or carry the weight. Months later, you realized that the task had become familiar. Looking back, you could thank the Lord for teaching you patience and giving you the ability to continue.

Such experiences remind us how little we can judge from a beginning. Joseph's work in the pasture belonged to a life whose later course he could not yet imagine. God knew the use He would make of that life. The same Lord knows the purpose of the duties entrusted to us.

Before Moses stood before Pharaoh, he tended a flock in the wilderness. David also cared for sheep before he became king. The men called to proclaim Christ's resurrection included fishermen whose days had been occupied with nets and boats. God was pleased to employ people whose lives had been shaped through ordinary work.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:27-29

²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.

The Lord receives the glory for the work He accomplishes through His servants. Their usefulness springs from His power and grace. A humble beginning places no obstacle before Him. The person overlooked by the world may be precisely the person through whom He intends to accomplish a gracious purpose.

This is a comfort for ordinary people. Most of our lives are lived beyond public attention. We care for those entrusted to us, earn a living, and fulfil responsibilities that will never appear in a history book. Nevertheless, we live before the face of God. The years that seem insignificant to us remain within His wise and purposeful care.

Little Things in the Hands of God

Throughout Scripture, the Lord employs familiar things in remarkable ways. A shepherd's sling becomes an instrument of deliverance. A widow's small supply of meal and oil sustains her household according to God's word. A few loaves and fish become sufficient to feed a multitude when the Lord Jesus blesses and distributes them.

1 KINGS 17:14-16

¹⁴ For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

¹⁵ And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

¹⁶ And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

The widow could see the small quantity before her. God knew the provision He would make. Each meal became a testimony to His faithfulness. The vessel in her house served a purpose that she could never have secured by the strength of her own hands.

The Lord who created the heavens and the earth is pleased to work through ordinary means. He uses the preaching of the Gospel, a conversation, an act of hospitality, or a gift offered to meet

another person's need. We rarely know how far the effects of such things will extend.

A small congregation may send the Gospel far beyond the walls where it gathers. A recorded sermon can reach someone who has never visited the church. A printed article may be shared with a neighbour. Support sent to another ministry may help people whose names we will never know. The immediate act may seem modest, while the Lord gives it a significance beyond our sight.

The same is true of personal kindness. You do not know what a thoughtful word may mean to a stranger. You may never learn what burden that person carried into the conversation. We should be faithful with what the Lord places before us and entrust the outcome to Him.

Joseph's ordinary responsibilities belonged to a providence much larger than his understanding. The pasture was part of the road toward the palace. Every duty was lived within the purpose of God, even when no one could trace the connection.

A Beloved Son in a Troubled Family

The household in Genesis 37 was troubled. Joseph brought his father an evil report concerning his brothers. The text gives us that fact without supplying every detail of the report or every motive in Joseph's heart. We should respect the limits of what has been revealed. The brothers resented him, and the tension within the family was already evident.

Anyone familiar with siblings can understand how a report to a parent may become another occasion for resentment. Honesty may be resented by those whose conduct it exposes. A young person may also speak with limited wisdom. The passage does not settle every question we might ask about Joseph's manner. It plainly shows a household in which affection and jealousy had become painfully entangled.

Jacob loved Joseph more than his other children. Scripture states this openly. Joseph was the son of his old age, and the son of

Rachel, whom Jacob had loved deeply. His birth had been received as a particular mercy after Rachel's years of longing.

GENESIS 30:22-24

²² And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

²³ And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:

²⁴ And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.

That history helps us understand the depth of Jacob's affection. Joseph represented an answer to longing within a complicated family story. Jacob had experienced disappointment and deception himself. His household included relationships marked by rivalry long before the events of this chapter.

The coat of many colours made his special affection visible. Joseph wore a garment that distinguished him from his brothers. They could see the honour their father had given him. Whatever Jacob intended, his favouritism created a source of bitterness within the household.

The account is painfully recognizable. A parent's affection, expressed unwisely, may wound other children. A visible distinction can become a daily reminder of perceived rejection. The brothers watched Joseph receive what they believed had been withheld from them, and resentment grew.

Their resentment did not excuse their conduct. Jacob's partiality did not give them the right to hate their brother. Scripture allows us to see how sin develops without calling that sin righteous. We can recognize the conditions in which bitterness grows while remaining clear about the guilt of those who cherish it.

Parents should receive this passage with humility. Children are attentive to the way love is expressed. The comparison a parent treats lightly may settle deeply in a child's heart. We need wisdom to love those entrusted to us with patience and care. Our confidence

must remain in the grace of the Lord, for even sincere affection can be expressed through the weakness of our flesh.

The Grace That Sustains Imperfect People

The Bible speaks honestly about the faults of God's servants. Jacob received covenant promises, yet his family life reveals serious failures. Moses was used mightily by God, yet acted in disobedience. David wrote words that have comforted generations, while the account of his own life includes grievous sin.

This honesty is a mercy to us. We need to know that the Lord deals with real sinners. The saints of Scripture lived in dependence upon divine grace. Their place in God's purpose did not make their conduct flawless, and their failures were never hidden from His sight.

Jacob was a man of faith who still struggled with the weakness of his flesh. The love he felt toward Joseph was real, and the injury caused by his favouritism was also real. The Lord carried forward His purpose in a household whose members urgently needed mercy.

1 JOHN 1:8-9

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

These words bring us to honest confession. We have no reason to imagine that the troubles in Jacob's house belong to a kind of humanity wholly different from our own. Pride, partiality, and resentment find ready soil in fallen hearts. We need cleansing, and the Lord graciously provides it.

The hope of God's people rests in the perfect Saviour He has given. Jesus Christ accomplishes what our imperfect obedience could never secure. He is our righteousness before God. The record

of human failure in Scripture makes the glory of that provision shine more clearly.

We should therefore read this history with humility and hope. We learn to acknowledge our own sin, ask for wisdom, and depend upon the grace of God. The Lord accomplishes His purpose through servants who remain wholly indebted to Him.

When Bitterness Takes Root

The final words of our opening passage describe the brothers' hearts through their speech. They hated Joseph and could not speak peaceably to him. Their bitterness had become so settled that it shaped even an ordinary exchange with their brother.

Hatred often develops in this way. A person notices an injury, remembers it, and returns to it. The memory is rehearsed until it becomes the lens through which everything else is judged. Even an act of kindness from the offending person may be received with suspicion. The heart has already decided what it intends to see.

The murder the brothers later contemplated began with the bitterness they cherished here. Their eventual violence had a history. Sin took root within them before it appeared openly in their treatment of Joseph.

PROVERBS 4:23

²³ Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

The heart requires watchfulness. What we repeatedly entertain will shape what we say and do. A resentment that seems private may already be preparing the way for words or actions that will wound others deeply.

MARK 7:20-23

²⁰ And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

²³ All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Our Lord places the source of defilement within the fallen heart. The brothers' hatred was their own. They could point to Jacob's preference and Joseph's coat, but their responsibility remained. The evil they would commit arose from desires they had allowed to grow.

Beloved, we should ask the Lord to search us here. Are we nursing an old grievance? Have we become unable to speak peaceably to someone? Do we find satisfaction in imagining that person's humiliation? These questions belong in the life of the church because the people of God still need the correction of His Word.

The grace that forgives us also teaches us to bring our bitterness before the Lord. We need His help to speak honestly, to act wisely, and to relinquish the private pleasure of resentment. The Gospel gives us a sure foundation for such humility: every believer stands before God as a sinner received through Christ.

The Purpose Already Moving Forward

Genesis 37 opens in a pasture and a divided household. A young man works among sheep. A father expresses love unwisely. Brothers cherish resentment. Beneath these familiar human circumstances, the purpose of God is moving forward.

Joseph is approaching a sudden change of life. The chapter will soon carry him into suffering that he could not have anticipated. Yet the Lord who governs the pasture also governs the road, and the Lord who knows the road remains sovereign over the pit.

The wickedness of men will be real, and God will hold them responsible for it. His own holiness will remain perfect. Through all that follows, His covenant purpose will stand. The Lord will preserve the family through which the promised Christ will come, and Joseph's life will serve that gracious purpose.

For now, let us receive the comfort offered at the beginning. The ordinary places of our lives are known to God. The duties we perform and the burdens we carry remain before Him. He is faithful in the season whose meaning we can see, and He is faithful in the season whose meaning remains hidden.

You may be able to describe very little beyond the task before you today. Fulfil that responsibility in dependence upon the Lord. Bring your weakness to Him. Ask for wisdom in your relationships and grace for the condition of your own heart. The God who prepared Joseph in an ordinary household is able to sustain His people in every circumstance He appoints.

Questions for Discussion

Read, reflect, and discuss in the light of Scripture.

1. Observation: What does Genesis 37:1-4 tell us about Joseph, Jacob, and the brothers? Which details about their motives remain unstated?

2. Interpretation: How do Joseph's ordinary responsibilities help us understand God's providence? Read 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 alongside the chapter.

3. Self-examination: What signs in speech or thought may reveal that resentment is taking root? How do Proverbs 4:23 and Mark 7:20-23 address that danger?

4. Application: Consider a parent, employer, or church member whose favouritism has wounded others. What would a wise and gracious response involve?

5. Reflection and prayer: Identify an ordinary responsibility or present burden whose purpose you cannot yet see. How can the truths in this chapter shape your prayer and conduct this week?

The Lord Directs Every Step of His Servants

GENESIS 37:12-17

¹² And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.

¹⁴ And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

¹⁵ And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

¹⁶ And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.

¹⁷ And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

When His Hand Is Unseen

There are seasons when the providence of God seems wonderfully clear. We recognize His direction, rejoice in answered prayer, and thank Him for an opportunity that has opened before us. The circumstances appear to fit together. We can trace the kindness of His hand almost as easily as we follow a well-marked path.

Such moments are a comfort to people whose faith is often weak. We welcome the reassurance of seeing a burden lifted or a long uncertainty resolved. We may look back over a series of events and recognize a pattern that was hidden while we were living through them.

Other seasons are harder to understand. We know what obedience requires today, but tomorrow remains uncertain. We believe the promises of God while struggling to see how present sorrow belongs within His gracious purpose. The truth is familiar; the difficulty of depending upon it is immediate and personal.

A believer may know the Gospel and understand that Christ has accomplished redemption, yet still ask how a particular trial fits into the larger picture. The suffering is real. The emotional distress is real. Faith does not give us complete knowledge of the Lord's purpose in every circumstance.

Genesis 37 teaches us how to live within those limits. Joseph began his journey with no knowledge of the pit, the caravan, Potiphar's house, or the prison. The palace was beyond his sight as well. He knew that his father had sent him to find his brothers. That was the responsibility before him.

What appeared to be a simple errand became part of a journey through which God would preserve the covenant family. The consequences extended far beyond Joseph's private life. The Lord was carrying forward the history through which the promised Redeemer would come.

Joseph could not see the destination. The Lord had appointed the path. This is the central comfort of the passage: the God whose hand is unseen remains fully present in the circumstances of His servants.

A Father's Request and a Son's Response

Jacob's sons had gone to feed the flock in Shechem. Concerned about their welfare and the condition of the animals, he called Joseph and sent him to bring back a report. The task belonged to the ordinary needs of the family.

Joseph answered, "Here am I." His willingness is worth noticing. He received his father's instruction and undertook the journey without any recorded protest. The text gives us a brief response, but that response carries the weight of readiness.

The journey required effort. Joseph would have to travel away from the household, locate his brothers, and return with news. This was a substantial errand in a world where travel demanded time and endurance. He could not simply glance down a familiar lane and report that all was well.

His response also invites us to consider the relationship between a willing servant and the one who sends him. Joseph knew his father's affection. He accepted the responsibility placed before him. He did not require a complete account of every circumstance he might encounter before he began.

We should be careful about claiming more than the text reveals. Joseph's answer is not a full account of his inward spiritual condition. Nevertheless, his readiness provides a useful occasion to consider obedience. A servant receives a clear duty and proceeds without possessing complete knowledge of its outcome.

Abraham's obedience provides a direct biblical example of faith expressed in such circumstances.

HEBREWS 11:8

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Abraham went because the Lord called him. The destination was held within the knowledge and promise of God before it became part of Abraham's experience. Faith received the word of the One who sent him.

Isaiah also expressed readiness when the Lord called for a messenger.

ISAIAH 6:8

⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

The people of God are continually learning to receive their responsibilities in dependence upon Him. We would often prefer to know the whole course before beginning. The Lord gives us His

Word and calls us to trust the wisdom with which He governs what lies ahead.

That principle belongs in ordinary life. A parent cares for a child without knowing all that child's future will hold. A believer speaks the Gospel without knowing how the hearer will respond. A servant fulfils a duty whose eventual significance remains hidden. The Lord knows what His servants cannot yet see.

The Conversation in the Field

Joseph arrived in Shechem and did not find his brothers. The instructions he had received brought him to one place, but the people he sought had moved elsewhere. The situation required further searching.

A man found him wandering in the field and asked what he was seeking. Joseph explained that he was looking for his brothers. The man had heard them say that they would go to Dothan, and he gave Joseph the information he needed.

The passage records no name for this man. It offers no extended description of his history or character. He appears in the account through a conversation that directs Joseph to the next place on his journey. A few words become part of a providence whose consequences extend through generations.

Read quickly, the exchange may seem as ordinary as asking directions along a road. Yet every part belongs within the Lord's purpose. Jacob sends Joseph. The brothers move. Joseph searches. An unnamed man supplies the information that takes him to Dothan.

The Lord accomplishes His will through means. Human actions and conversations have a real place in the history He governs. His sovereignty gives those details significance. The man in the field did not need to understand Joseph's future for his words to serve God's purpose.

We rarely know the full consequences of what we say. A person may remember a brief conversation long after we have forgotten it.

An ordinary instruction may direct someone toward an opportunity or bring a needed warning at the right moment. We are responsible to speak truthfully and act faithfully within the circumstances given to us.

PROVERBS 16:9

⁹ A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Joseph intended to find his brothers and report to his father. His brothers had their own plans for the flock. The man in the field answered a question. Above these genuine human decisions stood the Lord, directing the steps through which His own purpose would unfold.

God's providence often operates quietly. We may look for the dramatic event while overlooking the conversation that prepared the way for it. Genesis asks us to pay attention to both. The Lord who governs the great turning points of history also governs an encounter in a field.

The God Who Knows the Whole Path

Joseph's limited knowledge did not limit the knowledge of God. The Lord knew where the brothers had gone, what they would do when Joseph arrived, and how their actions would serve a purpose they neither understood nor desired.

The psalmist expresses the depth of God's knowledge in words that should steady our hearts.

PSALM 139:1-6

¹ O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

² Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

³ Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

⁵ Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

The Lord knows His people with a completeness that no creature possesses. He knows our rising and resting, our thoughts and words. The hidden motives that confuse even our own self-understanding are open before Him.

We cannot truthfully claim such knowledge of another person. Even those closest to us remain capable of surprising us. Nor do we always understand ourselves. Our desires may conflict, our opinions may shift, and the heart may conceal from us what is painfully evident to others. God knows us perfectly.

This knowledge is inseparable from His government. He understands where His servants have been and where He is taking them. The road that surprises us has never surprised Him. Nothing in Joseph's journey forced the Lord to revise His eternal purpose.

We sometimes imagine God as though He were a powerful observer waiting to discover what will happen next. That picture comes from the limits of our own experience. We learn events as they unfold. We respond to information as we receive it. The Lord's knowledge is perfect, and His counsel stands.

ISAIAH 46:9-10

⁹ Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

The Lord declares the end from the beginning. His purpose does not depend upon our ability to anticipate the next circumstance. We can be certain of His faithfulness while acknowledging how little we know about the days ahead.

This truth also gives weight to the ordinary rhythm of life. We rise, dress, work, eat, and rest. Another day may pass without an

event that seems memorable. Still, that day belongs to the Lord. He remains at work in the duties we perform almost without thinking.

Joseph's search for his brothers belonged to such a day. He had an errand to complete. Yet the Lord was directing him into a history that would eventually preserve the very people preparing to harm him. The servant saw a task; God knew the gracious end toward which the entire journey was moving.

Providence in the Presence of Suffering

This doctrine becomes especially searching when the road leads into suffering. We readily thank God for circumstances that please us. A tragedy presents a more difficult question. How can the Lord's holy government encompass an event that brings such grief?

The question should be handled with humility. Human cruelty is genuinely evil. An injured person deserves compassion, protection, and truthful help. The sovereignty of God never gives a wrongdoer permission to harm another person. Scripture speaks clearly about both the holiness of the Lord and the guilt of sinners.

At the same time, suffering does not place a person beyond God's care. We must not imagine that evil has opened a region of life in which the Lord can no longer act. Joseph's brothers will commit a terrible wrong, and Joseph will remain within the providence of God throughout it.

The comfort belongs especially to the sufferer. What has happened is known to the Lord. He sees the injury, knows the offender, and understands the burden borne by the wounded heart. His power and faithfulness are present even where we cannot explain His purpose.

We should resist the urge to invent an explanation for every tragedy. We are not God. A person in pain may need our presence and practical help long before any extended discussion. Yet the truth that steadies our care remains precious: the Lord has not abandoned His people to meaninglessness.

His promise speaks with particular tenderness to believers who are unable to see beyond their present sorrow.

ROMANS 8:28-29

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Paul identifies the people to whom this promise belongs and the purpose toward which God's work moves. Those who love God are those called according to His purpose. The good He has appointed includes conformity to the image of His Son.

Our immediate preference cannot measure the whole meaning of that good. We may long for relief while the Lord sustains us through a season of waiting. We may learn dependence through weakness or compassion through suffering. Sometimes we can later recognize such fruit. Sometimes the questions remain unanswered throughout our earthly lives.

The certainty rests in God Himself. He knows what we cannot know, and He loves His people in Christ. The promise does not require us to call wickedness good. It directs us to the Lord whose holy purpose remains sovereign over the consequences of wickedness.

Joseph will eventually be able to speak about the good God accomplished through his suffering. At this point, he has no such understanding. The Lord is already faithful to him before the explanation comes. That is a comfort for every believer still walking through an unfinished chapter.

A Lamp for the Next Step

Our lives must be lived one step at a time. We can make reasonable plans and prepare carefully, but we cannot see every circumstance that waits around the next turn.

Even familiar travel illustrates this limitation. We take a road we have driven many times and expect an ordinary journey. Yet we cannot see every vehicle approaching the next bend or every event that may interrupt the routine. Familiarity gives us confidence without giving us complete knowledge.

The same limit applies to larger decisions. We may understand the duty before us while remaining uncertain about its consequences. We would like the whole map unfolded and every difficulty explained. The Lord gives us the light of His Word.

PSALM 119:105

¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

A lamp enables a traveller to take the next step. It provides real light without revealing the whole country at once. God's Word gives us truth to believe and a path of obedience to follow within the circumstances He has appointed.

Joseph knew that his father had sent him to seek his brothers. When the man in the field told him where they had gone, he continued the search. The next stage led toward suffering, but his limited knowledge did not remove him from God's direction.

What, then, are we trusting as we walk? Our strength can fail. Our judgment is limited. Our own righteousness offers no foundation for acceptance before a holy God. We need the Lord both for the path of life and for the salvation of our souls.

The Gospel directs us to Christ, whose finished work is sufficient for His people. We come as sinners in need of grace. Our hope rests in the Saviour who has accomplished redemption and who keeps those given to Him by the Father.

JOHN 10:27-29

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Here is security that reaches deeper than our ability to explain the road. Christ knows His sheep and gives them eternal life. The Father's hand holds them. Their preservation rests in divine power and faithfulness.

The believer may therefore continue with honest dependence. We ask for wisdom, receive the instruction of Scripture, and fulfil the duty before us. We do so as people held by the Lord, whose care remains certain when the next turn is hidden.

Trust without Bargaining

The promise of God's guidance calls us to a life of trust. It does not give us a method for securing every earthly condition we prefer. Christians grow older. Bodies weaken. Illness may come. These realities belong to the world through which the Lord carries His people.

We should therefore be cautious of teaching that promises wealth, unbroken health, or freedom from ordinary human frailty as the necessary evidence of faith. Such promises turn attention toward a desired earthly outcome. Scripture directs us toward the faithfulness of God through every outcome He appoints.

The testimony of Joseph's life challenges an expectation of constant ease. He obeyed his father and travelled toward betrayal. Later, upright conduct in another household would be followed by false accusation. The Lord would remain with him throughout those events.

Faith receives the Lord as He has revealed Himself. It asks for help and gives thanks for mercy. It can pray earnestly for healing while resting in God's wisdom. It can work diligently to provide for a household while confessing dependence upon His provision.

We have no need to pretend that fear never arises. The believer may tremble and still trust. A heart pressed by sorrow may need to return to the same promise many times. The Lord's patience is greater than the steadiness of our emotions.

PROVERBS 3:5-6

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Acknowledging the Lord in all our ways brings the whole of life before Him. The difficult conversation belongs there. So does the medical appointment, the workday, and the responsibility at home. We receive His Word as the authority that governs our conduct and His wisdom as the foundation of our confidence.

Beloved, the Lord knows the end from the beginning. You and I live the story as it unfolds. That difference should teach us humility. We have reason to act responsibly and plan carefully, while entrusting the outcome to the One whose knowledge is complete.

The Holy Work of Trusting God

Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan. The account has brought him to the threshold of a terrible betrayal. He remains unaware of the conspiracy that will form when they see him approaching.

Yet every step has been known to God. The father's request, the journey to Shechem, the search in the field, and the stranger's direction all belong within His providence. The Lord's purpose has moved forward through details that could easily have seemed insignificant.

We should carry this truth into our own uncertainty. Wherever the road presently leads, the child of God remains within the keeping of the Father. A painful season does not mean that His care has failed. He knows the place where you stand, and He will sustain you there according to His wisdom.

The work before us is to trust Him. This is a holy calling that reaches into the ordinary habits of life. We ask Him to strengthen our faith, to correct our thoughts through Scripture, and to make His faithfulness evident as He carries us onward.

We may not yet understand the shape of His purpose. We can still know the character of the One who leads us. The Lord who directed Joseph's steps is faithful to all His promises in Christ. His hand may be unseen, but His people are always held within it.

Questions for Discussion

Read, reflect, and discuss in the light of Scripture.

1. **Observation:** List the ordinary actions and conversations in Genesis 37:12-17 that brought Joseph to Dothan. What does the text leave unknown about the man in the field?
2. **Interpretation:** Read Proverbs 16:9 and Isaiah 46:9-10. How do these passages explain the relationship between human plans and God's purpose?
3. **Discernment:** How does the lamp in Psalm 119:105 help us understand guidance? What expectations about knowing the future should it lead us to reconsider?
4. **Pastoral application:** A hurting friend says, "I cannot see how God could be with me in this." How would you offer compassion and practical help while sharing the hope of Romans 8:28-29?
5. **Personal response:** Where are you being asked to fulfil a clear responsibility without knowing its outcome? Describe one concrete way to acknowledge the Lord in that situation, and make it a matter of prayer.

Human Sin Never Escapes the Sovereign Rule of God

GENESIS 37:18-24

¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

²⁰ Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

²¹ And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

²³ And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;

²⁴ And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

Obedience on the Road to Betrayal

Joseph's journey began with a willingness to obey his father. He had travelled to Shechem, searched for his brothers, and followed the information that led him to Dothan. He had fulfilled the responsibility entrusted to him. Now the men he had come to find saw him approaching and began to discuss his death.

This is one of the most painful scenes in the account. The people planning the violence were his own brothers. The household that should have offered belonging became the source of betrayal.

Before Joseph reached them, the hatred already present in their hearts had taken the form of a murderous conspiracy.

The passage teaches a truth God's people must continually remember: faithful conduct may be followed by deep disappointment. A person may do what is right and encounter rejection. An act of obedience may lead into circumstances filled with sorrow.

Joseph did not arrive at Dothan because he had carelessly abandoned his duty. He was there because he had followed his father's instructions. The road upon which God directed him led to this place. The presence of the pit did not mean that the Lord had ceased to govern his steps.

Beloved, we need this truth when our own expectations are overturned. We may have prayed, sought wise counsel, and acted responsibly, only to find that the next season is difficult. The Lord's faithfulness remains greater than our ability to understand what He is doing.

A simple injury can illustrate how quickly a life changes. One step goes wrong, and months of recovery follow. The person who expected an ordinary day now depends upon others for help. Familiar responsibilities become difficult. The road ahead seems painfully narrow.

Such experiences expose our limits. They also become places in which we learn the sufficiency of the Lord's care. He remains present with His people in weakness. The uncertainty of our circumstances cannot alter His promise to keep us.

HEBREWS 13:5-6

⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

⁶ So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

The Lord's promise deserves more than a passing glance. We sometimes repeat familiar words so readily that we scarcely

consider their meaning. Here the living God assures His people of His presence. The comfort reaches into the darkest place a believer may enter.

Praise in the Valley

We readily give thanks when circumstances bring good news. A favourable report from the doctor can lift a burden that has weighed upon a family for weeks. Restored health, a repaired friendship, or peace within a household gives us immediate reason to rejoice.

We should gladly receive those mercies. The Lord is kind to grant relief, and thanksgiving is a fitting response. Long years of life, strength for work, and the ordinary enjoyment of another day are gifts that deserve to be acknowledged.

Yet our Lord remains worthy of praise when the report is difficult. His glory does not diminish because our strength has failed. He is the same faithful God in the room where the family receives painful news.

That confession may cost us something. It is easier to speak of gratitude when the burden has already been lifted. In the midst of illness, even the simplest prayer may come slowly. God knows the frailty of His children. We can ask Him for the strength to praise Him while acknowledging the weight we bear.

PSALM 23:4

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

The psalmist's confidence rests in the Lord's presence within the valley. The valley is real, and the Shepherd is there. His people receive comfort from the One who accompanies them through it.

The same confidence reaches to the question of life and death.

ROMANS 14:7-8

⁷ For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

⁸ For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

We belong to the Lord. That belonging fortifies the soul when circumstances move beyond our control. The believer's life is held by Christ, and death cannot sever the bond He has established through His redeeming work.

Scripture also gives us language for calling upon God from the depths. David asks where he could go from the Lord's presence, and Jonah cries to God from the distress into which he has fallen. These are distinct voices bearing witness to the Lord's reach.

PSALM 139:7-10

⁷ Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

JONAH 2:9

⁹ But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

The Lord hears His people. He reaches the place where human help cannot reach. Joseph's brothers could cast him into a pit, but they could not remove him from the knowledge or government of God.

We should ask for grace to carry this truth into our trials. A day of weakness is still a day lived before the Lord. Our pain may be intense, and our prayer may be brief. Nevertheless, we belong to Him, and His faithfulness gives us reason to call upon His name.

The Dreamer Comes

The brothers saw Joseph while he was still far away. The distance gave them time to speak together before he arrived. Their words show how thoroughly resentment had shaped their view of him. They called him the dreamer and proposed killing him to see what would become of his dreams.

The dreams had spoken of a future they refused to accept. Their hostility toward Joseph had become hostility toward the prospect of his exaltation. They intended to silence the one who had told them what God had revealed.

This was deliberate evil. They discussed a means of killing their brother and a story that would conceal the deed. The proposed explanation about a wild animal shows an awareness that the truth would expose their guilt. Their plan included the harm itself and the deception intended to follow it.

We should allow the seriousness of this scene to stand. The brothers were responsible for what they wanted to do. The providence of God did not make their hatred innocent. Their conduct flowed from their own hearts, and Scripture records it as wickedness.

At the same time, their plan could not become sovereign over the Lord's purpose. They imagined that removing Joseph would remove the future announced in his dreams. God would employ the consequences of their actions to carry that future forward.

This is a central truth of the account. Human sin is real, and human responsibility is real. The sovereignty of God is also real. Scripture places these truths before us together, and we are called to receive them with reverence.

Reuben's Intervention

Reuben heard the proposal and intervened. He urged the brothers to spare Joseph's life and cast him into a pit. The text explains his intention: he hoped to rescue Joseph afterward and return him to their father.

The intervention mattered. The brothers had discussed murder. Reuben's words turned their immediate action toward confinement. Joseph was seized and thrown into the pit, yet his life was preserved.

We should be precise about the mercy present here. The brothers still committed a grave wrong. They stripped Joseph of his coat and deprived him of his freedom. Reuben's intervention limited the violence they were about to inflict; it did not make the whole scene just or compassionate.

Nevertheless, the Lord used that intervention. An imperfect member of a troubled family spoke words through which Joseph's life was spared. The purpose of God moved forward through a decision whose full consequences Reuben could not have understood.

Consider how much lay beyond his sight. Joseph would eventually become an instrument for preserving this household during famine. The family would continue within the covenant history through which the promised Christ would come. Reuben could not see the whole course of that history when he urged his brothers to spare Joseph.

The lesson should make us attentive to the responsibilities before us. A timely word can matter profoundly. We may be able to restrain harm, speak for someone vulnerable, or direct a conversation away from cruelty. The Lord gives significance to actions whose effects exceed our understanding.

God's providence includes the means by which He accomplishes His purpose. Reuben's intervention belonged to those means. The preservation of Joseph was already within God's counsel, and this brother's words served that appointed end.

The Empty Pit

The brothers took Joseph's coat and cast him into a pit. Scripture adds a detail that makes the scene especially stark: the pit was empty, and there was no water in it.

The garment that had distinguished him in his father's household was gone. The brothers whose welfare he had come to learn were now the source of his suffering. The empty pit held no provision for his thirst. The account leaves us with a young man suddenly stripped of the security he had known.

We cannot reproduce every thought that passed through Joseph's mind. The text does not give us that private record. We can understand, however, the severity of the betrayal. Later testimony from the brothers will confirm that he pleaded with them and that they saw his anguish.

From Joseph's position, the future was hidden. The Lord's purpose did not come to him as an explanation written upon the walls of the pit. He experienced the cruelty of the moment. God's faithful government remained true while Joseph endured circumstances that could scarcely have appeared reassuring.

That distinction matters pastorally. A believer may be secure in the Lord's keeping while feeling deeply unsettled. The strength of God's hand does not rise and fall with the strength of our emotions. His promises remain true when fear makes them difficult to apprehend.

We may bring that fear to Him. The God who knows every thought is not startled by an honest question. Scripture contains the prayers of troubled saints. We should read those prayers, open our hearts before the Lord, and ask Him to conform our understanding to His Word.

1 PETER 5:6-7

⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

The mighty hand of God is a place of humble dependence. The believer may cast care upon Him because He cares for His people. The promise is personal, tender, and strong enough for the heart weighed down by circumstances it cannot change.

Responsible Sinners beneath a Holy Sovereignty

When we speak of God's complete government, some suppose that human responsibility must disappear. The brothers' conduct shows us why Scripture does not allow that conclusion. They desired to harm Joseph. They formed the plan willingly. The hatred belonged to them.

God does not need to create a love of sin in the fallen heart. We know from our own lives how readily sinful desires arise. We have wanted what was forbidden, cherished resentment, and justified conduct we knew to be wrong. Honest confession acknowledges that the guilt is ours.

ROMANS 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The wages of sin belong to the reality of divine judgment. The gift of eternal life belongs to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Both truths address us as people who urgently need salvation.

The brothers remained accountable, and the Lord remained holy. Their actions could not overthrow His counsel or place Joseph beyond His keeping. God would direct the consequences of their sin toward a gracious purpose that their own intentions opposed.

We must let Scripture govern our language here. God's sovereignty reaches all things. His holiness is perfect. Human beings bear responsibility for their wickedness. Our limited ability to explain the relationship between these truths does not give us reason to abandon any of them.

The cross will display this relationship with the greatest clarity. Wicked men acted against the Lord Jesus, and God accomplished

redemption according to His determinate counsel. The guilt of the participants and the holiness of God's purpose stand together in the apostolic witness.

For Joseph, the practical comfort is that hatred will never become the ruler of his future. The Lord reigns over the men who have betrayed him and over the place into which they have cast him. Their wickedness is grievous, but God's purpose stands.

Loved before the Trial Began

The believer's security in God reaches deeper than the circumstances of a particular day. Scripture directs us to His eternal love and gracious purpose in Christ. Salvation belongs to the Lord from its beginning to its completion.

EPHESIANS 1:4-7

⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

⁷ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

The grace believers experience in time proceeds from the purpose of God. We hear the Gospel, come to know Christ, and rejoice in the forgiveness of our sins. In that experience, we discover a mercy whose source reaches beyond the beginning of our own lives.

God's people have been loved in Christ. The Father has purposed their adoption, the Son has accomplished redemption, and the Spirit brings them to faith through the Gospel. Their hope rests in the Lord who has undertaken to save them.

Joseph belonged within the history of that promise. The Old Testament saints trusted the God whose promised redemption would be accomplished in Christ. Believers today look to the

Saviour who has come and finished His work. The ground of salvation is the same gracious Lord.

This truth should comfort the conscience troubled by weakness. Acceptance before God rests in Christ. We do not earn His keeping through a performance strong enough to impress Him. Our salvation is grounded in the redeeming work of the Son and the faithfulness of the Father who gave us to Him.

When a believer feels alone, this is a word to remember. The trial began in time; God's love reaches into eternity. The circumstances may be severe, but they cannot overturn His gracious purpose toward His own.

The Root beneath the Fruit

The brothers' violence calls us back to the bitterness with which the chapter began. The root had been growing before the fruit appeared. Their inability to speak peaceably to Joseph developed into a willingness to kill him.

Bitterness often works beneath the surface. A person rehearses a grievance privately, imagines a reply, or takes satisfaction in the thought of revenge. Each repetition nourishes the resentment. Eventually the heart becomes organized around the injury it refuses to release.

We can lose years in that condition. Families sometimes remain divided long after the original quarrel has faded from memory. The separation becomes part of each person's identity. Additional grievances are gathered to justify the continued hostility.

The cost is heavy. Bitterness damages relationships and disturbs the peace of the person who carries it. The enemy may be sleeping comfortably while the offended person lies awake rehearsing the next argument. The resentment promises satisfaction and continually demands more attention.

HEBREWS 12:14-15

¹⁴ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

¹⁵ Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

This warning belongs within the life of God's people. Grace calls us to take the condition of our hearts seriously. A root of bitterness troubles more than the person who first cherishes it. Its influence reaches households and congregations.

How strange it is to rejoice that God has forgiven our sins while refusing even to bring our resentment against another person before Him. The Gospel should humble us. We have received mercy far beyond anything we could claim as our due.

EPHESIANS 4:31-32

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Forgiveness does not require a person to return to danger or give an unrepentant offender unrestricted access to do further harm. Wise boundaries and truthful accountability may be necessary. Yet we can ask the Lord to free us from the desire to nourish hatred. We can entrust judgment to Him and seek grace to act in a manner consistent with the mercy we have received.

Joseph will later have the opportunity to deal with his brothers from a position of authority. Their future will lie within his power in a way none of them could imagine beside the pit. His conduct then will bear witness to grace, and it will direct our thoughts toward the greater mercy found in Christ.

Presented Faultless in Christ

The account eventually brings guilty brothers before the one they had rejected. Their helplessness in that meeting invites us to consider our own standing before God. We approach Him as sinners who have nothing in ourselves sufficient to answer His holiness.

Our hope is Jesus Christ. He is our righteousness and our Redeemer. The believer is received through the perfection of His person and work. The grace that saves us will also bring us into the presence of God with joy.

JUDE 1:24-25

²⁴ Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

²⁵ To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

These words turn the heart toward worship. The Lord is able to keep His people and present them faultless before His glory. That final presentation rests upon His saving power. We look to Christ, whose righteousness is sufficient and whose intercession never fails.

Joseph remains in the pit at the close of this passage. His circumstances are painful, and the next stage of his journey will bring further sorrow. Yet he is held within the counsel of God. Human sin has brought him low, and human sin cannot become sovereign over his future.

Let us therefore ask the Lord for faith in trial and humility concerning our own hearts. May He expose the bitterness we are tempted to cherish. May He teach us to forgive as those forgiven in Christ. And may He strengthen us to confess, even in the dark place, that the Lord remains faithful to His people.

Questions for Discussion

Read, reflect, and discuss in the light of Scripture.

- 1. Observation:** How do the brothers' words in Genesis 37:18-20 reveal both their intention and their awareness of guilt? What does the passage explicitly tell us about Reuben's purpose?
- 2. Interpretation:** Why does Joseph's obedience matter when we consider the suffering that followed? How would you answer the assumption that every hardship proves a believer has taken the wrong path?
- 3. Doctrinal reflection:** How can we affirm both God's sovereign rule and the brothers' responsibility for their sin? Which claims should we avoid making about God's holiness?
- 4. Practical discernment:** What is the difference between relinquishing bitterness and allowing someone to continue harmful conduct? Discuss Ephesians 4:31-32 alongside the need for truthful accountability.
- 5. Prayer and assurance:** Read Jude 24-25. How does Christ's ability to present His people faultless address fear, loneliness, or a troubled conscience? Turn that assurance into a prayer for someone facing a difficult season.

God's Providence Rules over the Decisions of Wicked Men

GENESIS 37:25-28

²⁵ And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

²⁶ And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

²⁸ Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

Beneath the Voices of His Brothers

Joseph has been stripped of the coat his father gave him and cast into an empty pit. The brothers who seized him remain nearby. Their hatred has carried them to the edge of murder, and now they sit down to eat.

Everything familiar in Joseph's life has been overturned. His father is far away. His brothers have become his enemies. The freedom with which he began the journey will soon be taken from him. He has no authority over the decision being made above him.

Yet he remains within the gracious government of Almighty God. The Lord has purposes for Joseph that the pit cannot cancel. The dreams given to him will find their fulfilment according to God's

wisdom. The hatred of his brothers cannot overturn the counsel of the One who revealed them.

Joseph did not have to understand the whole purpose for that purpose to remain certain. His anguish was real. The account later confirms that he pleaded with his brothers. The security of God's government existed alongside the pain Joseph experienced in the moment.

This is a truth we easily lose sight of in trial. We look at what is immediately before us and struggle to apprehend the strength of God's keeping. The Lord's care may be hidden beneath circumstances that trouble us deeply. Nevertheless, He remains faithful.

Beloved, the people of God belong to Him. Christ has purchased them with His own blood. Their lives are held within a grace whose strength exceeds every earthly opposition.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

¹⁹ What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

That belonging is a comfort and a calling. We are received through Christ and called to honour Him with the lives He has redeemed. The Lord's discipline, when needed, also proceeds from His fatherly care. He deals with His children as those who are His own.

HEBREWS 12:6

⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

The Lord will sustain and correct His people according to His wisdom. Our confidence rests in His faithful love. The pit cannot take away the ownership established by grace.

Bread beside the Pit

The brothers sat down to eat bread. That simple statement reveals a terrible hardness. Joseph was suffering nearby, and they continued with their meal.

Their appetite was attended to while his pleas were disregarded. The narrative allows that contrast to speak with great force. The brothers had become capable of treating the anguish of their own flesh and blood as a matter that did not interrupt their comfort.

Years later, their own words would disclose more about this scene.

GENESIS 42:21

²¹ And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

They had seen the anguish of his soul. They had heard him plead. Their later confession leaves no room for imagining that Joseph's distress was unknown to them. They knew, and they would not hear.

The scene exposes the corruption of the fallen heart. Envy had become hatred, and hatred had become a willingness to disregard another person's suffering. The brothers wanted Joseph removed. His tears did not change the desire they had chosen to serve.

We should read this with sober self-examination. The human heart can become extraordinarily skilled at protecting its own interests while dismissing the pain of others. A person may rationalize cruelty, minimize an injury, or call selfishness necessary. The words used to explain the conduct do not change its character before God.

JEREMIAH 17:9-10

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

¹⁰ I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

The Lord searches the heart. He sees beneath the explanations we offer to one another. His judgment takes account of the motives from which our conduct proceeds.

The brothers' meal also reminds us that outward calm is no proof of innocence. A person may carry on ordinary activities while concealing serious wrongdoing. The ability to appear composed cannot cleanse the conscience or make an evil purpose righteous.

Joseph's later story will bring their guilt back before them. For the moment, they sit above the pit with bread in their hands and their brother's pleading before their ears. God sees both the suffering below and the hardness above.

What the Heart Produces

It is common to hear that people are basically good. Genesis 37 gives us reason to examine that claim in the light of Scripture. The brothers' cruelty arose from human hearts. Their conduct reveals the seriousness of the condition from which sinners need to be saved.

ROMANS 3:10-12

¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

This diagnosis reaches all of us. We should resist the temptation to read the account as though the brothers belonged to a class of sinners wholly unlike ourselves. We may not have committed their particular crime, but we know the inward desires from which sin proceeds.

Anger, envy, and self-justification are familiar to the fallen heart. We have preferred our own advantage. We have rehearsed grievances. We have wanted another person to receive the humiliation we thought deserved. The Lord's restraining mercy is a

reason for gratitude, and His searching Word is a reason for humility.

James explains the movement from inward desire to destructive conduct.

JAMES 1:13-15

¹³ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

God is holy. The sinful desire belongs to the person who is drawn away and enticed. Lust conceives, sin follows, and death stands at the end of its course. The brothers' conduct illustrates that progression with terrible clarity.

This is why bitterness deserves immediate attention. It promises a private satisfaction while preparing public harm. A person who repeatedly nourishes resentment may eventually say or do what once seemed unthinkable.

The damage can reach a household, a friendship, or the witness of a congregation. A believer who speaks constantly with hostility obscures the gracious message he professes. The Gospel we proclaim should shape the manner in which we address those around us.

2 TIMOTHY 2:24-26

²⁴ And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

²⁵ In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

²⁶ And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Paul connects gentleness with a humble recognition of God's power to grant repentance. The person we regard with contempt may be someone whom the Lord will bring to the knowledge of the truth. We have reason to speak faithfully and patiently, knowing that salvation belongs to God.

Imagine the change if the brothers had acknowledged their envy before it ruled their conduct. They had received provision within their father's household. They belonged to the family of the covenant promises. There was abundant reason for gratitude, yet resentment directed their attention toward the honour Joseph received.

The same danger remains near us. We can overlook the mercies given to us while fixing our thoughts upon what someone else possesses. The heart needs the correction of the Word and the renewing grace of the Lord.

The Victory Given in Christ

The exposure of sin brings us to the necessity of the Gospel. We need a Saviour who can deal with guilt before God. The law's righteous demands cannot be satisfied by our attempt to place a better appearance upon a fallen heart.

Christ has redeemed His people from the curse of the law. He has borne the judgment due to their sin and provided a righteousness that is complete.

GALATIANS 3:13

¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

The believer's hope rests in this finished work. Christ has acted as the substitute of His people. The guilt for which they could never atone has been answered in His suffering and death. His righteousness is accounted to those who believe.

The apostle therefore calls believers to reckon themselves according to their union with the risen Saviour.

ROMANS 6:10-11

¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

¹¹ Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To reckon ourselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ is to receive the truth of what He has accomplished and to live in its light. Our continuing struggle with sin gives us reason to depend upon Him. The victory belongs to the Lord who has redeemed us.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:57

⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This word directs our boasting toward Christ. We do not stand before God on the assumption that we are better than Joseph's brothers. We stand as sinners who need mercy and have found that mercy in the Saviour.

Such grace teaches humility. We can condemn the brothers' wickedness truthfully while confessing the sin in our own hearts. We can ask God to restrain us, correct us, and make our conduct consistent with the Gospel we have received.

The Caravan Arrives

The brothers lifted their eyes and saw a company of Ishmeelites coming from Gilead. The camels carried goods toward Egypt. A caravan passing along its route now became part of the decision being made concerning Joseph.

The timing matters within the narrative. Joseph was in the pit. The brothers were together. The travellers were approaching. Circumstances converged at the point where the next stage of Joseph's journey would begin.

The travellers had their business, their cargo, and their intended destination. They did not possess a full understanding of the covenant purpose their journey would serve. Yet their arrival belonged within the Lord's government.

God works through the real movements of human life. Roads are travelled, goods are carried, and decisions are made. His sovereignty extends through those actions without making them empty or unreal. The caravan would carry Joseph toward a future appointed by the Lord.

PROVERBS 16:9

⁹ A man's heart deviseth his way; but the LORD directeth his steps.

The principle reaches even to events people are inclined to call chance.

PROVERBS 16:33

³³ The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

The Lord's government is complete. What seems uncertain to us remains within His knowledge and decree. We cannot calculate every outcome, but no outcome becomes a surprise to Him.

Nor does earthly authority establish a region beyond His rule.

PROVERBS 21:1

¹ The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

The heart of a king remains in the hand of the Lord. Pharaoh's authority, which will later become important in Joseph's life, stands beneath divine authority. The ruler of Egypt will act within a history governed by the God of heaven and earth.

These truths enlarge our understanding of providence. The Lord's sovereignty reaches the traveller on the road and the ruler in the palace. The ordinary decision and the public decree both remain beneath His rule.

Joseph could not see those connections from the pit. He would learn them through the course of a life held by God. The approaching caravan was already serving the purpose that would eventually bring him before Pharaoh.

Judah's Proposal

Judah asked what profit there would be in killing their brother and concealing his blood. He proposed selling Joseph to the Ishmeelites. They could remove him from the family, receive money, and avoid shedding his blood themselves.

The proposal appealed to the brothers' interests. It also acknowledged the family relationship they were violating. Joseph was their brother and their flesh. That recognition should have called forth protection. In Judah's argument, it became a reason to choose sale over murder.

The decision spared Joseph's immediate life while committing another terrible wrong. Selling a brother into slavery was an act of betrayal. The money received could not make it merciful or just.

We should also be careful about claiming certainty concerning every element of Judah's motive. His words include concern about bloodshed and an appeal to profit. The narrative allows us to see the course he proposed and the brothers' willingness to accept it. Their agreement resulted in Joseph's sale.

Human beings often prefer a course that appears less severe while remaining deeply sinful. A conscience may settle for comparison with a worse alternative. Yet the proper measure of conduct is the holiness of God. The fact that the brothers chose sale does not remove the guilt of their choice.

They drew Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver. The young man sent to enquire about his brothers' welfare was handed over to strangers. The family bond was treated as something that could be exchanged for money.

Consider the weight of that moment for Joseph. The men from whom he had pleaded for help participated in his removal. His

future was placed in the hands of people he did not know. We cannot supply every thought he had, but the reality of betrayal needs no embellishment.

The text closes this movement with the journey to Egypt. Joseph was carried away, and the brothers remained with the money. They intended to be rid of him. God intended a future in which this same brother would become an instrument of their preservation.

God's Command and God's Decree

The account brings us again to the relationship between human wickedness and God's sovereign purpose. We must speak carefully, receiving the whole testimony of Scripture.

God commands what is righteous. His revealed law forbids murder and condemns the evil of those who harm their neighbour. The brothers violated His commands. Their desire to betray Joseph belonged to their own fallen hearts.

God also decrees and governs the history in which human beings act. The brothers could oppose His command while remaining unable to overturn His eternal purpose. The consequences of their actions would serve an end appointed by the Lord.

The sermons described this distinction in terms of God's prescriptive will and His decretive will. His prescriptive will concerns what He commands us to do. His decree concerns the purpose according to which He governs all that comes to pass. These terms help us keep together truths that Scripture itself affirms.

They do not make sin innocent. The brothers were willing participants in their wrongdoing. God did not need to make their hearts love cruelty. Nor do the terms suggest that His holiness is compromised. His purpose remains righteous in every circumstance He governs.

The cross provides the clearest testimony. The apostles spoke of wicked hands acting within the determinate counsel of God. The sin

belonged to the perpetrators, and redemption proceeded according to the holy purpose of the Lord.

There is much here that exceeds our understanding. We should be willing to confess that limit. Reverence receives the truth God has revealed without pretending to comprehend the whole depth of His counsel.

HABAKKUK 2:20

²⁰ But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

The proper response includes worship. The Lord is God, and we are His creatures. We may study diligently, ask honest questions, and seek greater understanding. We must also learn to bow before the wisdom that is perfect beyond our sight.

Humbled by the Reach of Providence

The Lord's use of the brothers' actions should humble us. They were accomplishing none of this with a righteous understanding of Joseph's future. They intended harm, while God directed history toward preservation.

Their conduct has also become an occasion for instruction through the written Word. Generations of believers have learned from this account. The Lord exposes human sin and comforts His people through the record of what happened beside that pit.

This gives the brothers no claim to praise for their wickedness. The glory belongs to the God whose wisdom exceeds the intentions of sinful men. His ability to bring good through their actions demonstrates His sovereignty.

It also corrects our tendency to overestimate our own importance. We may think of the work we do as though God's purpose depended upon our wisdom. Genesis reminds us how completely He governs the circumstances of history. Our proper place is one of grateful service and dependence.

Even the failures we confess are known to Him. Their consequences may be painful, and we remain responsible to seek forgiveness and make what restitution we can. Yet we need not imagine that our sin has placed the whole future outside His power. The Lord remains able to glorify His grace in the lives of people who have made a terrible mess of things.

Grace is mercy for the undeserving. It reaches sinners in their guilt and helplessness. The perseverance of God's people rests in the strength of that saving grace. A believer's failure should bring confession and repentance, together with renewed dependence upon the Saviour who holds His own.

The same Gospel gives hope concerning other sinners. We cannot know all whom God will bring to faith. The person presently living in rebellion may one day confess Christ with joy. We should speak the truth faithfully and entrust the saving work to the Lord.

The Road to Egypt and the Certainty of the Promise

Joseph was carried toward Egypt. The next stages of his life would include service in Potiphar's household, false accusation, and imprisonment. The fulfilment of his dreams would come through further waiting. Yet the Lord's purpose continued without interruption.

The brothers thought they had removed the dreamer. In the providence of God, their decision had set him upon the road by which the dreams would be fulfilled. The instrument intended for harm became part of the path toward preservation.

ISAIAH 46:9-10

⁹ Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

The counsel of the Lord stands. This promise is as certain in a dark season as it is in a season of visible blessing. His people may be unable to explain the present moment, but they can rely upon the character of the God who governs it.

We look finally to Jesus Christ. At Calvary, wicked hands crucified the Lord of glory according to the determinate counsel of God. Through His death, Christ accomplished redemption. His resurrection declared His victory, and He lives to bring His people safely into the salvation He has secured.

The sovereign Lord who brought salvation through the cross continues to govern the lives of those He has called. Their future belongs to Him. Every circumstance is known, every promise is sure, and every child of God is held within His faithful care.

Rest beneath His mighty hand, beloved. Bring Him the fear you cannot quiet and the questions you cannot answer. The Lord reigns over the road from the pit to Egypt, and He reigns over the road you are walking today.

Questions for Discussion

Read, reflect, and discuss in the light of Scripture.

1. Observation: Read Genesis 37:25-28 together with Genesis 42:21. What does the brothers' later confession add to our understanding of the meal beside the pit?

2. Interpretation: What does James 1:13-15 teach about the source and development of temptation? How does it help us avoid attributing the brothers' sinful desires to God?

3. Discernment: Judah proposed a course less immediately violent than murder. Why must conduct still be measured by God's commands rather than by comparison with something worse?

4. Doctrinal application: Explain, in your own words, the distinction between God's commands and His decree. How does this distinction preserve both human accountability and confidence in providence?

5. Reflection and prayer: Where have you been tempted to see circumstances as merely accidental or beyond God's care? Use Proverbs 16:9, Proverbs 16:33, or Proverbs 21:1 to shape a prayer of humble trust.

Joseph Points Us to the Greater Joseph

GENESIS 37:25-36

²⁵ And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

²⁶ And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

²⁸ Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

²⁹ And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

³⁰ And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

³¹ And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

³² And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

³³ And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

³⁴ And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

³⁶ And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

A Bloodied Coat and a Grieving Father

Genesis 37 closes beneath a heavy shadow. Joseph has been sold. His coat is stained with the blood of a goat. Jacob has been deceived by his own sons and has entered a season of deep mourning. The brothers believe they have rid themselves of the dreamer, while Joseph is carried toward a foreign land as another man's property.

Reuben's return to the empty pit reveals his distress. Joseph is gone, and the opportunity to restore him to their father has passed. The brothers then take the garment that once displayed Jacob's affection and use it to conceal their betrayal.

They bring the bloodied coat to their father and ask him to identify it. Their words lead him toward the conclusion they want him to reach. Jacob recognizes his son's garment and believes that Joseph has been killed by a wild animal.

The deception is cruel in more than one direction. Joseph has been deprived of his home and freedom. Jacob has been given a grief built upon a lie. The sons who know the truth remain within the household while their father mourns.

The text tells us that his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him. Think of the terrible contradiction in that scene. Those who helped create the grief stand among those offering consolation. Their silence preserves the deception that is breaking their father's heart.

Sin rarely confines its injury to the first act. The brothers' envy became hatred, their hatred became betrayal, and their betrayal required a continuing lie. Other people were drawn into the suffering. The money in their hands could never measure the cost of what they had done.

Joseph's future also remained hidden from them. They could see the silver received for his sale. They could not see that the brother they had rejected would one day become the instrument of their preservation.

Jacob could see the bloodied garment. He could not see the preparation God was making for his household. Joseph could see the road toward Egypt. He could not see the authority that awaited him there.

The Lord knew the whole purpose. His government encompassed the grief in Canaan and the journey into Egypt. The painful limits of human sight did not limit the faithfulness of God.

The Quiet Last Verse

The final verse of the chapter records Joseph's sale to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. It is a brief statement after a scene filled with anguish. Yet it shows that Joseph's story is continuing.

He has entered another household, in another land, under another man's authority. The circumstances of his life have changed profoundly. Still, he remains within the purpose of the Lord.

The chapter's ending is a helpful place to consider the way we live. We receive our lives one moment at a time. We may know the general direction of a plan, but the details remain beyond us. A day that begins routinely may bring news we never expected.

Paul describes the limits of our present knowledge in language that should make us humble.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

¹² For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Our present sight is partial. We should not mistake that limitation for a defect in God's wisdom. He understands what we cannot yet understand. The certainty of His purpose rests in Himself.

We need repeated reminders of this truth. Even after many evidences of God's faithfulness, the heart can become anxious when the next uncertainty appears. We may have depended upon Him through one trial and still struggle when another arrives.

The Lord knows our weakness. Scripture calls us to remember His benefits because we are prone to forget them.

PSALM 103:1-5

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

² Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

³ Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

⁴ Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

⁵ Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Remembering the Lord's mercies is part of the life of faith. We return to His promises, recall His provision, and ask Him to strengthen our trust. The same God who has carried us thus far remains faithful in the circumstances now before us.

Joseph's sale into Potiphar's house was known to Him. So was the grief of Jacob. God's care did not depend upon either man's ability to trace His hand. His purpose moved forward while both lived within an incomplete understanding.

The God Who Saves His People

Throughout this study, one great truth has remained before us: the Lord governs the steps of His servants and the schemes of wicked men. His counsel stands above the changing intentions of His creatures.

The same truth belongs at the centre of our understanding of salvation. God is the Saviour of His people. Their redemption proceeds from His eternal purpose, is accomplished in the finished

work of Christ, and is brought into their experience through the work of the Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel.

The sermons from which these chapters have been drawn addressed the tendency to argue about salvation in a way that obscures this central confession. Some emphasize God's eternal decree. Others direct attention to the cross. Still others speak chiefly of the moment when a sinner hears the Gospel and comes to faith. Each point must be understood within the whole testimony of Scripture.

God's purpose is eternal. Christ's sacrifice occurred in history. The Spirit brings sinners to faith in time. We should distinguish these matters carefully while rejoicing that the saving work belongs to the Lord throughout.

The certainty of the divine purpose gives us reason to worship. The completion of Christ's atoning work gives us reason to rest. The awakening of a sinner to the Gospel gives us reason to rejoice in the grace that has become known and precious to that person.

2 TIMOTHY 1:9-10

⁹ Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

¹⁰ But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

Paul brings together the grace given in Christ before the world began and its manifestation through the appearing of the Saviour. The eternal purpose and its historical accomplishment belong to one gracious work of God.

ROMANS 5:6-8

⁶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

⁸ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Christ died for the ungodly. The love of God is displayed in His giving of the Son for sinners. Our salvation rests upon what He has done for people who could not make themselves righteous before Him.

The Lord also appoints the preaching through which His people hear the Gospel.

ROMANS 10:14-15

¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

The ministry of the Word has a place within His saving purpose. He sends the message of Christ, opens hearts to receive it, and brings His people to the knowledge of His grace. The sinner who comes to faith discovers that the Lord has acted in mercy.

This is why the church must remain faithful to the Gospel itself. Human ingenuity may attract attention, but the message entrusted to us concerns the person and finished work of Jesus Christ. We are called to proclaim Him with clarity and confidence in the God who saves.

The name given to the Saviour declares His mission.

MATTHEW 1:21

²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

He shall save His people from their sins. Our confidence rests in that promise. Christ is sufficient for the work the Father gave Him to accomplish. The people He redeems are held in His faithful care.

Joseph's history points us toward this greater saving purpose. The Lord was preserving a covenant household, and through that

household the promised Redeemer would come. The road into Egypt belonged to a history whose fullness is found in Christ.

Reading Joseph within the Story of Redemption

Scripture records real people and real events. The brothers' wrongdoing, Jacob's grief, and Joseph's suffering belong to a history that matters. The account also belongs within the larger revelation of God's purpose to glorify Himself in the salvation of His people.

After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to read the Scriptures with attention to their witness concerning Him.

LUKE 24:27

²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

He spoke similarly to those who searched the Scriptures while failing to receive their testimony to His person.

JOHN 5:39

³⁹ Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

The Bible's unfolding history directs us toward Christ. Its promises, sacrifices, and accounts of divine deliverance find their place within the purpose fulfilled in Him. We should read with a concern to understand the passage itself and the way it belongs to that greater purpose.

Joseph was a sinner who needed redeeming grace. His life nevertheless presents patterns that lead us to consider the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus. A beloved son is sent by his father. He is rejected by his brothers, handed over through betrayal, and later raised to authority through which others are preserved.

These correspondences deserve thoughtful attention. They do not require us to treat every detail as a separate prediction or force the two histories into complete identity. The differences also

matter, especially where they display the unique glory of Christ. Joseph serves within the covenant history. Jesus is the Redeemer in whom the promises reach their fulfilment.

Long before Joseph's birth, the Lord had spoken to Abraham.

GENESIS 12:2-3

² And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

The promise extended beyond Abraham's immediate household. It reached across generations and nations. Paul identifies the promised seed in relation to Christ.

GALATIANS 3:16

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

The preservation of Jacob's household belongs within that covenant purpose. Famine would threaten the family. Through Joseph, the Lord would provide for them in Egypt. Judah, already present among the brothers in Genesis 37, belonged to the family that would be preserved. Through Judah's line, the promised Christ would come.

This helps us see why Joseph's private sorrow has a place within so great a history. The Lord was carrying forward a purpose whose consequences Joseph could not yet imagine. The events that felt like the collapse of his world were being governed toward the preservation of the covenant family.

The same account calls us to humility about our own limited perspective. We do not know the full significance of the circumstances through which God carries us. We may understand little beyond the pain of the moment. The Lord knows the purpose He is accomplishing, and His people can entrust themselves to His wisdom.

The Lord Sent a Man before Them

Psalm 105 gives a divine interpretation of Joseph's journey. It records both the suffering he endured and the Lord's purpose in sending him ahead of the family.

PSALM 105:16-22

¹⁶ Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.

¹⁷ He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant:

¹⁸ Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:

¹⁹ Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

²⁰ The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.

²¹ He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance:

²² To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

The psalm speaks plainly about the hardship. Joseph's feet were hurt with fetters. He was laid in iron. The time of waiting tested him. Scripture does not hide the cost of the road by which he came to authority.

Yet the same passage says that God sent a man before them. The brothers sold Joseph, and the Lord sent him. Their evil intention and God's gracious purpose meet in one history without becoming morally identical.

The time appointed by God eventually came. Joseph was released and given authority. The man who had been confined became responsible for the resources through which others would be sustained.

Joseph himself later explained the matter to his brothers.

GENESIS 50:19-21

¹⁹ And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

²⁰ But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

²¹ Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

His words preserve the distinction we have traced throughout these chapters. They thought evil against him. God meant the event unto good. The preservation of many lives came through a providence that exceeded the intentions of the men who had sold him.

Joseph also spoke comfort to the very people who had harmed him. He promised provision for them and their little ones. The authority he possessed became an occasion for care.

Here we begin to see more clearly why the account directs our thoughts toward Christ. The rejected brother becomes an instrument of life to those who rejected him. Their guilt is real, and mercy meets them in their need.

The Beloved Son Sent by the Father

Joseph was the beloved son of Jacob. His father sent him to enquire about his brothers and the flock. That earthly relationship gives us a point of reflection upon the sending of the beloved Son of God.

At the baptism of Jesus, the Father declared His pleasure in the Son.

MATTHEW 3:17

¹⁷ And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The love within the life of God is perfect. The Father sent His eternal Son into the world according to His gracious purpose. Christ came willingly to accomplish the redemption entrusted to Him.

JOHN 3:16-17

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Jacob did not foresee what his sons would do to Joseph. The heavenly Father knew and ordained the saving work for which He sent Christ. This difference guards the unique glory of the Gospel. The sending of the Son was an act of divine wisdom and love whose purpose stood from eternity.

Jesus declared His readiness to do the Father's will and the certainty that He would preserve those given to Him.

JOHN 6:38-40

³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

The Son's obedience is complete. He fulfils the will of the Father and will raise His people at the last day. Their salvation rests in the faithfulness of the One sent to redeem them.

Joseph left his father's household to seek his brothers. The Lord Jesus entered our fallen world to seek and to save the lost. He came as the eternal Son made man, fully divine and truly human, to accomplish the work no other could perform.

LUKE 19:10

¹⁰ For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

We should receive this truth personally. The Saviour's mission addresses the lost condition of sinners. He comes in mercy to those who need Him. The Father's love and the Son's obedience give the believer a sure foundation for hope.

Rejected by His Own

Joseph's brothers saw him approaching and conspired against him. Their hatred had become a determination to remove him and silence the dreams he had announced.

The Gospel records the rejection of Christ in words of profound sorrow.

JOHN 1:10-11

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

The Creator entered the world He had made, and the world did not know Him. He came among His own, and He was rejected. The account exposes the depth of human sin in the presence of divine goodness.

The religious leaders conspired against Him. Judas betrayed Him. Pilate authorized His crucifixion, and Roman soldiers carried it out. The responsibility belonged to the people who participated in those acts. The apostolic witness also sets their conduct within the sovereign counsel of God.

ACTS 4:27-28

²⁷ For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

²⁸ For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

ACTS 2:23-24

²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

²⁴ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

These passages deserve careful attention. The hands were wicked, and the counsel of God was determinate. The participants acted sinfully, while the Lord accomplished the holy purpose of redemption.

The cross stood within God's plan from the beginning. Christ's suffering fulfilled the work for which He came. His enemies could neither overthrow the Father's purpose nor prevent the saving outcome of His obedience.

We have encountered the same relationship in Joseph's history. The brothers intended to destroy his future, and their conduct became part of the road to its fulfilment. At Calvary, the truth appears in its fullest saving significance. God accomplished redemption through the death of the Son delivered into wicked hands.

We must confess this with humility. The depths of providence exceed our ability to explain them exhaustively. A lifetime of theological study cannot place the infinite wisdom of God within the limits of our minds. We can know what He has revealed and worship Him for the truth He has made known.

The Lord is sovereign. Human beings are accountable. His holiness is perfect, and His purpose stands. We should receive these truths together and ask Him to keep us reverent as we seek further understanding.

Betrayed, Stripped, and Handed Over

Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver. Judas agreed to betray the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. The sum differed, but the exchange of a person for money presents a solemn correspondence.

MATTHEW 26:14-16

¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

¹⁵ And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

¹⁶ And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Greed participated in the betrayal. The value placed upon the Lord by the betrayer reveals the degradation of the heart that turns against Him. The Son of God was handed over through the sinful actions of men who would answer to God for what they had done.

Joseph's coat was taken from him. The Lord Jesus was stripped, and His garments became the subject of the soldiers' division and casting of lots.

JOHN 19:23-24

²³ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

²⁴ They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

The Gospel explicitly connects this action with the fulfilment of Scripture. Even the humiliation inflicted upon Christ occurred within the purpose of God. The soldiers acted, and the Word was fulfilled.

Joseph was placed under the power of others. Christ also suffered at the hands of men, yet His unique authority remained. He gave His life willingly according to the commandment received from the Father.

JOHN 10:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

¹⁸ No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

This is the glory of the Saviour's obedience. He willingly laid down His life. The violence of His enemies was real, and His self-offering

was free and purposeful. He went to the cross to accomplish redemption.

Joseph depended upon the preserving hand of God through his ordeal. Christ, the eternal Son, offered Himself in perfect obedience and possessed authority to take His life again. The correspondence leads us to worship the One whose person and saving work surpass every earthly pattern.

The Righteous Sufferer

Joseph's later life included temptation in Potiphar's household and false accusation when he refused his master's wife. He fled the occasion of sin. His obedience was followed by imprisonment, and the Lord remained with him there.

GENESIS 39:9

⁹ There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

GENESIS 39:20-21

²⁰ And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

The account continues the lesson we have already learned. Upright conduct may lead into a difficult season. God's favour is present with His servant even when the outward circumstances are severe.

Christ is the perfectly righteous Sufferer. He entered fully into the weakness of human life and was tempted, yet remained without sin.

HEBREWS 4:15-16

¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

His sinlessness is essential to our hope. He stands before the Father as the perfect High Priest and the sufficient Saviour. We may approach the throne of grace through Him, seeking the mercy and help we need.

Joseph's suffering served a purpose within the history of preservation. Christ's suffering accomplished atonement. Isaiah describes the work of the promised Servant in language that brings us directly to the heart of the Gospel.

ISAIAH 53:4-6

⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Our transgressions and iniquities are the issue. The Saviour bears the judgment of His people. The peace He secures rests upon His substitutionary suffering. The Lord lays upon Him the iniquity for which we could never make satisfaction.

We should linger here. The account of Joseph has brought us through envy, cruelty, and deception. We have seen enough of the human heart to know our need. In Christ, God provides the answer to that need. The guilt of sinners is dealt with through the obedience and sacrifice of the righteous Son.

Redemption Accomplished

Christ came to save His people from their sins. His death accomplished the purpose for which the Father sent Him. The sufficiency of His work is the foundation of the believer's assurance.

At the cross, the Lord Jesus declared the completion of His work.

JOHN 19:30

³⁰ When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

The testimony of Hebrews directs us to the enduring perfection of His offering.

HEBREWS 10:12-14

¹² But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

¹³ From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

¹⁴ For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

We have no additional sacrifice to place beside His. The righteousness that answers for us before God is found in Christ. Our works cannot supplement the merit of the Son, and our will cannot supply what His atonement supposedly lacks. His finished work is sufficient.

The Gospel calls us to receive this truth with the humility of sinners who need mercy. We come to Christ with our guilt and helplessness. We find in Him the forgiveness and righteousness that could never arise from our own resources.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

²¹ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Our sin is laid upon the sinless Saviour, and His righteousness is the believer's standing before God. This gracious exchange is central to

the Gospel proclaimed throughout these sermons. The sinner's hope rests wholly in the person and finished work of Jesus Christ.

That hope also changes the way we understand coming to Him. We approach as those whose sins made His suffering necessary. We have no claim grounded in personal worthiness. We flee to Him for mercy and discover that He receives those who come.

JOHN 6:37

³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

The promise is gracious and sure. The Saviour casts out none who come to Him. His welcome rests upon the Father's purpose and His own faithful saving work.

Mercy for Guilty Brothers

When Joseph's brothers eventually stood before him, they encountered the man they had rejected in a position of authority. Their need was great, and their past conduct gave them reason to fear.

Joseph's response reveals a remarkable mercy. He recognized the providence of God in the history that had brought them together. He spoke to them as their brother and explained the preservation the Lord had accomplished through his journey.

GENESIS 45:4-8

⁴ And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

⁵ Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

⁶ For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸ So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

His words did not erase the fact that they had sold him. He named that conduct directly. He also directed their attention to the greater purpose of God, who had sent him before them to preserve life.

Grace meets people whose guilt is real. The brothers had no ground for congratulating themselves. Their preservation depended upon the provision made through the one they had harmed.

The account gives us a moving occasion to consider the mercy of Christ. We come to Him as sinners for whom He suffered. The sins we confess are the very sins for which He bore judgment. Yet He receives His people in grace and gives them the life He has secured.

God's forgiveness is righteous because Christ has satisfied divine justice. The guilt of His people has been answered in the sacrifice of their Substitute. The Gospel therefore offers a welcome grounded in the finished work of the Son.

Beloved, let this mercy humble and comfort you. We have no righteousness to display before God as an independent claim. We have Christ, and in Him we have all that is needed for acceptance. The Saviour who died for His people lives to preserve them.

Exalted to Give Life

Joseph was raised from confinement to authority under Pharaoh. Through the responsibilities given to him, bread was provided during famine and Jacob's household was preserved. His exaltation served the life of others.

The Lord Jesus rose bodily from the grave on the third day. He ascended to the Father's right hand and reigns in glory. His authority extends over heaven and earth, and His saving ministry endures forever.

PHILIPPIANS 2:8-11

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The One who humbled Himself in obedience unto death is exalted. Every knee will bow before Him. The glory of the risen Christ belongs at the centre of the church's hope and worship.

His present intercession assures the complete salvation of those who come to God through Him.

HEBREWS 7:24-25

²⁴ But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

²⁵ Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

He lives forever. His priesthood continues, and His saving power is sufficient to the uttermost. The believer's preservation rests in a living Saviour whose work and care never fail.

Joseph distributed food to those facing famine. Christ gives Himself as the bread of life.

JOHN 6:35

³⁵ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

The life He gives is eternal. Those who believe in Him receive the salvation He has accomplished. The earthly provision in Joseph's history directs our thoughts toward a greater fullness found in the Son of God.

The Lord's promise also reaches forward to the resurrection of His people. He will raise them at the last day, as He declared in John 6. Our hope includes the redemption of the body and the completion of His gracious purpose. The Saviour who rose will bring His people into the glory He has secured.

Until Faith Becomes Sight

We have followed Joseph from the ordinary life of his father's household toward the land of Egypt. Along the way, the account has exposed the bitterness of fallen hearts and displayed the certainty of God's government.

A father sent his beloved son. Brothers rejected him, took his coat, and cast him into a pit. They sold him to strangers and carried a bloodied garment home. Jacob mourned while Joseph entered another household far away.

Through every scene, the purpose of God continued. The Lord was preserving the covenant family and carrying forward the history in which Christ would come. The pit served a purpose that those standing beside it could not see.

Then the Scriptures direct us to the greater Joseph. The Father sent His beloved Son. He was rejected, betrayed for silver, and delivered into wicked hands. He suffered, died, and was laid in a tomb. Through His sacrifice, redemption was accomplished according to the determinate counsel of God.

On the third day, He rose. The crucified Saviour lives forever, reigning in authority and interceding for His people. He is our righteousness, our life, and our sure hope before the Father.

Trust Him when the road is clear, and trust Him when the next step is hidden. Bring Him the sorrow that weighs upon your heart. Wait upon Him in the season whose purpose you cannot understand. His wisdom is perfect, and His promise stands.

One day, faith will give way to sight. The Lord will bring His people into the fullness of the salvation He has secured. We will

know Him in the glory He has promised, and the questions that trouble us now will be held within the joy of His presence.

Until that day, the church rests in this confession:

ROMANS 11:33-36

³³ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

³⁴ For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

³⁵ Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

³⁶ For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. The glory belongs to the Lord. The road from the pit to the palace is a testimony to His providence, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the fullest revelation of His saving grace.

May He strengthen us to trust Him, teach us to walk humbly before Him, and keep our eyes upon the Saviour who holds His people fast.

Questions for Discussion

Read, reflect, and discuss in the light of Scripture.

1. **Observation:** What did Joseph, Jacob, and the brothers each know at the end of Genesis 37? How does Psalm 105:16-22 enlarge our understanding of the same events?
2. **Biblical interpretation:** Identify three correspondences between Joseph's history and the life of Christ. Where do the differences help us see Christ's unique person and saving work more clearly?
3. **Doctrinal reflection:** Read 2 Timothy 1:9-10, Romans 5:6-8, and Romans 10:14-15. How do God's eternal purpose, Christ's historical sacrifice, and the preaching of the Gospel belong together in the salvation of His people?
4. **Gospel application:** How do 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Hebrews 10:12-14 answer the believer who fears that personal failure has made Christ's work insufficient? How should this assurance lead to humble confession?
5. **Worship and prayer:** Consider the whole journey from Genesis 37 to the exalted Christ. What present fear can you entrust to Him in light of His resurrection, intercession, and promise to raise His people at the last day?

God's purpose stands through every trial.

Joseph's journey began in an ordinary household and led through betrayal, an empty pit, and the road to Egypt. Through every painful turn, the sovereign hand of God carried forward His gracious purpose.

Drawn from five sermons on Genesis 37, Pastor Jason Boothe traces God's providence through Joseph's suffering and directs readers to Jesus Christ, the greater Joseph. These pastoral reflections explore human responsibility, forgiveness, and the assurance of salvation through Christ's finished work.

With full-text King James Version Scripture passages and twenty-five discussion questions, this book invites personal reflection, family reading, and group Bible study.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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