

From the Prison to the Palace (7)

The Life of Joseph

By Rev. Garrett Eriks

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Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

5101 Beechtree Street
Hudsonville, MI 49426

Website: www.hudsonvilleprc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/hudsonvilleprc

We turn in God's word this morning to Genesis 41. Last week we looked at the first 36 verses of the chapter, now this morning we'll look at the rest of the chapter, verses 37 through 57. I'm going to start reading at verse 25 which is the interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh's that leads into the text that we consider this morning. So Genesis 41 beginning at verse 25.

25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. 27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. 29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: 30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; 31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. 32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. 33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

Now begins the text,

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a

one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: 40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. 44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. 46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. 48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. 49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. 50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. 51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. 52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. 53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. 54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. 56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. 57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

Thus far we read God's word.

Let's ask God's blessing now in prayer.

Father in heaven, we come to the preaching of the gospel at this part of our worship and the understanding that we need this word. This word is the bread of life for our souls. It's the gospel. It's good news to us. We pray, Father, that we may hear the good news this

morning, that we may be fed with this word through the working of the Holy Spirit, but our desire most of all, is that our hearts and our minds would be pointed to thee and the greatness and the majesty of thee, our God. Please strengthen thy servant that he may be faithful in the proclamation of this word, but may we know together that no man can be the Holy Spirit, we need the Spirit to work this word in our hearts and lives so it has an effect upon us, and so that we bear fruit in our lives. All this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

In this history, we see Joseph ascending from the prison to the palace. It's a remarkable turn around, that Joseph goes in one day from the prison to the palace. He goes from being a servant in prison to the second in command in Egypt. It's important as we consider this history, that we look at it from a right perspective. The danger is, this morning, we would look at it from this perspective, the perspective that here Joseph has reached the pinnacle, that this is the goal. Joseph went from being lonely in Egypt, he went from having all kinds of bad things happening to him, from his being thrown in the pit, and his brothers selling him as a slave into Egypt, and then working his way up in Potiphar's house only to be thrown into prison, but now after all of the suffering he has gone through, now Joseph has reached this, he's the second in command in Egypt. That we would see the great good of this story in this, that Joseph is second in command, he's rich and along with that he has a beautiful Egyptian wife. That's not our perspective, this morning. It ought not to be our perspective. That is the perspective of some. They say trust in God and God's going to reward you. Trust in God and God's going to make you rich. He's going to give you positions of power in this world. He will make you rich and powerful in a pagan, idolatrous world. But that's a false gospel. It's not the true gospel, not the way we ought to look at this passage. Instead, we have to see that when Joseph went from the prison to the palace, he's in a position of greatest danger now. This is the most perilous position for Joseph to be in here in the palace of Joseph. The most perilous place for Joseph is not the pit, the most perilous place for Joseph is not prison, the most perilous place for Joseph is the palace. It's right here. Only then when we look at the text from that perspective will we look at the text with fear and trembling like we should, and only then will we see God as we should.

That's what we want to be focused on always in the life of Joseph. The life of Joseph is not about Joseph. The life of Joseph is about God. It's about the Lord. It's about his covenant faithfulness and goodness, and now we see that here again this morning. We see the sovereignty of God, the providence of God, and the revelation of God, these truths of God all intersect here in this passage and in this history. We see the sovereign grace of God, the sovereign salvation of God, the province of God as he's leading Joseph in his life according to his sovereign will and as he's doing that by the revelation that he has given to Joseph. But in all of that, we see the work, the work, the powerful sovereign work of God. And so we have to keep that in mind, this morning. The focus is on God and what he's doing in the life of Joseph. He protects him and preserves him in this great danger that he faces in the palace.

So with that in mind, we consider the text using the theme "From the Prison to the Palace." We notice, first, the perilous position; secondly, the powerful preservation; and finally, the providential purpose. From the prison to the palace.

Joseph's promotion from the prison to the palace was not the best thing that happened in his life so far. Now, from an earthly perspective, that would be true. The palace was the best thing that could happen in his life, but not from a spiritual viewpoint. This was not the best thing that happened in his life. This was a perilous position for him to be in because, first of all, in the palace he was given power and wealth. We'll take notice first of those two things. First, Joseph was given great power. Pharaoh said to Joseph that he would be given the position of being second in command in the kingdom. That's what we read from the beginning of the text when Pharaoh says beginning in verse 38, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" Pharaoh is not referring there to the one true and living God. The Spirit, the Holy Spirit of the living God, Pharaoh doesn't know that God. It's more the gods in general. He thinks that the gods in general, idol gods are behind Joseph in what he does. But anyway, what Pharaoh then says is, "Now Joseph, I'm going to exalt you. I'm going to elevate you." He's discreet and wiser, we read in verse 39, and then he says in verse 40, "Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou." And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." Joseph was given this position of power. He went from prisoner to second in command in the land of Egypt.

Along with that, in an elaborate ceremony Pharaoh hands over to Joseph the big ring that was on his finger that had Pharaoh's seal, and the significance of that was Pharaoh now could make laws that would fall upon the entire land as if they were coming from Pharaoh himself. He was given that kind of authority right off the bat there in Egypt. Along with that, he had nice clothes put on him, kingly robes that were put on him, gold chain around his neck. And then after that elaborate ceremony, Pharaoh put Joseph in his second chariot. No ordinary chariot, again, the chariot of royalty and paraded him through the streets of Egypt. And the people, when they saw him coming, they yelled, "Bow!" Joseph has achieved in one day celebrity status in Egypt. People are yelling, "Bow before him," and people are bowing before him. And along with that, we see that powerful position when the famine actually hits. Seven years when there's years of plenty, after that, the famine hits. And what does Pharaoh tell the people? "You don't have food? Go see Joseph and whatever he tells you to do, do it." That's the power and authority that Joseph was given when he was only 30 years old.

That's a perilous position. Do we see that and understand that? Well, think about that in our own day. What if one of our children or one of our grandchildren at the age of 25 or 30 years old got to be the Vice President of a Fortune 500 company. Would that be how we would view their position, that it's a perilous place for them to be? Or would we think that's great, look what they've done, look how they've climbed the corporate ladder and ascended the ranks. They've got money. They've got power. Or think of that, a young man in the church, he ascends to be Vice President of the United States and when we tell someone about that, we'd be so proud. Look what he's done,. Look what he's

accomplished. Would that be our viewpoint? That's our viewpoint from the perspective of our kids, that they've got this business, they own a business, they're successful in the world. That's what we want for them. If we think that that's the pinnacle, then we ought to repent of that because the reality is that's the most perilous position to be in.

We know that from this perspective, the saying goes that power corrupts. I know you won't find that in the Bible, but power corrupts, but that can be implied from the words of Jesus. Remember, what Jesus said about power and greatness in his kingdom, greatness in the kingdom is not in being one who has great authority and being in command, but instead it's being servant of all. That's what Jesus says. That's where greatness is found in the kingdom. But now Joseph is put in a dangerous, precarious, perilous situation, not only because he has this position of power, but its power in Egypt. It's not in the Promised Land of Canaan. We have to remember that God did not promise to his people that they would have power and authority in the world in Egypt and Syria and Babylon, but instead God promised that his people would be in the Promised Land of Canaan. They would not inherit Egypt, they would inherit that Promised Land. But now Joseph is in Egypt and he has power here in Egypt, and along with that power Joseph is suddenly rich. He is rich. That is evident from the clothing that he now wears. The gold chain that girl put around his neck. The chariot in which he is riding. And along with that, he is in charge. He's in charge at 30 years old, coming from the prison. He's in charge of the entire economy of Egypt. He's the Allen Greenspan, the Bernanke, of Egypt. He's in control of these things.

That's a perilous position to be in, to have that kind of wealth along with power. It's perilous because of what the word of God says about that. Remember, 1 Timothy 6:10, the love of money is the root of all evil. Remember what Jesus says, that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. All those words of the scriptures tell us the great danger of wealth and money and now Joseph is rich. The danger is that he thinks now that he's rich, that he has it all, has everything that he could ever want with the power and the riches. If we interpret Joseph's life from the perspective that Joseph has it good now after 10 years in prison and 13 years in Egypt because now he is rich, we need to examine ourselves. If that's the way we look at this passage that now this is really great, now it's getting good because Joseph has these riches and power, we have to examine how much we've been affected by our own American culture and by the materialism of our day.

We have to examine ourselves as parents and grandparents, are we teaching our children in any way by our own actions or by our words that this is the pinnacle, this is the goal, it's all about money, it's all about power, it's all about being someone in this world. We ought not to be, and if we are, we ought to repent of that as well. But this says something else to us this morning. There is no doubt that we live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world and probably in the history of the world, the affluence that we have in this land and the wealth that we have, and it's not just for some, really for most of us, if not all of us, is unprecedented. We have to see this morning what that means. That means as we look at Joseph's life and we see the peril in his life, it means we're in a perilous situation, too, because in our day wants and needs are all confused. What we truly need, what we're

truly focused on in our hearts, it gets all confused. We're in a perilous position too, because of the wealth and the affluence of our own day we.

We have to see that this morning as we look at the life of Joseph, but also not be discouraged in that. Our strength, then, is found in God. God preserves Joseph, he will preserve us. But there's another part to the perilous situation which Joseph finds himself. That perilous situation is this: it's the influence of Egyptian culture upon him while he is away from the covenant community, while he is away from his own family, and from the Promised Land, for we read here in the text that Pharaoh gave to Joseph an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife. So we see in this the influence of Egyptian culture upon Joseph. Now that peril is understood when we understand that Joseph has now been in Egypt for about 13 years. We read in the text that he's 30 years old. We know that he was sold as a slave by his brothers when he was about 17 years old. So what this means is that Joseph was in Egypt almost as long as he lived under his father's roof in the Promised Land of Canaan

And in addition to that, in some of the most formative and impressionable years of Joseph's life, he lived not under his father's roof, but in the land of Egypt. We know that the normal way when children and young people are growing up is that they're living under the authority of their parents and the command for children and young people is obey your parents because they've been put over you, they are to lead you and direct you. They give you wisdom, the wisdom of the word of God, and you're to follow that. Joseph didn't have that as a young person. Think of that 17 year old young man without that godly influence of his father, and that's because he's away from the Promised Land.

Joseph grows up in this wicked culture and now, along with the power that he has and the wealth that he has, Pharaoh says, "I'm going to give you a new name, Joseph. Your name is going to be Zaphnathpaaneah. Now that name means "revealer of secrets." No doubt the idea is that because Joseph was the one who told Pharaoh the interpretation of his dreams, that's why Pharaoh gave him this name, but it's still an Egyptian name connected to Egyptian gods. Now it makes sense from Pharaoh's position that Joseph would have an Egyptian name because of his position. So it's easy to read over that and think, "Well, no big deal. Of course he would have an Egyptian name. That's part of his work and part of his calling that he now has." But we see in that the influence of Satan to try and make Joseph a good Egyptian there in the land of Egypt.

There's the influence of the culture upon him. In addition to that, Pharaoh also gave to Joseph an Egyptian wife, but not any Egyptian wife. This Egyptian wife, Asenath, was the daughter of Potipherah, the priest of On. He's a high priest of one of the chief religions in the land of Egypt and his daughter becomes Joseph's wife. This is a young woman who grew up not only worshiping the pagan idols of Egypt but she was right in the heart of it all. Her father was dedicated to it. He was zealous in that, and no doubt taught her that as well, and now this woman becomes the wife of Joseph. Now we might say, well, Joseph should have said no, and all the rest, so we don't know how this all happened. It wasn't Joseph asking for this Egyptian wife. Again, it's part of his position.

It's part of his position. It's Pharaoh telling Joseph, "Here's your new name. Here's your wife."

Pharaoh does this and we see in this, again, the influence of the Egyptian culture, an attempt to influence Joseph. We see the great peril now that he is in, the great peril is this: Satan is working through the Egyptian culture striving that Joseph would lose his identity, his spiritual identity, that Joseph would not anymore serve the one true and living God, that he would not see him any longer as a Hebrew and as a Jew, but instead that he would see himself as an Egyptian. That's what Satan is working here, that he would serve the pagan gods of Egypt, that he would live for power, prominence, fame and riches, that he would look at life from this perspective, "I now have it all." That's what Satan is working through this. We see the great danger that Joseph is in, but we see also the perils that we face as we live in our culture and in our world today. Satan is trying to do the same. Satan wants us to lose our spiritual identity. He wants us to lose our identity in the midst of this world so that we would not associate ourselves with God and his word, but instead we would associate ourselves with the things of this world, the pursuit of those things. Not just money, but the love of money. Not just power but the love of power. And to think that our lives aren't complete unless we have these things.

The world in which we live wants us focused on those things. We live in a time of great peril as well. Our children live in this age as well and the question is this, the question for Joseph is how Egyptian did he become? How much did this all have an influence upon him? Did he lose, did he lose all of his thoughts about God? Did his identity change? Would he associate with the idol gods of Egypt instead of with the one true and living God? That question is important for us this morning, how Egyptian have we become? How worldly have we become? How much have we adopted of the culture of our day, the materialism of our day, desire for power in our day? How much has this influenced our own desires and our own thinking? We have to answer that question. We have to look at ourselves in regard to that, but now we can look at Joseph and we have this answer. Joseph didn't lose his identity. Strikingly, he didn't. In this perilous position of power, wealth, and pagan culture all around him in the palace, Joseph does not lose his spiritual identity, and that is because of the work of the living God in Joseph's life. What we see here is the good that is happening, the good work of the living God.

Well, where do we see that? How do we find that? Well, it's found in the details of the text that we ought not to overlook. What's striking is that as you read the text and you read about Joseph's new name and you read about his wife, then soon after that you read about Joseph having two sons and what we ought not to miss are the names of those two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. He gives to his two sons Hebrew names and those Hebrew names are given to his two sons with purpose. What those two names tell us is how Joseph views the world in which he lives. This is how Joseph views his time in Egypt and how he got there. We see here in these two names the worldview of Joseph at this moment. And notice what his worldview is focused on, not on himself, not Egypt but God. As the names are explained, as Joseph himself explains why he chose those names, who does he start with? God, "For God, verse 51 we read, and then verse 52, "For God." It's all about God. We see that Joseph, by a gracious work of God, has not lost his

identity. He's viewing the world not from the perspective of Egyptian culture, he's viewing the world from the perspective of God's truth.

Let's look at these two names. The first name, Manasseh. The name Manasseh means literally "one who forgets," and now it's explained in verse 51 why Joseph chose this name, "For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." Now the idea here is not that Joseph forgot his family. The idea is not that Joseph said, "I don't want to think about my family anymore because of all of the hurt and all of the abuse that they have inflicted upon me in my life." That's not what Joseph is saying. Instead, what Joseph is saying is that he will not be identified by his affliction. What he's saying is, "I'm not going to focus in my mind and in my heart, and I don't, on all of the hurt that I have gone through."

Now that's important. What that says for Joseph is he's not going to immerse himself in Egyptian culture simply because he's mad, because he's angry about what his family has done to him, because of what Potiphar's wife did to him, or in the end because of what God did to him. He's not going to live in a wrong response to the things that were done in his own life. He's not going to feel sorry for himself as he looks back upon his life. He's not going to allow his affliction, some of which that took place from his own family, he's not going to allow that to control what he does going forward in his own life. You see, there are people who do that and that may be something we are tempted to do as well, that because we're upset with what has happened in the past with the many ways that we've been hurt, we try to simply forget everything that's happened, we do that by immersing ourselves in things we ought not. And people do that today, they immerse themselves in the things of this world to try and find an escape from all of the hurts that they have inside. And people do that in many different ways. They try to find an escape from it all. They do that with drinking. They do that with drugs. They do that with cutting. They do that with controlling other things in in their lives. Joseph's saying, "I'm not going to be identified by my affliction and then respond in a wrong way to it." This is a great danger for us, too, that we would allow our past afflictions and struggles to define us, that we would allow a disease to define us, that we would allow suffering in our lives to define us, that we would allow sins in our lives to define us as well and we say, "Well, I'm just a failure. I walk in this sin. I've struggled with this sin." We identify ourselves with that.

You see, if that's our viewpoint, then all we do is we begin to feel sorry for ourselves. We're not focused on God, we're focused on ourselves, and so we must confess what Joseph did, we must confess by faith that we will forget those things in the sense that we will look at them in the right perspective, we'll forget those afflictions and not allow those afflictions to be our identity and to control what it is that we will do and how we will live in the midst of this world. But instead, God's love, his mercy, his faithfulness, that defines who we are. That's what Joseph is saying here. That's what defines him, it's his relationship with the covenant God, and that's what he finds us as well.

There's the second name, Ephraim. Joseph states positively in the name Ephraim his worldview, and that is that God has been faithful and given him great fruitfulness. That's

verse 52, "For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." There's some interesting things that come out of this name. First of all, notice how Joseph identifies the land of Egypt. He doesn't identify it as a great place. He doesn't identify, even now where he has riches and power, as the best place on earth. "Now I'm home." He doesn't identify it as a place in which he's comfortable, but he calls it "the land of my affliction." He's in the palace, second in command, and still he says, "Egypt is the land of my affliction." He says, "I'm not home here. I'm not comfortable here and I never will be." Joseph is saying here that it would be better to be hated by his brothers and be in the Promised Land than to be by Pharaoh and be rich in the land of Egypt. That's striking. That's what Joseph is saying here. He's saying it's better to be in the courts of the Lord than dwell in the tents of wickedness, as we read in Psalm 84. He's identifying himself with God, the covenant relationship that God had established with him, and he's identifying himself with the Promised Land.

Secondly, he says that God had made him fruitful in his affliction. How is it that he's fruitful in his affliction? Well, it's not just the position he's in but it's the spiritual fruit that God had given in his life, and he praises God for the fruit that God had produced in his life so that he continues to trust in God and he continues to obey God. He knows that God has not abandoned him here in this land of affliction but God has been with him.

That's good for us to consider, this name Ephraim as well. May this be part of our worldview as well. What that means for us is that we ought to say as well, "I'm not comfortable in the world of wickedness and sin. This is not my home. No, my home is heaven. It's to be with God. It's to dwell with God." We're home here, we're home in the homes in which we live because our families are there and we come together around the word of God and in prayer, but out there in the world, I'm not at home there in all the wickedness and sin that's found there and all the language that's found there, all the sinful deeds that are found there as well, but in this world I desire to be with God and his people, and not with the world of sin. But he's saying, too, in the midst of this world of sin, it's God who makes me spiritually prosperous and fruitful in this world. He does that by his spirit.

That was the perspective of Joseph. Now what we see in this, what we see in this is the powerful work of God. You have the intersection of God's sovereignty, his providence and the revelation of God, his word. God's sovereignty is his authority to rule over all things however he decides. God's will cannot be thwarted. It cannot be changed. God is the sovereign God of the universe who does as he pleases, as we read in Psalm 115:3. As a God of providence, he works out his will in this world. That's the difference between sovereignty and providence. It's how he executes his sovereignty in this world in Joseph's life and in our lives, but we also have, along with that, not only the sovereignty of God, not only the providence of God, but in the midst of that God reveals himself. God revealed himself to Joseph in dreams. God reveals himself in truth to us, not through dreams but in the Holy Scriptures. So we're not blind as we go through this life. We have truth that guides us.

Now we see all of that come together in the life of Joseph. You see the sovereignty of God here. In this passage you see that, the providence of God. God's been leading and guiding Joseph through his life. He goes from the pit, to the prison, now to the palace. God's been leading him and guiding him through all of that, but we see the sovereignty of God, too, the sovereignty of God in the salvation of Joseph. Why is Joseph not influenced by Egyptian culture? Why does his Egyptian name and his Egyptian wife, who comes from a good Egyptian family that worships pagan idols, why does that not have an influence upon him? Why does the riches and the power not go to his head so that he's full of pride in what he does? It's only because of the sovereign, powerful, grace of God. God preserves Joseph here through all of these things. He's saturated in Egyptian culture yet he keeps saying, "No, no, no," to it all. That's the powerful work of God's grace we see here in the text, since the same sovereign work of God that we see in us and we're saying, no, to this culture, no, to the love of money, no, to the power, no, to all of the influences that it has upon us in our afflictions.

We're saying, no, to it, that's the fruit of God's work within us, but there's another part to this. We must not forget that God had been revealing things to Joseph. What had God been revealing to Joseph? Well, it wasn't just there will be seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine, but remember the first dreams. The first dreams. God said through those dreams that his brothers would bow down before him. Joseph has that in the back of his mind. He knows that whatever God says is true. He's in prison and that's what keeps him going, "God said. God said. And God's word never fails. God said. I'm going to be reunited with my brothers again. I'm going to see them again." He knows that because God told him so. He believes that word of God. Now think about it, Joseph has to begin seeing how things are coming together here in this plan of God. In regard to those dreams, Joseph right now has people bowing down before him. It's not his brothers yet but he's going through the streets of Egypt in the chariot of Pharaoh, and I would think that Joseph is thinking about those first dreams. "God has brought me from the pit to the prison, to the palace. This must be part of the plan of God to reunite me with my brothers. And then think about it, seven years of plenty but the seven years of famine are coming, and that famine is going to cover more than Egypt. Maybe my brothers will be coming." Joseph has to be thinking, "I better keep an eye out for my brothers."

You see, Joseph is encouraged by the word of God, and he lives by that word, he trusts in the sovereignty and in the providence of God. That's because God has revealed himself to Joseph. We have to live by that word of truth in the midst of our lives, too. We know God's sovereign, he preserves us. We know that he is the one who's providential, he's ruling over all things and controlling all things that happens in our lives, but as we go through affliction and hardship under the providence of God, he doesn't leave us on our own. He gives us the word of truth and he says, "Follow that. Listen to it. Listen to my promises and believe those promises."

But now there's a providential purpose that God has in all of this. We have to remember what it is that God says in Romans 8:28. In Romans 8:28, God promises to work all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. All things work together for good. We see that in Joseph's life. Remember

what the good was. The good for Joseph in Egypt was not, it was not the palace. Joseph sees the palace and he knows this is not as good as it gets. There's something higher and there's something better than the palace, and what's higher and better than the palace in Joseph's mind is the Promised Land. It's fellowship with God. It's the promises of God. The same is true in our lives. This world is not as good as it gets. Having more money, having greater power, having anything else that we would set our hearts on, it's not as good as it gets, but when we set our hearts on those things, that's what we're saying. "This is as good as it gets." But it's not.

What is the good? The good is God's plan of redemption. That's the good here. You see that when you look at Romans 8. Now the question is in Romans 8, well, what does that word "good" mean? What does that word "good" stand for? Well, verses 29 and 30 tell us, "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. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." What is the good? It's salvation. That's the great good. It's God's plan of salvation.

That's God's providential purpose here. Joseph is part of God's plan of redemption. Let's not forget that. Let's see the bigger picture here of Joseph's place in God's plan of redemption. You see, through Joseph, his family of about 70 people would come down to Egypt, and in the roughly 400 years that they were in Egypt, they would grow into a great nation. Then there would come a pharaoh who would not remember Joseph and he would make the people slaves. Slavery, something that comes up time and time again in the life of God's people. Joseph's life and then going forward, there would be slaves in Egypt, but God would deliver them through the Red Sea. And then they would be in the wilderness for a time and they would come right up to the edge of the Promised Land then God provided one to lead them into the Promised Land. Who was that? Who led them in, kids? Joshua, the Old Testament name for Jesus. The plan of redemption and salvation. Then after that they were in the Promised Land, they walked in sin, they did what was right in their own eyes. God brought enemies to enslave them and then he sent judges, pictures of the Savior to come. And then he gave them kings. But then they walked in sin. How many of the kings were sinful and idolatrous and led the people in that idolatry and God brought them into slavery? But then he brought them out, brought them back to the Promised Land. But the temple wasn't as beautiful, the city of Jerusalem wasn't as grand. Why? It was all preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah. "There's something better," God was telling his people through it all. "There's something better than just this Promised Land. There's something better than the temple. It's Jesus Christ himself, the Savior, that I promised." And that's the better for us. It's Christ. It's friendship and fellowship with him. Let us see in our lives, then, as well the providential purpose of God for our lives and even for the suffering in our lives.

There is great hardship and suffering in our lives. We've seen that in the life of Joseph, a hardship and suffering that he went through. It was difficult. We can relate in many ways. Some of us here this morning know great hardship and affliction. Tears flow at times. Sometimes there doesn't seem to be an explanation for why it was at that time. The tears

flow. But it's good for us to remember the bigger picture. What happens through the time of affliction and trouble is we get such a narrow focus, the blinders get on. It's only right here, right now, what I'm going through right now, and we turn very inward and we become self-focused and the word of God delivers us from that and says, "Nope, there's a bigger picture. There's a bigger picture and the bigger picture is salvation. Salvation. Our salvation. The salvation of the church. The return of Jesus Christ." And God's working all things for that day when Jesus Christ will come. He's working all things for the salvation of the church, salvation of the church and the line of generation, the salvation of his people who are among the nations of the world. And we continue to see that in our suffering and affliction. May we have this perspective, this right worldview, the worldview of the truth of God's word, that God has a sovereign purpose for everything that he does and it's good. It's so good. We know that in our lives. We'll experience that most fully when we're in heaven in glory. We see here the great beauty of the work of God as Joseph went from the prison to the palace, teaching us there's something higher and better than the palace, it's the life we have with God in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us pray.

Father in heaven, we are thankful for this word this morning, and we pray that thou wilt deliver us from the effects of our sinful culture upon us. May it not be that we look at the ideal in this world as having power, and wealth, and honor. May we not live for the things of this world, instead, may we learn that what is so important, what is best, is the relationship we have with thee in Jesus Christ. So Father, renew us and strengthen us by this word of the gospel as we live our lives in the midst of this wicked world that we live to glorify and honor thee. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

- I. What is the most perilous time of Joseph's life?
- II. We must remember that this history is not about Joseph, but it is about God.

**The Life of Joseph
(7) From the Prison to the Palace**

I. The Perilous Position

- A. Joseph's promotion from the pit to the palace was not the best thing that happened in his life so far, but the most perilous place spiritually because he had power and wealth.

- B. Joseph's position is perilous because of the influence of Egyptian culture upon him while he is away from the covenant community in the promised land.

II. The Powerful Preservation

- A. As we wonder about how Egyptian Joseph is becoming there is a detail that answers this question for us: Joseph has two sons and gives them Hebrew names.

- 1. Manasseh

- 2. Ephraim

- B. In the text we see the powerful work of God in Joseph's life and in His heart so that Joseph believes and lives by truth.

III. The Providential Purpose

- A. God promises in Romans 8:28 that all things work together for good. What is this good?

- B. Let us see in our lives that there is a providential purpose for our suffering.