

Divinely Prepared and Positioned

by Fred Tomlinson

This sermon delves into the life of Joseph from the book of Genesis, highlighting how God's sovereignty was at work in every aspect of Joseph's journey, from his dreams to being sold into slavery, falsely accused, and eventually rising to power in Egypt. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty in our lives, even in the midst of trials and challenges, and how God uses every experience to fulfill His purpose. The sermon concludes with the lesson that nothing in the life of a true Christian is random, but all is pre-ordained by God for His ultimate plan.

Scripture: Genesis 37:3, Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28, Psalm 103:1

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Purpose in Trials"

Description

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Transcript

Well, if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to the book of Genesis. I want this morning to have some thoughts to share with you from the life of Joseph. There's so much here that we can look at.

Most of you will know that the story of Joseph occupies some 12 chapters in the book of Genesis, which is a very substantial section of the book. And there are very many features that we can look at in this passage that are of great profit. The particular way in which I'm going to approach it might be just a little bit different, certainly different from an attempt to work through the story, verse by verse or even chapter by chapter.

But let me read a few verses as an introduction. We're in chapter 37 of Genesis. In verse 3, the opening words are, as you'll notice, know Israel.

But I perhaps could remind you that clearly this is a reference to the individual we know as Jacob. Just a couple of chapters earlier, he's had an encounter with God, you remember, during the night. And it was God himself, or the God-man that was speaking to Jacob on that occasion, who said that your name will

not continue to be Jacob, but Israel.

This was as a result of his wrestling with that God-man, you remember. So that's where we are here. Now Israel, or now Jacob, loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a very colored tunic.

His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all the brothers, and so they hated him, and could not speak to him on friendly terms. Then Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him even more. He said to them, please listen to this dream which I have had.

For behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheep rose up, and also stood erect. And behold, your sheaves gathered around, and bowed down to my sheep. Then his brothers said to him, are you actually going to reign over us, or are you really going to rule over us? So they hated him even more for his dreams.

Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, lo, I have had still another dream, and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me. And he related it to his father, to his brothers, and his father rebuked him, and said to him, what is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come and bow ourselves down before you to the ground? His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. Amen.

I'm going to take a little detour and come back into this story in a little while. Let me say that I believe that one of the great barriers to spiritual progress is a failure to grasp the sovereignty of God. It's that serious.

And, you know, if someone were to ask, well, do you believe that God is sovereign? I think, without much of a question, the response would be, well, of course we do. But I think that, in so many cases, that response is more of an intellectual nod than anything else. And if that's the case, if that signifies, in some way, a lack of appreciation of the sovereignty of our God, then that response is insufficient to produce in us and from us true spiritual worship.

No matter how many times we may sing a song such as, how great is our God, and we can sing it over and over again, but until and unless we have a real sense of he whom we're addressing and speaking of, we will not be able to truly worship him. I'm thinking now of the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost when he was preaching. He used a very heart-stirring statement when he was speaking of Jesus, of course, but he spoke of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

That's a big statement. But this was how Peter was appreciating the awesomeness of God and indeed his sovereignty, although he doesn't use the word there, but just in the choice of words, and I'm quoting, of course, from the Old King James translation, the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Again, he was making the statement in reference to what had happened to Jesus.

The fact is that he'd been crucified and so on, and there's a whole context for that. The Apostle Paul, you'll remember in the book of Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 11, he says that we have been predestined according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will. God is sovereign.

He is a sovereign God. He is not half sovereign. He's not three-quarters sovereign.

He's not seven-eighths sovereign. To be sovereign, this demands that he is absolutely sovereign in everything. And this concept is not some creation of someone perhaps called Calvin.

I'm not demeaning him. At all in making that statement. But this is not some idea that someone has come up with.

I'm thinking of what the prophet Isaiah said. Isaiah chapter 46, verses 9 and 10 read like this. And he's saying basically that God declares, for I am God and there is no other.

I am God and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying my purpose will be established and I will accomplish all my good pleasure. This is our God. And before this sense and increasing awareness of the God whom we're addressing and in whose presence we find ourselves, everything else with us.

Before this supreme reality, who is our God? All our elevated ideas, thoughts about ourselves, about our knowledge of theology even, our experiences of what we've heard in our assemblies over the years and so on, which may have been wonderful, but when we're in his holy presence, in his sovereign presence, everything is subdued, everything withers. You remember an ancient statement from scripture which says, who can stand when he appears? Of course it's not only all of our inflated ideas about ourselves, but even at the other end of the spectrum, all of our insecurities and those things that influence men and women greatly, perhaps especially in these days. But all of our busyness, all of our preoccupations, I dare to say even our attempts to serve God, everything in his holy presence is subdued, that he might be all in all.

Amen. This is our God and I remind you of how I started by saying one of the great barriers to our spiritual progress is a failure to recognize this very, very basic but very, very important truth. In the unfolding message of scripture, we find what Paul refers to, when he writes to the Ephesians, as the eternal purpose of God.

We find as scripture opens and we turn our pages and work through, we find this purpose, that which God is working out, we find this purpose being manifest in tangible terms, in time and space. In the Old Testament, perhaps we see this very particularly, as we witness God moving in very tangible ways, in practical terms, dealing with real issues, real people and things that are around them. As he unfolds his word through the Old Testament, there are many occasions where in his genius, he succeeds in incorporating into these developing issues, what we can only refer to as types or shadows of a greater truth, which would ultimately be unfolded.

So under the Old Covenant, although it's God working, the sovereign God, he's dealing with the people who he has chosen for himself. He's instructing them and working with them in a variety of ways that we can find in scripture. And yet, as we look at these scriptures and these items through the lens of the New Testament, we can see that God ingeniously had woven into those particulars illustrations that we refer to, that the scriptures themselves refer to, as types and shadows.

They're a kind of a shadow of something else, something much greater that belongs to the covenant which would follow, the better covenant, as the writer to the Hebrews refers to it. And as we examine those types and those shadows that we find in the Old Testament, even as we examine them in the light of the New Testament, we go back there, and on many occasions I've referred to this approach as being somewhat like looking in a pictorial section of the Bible, where the great spiritual truths of the New Testament are being worked out in terms of human experience in practical ways, that highlights, and notice that even though only shadows of the reality which was to follow, but even the shadows, because they've been designed and ordained of God, they're instructive and they're helpful. They're graphic, but they give us insights that we appreciate so greatly.

And that's very, very wonderful. And I believe that what I'm referring to here is most certainly witnessed in the life and experience of Joseph. And certainly in more ways than we will be able to look at just now.

In order to appreciate what I've been saying, and what I am now saying, is to be seen in the life and experience of Joseph, perhaps let me give you just a little bit more background, and then we'll proceed from that point. You will remember as you read through the earlier chapters in Genesis, we find, say in chapter 12, we find that God himself breaks in on human history, and he chooses a man. As a matter of fact, it's a pagan man at this point.

He chooses him, his name is Abram, and God talks to him. The God of heaven, the sovereign holy God speaks to this man, and makes it very plain that he has a purpose for him and for his life. And in the course of him talking with Abram, he actually makes covenant promises to him.

And in particular, he instructs him that through his seed, through the generations that will flow from him, God will actually bless the families from the whole wide world. We can't even begin to imagine what this would mean to Abram at this point in time. We remember particular things concerning his age, and the fact that even to have generations to follow was an impossibility.

That's kind of another story, I don't want to digress too far, but the fact is, to have God speaking to him and making his plan known to him in this way was mind-boggling. As it turns out, of course, Abram and Sarai, as she was named first of all, had the child, and that was the promise, I'm thinking, and that was Isaac. And as time moved on, Isaac grew, God visited Isaac, and he restated the same covenant to him.

And then there was a child, a particular child that was born to Isaac, and his name was Jacob, and God visited Jacob, and he restated this great fact. In other words, God was saying that he was going to accomplish something through their seed in the future, which would be a sort of blessing that would be not just for them as individuals, and even individual family, but it would be for the families of the whole earth. There would be something which would spread around the globe.

It was awesome, and this great covenant promise was made in many ways. Do you remember God even told Abram to look up into the sky and look at the stars of the sky and ask, can you number them? Well, of course not, nor would anyone be able to number what I am going to accomplish through you and through your seed in the future. Again, it was all a mind-boggling thing.

We know that for the outworking of that promise, but we're still in the Old Testament here, but for the outworking of this promise in terms of Old Testament times, God ordained that this company, this people that he was alluding to would at some stage in the future for them, for Abram and Isaac and Jacob, it would involve God actually calling his people out of bondage. In fact, it would physically, in this tangible aspect of the Old Covenant, it would be out of Egypt, out of this place where his people, the people that God had chosen, descendants of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, that they would be actually captives in Egypt, and they would be slaves, and they would be crying out to God. He doesn't describe all these things, but we know from reading on through scriptures how this was most certainly true.

But God was indicating that he was going to call the people out from bondage and slavery, and he would conduct them into another land and into a land that would be flowing with milk and honey. And we know that this was actually going to work out, and this is the basis of the book of Exodus in particular, as you know very well, as that would work out in due course. But all of that would be a shadow of a spiritual truth which would be revealed in the fullness of time.

And we know from reading the Apostle Paul, writing not least to the Galatians, where he makes it plain that when God said to Abraham that he was going to bless all the families of the earth through his seed, the Apostle Paul makes a special observation and a very important point when he says that when God said that, he didn't say through your seeds, plural, but through your seed, singular. And Paul settles this completely when he says, speaking of the seed which would be the key to the blessing, was actually Christ himself. In other words, when God was speaking to Abraham, as we've noticed and reminded ourselves just now, it was really a long, distant view into the future where the word would be fulfilled and come to fruition in the person of the Lord Jesus and through his redemptive work at Calvary.

Do you see the shadow? It was real to the people then because they really were in Egypt, they really were suffering and they really were delivered from that bondage and they really did. I know there's more to the story than this, but there was those who made it all the way to the promised land, to the land of Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey and so on. But here's the issue.

When God made that promise to Abraham, you almost need a blackboard, when he made that promise, he was speaking about something which would be worked out in history, in that very part of the world, in the future. We look back and we can see God speaking to Abraham, we can read the account of it actually happening, where Moses was called and where Moses conducted the people out of Egypt and we read about Joshua and his part in taking the people on into the promised land and so on. But pausing there without making the jump right on into the New Testament, there was a problem right there which God was well aware of but it wasn't a problem to God and that is that for the people that God had chosen to be called out of Egypt, there was a question, well how would that be? Because the people of God didn't live in Egypt, they lived in Canaan.

So if anyone was thinking about this very clearly at that time, and I can't say what anyone was thinking at that time, that there would be a logical question, well how in the world is God going to call his people out of Egypt if his people actually are in Canaan? The fact of the matter is that God knew exactly what he was going to do and in order to make this transition for the people from Canaan, Abraham's descendants, from Canaan to Egypt, probably about 200 miles I think, God had a plan because God is sovereign and so he chose an individual again to be the key, as it were, to this transition and that key would be Abraham's grandson whose name was Joseph and that's where Joseph comes in on the story. God chose Joseph. Let me just pause here.

It's a wonderful thing that God in his grace chooses people and sometimes when we look at records in scripture of God choosing people, there are many times when we think well this is an unlikely choice here and I'm only mentioning this very briefly but God has a reputation for choosing the most unlikely material through whom he will accomplish his great purposes and although certainly many of you will be aware of this, there's a very real sense in which the story of Joseph typifies, like in shadow form as it were again, the very life of the Lord Jesus and his ministry. That would be a different approach to these texts but we're not moving away from that. But no type, no shadow, none of them that we find in the Old Testament are able or are sufficient in and of themselves to fully reveal the truth of the New Testament.

They're just a faint shadow. There's a semblance, there are aspects in that person perhaps, if it's a person we're thinking about or in this ordinance where we can see the parallel but every one of them falls short in the ultimate sense and that's certainly true with Joseph, a great and wonderful man that he was. But as we find him here in this little section of verses that I've read to you, we find this young man, if we'd read just a verse earlier we would have seen that it records that he was 17 years of age at this particular time and we

look at him and he's an arrogant young individual and he's totally spoiled.

As a matter of fact there can be no doubt that his father has played a good part in that because what father with 12 sons would particularly favour one of his sons in this way, make this special coat for him and so on. It's true that in so many cases as parents we do things which may be well intended but in actual fact we work against the purposes of God and we don't do any favours for our children, wanting in many ways to have them advance beyond what we've experienced in life and things are done with good intentions but in so many ways we lay snares and traps for them that hold them up and I think something like that was happening here in this case and so the father in some respects in my mind anyway really really screwed the boy up at that point in time. He became arrogant and proud and so on and then of course just to make matters worse and far far worse he has these dreams.

I think it would not be wrong to say that because I'm not doubting the dream at all as having a divine origin as we can know from how it all works out in the story. Sometimes God gives gifts, perhaps I could speak from my experience and others who are listening to me could speak from theirs I'm sure, where God has enabled us in particular ways to move or minister in ways that we perhaps even foolishly may refer to as gifting and in so many cases there's not the corresponding maturity in which to function in that gift and clearly as I think of Joseph if indeed I'm right and I'm certainly convinced in my own mind I am right in this, that the source of this dream was the Lord himself but the way he handled it only brought trouble and made matters worse and we saw this didn't we in a very clear sense in this section of scripture and his brothers are profoundly offended and by the whole thing he relates it not just to his brothers and their madness can be they're really I mean they're going to be mad if they're ready to kill him to kill their young brother but they were ready to do that and but then he tells his dad as well like his father and and his father rebuked him we saw in verse 10 and so on and yet having said that I can't help but notice in verse 11 it says that the father kept the same in his mind in other words he was he was shocked I think he was offended by it but at the same time I think there was a witness in his heart that this just very well could be of God in some way that they couldn't even begin to imagine at that point in time and and such was the case here from that point in Joseph's life everything was downhill from that point you'll remember in fact there were 13 years specified in the text 13 years of experiences and to all intents and purposes you could say well those years contained a variety of very random events and circumstances and I have no record in scripture that gives me a support for saying this but I don't think it would be unreasonable to imagine that as Joseph found himself going through these different circumstances I'll say a little bit more about in just a moment and I think you just a human response would be to say this is not fair the things that were happening you know why is this happening these would be questions as a matter of fact I heard someone say just as recently as yesterday why is this happening now you know these are very human responses to circumstances that we can't cope with for whatever reason and certainly Joseph had been subjected to experiences like what was happening when his brothers took him and put him in a pit if you remember there's more about that to come in a moment but the fact is it went from bad to worse in a sense and so on and I can't help but wonder and again I'm prepared to be shown to be wrong but I can't help but wonder whether Joseph in the midst of those 13 years and the events that were taking place would have thought to himself I was a fool the way I behaved thinking back to the way he presented those dreams at that point in time but he walked through those 13 years of events and circumstances without the slightest clue I think that God was closer to him closer to him than his next breath hmm God had this pre-determined plan this pre-determined council of God this sovereignty of God that was moving that was not dormant at all and these events recorded here for us in scripture they're all taking place they're not they're not accounts of God seeing something go on that he didn't expect to go on and here he's taking

some action to counter that development because it's taken him off guard or taken God by surprise not at all again and again and again through scripture reminded that there are no surprises to God and that he knows exactly what what's going on and he's pre-determined things and he God I believe had determined in his own being in his own heart in his own will he determined that this young boy Joseph who's now a bit more than a boy he would be the key that he would use to get those people this huge family of the people that God had chosen out of that area of Canaan into Egypt you know um there's been many occasions with with my own children our own children um when I'm now with grandchildren where because I've always enjoyed doodling and drawing things and there have been occasions many many of them over the years where they would be with me one or other or perhaps a group of them and I'd start to draw something and I said can you guess what this is and I drew a line and they're watching a few squiggles and some lines over here and so on and they just didn't have a clue what I was what I was doing and really you know that's that's what's happening here there are things which are happening uh around Joseph and within Joseph that don't make sense they don't connect somehow they're like my squiggle here the line over here and something they're random that's how it seems and no one could be blamed for thinking that but as that story unfolds um you know he from from the pit where he was thrown and then the fact that he was bought by these traders that are traveling through for 20 pieces of silver to his brothers this is all the detail which is quite thrilling to read I hope you'll want to read it after all of this um and they take him to Egypt so he he's transported certainly against his own will as a 17 year old boy to Egypt and there he finds himself as a slave of a man of some notoriety called Potiphar and many of you are aware of the story of how Potiphar loved Joseph he favored him greatly appreciated him felt that he was a straightforward young man and he gave him a lot of responsibility in his home and Joseph lived in that context uprightly but then you'll remember the story of how Potiphar's wife as an occasion when Potiphar was away she started making approaches to Joseph that Joseph recognized immediately was completely inappropriate and he's he tries to escape and run away but she grabs hold of his shirt or something piece of his clothing and she keeps it and he runs away and of course then she turns and she broadcasts what has happened and when the husband finds out of course it's a disaster and the next thing is we find that Joseph having been falsely accused of this crime is placed in prison where he spends the next two years and there he meets do you remember the butler and the baker and they have dreams and he is able to give the interpretation he makes it plain he said no man can interpret these dreams only God can do it so he's got a God consciousness and a God conscience in Potiphar's house and certainly we see witnessing here as he's in prison on this occasion and and then perhaps we could just turn on a little bit just turn with me still in Genesis to chapter 41 and let me just read here because the pharaoh himself the pharaoh of Egypt he he has a dream we could read about that and none of his wise men are able to interpret this dream at all and as it turns out sorry it's very hard to just pick out isolated things and still make them connect but by this point the the cupbearer the butler who Joseph has been with in prison Joseph's given an interpretation to his dream and it comes true and in seven days he's reinstated back in pharaoh's palace again with that responsibility and so being then in that position he's just been with Jacob Joseph for a period of time in prison he's now back with pharaoh and he hears pharaoh's had this dream and no one can interpret it and that that reminds this particular individual that before he left the prison Joseph actually said to him remember me when you're out and so on and he'd forgotten him but this dream of pharaoh's that couldn't be interpreted reminded Joseph and so he speaks up on this occasion he says well I was with a man when I was in prison and he says how tells him how he had interpreted his dream so accurately and so pharaoh has Joseph called out of prison to him and so on and Joseph interprets pharaoh's dream and without looking at all the detail of the dream which would take us longer than we have this morning Joseph indicates that there are going to be seven years of bounty from the land of Egypt from the ground in those

days and following the seven years of bounty there's going to be seven years of a terrible famine and Joseph in giving this interpretation to the dream actually says that to pharaoh that what he needs to do is to collect I think it was a fifth I haven't read this just recently of all that they were reaping and they were to store it in barns and keep it through collecting supply for those seven years so that when the seven years of famine come they would have adequate food and pharaoh was so profoundly impressed with the interpretation and the wisdom of Joseph that he actually elevated Joseph let me just read I'm in chapter 42 is that what I asked you to do well we'll go to 42 and verse 38 then pharaoh said to his servants can we find a man like this in whom a divine spirit exists one more how much sorry yes so pharaoh said to Joseph since God has informed you of all this there is no one so deserving and wise as you are you shall be over my house and according to your command all my people shall do homage only in the throne I will be greater than you pharaoh said to Joseph see I have set you over all the land of Egypt then pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and he put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold necklace around his neck he had him ride in his second chariot and they proclaimed before him bow the knee and he set him over all the land of Egypt moreover pharaoh said to Joseph though I am pharaoh yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt and so it goes on then he gives to Joseph asana for his wife all right so I think we can see what's going on there and so on and the story continues on let me just look a little further down in this chapter two sons have been born now to Asana and verse 51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasse for he said God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household he named the second Ephraim for he said God has made me fruitful in all the land of my affliction amen this is profoundly helpful for us notice there was a reason a very real reason why he chose those names for those two sons and we're taking into account what we've the ground that we've covered so briefly but it's reminded us of just the circumstances that have led to this precise moment he's been so incredibly highly favored and exalted by pharaoh in the land of Egypt and he has this new wife he has now these two new boys that have been born and the first the first one Manasse means making to forget and the next name is made fruitful they're the meanings of them the fact is whatever took place in the earlier days of Joseph's life there were these 13 years that we've talked about which at least alluded to the fact that there were a number of things that went on that were that were unfair and to all intents and purposes random but here he is at this particular moment in his experience and he names his two boys this way let me just let me just pause here and say that what we read in verse 51 Manasse making to forget and then verse 52 made fruitful it's very significant the fact of the matter is if we have desires in our own hearts that we want to move on with God you see for Joseph it was so important that he would he would get past these experiences that he would get past his feelings and his responses to it whatever they had all been not many of them are specified but the fact is there was that which he needed to get past in other words we're looking here this this was a brand new beginning it was a fresh start and I think what I'm what I'm learning here is that before we can experience the the fresh the the fruitfulness of a new beginning we have to get clear of what was past in other words it seems to me although again it may seem we can understand it somewhat but maybe this even a degree of randomness about the fact that he just chose these two names I'm sure he knew what he was doing but did he did he at that time under the old covenant did he understand the significance that those choices of names there would have a profound impact on people like you and me living today under the new government where it's as though the Holy Spirit is saying if it is indeed in your hearts to discover ever more fully your own destiny that which God has ordained to be your life your purpose your ministry it's essential first that we get past the thing we get we get clear of the stuff that has influenced our lives and corrupted our minds and focused our attention in ways that clearly are inconsistent and incongruous with this new thing that God is wanting to lead us into it's as though we're wanting to we're wanting to put the new wine in in the old wine

skins and jesus taught on that he said that's not going to work at all um but in other words there's that about our lives even in the times when we've heard the gospel and we're disposed to respond to it we said we want this blessing we want to know this blessed life but the holy spirit is saying but before you can experience that in this particular way this real fruitfulness you need to allow me to get you past that which would otherwise hold you up and inhibit your progress and so on and so here picture this joseph is at this stage i dare say he's with his wife and here are the two babies i don't know you know these are the names that's all i know um but the fact is what what was going on in him and i'd like to suggest to you that at that moment he was a happy man i believe at this point he's in a good place he's at peace in his heart because he knows he's got past those things he knows beyond any shadow of doubt that he's been able to in the truest sense forget the past and he's in this new mode in this new life that has opened up for him and so on he's found he's found his place he's found his niche he's discovered his destiny amen you know when i was thinking about this i think it was last night i was up in the night so i don't know where it was at what stage in the day in the hours i was thinking about a story that some of the folk who are listening to me won't let me tell before but many years ago my mother was in hospital in london england and i was very unwell and without going into lots of detail i was i went over to england so that i was able to spend some time with her and i was visiting people in and around the area that i knew and in meetings in the evenings but in the daytime i would go in to visit my mother and i was just getting down i think it was if i'm remembering correctly i think it was actually my last day that i would be able to visit her in the hospital and as i walked past the nurse's station the sister who was in charge she called me to one side and she said said i just want you to know because she'd seen me coming in each day for two weeks and she said just want you to know we're discharging your mother today or was it tomorrow i can't remember and that was great news so when i went in there just she said we decided we'd let you tell so as i went in and i i said mom you're going to go home tomorrow i could never forget her response because in a very simple way she said did you say home fred did you say home i'm going home and she repeated that several times the sense in which she was at home right there in the hospital then because her heart and mind was changed do you understand me it was the physical thing of actually going home she was still in the hospital yes but but it brought such peace and such joy into her heart that she would be able to go to her own place amen i think that's what happened for joseph i think now with this new situation and responsibilities um with his new wife with his children and he just he was at peace he was at home in himself he'd found the place that god had ordained for him the past was gone and he was rejoicing in the prospect now of actually going home if you like to the fruitfulness to the outworking of this uh in his in his life and uh you know i'm thinking back to the children when i'm touring can you see what it is no no more squiggles more like no no and then at some point someone said i i know what it is and i think this is exactly what was going on in for joseph there'd been all of this random things things happening unfair things betrayals being forgotten about and so on and so on and here now at this point in time the picture's coming together and he's seeing things and he's discovering in a fresh way that that god had actually been working all the way through just turn with me one more time we'll go chapter 50 right to the end of genesis on this occasion and so all right jacob jacob has died by this point in time and he died back in canaan which was his and joseph and an entourage they've been back to take the body back to canaan and they've now coming back to egypt which is their new home all right that's the background and so they had buried their father verse 14 of chapter 50 and joseph returned to egypt he and his brothers and all who had gone with him to bury his father when joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead in other words when they realized and thought this through they said what if joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him so they sent a message to joseph saying this is good thinking your father charged before he died saying thus thus shall you say to joseph please forgive i beg you the transgression

of your brothers and their sin for they did you wrong and now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the god of your father and joseph wept when they spoke to him and then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said behold we are your servants but joseph said to them do not be afraid for am i in god's place as for you now let's just pause here this is one of the most profound statements certainly in the connection of right now and as for you you meant evil against me but god meant it for good in order to bring about this present result to preserve many people alive so therefore do not be afraid i will provide for you amen and for your little ones so he comforted them and spoke kindly to them amen nothing just happened randomly god was in it and joseph could see that very very clearly now as the years have gone by and so on he could see that everything had a purpose everything was serving god's eternal plan amen even his arrogance in the beginning even being thrown into the pit even the midianite traders and the 20 pieces of silver even the event with potiphar's wife even the 20 years in prison the baker the interpretation of their dreams pharaoh's dream everything being made second only to pharaoh in egypt and now being reconciled to his father and his brethren he's just saying it had to be god i see it now joseph looks back and sees it all clearly god was in it all every squiggle and every line was part of the developing picture that god was painting if you will of the story he was telling the events that were making sense god was forming through the squiggles and the lines he was forming a predetermined end that he was moving toward because he's sovereign he knew exactly what he's doing he never took his eye off joseph even in the midst of those strange 13 years of experiences even when joseph's back was against the wall and perhaps especially when his back was against the wall god was there and he knew it not it was it was actually his father who said that i remember when he said bethel he woke up the next morning after a dream he said god was in this place and i knew it not there's so much that we don't know at the time certainly but the fact is what he recognized now was that everything was under god's control nothing was haphazard how slow we are to realize that and come to terms with that in our lives there's a there's a rest that remains for the people of god and certainly in this fresh but very real holy spirit imparted sense of god's sovereignty and his sovereign love and grace for me and for you it brings its own rest it's it's home to us it was actually um a great statement from the past which goes like this when we go through trial or through a trial the sovereignty of god is the pillow upon which you lay your head it was actually charles spurgeon who made that statement when you go through a trial the sovereignty of god is the pillow upon which you lay your head because only that can make sense of the chaotic developments which there is for which there is no other explanation the apostle paul would write to the christians in rome and he said we know look the confidence of this we know that all things that is all things work together for good this is do you remember when we were earlier when i said he's not he's not half sovereign he's not three quarters sovereign not seven eighths sovereign all things is the statement of scripture this is the word of both that we know this that and joseph certainly knew it now all things work together for good to those who love god to those who are called according to his purpose he's not talking about everything in the world all working together for good he said it's for those who love me for those who are my called ones those who are called according to my purpose he's saying i'm in control of everything for these lives and paul would also say that god works all things to will and to do of his good pleasure everything working together i think the outcome of all of this that i'm sharing with this morning is that through through the whole stretch of years these various experiences now the contrasting circumstances um in which joseph walked honorably before god what he was beginning to see was god was using each and every one of these situations to to prepare him for the purpose god had in his heart for him and and also to position him where god needed him to be in order to fulfill his calling and it was things that he was totally ignorant of in the process but now he was seeing it clearly and when that critical moment arrived when when his eyes were opened and he saw it beyond any doubt when he realized he was he was god's man he was in god's hand and and he

was in the very place the position the niche that god had ordained for him um he was able to be the key to numberless communities of people um from part they say safe from perishing um and and amen and of course he was able to save his own family his father and the family he was able for that for them to be provided for uh as well and uh and ultimately that stunning reconciliation when they come together with recognition what a part of the story that is we're not looking at just now perhaps let's close by just saying this much let's recognize that the the challenges that we face today like like joseph not not one of us none of us know how the story of our own lives will develop or how they'll end joseph didn't know either but he walked honorably before god going through he didn't understand all that god was doing yet but he walked honorably he was faithful to god in the mundane things and things that were worse than mundane they seem to be so wrong madame gil said all is right that seems most wrong if it be god's sweet will and you can only have that observation from a later stage in our journey at the time it doesn't seem like it it seems like things that my life has derailed god where's god in all of this and the fact is that god is faithful and as i said earlier god was never closer to joseph than when his back was against the wall when things were going really wrong but he didn't fully appreciate it but it would come to light as he continued to walk righteously and honorably before before god and i think i think what would dawn on joseph and this is an important thing was that all of this that he'd experienced was not just for him all of this was for god to prepare a man who could be a means of blessing and nonetheless multitude it actually says in the text that people came from all the earth it says to egypt to get some of this grain that had been kept to them because of god speaking through joseph and so on and and it isn't isn't it easy and i'm as human as you are isn't it easy to get our focus all on ourselves and we try to evaluate what we're doing and how valuable is this or how have i messed up here or screwed up somewhere else well we can all do that but if we can just see that god is working a purpose out in our lives it certainly will benefit us but in the final analysis it's not just for us it's for our family it's not just for our family it's for to whomever god will send us people that we may may never see in this in this journey i'm just looking to see if i can just drop down on the verse i wanted it's actually at the end of chapter 41 it says 56 i'll read when the famine was spread over all the face of the earth then joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the egyptians and the famine was severe in the land of egypt the people of all the earth came to egypt to buy grain from joseph because the famine was severe in all the earth and so what a wonderful thing he was god's man being prepared by god when he didn't know what was happening and god was positioning him and preparing his own heart so that he could have all of the unforgiveness and all of the bitterness and all of the sense of failure all right out of his life and in this new place into which god brought him he was a vehicle for god to minister to others let's just finish on this nothing nothing then for the child of god is just random the journey of a true christian is not only known to god in advance but was actually pre-ordained before time began but to think on that is to to blow away all of the worries and frettings and one thing and another and it brings us to this is that pillow where we lay down and say bless the lord on my soul all that is within me bless his holy name amen

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