

# (Genesis) 56 - Joseph Prepared by Providence in Pharaoh's Prison

by S. Lewis Johnson

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*The providence of God is seen in the life of Joseph, who is prepared for his work in Egypt through his experiences in prison, including the interpretation of the dreams of the cup bearer and the baker.*

**Duration:** 44:00

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Acts 4:27-28, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9

**Topics:** "Joseph"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's hand in the difficulties and challenges of life. He uses the example of Joseph, who experienced hardships but ultimately became a deliverer for his chosen family. The speaker highlights the sovereignty of God, stating that even the smallest details of our lives are under His control. He also discusses Joseph's time in jail and how he learned about the crimes committed in Pharaoh's court through his interactions with the cup bearer and the baker.

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## Transcript

Will you turn with me to Genesis chapter 40 for our scripture reading. Genesis chapter 40. Now you may remember the story to this point.

Joseph has been sold into captivity and as a result of the incident in Potiphar's house, in connection with Potiphar's wife, Joseph has now been put in jail. So we pick up the account in verse 1 of chapter 40. Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.

And Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, that's Potiphar, in the jail, the same place where Joseph was imprisoned. And the captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them and he took care of them.

And they were in confinement for some time. Then the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, they both had a dream the same night, each man with his own dream and each dream with its own interpretation. When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold

they were dejected.

And he asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, why are your faces so sad today? Then they said to him, we have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it. Now, that likely is a reference to the fact that the interpretation of dreams was practically a profession in Egypt as well as in Babylon at this time. And there were magicians and sorcerers and soothsayers and others who were generally called upon to interpret dreams.

For example, in the very next chapter, when Pharaoh has his dream, we read in the eighth verse of chapter 41, now it came about in the morning that his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh. So whether this was that there were no interpreters in prison at that particular time or whether there were just no interpreters who could interpret this dream or not, it does not say.

Joseph said to them, do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please. So the chief cup bearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him in my dream, behold, there was a vine in front of me and on the vine were three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out and its clusters produced ripe grapes.

Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand. So I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hands. Then Joseph said to him, this is the interpretation of it.

The three branches are three days. Within three more days, Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office. And you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cup bearer.

Now, three days from this time was the birthday of Pharaoh and he had a feast as was the custom and here the servants were going to be mentioned. And so they were thinking about this and they were dreaming about the things that they were thinking, which is not uncommon as we all know. Only keep me in mind, Joseph says, when it goes well with you and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house.

For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews. He doesn't say by his brothers in that sense. He's courteous and thoughtful and considerate of them.

And even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon or into the hole, literally. The Hebrew word is bore. It means a hole.

When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, I also saw in my dream and behold, there were three baskets of white bread on my head. And in the top basket, there were some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head. Then Joseph adds and said, and said, this is its interpretation.

The three baskets are three days within three more days, Pharaoh will lift up your head from you. You'll notice that from you and we'll hang you on a tree and the birds will eat your flesh off you. Those were vigorous days.

Thus, it came about on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants and he lifted up the head of the chief cup bearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief cup bearer to his office and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand, but he hanged the chief baker just as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief cup bearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

The subject for the ministry of the word this morning is Joseph prepared by providence in Pharaoh's prison. The Westminster larger catechism defines providence in this way. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions.

As you can tell from this, the characteristic and the important words are the words preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions. The providence of God is something that governs all of the actions of men, even their thoughts. The immediate operation of God and his providence is taught in passages such as Acts chapter 17 and verse 18.

In him we live and move and have our being. And this providential agency of God relates to the physical nature generally. He causeth the grass to grow, the psalmist writes.

It has to do also with the animal creation. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your father. It has to do with the events of human history so that all of the events of human history are governed by the providential hand of God.

It has to do with our individual life. And it has to do with so-called fortuitous events, even those that we think are accidental or chance events. The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord, the writer of the Proverbs says.

And it also has to do with the particulars as well as the universals. We are inclined because we are naturally pagan to think of God as being operative perhaps in the big events of history, but in the little things, no. But the scriptures say the hairs of all, of all, all your hairs or the hairs of your head are all numbered.

And I want you to know that's very particular for some of us. I know it's not a great job for the Lord to count mine, but for some others it is a great job, and God knows all of the hairs upon the head of all of us, and that's very particular. I say the pagans thought of providence as the work of God in the big matters, but in the little matters, well, he's not concerned about those things.

They had an expression *magna dei curant parva negligunt*. That is, the gods care for the great things, but they neglect the little things. But scripture puts it another way.

Scripture says he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, so that all of the events of life, even those things that we call little things, are things that are of great concern to the Lord God. And in fact, the Bible says, and we do follow the Bible, do we not? The Bible says that even the sinful actions of men are the result of the providential, sovereign, governing hand of God. Listen to scripture.

I'll just take one preeminent illustration. For truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever thy hand and thy purpose predestined to occur. Acts chapter 4, verse 27 and verse 28.

So the providence of God, it is that work of God in which he preserves and governs. Now this chapter before us is one of the most beautiful illustrations of the providence of God. Looked at in the light of the total story of Joseph, it is a remarkable chapter.

And two well-known sentences written by men find beautiful illustration here. William Cooper's famous hymn has the stanza, it is William Cooper, not Cowper. The Scots informed me about that when I was in Scotland.

God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. And then someone else has said, the Lord finds a thousand ways where reason sees not even one.

The offenses of the cup bearer and the baker were committed in the ordinary course of life, but ultimately the scriptures say they were planned by God. Now they were planned by God for the welfare of his servant Joseph. That's why the cup bearer ultimately offended Pharaoh and that's why the baker did too.

Because it was by this that ultimately Joseph came to the attention of Pharaoh. It was by this that he was ultimately made second in the land, right behind Pharaoh. It was by this that all of the Egyptians were made to bow before Joseph.

And Pharaoh later said to Joseph, we read of this in the next chapter, that a man should not even lift his hand or his feet without Joseph's permission in the land of Egypt. And it's all because of the offense of the cup bearer and the baker. And of course the reason for this is that Joseph might be the deliverer of the chosen family when they came down from Egypt from the famine and also from the pollution that was facing them in the land of Palestine.

So God works in the small things of life as well as in the great things. As the writer of the Proverbs puts it in verse 1 of chapter 21, the king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it, that is the king's heart, he turns it wherever he wills.

So the clock of divine providence keeps strict time and it never varies from one to the other. Now in chapter 40 we also read of Joseph's continuing preparation, looked at from the standpoint of Joseph. Consider he is now in the jail and two important officials are in the jail with him.

It's by them that he comes to know a great deal of the life of the court. He learns about the crimes committed in Pharaoh's court. He learns about the cabals, the intrigues that go on there.

And soon Joseph is going to be a man of that court and so consequently it's not surprising that God should be preparing him for the work that he should do when he should become the Lord of the land of Egypt. We've had a lot of books written in recent years by people who lived in the White House. Not the important figures but the maids and the cooks and the secretaries all wanted to get in on the act and tell us about the things that happen in the White House.

Well Joseph was learning about the things that were happening in the Egyptian White House from officials who were very important officials for the cupbearer and the baker were both important officials. He was also disciplined by his experiences. He had lived as a slave of Potiphar and then now he's in jail and he is under the jailer so he's being trained by God.

Now whether Joseph understood this or not we don't know. He doesn't say anything about it. He doesn't say I knew the Lord put me through these things because he wanted to train me.

But he was being trained and as a result of it he came to be the kind of ruler that God wanted Egypt to have at that particular time. And he learned that it's better to wear a shabby coat than to lose your conscience so that God was working in his inmost being as well as preparing him for wider service in the days to come. I would imagine that Joseph if he were here to talk to us would say some of the greatest days of training for me were spent in that jail.

And when the psalmist says that I was laid in irons. Now I know that is very difficult for a southerner to say irons for you Yankees who are in the audience. Irons.

We just say irons you know. Well when he was laid in irons if that's the way you pronounce it we'll get back at you one of these days don't worry just keep coming. What happened really was he was in those irons in the jail but the iron was beginning to enter into Joseph's soul and he became the kind of iron saint that God wanted to have.

Joseph you see had been a something of a spoiled brat it would appear. He was a person who was rather proud of those dreams that God had given him in which God said to him that the other brothers were going to bow down to him and not only that but his father and his mother were going to bow down to him too according to his second dream. And then in addition Jacob had unwisely perhaps given him that coat of many colors whatever kind of coat it was we talked about that.

It nevertheless was a coat that marked out Joseph's position among his older brothers as unique and as a brother who was going to have authority over them. And so he loved to talk about his dreams it would appear and he was if anything perhaps a little proud but God was going to take a great deal of that away from him. The thing that Moses learned when he was made a shepherd of the sheep in Midian for so many years is the thing that Joseph was to learn in prison.

The thing that Daniel was to learn in exile is the thing that Joseph is to learn in his incarceration. The thing that Bunyan learned the thing that Baxter learned when they were put in prison and out of whom came those marvelous works. Well this is the thing that Joseph learned and from Joseph came some works that were even more remarkable.

Well let's look now at chapter 40 and we'll seek to in the time that we have go through it and draw a few lessons at the conclusion. Now first of all in the first few verses Moses writes of the imprisonment of the court offices. Let's not forget that the cupbearer and the baker were rather dignified offices.

They were in other words important offices. They were not the kinds of offices that we might think of a cupbearer and a baker. They were important because they had particular responsibilities that affected very much the physical well-being of Pharaoh.

It was not uncommon for rulers to be poisoned by their cupbearers or poisoned by their bakers and so they were important officials and it was important that a man very loyal stand in that particular place. Some of the things that have been discovered through research and archaeology are rather amusing and one of the statements concerning bakers is rather interesting. The baker's task was widely regarded in Egypt as well because Egypt was famous for the pastries and cakes and fruit breads of all sizes and shapes that were produced there.

But there is a humorous comment in some of the literature and I'll read it to you. When the baker standeth and baketh and layeth bread on the fire his head is inside the oven and his son holdeth fast his feet. That should be holdeth fast his feet.

Cometh it to pass that he slippeth from his son's hands he falleth into the blaze. So you can see one had to be rather careful if he was a baker. They were important officials.

Now what they did the Bible does not say. These offenses are unknown. But the rabbis are individuals who often pretend to know everything about which the scriptures are silent and so they say that the trouble with the cupbearer was that he permitted a fly to drop into the king's cup and the baker's fault was that he allowed a grain of sand to be found in the king's bread.

Others have suggested perhaps with a little more plausibility that the two had conspired to assassinate the king and that the baker was more guilty than the cupbearer. Solomon says the king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion and that's what we read about here. So they are thrown into custody because Pharaoh we read was furious at what had taken place.

Now Joseph is in prison as well. He had gained higher ground finally but now he's at the bottom again and now he is going to be made the slave of these two officials. Evidently Potiphar trusted him a little bit because he did assign him to take care of these two important officials and so he's either made his way back into the favor of Potiphar or as we suggested last Sunday Potiphar did not believe everything that his wife said.

Isn't it interesting that the world often trusts the Christian more than they do worldlings even though they don't like to treat them very well. The world often if there is a position of trust that must be filled will turn to a Christian to fill it because the world recognizes that the Christian has some principles and consequently they are desirable of having men with principle in positions of authority. So Joseph is a man who is put in charge in the prison and now he is put in charge of these two men in so far as service of them is concerned.

Well one morning Joseph comes in and he notices that the face of the cupbearer and the baker are quite different from their normal faces. Incidentally they're different kinds of dreams. There are divine dreams that is dreams that God gives in order to teach us something.

There are diabolical dreams. These are the dreams of the false prophets who tell us they have dreamed something when they really not dreamed anything from God. And then there are the natural dreams that we all have.

It's rather interesting to me that in Israel there was no office of interpreter of dreams. It was a big business with the Babylonians and with the Egyptians. So they had their magicians and their interpreters of dreams and they were notably unsuccessful in both the book of Daniel in the Babylonians and also in the Egyptians here in the time of Joseph.

And I think it's rather interesting that the scripture has only two Israelites who interpreted dreams. One was Daniel and he was in Babylonia and the other is Joseph and he is in Egypt. And so what we read in the Bible is in harmony with what we know about the ancient world.

Now the dreams of these two men were dreams that they recognized were significant dreams and needed interpretation but no interpreter was there. So Joseph came in. He evidently stayed in the pit or the hole

and then as the morning came he was then in the presence of these two important officials in order to serve them.

He came in, he noticed that their faces were very sad and dejected and so he speaks to them and says, why are your faces so sad today? And they say, we've had a dream and there's no one to interpret it. Now if you'll remember Joseph's situation, you might be surprised at what Joseph says. I think that I might just as well have heard Joseph say something like this.

Now listen, let me give you a word of advice. Don't pay any attention to dreams because I had a dream back when I was in the land of the Hebrews and my dream back there was that my brothers were going to bow down before me and then I had another one in order to confirm it and not only my brothers but my father and mother were going to bow down before me and the next thing I know my brother sold me into captivity and then the next thing I know I found myself in jail. So I'd suggest to you forget all about the dream and don't let anybody interpret it and if anybody does interpret it to you, do just the opposite.

But now you can see that as far as Joseph is concerned, he doesn't take that attitude and the very fact that he doesn't take that attitude and interprets it for them, well that's evidence that in spite of what has happened to him, he still believes in his own dreams. He believes that dreams do have their interpretation from the Lord and he has faith in his own dreams because he is anxious to see that an interpretation from God comes to these men. And what is most interesting about it to me is that Joseph, in this exercise of faith, in the fact that these men do have a dream from God, becomes the fulfiller of his own dream.

That's precisely what happens. Because when he interprets the dream for the cup bearer and the baker, it's by virtue of the accuracy of his interpretation that later on when Pharaoh has his dream, the cup bearer finally remembers that Hebrew back in the jail who does a pretty good job of interpreting dreams. And it's by virtue of the fact that he does interpret these dreams that he becomes the fulfiller of his own dream because Pharaoh remembers him and takes him and exalts him to be the head under him over all the land of Egypt.

Oh, the power of faith in the Word of God. And Joseph is an individual who believes in the truths of Holy Scripture as they have been unfolded to him. Now the dream is a rather uninteresting dream.

It's one that relates to the office of the cup bearer. There were three branches. It was budding.

There were blossoms. The clusters produced grapes. Pharaoh's cup he saw in his hand, so he took the grapes and squeezed them into the cup and he put the cup to Pharaoh's hand.

And Joseph says this is the interpretation. In three days, that's Pharaoh's birthday, when they have the feast and they're going to have the feast for the servants. And they're going to go down the road and name all the servants and give them rewards or otherwise.

Well, Pharaoh's going to lift up your head and he's going to restore you to your office. And you'll put Pharaoh's cup again in his hand and serve as his cup bearer. Now at the conclusion of that, he makes an interesting request which has been misunderstood by or rather understood in different ways by biblical interpreters.

He says only keep me in mind when it goes well with you. Now some like to think of Joseph as an individual whose life is presented as a sinless life here in the book of Genesis. They like to say you cannot find anything in the life of Joseph that is contrary to the will of God and thus he serves as a most fitting

type of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we have already talked about this and so you know that I do think that Joseph is a type of Jesus Christ. But it's rather questionable, it seems to me, to affirm that he's a type of the sinless Christ. That's not necessary.

Others say that this is an indication of some lack of trust on Joseph's part. I have a good friend, he's a very fine Bible teacher, he likes to say ah, this is the one sin in Joseph's life. You see, he asked that the cup bearer would remember him and that was lack of trust in the Lord God.

Other interpreters say that's an exquisite, an exquisite human touch to the narrative. So we probably cannot say anything very dogmatic or worthwhile about it. It may be an evidence of a lack of trust.

On the other hand, it may simply be the kind of request that would normally be made. At any rate, God does not allow Joseph to play the angles. He does not even allow this scheme to produce fruit.

He is going to have Jacob, he's going to have Joseph exalted in his own way. Not because the cup bearer goes out and seeks to gain the position for him. Now the baker, listening, I'm sure, very intently to the interpretation that was given of the dream of the cup bearer, thinks, well, perhaps now I'm going to get a favorable one too.

This fellow seems to be a fairly good interpreter of dreams. He says, take your dreams to God and now he has been able to interpret the dream very well. Incidentally, Joseph's confidence is probably due to an impulse from the Lord God.

But he is confident. He says, dreams belong to the Lord, bring them to me. Now he doesn't mean, of course, he's the Lord.

He means simply that he knows that from the Lord comes the interpretation and he thinks he has a pretty good idea about how to get that interpretation from the Lord. Reminds me of two little boys who were talking and one of them said, my father and I know everything. The other little boy decided he would test that.

So he posed a rather difficult question to his friend. And his friend said, that's one for my father. So Joseph, when he says, dreams belong to the Lord God, he's not suggesting that he's the Lord God.

He means that God's the one who gives the interpretations and that's what he does. But the baker is looking for a favorable solution and so he asks him about his dream. It's very similar to the other.

It has three in it which represent the three days to Pharaoh's birthday, but like the dream of the cupbearer it's related to his occupation. It has to do with bread. Now he should have noticed, I guess, that the birds that were eating out of the basket were eating unmolested.

And so Joseph has to tell him that he's going to be lifted up too, but in quite a different way. In fact, he's going to be lifted up after having his head decapitated and the birds are going to come and eat him. I say these were vigorous days.

And this is what, of course, transpired. I rather think that we should pay attention to Joseph's methodology here. Now he doesn't say, I'm sorry, Mr. Baker, but I don't think that I can interpret your dream.

I'd rather you get someone else to do that. I interpret dreams only if the outcome is good. If the outcome is bad, well then I don't like to do that because that's not really the way to do your dreams.

You should do the positive, not the negative. Preach positively, not the negative. Give the good things, not the bad things.

Don't be disagreeable. So you can imagine that Joseph might not have wanted to say what he said and furthermore, that he might just have been a spiritual coward because there are lots of spiritual cowards standing behind the pulpit who know that certain truths are in the Word of God and who do not preach those truths because they think, well, it might be divisive. As if, like Mr. Calvin said, God has let slip something harmful to the church.

It's, you know, an attack on the wisdom of God not to preach the things that are in the Bible. If it's in the Scripture, we should proclaim it. If we're going to preach heaven, we do have to preach hell.

If we're going to be faithful and if we're going to be fruitful. So Joseph has the courage of his convictions and he has the courage that the Lord God will be with him and so he tells the baker the bad news. And the bad news is the ultimate news.

You're going to get your head cut off and the birds are going to eat you. Not a very good dream, I'm sure. Well, the remainder of the chapter tells us that the dream was fulfilled just as it had been anticipated.

There was the birthday feast. The names of the servants were read out and when it came to the cupbearer, Pharaoh noticed him. He lifted him up and gave him his job back again.

But when the name of the baker came up, he lifted him up too. But his body didn't go with his head. And so he lost his head and his body was hung and the birds came and ate just as they did from the bread that was on his head in his dream.

And the chapter ends with the laconic comment, yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph but forgot him. Well, you can see this story as a marvel of the intricate perfection of divine providence. Quietly, secretly, a most insignificant thing serves the divine will.

Joseph has come down to Egypt. He's been put in prison. Now he's serving these two officials and he comes in that morning and he notices a look on their face.

What an insignificant thing that the servant of the Lord God should come in that day and should see that those two officials are looking sad. But it was that little thing that was the key to the fulfillment of the word of God in respect to Joseph because it was that that started the conversation that led to the interpretation of the dream. You see, the exaltation of Joseph, the ongoing of the whole program of God depended upon being sold into slavery, the incident with Potiphar's wife which landed him in the jail, and then the observance of the look on the faces of the two men and the whole history of Israel and the whole history of the Hals Geschichte of the word of God depends upon that simple insignificant look that that morning he saw on the faces of those two men.

We like to think, we like to say like the heathen do, God's interested in the big things. He's not interested in the little things. We say surely he does operate in the great affairs, but as for working all things according to the counsel of his own will, why doesn't work all things, not everything, just the big things? There are people who say yes it was foreordained that Jesus Christ should come and should die making it possible

for us to have the forgiveness of sins, but all things being determined by the will of God, no not all things, just the big things.

Now of course that's scientifically impossible because all of the events of our human life are intertwined. Even if you looked at it scientifically you would have to say that everything must be bound together and everything does depend on everything else. But the scriptures are very plain.

Now as far as big things and little things are concerned, it's true the pagans do say God's, the gods care for the big things and they neglect the little things, but they're pagans. They're not believers in Holy Scripture. Scripture is different.

And as a matter of fact if you will think about it for just a moment, what is big and what is little in the mind of God? Why the thing that we've, the very expression that we use, things great or small, that exists, that particular distinction exists only for finite intelligences. We think things are big and we think things are small, but we have no indication whatsoever that God regards the things that we think are big as big or the things that we think are small as small. This distinction exists for men, it does not exist for God.

Just like mathematics, the smallest and the greatest quantity are equal in nothing when compared with infinity, and so things great or things small, these are distinctions that men talk about, not God. Those little things often are the big things with God, and I'm sure that it was in the sight of God a very big thing when Joseph came in that morning and took a glance at the faces of those two men and said, look, you're looking dejected this morning, what's the matter? That was the big thing. That was the great thing.

That was the thing that really counted. So when the Scriptures say that God works all things according to the counsel of his own will, you can be sure, my dear friends, that all things do work according to the counsel of his own will. They do.

Now, it may be divisive to say that, it may dishearten some of you to say that, it may make you angry to say, to hear that, but it is in the Bible. And your conflict is not with the preacher. It's with the Lord God.

In fact, the Scriptures say to us that those who teach the Word of God are ambassadors. Ambassadors are not supposed to say anything but what their chiefs say. Now, we have ambassadors who sometimes say things that their chief disclaims later on or did not order.

Who knows? I don't and care a lot less. But nevertheless, ambassadors are supposed to say what their chiefs say. Ambassadors for Jesus Christ are supposed to say what their chief says in Holy Scripture.

Joseph did that. I respect him for it. He was a man who taught the truth.

Someone has said ministers should be stars to give light, not clouds to obscure. In some cases the text is as clear as a mirror till the preacher's breath bedims it. We ought to pick out all hard words from our speech.

Good cooks stone the plums. Now, you can see that's a Puritan speaking. It's true.

And taking out all of the hard words, we still have the basic truth that God works all things according to the counsel of his own will. And William Cooper was right. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. And even in the little events, God is sovereign and carries out his will. Now, Joseph's sufferings in prison worked beneficially for his future leadership.

They put his soul in irons, but the iron entered into his soul. And Joseph became the kind of iron saint that might be useful to the Lord God. He had a lot of reason for complaints.

He could have said, Lord, you gave me an indication I was going to be over my brothers and over my father, and everything has been downhill since that time. But God showed him great mercy in the darkness that he experienced. Sometimes the dark things of life are necessary for us.

You know, if someone were to bring in a moving picture camera and throw a moving picture on the wall here, you wouldn't see much of it because of the light. But in the darkness, well, you would see a great deal. In the experiences of our lives, we wouldn't see a great deal of the hand of God in them.

If everything that we had was prosperity and everything was sweet and nice, it's when we have the experiences that are not so good that God speaks to us and in which we learn the things that he wants to teach us. Unbroken sunshine would matten our brains, Mr. Meyer says. How true that is.

We don't like to think of the difficulties of life, but the difficulties of life are often the only means by which God gets our attention. So may the Lord help us to profit from Joseph's experience of the divine providence and help us, and may God help us to remember that even the little tiny affairs of our lives are affairs under his sovereign control. And it's in them that he wants to teach us the things that make for our spiritual well-being.

If you're here this morning and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, it may well be you've come into this meeting by the sovereign providence of God to hear me say to you, you are a sinner. You are under divine condemnation. You are headed for a Christless eternity.

You are without hope and without God in this world. You are ultimately destined to spend eternity in the lake of fire, where it grows hotter and hotter and hotter. Yes, I know, hell, fire, and damnation preaching, but the Bible invented it.

You are destined to be in the place of the blackness of darkness forever, in which it gets darker and darker and darker. These are the words of Holy Scripture. I am the Lord's ambassador.

I do not add anything to his message, but give you plainly his message. But at the same time, the Scriptures also have a message of mercy. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, took it upon himself to carry out the intention of the Father to provide an atonement for sinners.

And he suffered and bled and died on the cross at Calvary, crying out, it is finished, the work of atonement accomplished, and the blood was shed. And now, by virtue of the preaching of the gospel, salvation is offered to sinners. And if God, through the Holy Spirit, has brought you to the conviction that you are a sinner, this salvation is for you.

Flee to the cross. Acknowledge your sin and your iniquity before the Lord God. Receive as a free gift, not by joining the church, not by praying through, not by doing good works, even religious works, but in simple faith, receive.

God wants to give you something. Receive the Lord Jesus as your own Savior, and rest for eternity in the forgiveness that God offers. May God help you to come.

Put your trust in the Lord Jesus. Believe in him. Receive as a free gift his salvation.

For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Let's stand for the benediction.

We are grateful to thee, Lord, for these wonderful words of Holy Scripture, which are so significant and meaningful to us. We thank thee for the providence that guides and guards our steps. And we thank thee for the greatness of the sacrifice of the Son of God.

And, Lord, if there should be some here who do not believe in Jesus Christ, give them no rest till they come to him. At this very moment, O God, bring them to a conviction of their sin and urge them to flee to the cross, bringing them there through the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit. May grace, mercy, and peace go with us as we leave this auditorium.

For Jesus' sake, amen.

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