



## The Sermon

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Genesis 41:38-57

October 9, 2022

"From Prison to a Palace"

TRANSCRIPT

All right, we've got a great passage that we're going to be looking at today, and I want to begin as always by reading the passage. So if you have your Bible, turn with me to Genesis, Genesis chapter 41, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 38 to the end of the chapter; and the reason that we do this is that Scripture actually calls upon the preacher to first read the passage from which he preaches, which makes a statement that everything that we have to say to you will originate from this text that I'm about to read. So the message doesn't originate with me, it doesn't originate with the culture or society, it originates with the text, and so it makes a statement. And then after I read this I'll pray, and then we will see, "What does it say? What does it mean? What does it require?" Those are the big three of a sermon: "What does it say? What does it mean? What does it require?"

So, beginning in verse 38, "Then Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?' So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning 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 put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the 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 him, 'Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land

of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh named him" - Joseph - "Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.

"Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.

"Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, 'For,' he said, 'God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.' He named the second son Ephraim, 'For,' he said, 'God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.'

"Now when the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do.' 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." This is the reading of God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative, all-sufficient, immutable, invincible word to us this day. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for Your word that You've given to us. Thank You that we're not dependent upon dreams or anything like that, that we have written sixty-six books that are perfectly recorded as from Your mouth, and they speak pure, undefiled truth to us. "Let God be found true, let every man be found a liar," Your Scripture says. And so we desire to hear from You from Your word this day. We live in a world of lies. We're surrounded, bombarded with lies: cable TV, Internet, newspapers. For once

in the week on Your day we now hear pure, unvarnished truth. May this truth find a home in our hearts this day, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The title of this message is "From Prison to a Palace." In these verses we see the dramatic turnaround of the fortunes of the life of Joseph. We see him rapidly ascend from the depths of prison to the heights of Pharaoh's palace. Only God could have done this. Only the invisible hand of God could have picked up Joseph and moved him from the lowest of the low to dwell in the highest of the high. And Joseph never sought this elevation. Joseph never campaigned for it he, he never pushed his way to the top; he was simply sitting in prison. God knew where he was, God found him, and God elevated him. All Joseph was trying to do with his life was honor God where he found himself; he was just trying to bloom where he was planted. And we learn here that God will honor the man who honors Him. And so Joseph becomes, really, the prototype for us, if we will seek to honor God, God will honor us.

Joseph's entire life has been a preparation for this. Winston Churchill once said when he became Prime Minister of England in 1940 at age 66, after he went through years of political defeat and humiliation and living, really, in obscurity, and suddenly in this moment, as Hitler comes to power, and England is weakened, and the right man is needed, and Churchill becomes suddenly out of the shadows into the spotlight the Prime Minister who would become the man of the century. When he assumed office he said, "My entire life has been a preparation for this one moment in time." God had prepared the man for the moment, and God had prepared the moment for the man.

This is exactly what we see being played out after years, 13 years of Joseph in obscurity, being sold into slavery, being separated from his family, taken to a foreign country, bought as a slave, serving in Potiphar's house, falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, thrown into prison; after all of these years of adversity and defeat and trial, God was working on Joseph. And God took the hammer of adversity and had put Joseph on the anvil of tribulation and broke him and molded him and strengthened him. His whole life was but a preparation for this one moment in time. As a teenager, Joseph was a brash, cocky, cock-sure of himself teenager, a braggard, who told his brothers that they're all going to bow down around him. He was stuff full of himself. He was a peacock strutting in the family.

That's not the kind of man God will use. He had to have the rough edges knocked off of him. He had to have the starch taken out of his shirt. Joseph's pride needed to be condensed and shrunk. He needed to be brought down to size; and there's only one school in which to learn this lesson, and it is the school of hard knocks. No one gets a free pass and just immediately ascends to the pinnacle, to the summit. No. The path that leads to the summit is the path of trials and tribulations and tears.

It has been well said that before God uses the man greatly, He must first break Him greatly. This has now happened with Joseph. He's not the man he used to be, he's now becoming a man of God. He has been molded and remolded and matured through the fires of adversity; and only now after these last 13 years, really, of discipleship, in the sense of dying to self. Only now is Joseph a fit vessel to be used in the hand of God. The same is true in your life. God uses trials in your life in order to mature you, in order to prepare you for what He has planned out ahead.

God has already marked the path of Joseph from before the foundation of the world; but in order for Joseph to step into this moment, in order for Joseph to be the vessel prepared and fit for the Master's use, he's had to go through these 13 years of adversity and difficulty; and the same is true in your life. Those of you who are young among us here today, you may not realize that. Those of you who are older here today have already been nodding your head yes with me as I have said these sentences, because you understand the reality of life, that James 1:2, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing."

It really doesn't matter how many bible studies you've attended and how many church services you've come to. It does matter; but ultimately, the acid test is how are you're going to live this. How are you going to put this into practice and to understand that God has a purpose and a plan for your life that includes trials and tribulations? Sometimes it's trials of our own making. Sometimes it's trials because of the family in which I find myself. Some of it's trials simply because we live in a fallen world. But for whatever the reason, Romans 8:28, "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose." And that greater good that stands behind all of our trials is found in Romans 8:29, the next verse, "to conform us into the image of His Son."

So as we look at this passage I've needed to give you this background that's not specifically stated in the text; but the whole rest of the Bible is like a chorus singing the truth of what I just laid out for you. So just know that even if you find yourself this day in great trials and difficult times, it's a part of God preparing you for what He has ordained for your future. So, let's walk through this passage, let's get into the sandals of Joseph, and let's see how this unfolds.

The first thing I want you to note, it really begins in verse 38, is, "Joseph's promotion by Pharaoh, Joseph's promotion by Pharaoh," as Joseph is suddenly catapulted to the top of the Egyptian dynasty. Verse 30, it begins with the word "then," and that tells us that what now follows takes place immediately after the preceding verses, that after Pharaoh has received this dream, and after Joseph has interpreted the dream, and after Joseph has given the plan to Pharaoh, "Seven years of plenty, we store up a fifth of the food, then seven years of drought and famine, and we will disperse the food," after giving that plan, "Then Pharaoh said to his servants," - referring to the circle of advisors and counselors in his inner circle, 'Can we find a man like this? Does such a man even exist?' - because Joseph has said to Pharaoh, we saw it last week, that - 'You need to find a man who is full of wisdom and discernment, a man who knows how to think, a man who knows how to see with penetrating gaze into the times in which we live and to design the solution that is needed in days of great difficulty. Anybody can lead when times are great; the challenge of leadership is to lead through dark and difficult days. Can we even find such a man like this in Egypt, in whom is a divine spirit?' I mean, Pharaoh acknowledges that there is a God of Israel. He acknowledges that this God is at work in Joseph's life, "because he could have never interpreted my dream for me otherwise. Can we even find a man in whom God is at work like this?"

And so, verse 39, "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, the interpretation of the dream, as well as the plan through days of famine, only God could have done this for you, this couldn't have just happened.' - Joseph is standing out like a bright star on a dark night - 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. No one else could size up the nation like this. No one else could design this plan for the survival of Egypt through difficult days that are coming. And so,' - verse 40 - 'you shall be over my house.'"

Now this is the third time that Joseph has been promoted to be over a house in Egypt. I mean, first he was put as head over Potiphar's house; that for ten years. And then he was made head over the jail in which he was; that was

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for two more years. And now, suddenly, he's over Pharaoh's house; and it's not just over his house like just the palace. To be over Pharaoh's house is like being, for us, over the White House. It means being over Command Central. It means to be over this house from which the entire nation is being led. And the only qualifier is at the end of verse 40: "Only in the throne I will be greater than you." In other words, if we have an organizational chart here of the Egyptian dynasty, here's Joseph, here's the entire nation, and every person now is being put under Joseph, and there's only one person over Joseph and that's Pharaoh. But Pharaoh is turning the keys of the kingdom over to Joseph, and Joseph now is becoming the CEO, the COO, the CFO. He's the Chief Executive Officer, he's the Chief Operational Officer, he's the Chief Financial Officer, he's the chief everything.

Verse 41, he reinforces it: "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.'" And to signify this in front of everyone in the palace, this circle of counselors and advisors, verse 42, "Pharaoh took off the signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand." A signet ring has the crest of Pharaoh, whatever that was; and any official document to be actually an official document there had to be wax put on that document; and Pharaoh, with his ring, with his signet ring, would seal it shut, and that signified all authority and all power in the nation, "This is to be executed." Pharaoh takes it off his hand, and there's a transfer of authority and power, and puts it onto the hand of Joseph in front of everyone.

"And clothed him with garments of fine linen." If you're going to be the Prime Minister of Egypt, you need to look like the Prime Minister of Egypt. "You need to have royal attire on. You can't look like a slob, and serve me."

"And put the gold necklace" - verse 42 - "around his neck." Protruding greatness and glory is now around Joseph's neck. He's gone from chains in prison, to now a gold necklace in the palace. He's gone from once wearing a coat of many colors back in the homeland, to now he's wearing the king's garments.

Verse 43, "He" - Pharaoh - "made him" - Joseph - "ride in his second chariot." In the in the royal processions, as they would proceed through the major cities (Cairo, down in the Valley of the Kings), Pharaoh would be in his chariot first, but immediately next to him and right behind him would be Joseph for everyone to see. Joseph is not along the sides of the road looking on, Joseph is the one that everyone is looking to in the second chariot.

"And they proclaimed before him, 'Bow the knee!'" Whenever Joseph rode the chariot, everyone in the nation was to drop to their knee in a sign of honor and submission to Joseph. Every time he would walk into a room, everyone is to drop to their knees and recognize the sovereignty of Joseph.

"And he set him over all the land of Egypt." I mean, truth is stranger than fiction. Who would have believed this? Who would have thought this; except God is the architect of this. And Joseph has not been ready for this, until he went through what all he went through that led up to this.

So, verse 44, "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.'" For no one to raise their hand means no one can do anything without your permission, and for no one to raise their foot means no one can go anywhere without your permission. Let me tie that together for you. No one can do anything, no one can go anywhere in the entire nation of Egypt in the glory of and the zenith of its power without Joseph's permission. He's been elevated. He's not like elevated over Rhode Island, he's elevated over the Egyptian dynasty.

Verse 45, "Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name to signify that, 'Joseph is no longer a foreigner, he's no longer an outsider, he's no longer one of them; he's one of us. He's one of our countrymen, and so we're naming him with an Egyptian name.'

"And then he gave him a wife, an Egyptian wife," who comes from a prominent family. Her father was the priest of On, which is a city on the Nile River. This is an amazing turn of events. And the Bible clearly teaches us elsewhere what is not directly stated in our narrative; but anytime you read the Bible, anytime you study the Bible, you have to go outside of your passage and see what does the whole rest of the Bible have to say about this passage. You never read the whole rest of the Bible in view of one passage, you'll take too many wrong turns in interpretation. No, you want the whole rest of the Bible to interpret what's happening here, because the whole Bible speaks with one voice; there are no contradictions in the Bible.

So, what does the rest of the Bible have to say about what we see taking place here? And there is one consistent testimony that comes from the throne of God, and it is that God raises up rulers, and God removes rulers. God may work through various means, democratic vote; God may work through the means of a family monarchy; but it's God raising up rulers, and God removing rulers, according to His Sovereign discretion.

Let me give you some cross-references. Daniel 2:21, "He removes kings and establishes kings." See, we have to have this insight from Daniel. J. C. Ryle once said, "It takes a whole Bible to produce a whole Christian." And so that's why you can't just master one portion of scripture or one book of scripture or one chapter of scripture. The tail's not wagging the dog, the dog's wagging the tail. You've got to know the whole Bible in order to be a whole Christian, and to have a proper and holistic understanding of Scripture.

Daniel 4:17, "The Most High" - referring to God - "is ruler over the realm of mankind, He bestows it" - God bestows it - "on whom He wishes." That was said to a reprobate, unconverted king. And Daniel 4:32, again, "The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes." Daniel 5:18, "O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father." That's how he got on the throne: God granted sovereignty to that man.

And I've got one more cross-reference I just have to give you. It took me a while to find it, it's one of those things, I know it's there, and I tracked it down - I say that humbly. Psalm 75:6-7, listen to this verse: "For not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert" - which was to the south - "comes exaltation; but God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another." Where is God? God's due north, straight up. And what the psalmist is saying here: "Promotion, exaltation, being advanced to the next stage, the next level; it doesn't come from the east, it doesn't come from the west, it doesn't come from the south, it comes from due north, it comes from God."

Whatever success you have had in this life, it has all come from God, not because you're smarter, it's not because you have this or that or this or that. God may have used that, but that's not the reason. There's only one reason: God. God granted it. And you may be saying this morning, "You know, this hadn't happened in my life yet. I'm in the pit, I'm in a prison of sorts from



which I cannot escape." Joseph can relate to you, and you can relate to Joseph, because Joseph was there for 13 long years in the furnace. And so I would say to you to encourage you: wait on the Lord. His time is perfect for you to be promoted. Could be even into marriage. Wait on the Lord.

This now leads, second, to "Joseph's administration of Egypt." That begins in verse 46: "Joseph's administration of Egypt." And what I love about this is that Joseph, now that he is empowered and elevated to this extraordinary position, he hits the ground running. He doesn't just go into the office, put his feet up on the desk and just ponder what all has happened and just kind of enjoy it. No, he puts his shoulder to the plow; he immediately gets after it. I love this about Joseph.

Verse 46, "Then," – you see verse 46 begins – "then Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt." And just to remind you again, he was kidnapped at age seventeen, ten-plus years in Pharaoh's house, two plus years in jail; he's now thirty. So that's a thirteen-year period of time.

The middle of verse 46, "And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt." There's no grass growing under his feet, he's after it. He's been in a prison, he doesn't know what's going on in the nation. He now goes out over the whole nation and, no doubt, in the second chariot, and he's examining cities, and he's looking at regions, and he's analyzing crops, and he's looking at livestock, and he's processing the storehouses that yet need to be built to take in all of this, and bigger barns.

Verse 47, "During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly." I mean, the crops grew. The grain came in. The fruit multiplied. The cattle increased. Food abounded. It was a golden era. It was a golden age of seven years. Egypt has never seen such produce; and it's exactly like God said it would be in the dream that he gave to Pharaoh, and it's exactly as Joseph interpreted that dream, which came from God; and these are days of prosperity like this glorious nation has never seen before.

Verse 48, "So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt" – we're to understand from that, year after year after year without failing to do so, Joseph works the plan; he worked the plan that God had given, verse 48 in the middle – "and placed the food in the

cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields." I just need to give a comment on this. Joseph was no socialist, he was smart. You've got to be stupid to be a socialist. He's smart enough to know that if you're willing to work, there will be a reward; and if you're just going to sit on your backside and wait for some entitlement to come to you, you need to get hungry enough until you get off your backside and work.

So what Joseph does, you'll notice that at the end of verse 48, it's almost a passing comment, but, "he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields." So people down here in southwest, if they work hard, they're going to have a larger produce; but up in the northeast, if they just decide, "Well, you know what; we just don't need to work so hard, because it's all going to go into one barn, and we're just going to divide it up, and everybody's going to get the same," well then people down here in the southwest are not going to work hard: "We're going to be like you bums up in the northeast, and we'll just divide up basically nothing. But if I know that we're going to store up from my fields into a common holding place and it's not going to go northeast, and it's not going to go northwest and north south east, but it's going to stay home, it's going to stay right here. Then you know what; I'm going to get my boys out in the field. And you know what; we're going to work hard, because we will be able to reap the benefit of our sweat and our toil."

Joseph was a wise and discerning man. He understood human nature, and he understood that hunger pains are a good thing to get you out into the field to work. And you're not going to get a free handout from people who do work, you're going to have to work. Joseph understood that. In verse 49, "Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance" - great abundance literally means exceedingly great abundance. How so? Well - "like the sand of the sea," - that's incalculable. It's a metaphor for "great abundance." And at the end of verse 49 - "until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure, like, 'We're running out of numbers to count this.'"

It's like the Greek language; the highest number is myriad, and the best you can do is say "myriads," plural. "Myriad" means "ten thousand," by the way, and "myriads," plural, means "ten thousands times ten thousands." But then "myriads of myriads," like the redeemed in heaven and the angelic being, it's "myriads of myriads times myriads of myriads." It's just an incalculable number. And that's the idea here. We can't measure the crops and the cattle that are being stored.

Before we move on, I just want to make a couple points here of Joseph's work ethic; three things. Number one, "He worked immediately." He wasn't a procrastinator. He immediately got about this without delay. There was a sense of urgency about him. He's not playing defense, he's playing offense. And, second, not only immediately, but actively. He didn't sit back and rest on his reputation or his office or this promotion; no. We read here, "He went out from Pharaoh and went through Egypt." I mean, it was like the wind was at his back.

And then, third, "Thoroughly he completed the job, all seven years." He didn't pull up short. He did not merely start his duties, but stop before the completion. You know, it's easy to start something, it's hard to complete it. It's easy to start a business, easy to start a marriage, easy to start whatever - a diet, getting in shape - anybody can start. The question is, "Can you finish?" It's not how you start the race, it's how you finish the race. Do you even finish the race?

Joseph here, he does, what we call today, a turnkey job: what he starts, he's finished. I've had young men work for me; they have great ideas they implement ministry, it's just they fade off the scene in about two months. Not Joseph; Joseph carries through. And so this should say something to you and me today just even about our work ethic, which glorifies God, by the way. We need to do our work immediately, without delay, whatever God has put in front of us to do; and we need to work actively with our whole heart; and we need to work thoroughly without quitting before we have finished the task.

Now I know what some of you may be thinking, "Yeah, but I work for an unsaved boss." So did Joseph. Pharaoh was an unsaved reprobate. Joseph wasn't playing the excuse card, he poured himself into it. And someone else here today may say, "Yeah, but I work for this godless corporation, this secular corporation." So did Joseph. He worked for the Egyptian dynasty, a land of paganism and hedonism and rank unbelief. So we need to be like Joseph; and let your yes be yes and your no be no, and work hard.

Third, beginning in verse 50, "Joseph's procreation of sons." Verse 50, "Now before the year of the famine came," - so probably in the sixth and seventh year before the famine came, those last couple of years of the prosperity - "two sons were born to Joseph." In verse 51, "Joseph named  
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the firstborn Manasseh, which means 'forgetful.'" I think my dad could have named me "forgetful."

So why would he name his son "forgetful"? Well, he tells us right here in the text: "for" - which means "because," or an explanation is now being given - "for God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." Children can bring us such joy, until they become teenagers. They can bring us such joy that it causes us to forget others sorrows. And this son Manasseh has caused him to forget those years of imprisonment and all that Potiphar's wife tried to throw at him and hang on him, and it made him forget his own family background, how they did him dirty and sold to those slave traders when they came through. Just one child; it can be like the sunrise in the morning and cast light over the entire earth. Just one child can bring such happiness and joy to a father. "I'm naming you 'forgetful,' because you've helped me forget all the bad in my life."

And then, verse 52, "And he named the second Ephraim." Now Ephraim means "twice fruitful, twice fruitful." And we say, "So, why?" He tells us right here; continue to read: "For he said, 'God has made me' - referring to Joseph - 'fruitful in the land of my affliction.'" And "fruitful" here is to be understood spiritually, metaphorically, not agriculturally. "But this second child has brought double blessing to my life. My cup is just filled to overflowing with this second child."

Anne and I started with twin boys after we were first married. And we'd be standing in a grocery line, and some dear person - I was trying to think of the right word; I didn't have to repent next sermon - some dear, lovely person would come up to us with our twins right there, "Oh, double trouble." "No, ma'am, you don't understand; it's double blessing. We have we have been twice blessed at one moment." That's how Joseph feels: "I am doubly blessed with these sons." And for those of you who are newly married, don't be like all the other millennials. You have a dog, but you don't have a child. What kind of worldview is that? You need to be fruitful and multiply. Don't be so self-absorbed with your vacations, learn how to have children.

The last thing I want you to see begins in verse 53, "Joseph's distribution of food"; begins in verse 53. Sorry, I couldn't get it to alliterate; I'll accept any help after the sermon. Verse 53, "When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end," - and it came to an end just

like God said it would come to an end. And someone here today may say, "Well, it probably came to an end, and God said it would come to an end because God simply looked into the future and saw how it would play out, and so God adopts that as His plan and makes that known to Pharaoh and to Joseph, that God's just looking down the proverbial tunnel of time to see what will happen in history, and then God will adopt that as His plan because He has a hands-off policy."

That's religious superstition; that has nothing to do with anything in the Bible. The only reason that God knows the future is because God has already purposed the future. You see, God foresees the future, because God has foreordained the future. God is the initiator, not the responder. "Man plans his ways, but it is God who directs his steps," Proverbs 16:1.

And so, verse 54, "And the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said; there was famine in all the lands," - "lands," plural. And I'm going to save a comment for that in just a moment; but just remember that, all the "lands," plural - "but in all the lands of Egypt was bread." So "all the lands" is larger than and distinct from "all the lands of Egypt." And Egypt had bread. Why? Because they had prepared for the future during years of plenty, and had stored the grain. They had more than enough grain to make more than enough food to sustain them through hard times.

So, verse 55, "So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread." And you know what Pharaoh said? "Don't talk to me about this. I'm not in charge of all of this distribution of food; I've turned this over to the man who's wearing my signet ring and is wearing my royal clothes and who rides the second chariot. You need to go talk to him."

And so, verse 55, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do it. Joseph is the man in charge of everything and everyone and every grain of wheat, or whatever is there, and every cattle. Joseph is in charge of it all." There's no committees that he's having to work with. He's like a man who owns his own business; he calls his own shots.

Verse 56, "When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth," - huh, all the face of the earth. Now how are we to understand that? One would be a more literal reading - and I read the Bible literally. However,

it would be naive of me to think that there are not figures of speech that are used in the Bible.

The other option is that this is hyperbolic language indicating a very large part of the region. I believe we are to understand this, in the second manner, and the reason I even pull over and park at this is I want you to learn how to interpret your Bible. It's one thing to know what it says, it's something else to know what it means by what it says.

And so, for example, it says, "The whole world went after Jesus," in John's gospel. Did it? Did the whole world go after Jesus? Listen, even all of Israel didn't even go after Jesus. Did Eskimos get in canoes and paddle their way over the Middle East? Did Inca Indians, Aztec Indians, did they get in logs and float across the ocean to follow after Jesus? Did Eskimos leave the North Pole to come after Jesus? I'll give you the answer: no.

When the Bible communicates, it often uses heroic language, it often uses hyperbolic language, and it just simply means "a large number." And so, as we are to understand this, we are not to presume that what Moses means when he writes this, that people on islands in the Pacific are not making little crafts out of palm trees and floating; they would never even make it. We're not to assume that people walked for years and years and years across China and over the mountains of Tibet and then down through Iraq and Iran and then come down south because they needed bread. No, understand how to interpret the Bible, that "this is hyperbolic language to communicate to us," John Calvin would say.

Often at our kindergarten level that we are to understand that this famine was so large that it extended beyond the borders of Egypt and it affected other countries and nations in Africa, and maybe up into the Middle East, maybe into Asia Minor; but we're not to understand this, that there was a famine at the North Pole or in China or wherever. It's just a large gathering. And so the one reason why I even stress this, to understand the extent of the atonement, whenever you see the word "world," which was the Sunday School lesson here today, it doesn't always mean every person in the world; it often means a large group for whom Christ died.

So, let me wrap this up. Verse 56, "When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth," – I take that to mean a very large area there in the

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Egyptian region extending somewhat beyond - "then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians," - I mean, he's going to take care of his people first. He's going to take care of the Egyptians first. Why? Because the Egyptians were the ones who put in the labor, who expounded the sweat, and who got in the field and who made sacrifice and stored for the future. "We're going to sell this grain and food to the Egyptians first before we sell to the other nations." - "and the famine was severe and the land of Egypt." The word "severe" here means "heavy," "weighty." It was a crushing blow, reducing Egypt to dust.

Last verse, verse 57, "The people of all the earth" - again, that's hyperbolic language - "came to Egypt" - the whole population of the whole earth did not come to Egypt - "came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph," - "Everybody, you're going to have to deal with Joseph." All roads are leading to Joseph - "because the famine was severe in all the earth."

I need to land the plane and close this. What's the number one lesson we learn from this? I just want to make sure you don't miss this. The number one lesson - we'll have to go outside of this and go to the words of Jesus in Luke 18:14 - is very simply this: "He who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." And for over 13 years, or going back to his teenage years, Joseph sought to exalt himself - yes, he did - as he thought he was the center of attention in his family, and that all of his brothers would bow down before him. And so God had to humble him; and for 13 years God humbled him, just stripped the bark off him one layer at a time, to bring him down, down, down, down into the pit of a prison; and Joseph learned humility, just like you and I learn humility, through the blows of life. And once he finally was humble enough to be used by God, God exalted him in a moment. God knew where to find him. God knew his name God, knew his address.

That's the lesson for you and me. If you try to exalt yourself, it could be 13 years of the school of hard knocks for God to humble you, it really could be; it could be longer. But if you would just go ahead and humble yourself, God will exalt you. First Peter 5:6 says, "At the proper time" - and I don't know what that proper time is for you. You and I are going to be humble no matter what; it's just either we humble ourselves, or God humbles us. But no one escapes this world. A believer, no believer escapes this world without being dressed in humility. So why not today, why not humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God, and trust that God in His proper time will exalt you.

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For those of you here today without Christ, the very first step into the kingdom of God out of darkness into light is a step of you humbling yourself. No one struts into the kingdom, we all surrender to enter the kingdom. And Jesus said, "If any man shall come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." No egomaniacs are following Christ. And so if you've never humbled yourself beneath the mighty hand of God, I call you today to come to God and confess your sin, what a failure you've been, and to cry out for mercy and to cry out for grace. And if you would come to God with childlike faith, He would receive you. He would receive you, and He would embrace you.

The ball's in your court. What will you do with Christ? Will you surrender to Christ? Will you step out of the crowd and out of the world and out of darkness and into the light the follow Christ? "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

[Prayer] Father, thank you for the life of Joseph. It's rather mind-boggling for us as we read from one account to the next; and his life's not even over. But what we looked at today, it is just incredible, and we hardly know how to even process this. But it did happen. And, Lord, we pray that You would look upon us and see elements of humility, and that You would be gracious to us and elevate us to whatever it is You have planned for us, according to your perfect timing. So, bless those who are here today, who sit under the sound of the word of God as it's been preached, in Jesus' name. Amen.