

Established by God

Genesis 41:1-36

Go ahead and be turning to Genesis 41 in your Bibles. As you turn, a quick announcement: we had a soccer coach that had to drop out, so we are in need of a PRE-K soccer coach. "What's required of such a coach," you ask? Besides communicating with parents, you mainly just need to love kiddos and keep them corralled on their field as they chase after the soccer ball en masse. If you can help us out with this, speak to Pastor Dale or to Wesley and Jessica Golds.

The LAST TIME I taught, the lesson was about Judah's "Series of Bad Decisions." One person told me I should've called it "A Series of Unfortunate Events." Familiar, right? Sounded appropriate too, and believe me, I had thought about it! However, such a title would've implied that everything that Judah experienced "just happened" to him, that it wasn't the product of his own rotten decisions, which we know wasn't the case. No, if anyone's life seemed like it was completely out of control, that would've been JOSEPH'S! Faithful son sold into slavery by his hateful brothers...faithful slave thrown into prison at the first accusation of wrongdoing...faithful follower of the God left to rot in prison after he thought he'd met his God-sent ticket out of there. Joseph remained faithful...and things only got WORSE.

It would've been easy to despair, to lose hope, give up, and begin attempting to make maneuvers to secure his own release apart from God. Sadly, that's often our first move, right? To try and figure out things on our own rather than hit our knees and beg God for insight and wisdom? Do you think Joseph had low days? I'm sure he did; he was a man. However, just as Scripture doesn't record Joseph's sins, neither his sins nor his moments of despair are what the Holy Spirit intended for us to take away from Joseph's life. Instead, I believe we're to learn from Joseph's faithfulness and his quiet confidence that his life was "Established by God." The whole of God's Word is a testimony to His sovereignty; however, few passages bring that truth into such sharp relief as our passage for tonight. So, if you've found Genesis 41 in your Bibles, we'll start in verse one, reading...

Genesis 41:1-7

1 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, 2 and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. 3 And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. 6 And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. 7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

I love the way the ESV translates that.



"After TWO WHOLE YEARS!!!" In the Hebrew it literally reads, **"After two years, DAYS,"** which conveys the meaning that it was two years' worth of days, **"two whole years."** Clearly, we're supposed to feel EXASPERATED by the whole situation. It hadn't taken a couple of days for the cupbearer to find the right moment to bring up Joseph's plight to Pharaoh. It hadn't taken a couple of weeks for the paperwork to "come through." NO! It was a couple of YEARS because he had been FORGOTTEN! Ignore the chapter and verse divisions. Joseph had just correctly interpreted the dreams of the Pharaoh's cupbearer and his chief baker. That's astounding! That's a story that I imagine the cupbearer could've gotten a LOT of mileage from!

"Yeah, I remember this time when I was in the clink," and all the other Egyptian court attendants were like, *"Whoa! You did time?!"* The cupbearer was like, *"Yeah. The things I saw...I'm telling you, it changes a man. So there I was. Pharaoh wasn't happy with me, and I feared the worst was coming. Then one night I had this dream, but it felt like MORE THAN A DREAM. I felt like it MEANT SOMETHING, only I didn't know what, so it just made me worry MORE. Then this Hebrew guy working for the jailer—pretty sure he was in prison too, though it was hard to say with the way he was in charge of everything—asked me to tell him my dream, me and the guy I was in with (he had an odd dream too), and BOOM! He told us what our dreams meant, and THINGS HAPPENED JUST LIKE HE SAID! It was amazing! I tell you what, there was something about that guy...can't put my finger on it...maybe something I was supposed to do..."*

Yeah! Joseph asked you to REMEMBER HIM and PETITION PHARAOH FOR HIS RELEASE! How do you forget something like that?! Maybe the cupbearer was really FORGETFUL, and that's why Pharaoh threw him in prison...he laid his cup down somewhere and forgot where he left it. Who knows? Then we read those words, "AFTER TWO WHOLE YEARS," and we learn the severity of the cupbearer's forgetfulness.

Now, REMEMBER, as Pastor Dale last taught from Genesis, we have completely FORGOTTEN that the rest of this chapter through chapter 50 even EXISTS, right? We're like Joseph; we don't know what comes next, but we know the One who does. Like Joseph, we know that, while the cupbearer may have

forgotten him, the Lord hadn't. He's been working this whole time! To what end? WE DON'T KNOW, but as Spurgeon said, "**God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.**" Even when circumstances are terrible, God is still working. The 13-year trial that Joseph had been through thus far had been long and painful, but His God and ours had a GOOD PURPOSE behind it. God ALLOWED Joseph to LIVE and be SOLD to Ishmaelite slave traders. He ALLOWED Joseph to wind up in the household of Potiphar. He ALLOWED Joseph to be FALSELY ACCUSED of rape and thrown into prison, and He ALLOWED Joseph to be FORGOTTEN by the cupbearer. None of these were things the Lord had FAILED to do; they were things He was DOING. Why?! Pharaoh was going to have a dream of his own. What was his dream? We just read it, but here's a visual...

Those old Animated Stories from the Bible videos so often come to mind when I read passages like this. I love that depiction compared to others because it's done in a way that FEELS SCARY. For Pharaoh, this was a NIGHTMARE! Notice the language. We're told that Pharaoh was standing beside the Nile River, AND BEHOLD, seven fat, healthy cows came up out of the river and fed on the reed grass, AND BEHOLD, seven sickly cows came up and DEVoured THEM! The sight of cows eating other cows would be a horrible sight indeed! It was startling enough that it woke Pharaoh up! "*Whew! Just a dream,*" he thought as he fell back to sleep...

...AND BEHOLD, he dreamed of a cornstalk that bore seven ears of corn! That's amazing given that a good stalk might only bear half that. AND BEHOLD, a blighted cornstalk snaked its way out of the ground and swallowed up the good stalk and its ears like the sickly cows devouring the healthy cows. AH! AND BEHOLD, it was just a dream...or was it? This was a terrifying night, and as the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write "BEHOLD" over and over again, He invites the reader to be TERRIFIED with Pharaoh. This was no ordinary dream.

Now, many in that day would have already assumed as much given who Pharaoh was considered to be. To the Egyptians, Pharaoh was revered as WHAT? A GOD, right? And given that dreams were considered messages from the gods, the dreams of Pharaoh were of paramount importance! We're not there yet, but later we'll see that Pharaoh's dream was a REVELATION FROM GOD. This is ONE MORE THING God had done! God had given the message to Pharaoh in a way that had GOTTEN HIS ATTENTION, through a couple of dreams.

We've seen how much reverence the Gentiles had for visions in the night on recent Sundays in our Daniel series, right? Thing is, God had NOT spoken with Pharaoh in a way that he actually understood. God brought the solution to a problem Pharaoh didn't even know was looming THROUGH ANOTHER PROBLEM, the riddle of his dreams. Pharaoh wasn't slow on the uptake either. He knew these were NO ORDINARY DREAMS, and the morning absence of understanding brought anxiety. We read...

Genesis 41:8

So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh called in the magicians, the “diviner-priests” (not DESIGNER priests), who supposedly specialized in dream interpretation. These are the same type of so-called “experts” who attempted to serve Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Daniel with their dream manuals. We still have these charlatans around today. They’ve merely exchanged their titles for letters after their names and their dream manuals for published “research” in academic journals. They give their interpretations for what ails humanity from their tenured positions in universities, the podiums of press conferences, and the armchairs of news outlet interviews. They claim to have all the answers, but like the ancient dream interpreters who followed the gods of their day—and by “gods,” I mean imaginary deities who were nothing more than amplified humanity with amplified flaws, roles readily filled by demons—our “experts,” our “diviner-priests” check their interpretations by the gods of our day, the gods of evolution, climate change, socialist Marxism, sexual deviance, and every other woke ideology they can imagine.

Well, in the (likely) event that those guys were useless, Pharaoh called in all the “wise men” of the kingdom, people who, I believe, had the outward appearance of success in their realms. As best as I can tell, these guys would’ve been skilled businessmen, talented craftsmen, and wise administrators, and you know what? They all fell flat on their faces too, once again proving that if peoples’ worldview isn’t informed by the One True God, the God of the Bible, they too are operating out of WORLDLY wisdom, which is useless when it comes to the most important things, things that are SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED.

Why do I park on this seemingly minute aspect of this account? Well, when the pressure is on, when the stress level is high, fallen people such as we are can be quick to turn to the VERY SAME WORLDLY SOURCES for solutions. Rather than hit our knees in isolation before Almighty God, we pull out our smartphones and “ask Siri,” or “ask Google,” or we reach out to a friend, someone with skin on, someone we can see and whose voice we can literally hear. Now, don’t get me wrong, there are great, online, biblical resources, and all of us in this room have connections with godly people (I hope you’ve sought to make those connections; you need them, and they don’t form themselves). However, if the online forum or article or the counsel of the friend you reach out to isn’t informed by the Word of God, they’re no better than these diviner-priests who are reaching out to no-gods and really just attempt to get by on the collective ignorance that is worldly wisdom.

Like Pharaoh, GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A MESSAGE, and if you’re a born-again child of God, you’ve also been given the Interpreter, the Holy Spirit, the Master Teacher who is always with you, ready to guide you into all truth, who brings all things to your remembrance right when you need it, and who empowers you to live in the truth He reveals. God’s given you the Message and the One you need, and as we’re getting ready to see, Pharaoh’s about to get the one he needs. We read...

Genesis 41:9-13

9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, I remember my offenses today. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, 11 we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. 12 A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. 13 And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.

"I remember my offenses today." Makes sense. What had the cupbearer just observed as he stood in Pharaoh's court? All the diviner-priests and wise men of the kingdom had been called in to serve Pharaoh by interpreting his dream, and they all WHAT? They FAILED. Their failure reminded the cupbearer of a similar failure in his life. *"Pharaoh, in the sight of all this failure today, I'm reminded of a time a little while back when I failed you. Do you remember that? You had me thrown in prison, but while I was there, I met an amazing young man."*

Part of me finds it hard to believe that the cupbearer never let word one slip about his encounter with Joseph in prison. Then again, why would he want to bring it up and remind Pharaoh of his own past failures? Even now it was a bit of a risk to dredge that back up, what with Pharaoh already anxious, probably frustrated at the failure of his so-called "wise men."

IT WAS TIME, though. Just as God had allowed the cupbearer to forget about Joseph two years earlier, God was bringing him back to remembrance. *"Oh my! PHARAOH! I know the man you need!"* Can you imagine the scene? Pharaoh perks up as his cupbearer tells him, *"You see, there's this HEBREW, CRIMINAL SLAVE..."*

Do you think Pharaoh was slightly taken aback at the description of the man the cupbearer now recalled? Perhaps he was too desperate to care, but I feel like this had to be A BIT OF A TOUGH SELL! The man was a HEBREW, someone who was already seen as DETESTABLE. In a couple of chapters, we'll read how Egyptians wouldn't even eat with them (Genesis 43:32). He was also a slave, a NOBODY. Then there was the problem of HOW THE CUPBEARER MET HIM. This man was in prison, charged (falsely) with raping the wife of the captain of the guard. YIKES! A tough sell indeed... Joseph sounds like Jesus, doesn't he? Jesus, the SEED OF ABRAHAM was betrayed by Judas for the same price as a household SLAVE, and after being convicted of MANUFACTURED CHARGES, He was executed as a CRIMINAL on a Roman cross. In both cases, THE CRIMINAL HEBREW SLAVE WAS SAVIOR!

Jesus would one day give SIGNS confirming His divine identity (John 20:30-31), and ONE MORE THING the Lord had already done was GIVE Joseph a SIGN for the cupbearer to give to Pharaoh supporting his claim. God VALIDATED Joseph in advance! **"He interpreted our dreams to us...and as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."** Joseph wouldn't have been there to interpret the cupbearer's dream if God hadn't allowed Joseph's terrible trial.

Joseph's accurate interpretation of the cupbearer's dream was a miracle in and of itself, and just as the life and miracles and glory of Jesus was confirmed by eyewitnesses (2 Peter 1:16), Joseph's ability to

interpret dreams was confirmed by the Pharaoh's cupbearer. The Lord could've given a dream to anyone for Joseph to interpret, but God ensured that it was Pharaoh's cupbearer, the king's trusted advisor himself, who had the dream AND the personal encounter with Joseph so that, when the time was right, he could present him to Pharaoh as the solution he needed, and he would believe and act. Was that coincidence? NO, it was the hand of God. Well, Between Pharaoh's DESPERATION, the confidence that Potiphar STILL demonstrated in Joseph by placing Pharaoh's officials in prison UNDER HIS CARE, and the personal testimony of the cupbearer, Pharaoh had heard all he needed to hear...

Genesis 41:14-16

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it. 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.

IT WAS FINALLY TIME! For what? Joseph's "rags to riches" story? His "pit to palace" dream come true? NO! It was time for him to fulfill God's purpose for him! Joseph "shaved himself" appeared before Pharaoh, the "**troubled,**" humiliated "god-man" who's supposed to be able to interpret his own dreams but can't, and tells him, "God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." Pastor Dale and I talked about this, and at first glance, it seems like Joseph's got good news for Pharaoh. However, that isn't what's meant by "favorable." The NET Bible translates the phrase as "God will speak concerning the welfare of Pharaoh," and you probably have a footnote in your ESV Bible with a similar translation. In the Hebrew, the phrase contains the word "shalom," or peace. Remember, when Pharaoh woke up from his dream, his spirit was troubled. Joseph reassured him by telling him that God had an answer, one that would "calm his heart, or give him the answer that he desired" (NET Bible note). God was about to calm Pharaoh's spirit, and isn't that what happens for us when we hear God speak? No, it isn't audible, but when His Spirit brings His Word or past works to our remembrance, it's so profound that it might as well be audible. In such a simple but inspired phrase, God's Spirit reminds us that when our spirits are troubled, HE HAS THE ANSWER THAT WILL CALM US.

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Having been so reassured, Pharaoh recounts his dreams...

Genesis 41:17-24

17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. 18 Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. 19 Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, [Now this next bit of info is new and factors into the interpretation; Pharaoh said] 21 but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke. 22 I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. 23 Seven ears, withered, thin,

and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them, 24 and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.

The interpretation...

Genesis 41:25-32

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. 28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29 There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, 30 but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, 31 and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. 32 And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

The scriptures are clear. The two dreams are one that have to do with seven years of PLENTY followed by seven years of FAMINE that will be so severe that all the plenty would be forgotten; that's what the part meant about the ugly cows still looking just as malnourished after they had devoured the healthy cows! The famine would CONSUME THE LAND.

You know something that's fascinating about all of this? It's ALWAYS TWOS. Have you ever noticed this? I've never considered this before, but in Walvoord and Zuck's The Bible Knowledge Commentary, they point out several of these TWOS in Joseph's story, and then I started seeing even more TWOS...

- Joseph was one of TWO sons of Rachel.
- Joseph had two brothers who saw him as a means of gain: Reuben, I believe saw him as a way to earn back his birthright, and Judah saw him as a means of financial gain (20 shekels of silver); INCIDENTALLY, they were also two brothers who PROTECTED HIS LIFE (though not his welfare).
- Joseph also had TWO dreams of his own, about they were BOTH about the same thing!
- Joseph was stripped of TWO garments, one by his brothers, and one by Potiphar's wife.
- Joseph was thrown into TWO pits, the pit in Dothan, and the prison in Egypt.
- Joseph met TWO dreamers in prison in Egypt and interpreted their dreams.
- Joseph languished, forgotten in prison, for another TWO years.

Now Pharaoh has told Joseph his TWO dreams, and what has Joseph learned, not only from the Lord's interpretation of the dreams, but also from his own life experience? He tells us, **"The DOUBLING of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is FIXED BY GOD."** The thing is FIRM. It's STABLE. It's ESTABLISHED BY GOD. Regardless of how much or how little Joseph understood his path, the LORD was with him, and I believe he knew that. I believe the chief thing that gave him the strength to continue

living blamelessly for the LORD was the understanding that God had ordained these events in his life for a reason, and just like He did with Pharaoh, God confirmed it in the life of Joseph BY TWOS.

“The thing is fixed by God.” It’s SURE, it’s ESTABLISHED, and moreover, the One who’s made it so is GOD. LIKE JOSEPH’S LIFE, the fate of Egypt and the surrounding lands wasn’t in the hands of a dad who showed favor to some and not to others. It wasn’t in the hands of a bunch of hateful, wicked brothers. Neither Joseph nor Egypt’s fate laid in the rash hands of Potiphar or those of his faithless wife. Their fate wasn’t kept under lock and key by any prison warden, nor were they at the mercy of a forgetful cupbearer. The Giver of dreams and interpretations hadn’t lost control of the situation, nor had He changed His mind about those involved. Nothing happened to Joseph without God’s permission, and Joseph now assured the king that the same was true for the nation of Egypt. The psalmist would later reveal even more about Joseph’s journey and God’s ceaseless work behind the scenes...

Psalm 105:16-19

16 When he summoned a famine on the land

and broke all supply of bread,

17 he had sent a man ahead of them,

Joseph, who was sold as a slave. [God did this! He was in control! He had made preparations!]

18 His feet were hurt with fetters;

his neck was put in a collar of iron; [This likely refers to Joseph's imprisonment.]

19 until what he had said came to pass,

the word of the Lord tested him.

If these few verses give a brief summary of Joseph's life, the reference to Joseph's slavery is logically followed by his imprisonment, and then there's that reference to "what he had said." The psalmist says that God's Word tested or REFINED Joseph until HIS PREDICTION came to pass. Which prediction was that? There's disagreement among scholars, but I believe the psalmist was writing about the FIRST message Joseph received from God, the TWO DREAMS about BEING TOGETHER with his family again and his FUTURE AUTHORITY! By these visions, these messages from God, we read that Joseph was TESTED. I'm reminded of the lyrics to "You've Already Won," a song we've come to love here that says...

I know how the story ends

We will be with You again

God had already shown Joseph that there would be a time when he would be reunited with his family while possessing great authority. He knew how the story would end! We sing "We will be with You again," talking about God, but Joseph could have also said, "I will be with you, MY FAMILY, again." Despite his ever-worsening circumstances, Joseph CLUNG to this revelation from the Lord, and the Bible says that he was REFINED by it as a result. "Do you believe you heard from God? Even though you can't see how it could ever happen, do you believe He will do it???" I believe Joseph had such confidence, and so can we. WE KNOW HOW THE STORY ENDS, and WE WILL BE WITH HIM AGAIN. Now, those who have yet to call on Jesus to save them have no such reassurance, but do you see how that understanding

makes everything that ever happens to us as believers in this world OKAY? In the end, IT'S ALL GOING TO BE OKAY! The psalmist went on to say...

Psalm 105:20

**The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free;**

Just as there was a time of release for Joseph, there will be a time of release from trial and suffering for every follower of the Lord. I love what Matthew Henry had to say in regard to this stage of Joseph's life. He encourages us saying...

"There is a time set for the deliverance of God's people; that time will come, though it seem to tarry; and, when it comes, it will appear to have been the best time, and therefore we ought to wait for it, and not think two full years too long to continue waiting."

God had proven His sovereignty over the situation. EVERYTHING was coming together according to His good plan, and He wasn't finished. In His perfect time, He had given the dream, the interpreter, and the interpretation. However, this had only revealed the coming tribulation. Now God would provide the solution...

Genesis 41:33-36

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. 35 And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. 36 That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.

Random question, but I promise it's related: who here saves plastic food containers to reuse (or grew up in the house of someone who did)? It's pretty useful, right? Now, granted...

It took me 30 minutes to find the butter at Grandma's house



...some can get a little too excited over the prospect of free Tupperware. Yeah, the struggle's real. HAHA. What's my point? Well, it's a handy solution. It held food before, it can hold left overs now, right? It's still useful, especially when you want to send leftovers home with someone and don't want to worry about getting the container back! Well, we've already observed how God REVEALED to Pharaoh what He was about to do in the land. He ALLOWED the extended, unlawful incarceration of Joseph so he would be in POSITION to interpret the dream. I mean, consider the odds of Joseph's brothers SELLING him when murder was originally on their hearts, the coincidence of the Ishmaelite slave traders who just happened to pass by in the heat of the moment, Joseph's purchase by POTIPHAR and not some random Egyptian, and the false accusation that landed him in the KING'S prison rather than executed. Had any step in Joseph's journey been different, if God's hand wasn't on it all from the start, Joseph's integrity would've likely gotten him killed or freed, and he wouldn't have been in place to interpret Pharaoh's dream.

God fully superintended Joseph's hard road. God had sent Joseph to Pharaoh to interpret (deliver) a message, but his usefulness wasn't over when he gave the interpretation. The message has been delivered. Pharaoh knows what's going on—no doubt, he's reeling, but he knows what's going on...but there's still this Hebrew young man standing there. The newly revealed situation called for a WISE ADMINISTRATOR, someone who could run a nation like...oh...I don't know...a well-run household, someone who could set up overseers and OVERSEE THEM as they stockpiled food during the seven years of plenty, essentially setting up a well-stocked, NATIONAL PANTRY to get them through the seven years of famine. HMMM...where could Pharaoh find a guy like that? God said, *"Yeah, I thought of that too when I chose the one through whom I would deliver my message."* I won't spoil who it is, though...

You know, between where we're studying on Sundays and the STRIKING SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THEIR LIVES, it's hard not to think about Daniel when studying the life of Joseph. Daniel was an exiled servant in a pagan land to a pagan king, and Joseph was an EXILED SERVANT (SLAVE) in a pagan land to a pagan king. Why do we look upon Joseph's plight as good while seeing Daniel's identical plight as bad? THEY'RE THE SAME! If I were to hazard a guess, I think it's because of the RESULTS of Joseph's plight,

the salvation of his family, that cause us to view his exile differently. THIS should cause us to recognize that his elevation to viceroy wasn't the blessing or reward of the situation, but rather the SALVATION wrought by it. This is bigger than God's preoccupation with one man; it's about His plan to birth a NATION and one man's DIFFICULT ROLE in that plan.

Sometimes, when things seem as bad for us as they were for Joseph, we can get low and start doubting. *"This can't be part of God's plan. There's no way!"* Can't it? Is God not big enough to use the details of your situation to bring about a good and glorious end, even if that end is heaven itself (1 Peter 5:10)? Do you know what's coming next?! Just like Joseph, you don't, and neither do I, but as I've already said, we know the One who does, whose plan will NEVER FAIL. Therefore, as James encourages...

James 5:7-8

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Be PATIENT. This journey wasn't about Joseph, just as ours is NOT ABOUT US! The so-called "advancement" or "elevation" or "promotion" of Joseph was neither the reward nor the POINT. As we'll see as we continue through our study, the point was to bring Israel and his family to Egypt, yes, where they would eventually be enslaved (that's HARD), but it's also where God would fulfill His promise to the Patriarchs to make them a great nation. By tucking His people in the middle of the world's greatest superpower of that time, they could multiply in safety (though AFFLICTED) without alarming surrounding nations, inciting their attacks and turning God's progress in fulfilling His promise into a two-steps-forward-one-step-back prospect. To wage war on Israel would be to wage war on Egypt, so in this way they were protected. THAT'S the blessing. THAT'S the reward. THAT'S the POINT, God's grand plan, not Joseph's worldly ambitions or success (or ours), and we cheapen God's work when we MORALIZE this account and turn the life of Joseph into a glorified CAT POSTER that says, "Just hang in there!" promising that godliness is a formula for worldly success. IT ISN'T, but here's the promise: No matter how things look, GOD IS WITH YOU just like He was with Joseph; He's with you in your triumphant highs and abysmal lows. HE'S WORKING even when you can't see or feel it, and contrary to how your circumstances may make it feel, GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL. He's still over all and still worthy of our lives and our worship. Through Joseph's anguish and suffering, his family was saved, so that through them would come another Son beloved by His Father who would also suffer terribly so that EVERYONE could be SAVED FOREVER. God was sovereign then in their lives, and He sovereign NOW in OURS.