

THROUGH IT ALL: BLESSED & PROSPEROUS (41:41-57)



If you found out tonight that a long-lost relative has left a trust for you worth over a billion dollars, would you take it?



If you graduated, worked your tale off building a business or product, and someone offered you 500 billion dollars for it, would you most likely take it?

Hold on to that thought. We'll come back to it later in the sermon.

Now, when we last saw Joseph, he was remembered by the cupbearer and promoted by Pharaoh...

Genesis 41:41 ***"And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."***

Notice: Joseph didn't manipulate his way to the top. He didn't even expect this to happen – Pharaoh had him brought out of the dungeon and said, "I hear you can interpret dreams." The last thing Joseph expected was this scale of blessing and prosperity from God. Let me show you what I mean...

1. The position he didn't ask for

Let me remind you of everything he received from Pharaoh:

Genesis 41:42–43 ***"Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. ⁴³ And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt."***

Notice: Pharaoh says, "I am placing these things on *you*." Joseph didn't ask for it, but he did receive the following things...

- **New rank** – When he rode in the “second chariot” it showed everyone that Joseph was now second in charge throughout the nation of Egypt. But Joseph never expected this to happen.
- **New authority** – The Hebrew word that’s translated as “signet ring,” means “to sink.” As I mentioned last week, the ring was used to *sink* the royal emblem into soft clay or wax on a royal document. Joseph now had authority and financial power over the entire nation. But he didn’t ask for this new authority.



- **New wealth** – When Pharaoh placed the gold necklace (show pic – just an example) around his neck, it was an outward sign of the honor and wealth that was being bestowed on Joseph. But again, he didn’t seek that out.
- **New respect** – As Joseph rode down the streets of Egypt, the security detail would command the people, “Get on your knees and show this man respect!” But Joseph didn’t ask for that to be shouted. In fact, from what we know about Joseph, he was probably embarrassed by it.

For the past 13 years, Joseph was never the guy who *demand*ed respect – he was a guy who *earn*ed respect by his kindness, hard work, honesty, and God-given leadership skills.

2. The name he didn’t ask for

Genesis 41:45a “Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphenath-paneah...”

Pronounced: **Zaphenath** → ZAF-uh-nath
Paneah → puh-NAY-uh

Right in the middle of this name is the syllable “nath,” which referred to a goddess that was worshipped in Egypt (“Neith”). So, Joseph’s new name was meant to honor a pagan god, but Joseph would have never chosen it for himself. Pharaoh *gave* him the new

name – very much like Daniel received a new name when he was a slave in Babylon.

3. The wife he didn't ask for

Genesis 41:45b “...And [Pharaoh] gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.”

Pronounced: **As** → *AS*
e → *uh*
nath → *nath*

The same syllable (“nath”) is in her name – to honor the pagan goddess. And his new wife was the daughter of an Egyptian priest from the city of “On” – a city known for *sun worship* (Located 7 miles north of Cairo. Also known as Heliopolis).¹

Joseph's marriage into this prestigious family would have seemed like an honor in Egypt's eyes.² But Joseph didn't have a choice in marrying her, even though he made the best of it – having a loving and committed relationship together. He never had multiple wives which was common in that day (even in his own family).

So, Joseph is now a celebrity in Egypt where everything he says and does is headline news. Every time he went out with his wife, the Egyptian “paparazzi” would have watched their every move.

For people who *crave* this kind of rank, authority, wealth, and attention – they typically cannot handle it. They're usually corrupted by it. ~~In fact, one Greek historian watched how wealth and power corrupted so many Roman leaders, and he later said...~~

~~“No beast is more savage than man when possessed with power.”
 —Plutarch (Greek historian)~~

~~He's not saying that every person with power is a savage; he's saying that great wealth and power *tempts* people to become~~

¹ Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 92). Victor Books.
² Mathews, K. A. (2005). *Genesis 11:27–50:26* (Vol. 1B, p. 764). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

~~those things.~~ Potiphar's wife is an example. And history is filled with other examples.

But we never see Joseph act that way. And it's only because God had put him through 13 years of suffering and waiting to prepare Joseph for that kind of power and authority without abusing it.

So, he went from the pit to the palace, from the dungeon to the throne room. But God isn't done blessing Joseph...

Genesis 41:50–52 “Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him.⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.”⁵² The name of the second he called Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Joseph didn't have a choice in who he married, but he *did* have a choice in naming his kids. So, he gave them Hebrew names instead of Egyptian names...

- **His firstborn son was *Manasseh***, which sounds like the Hebrew word for “forget.” Joseph was saying that God had caused him to forget all his hardships. So, every time Joseph saw Manasseh, he was reminded of God's goodness even in the midst of suffering.
- **His second son was *Ephraim***, which sounds like the Hebrew word for “fruitful.” Joseph was thanking God for allowing him to prosper in a land that had brought him so much trouble.³

So, we see – even though Joseph was given an Egyptian name and wife – he never lost his relationship with the true God of heaven. He remained faithful through it all!

And because of his faithfulness, watch how God uses him to impact the world...

³ Bethancourt, P. (2024). *Exalting Jesus in Genesis* (D. Platt, D. L. Akin, & T. Merida, Eds.; p. 249). Holman Reference.

Genesis 41:53–57 “The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end,⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.⁵⁵ When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.”⁵⁶ So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.⁵⁷ Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.”

Joseph’s brilliant planning had prepared Egypt for this moment! He opened the storehouses to sell grain to the Egyptians first. But apparently, this was a famine like the world had never seen. So, Joseph sold grain to many other nations who were suffering as well.

Remember: Joseph is only 37 years old at this point and the world is relying on his leadership to save them from starvation! Now he was seeing how his 13 years of training were coming into play:

- **It began in Potiphar’s house**, where he managed Potiphar’s entire estate – all of the servants, crops, herds, and finances. Even the maintenance and security on Potiphar’s estate – the Bible says Potiphar didn’t concern himself with *anything* other than the food he ate.
- **It continued in prison** where he became responsible for “everything” that happened in the prison. The Bible says, “Whatever was done there, [Joseph] was the one who did it.” Have you ever stopped to consider what it takes to run *everything* at a prison...
 - **Inmate housing** (separating people/groups who don’t get along)
 - **Daily schedule** (sleep, work, exercise, free-time, bathroom, shower)
 - **Managing food services** (feeding hundreds or thousands)
 - **Visitation** (who would be allowed and when)

- **Religious services** (chapel)
- **Counseling for inmates** ("Hey Joseph, can we talk?")
- **Medical services** (surgery, funerals, etc.)
- **Cell inspections** (searching for weapons, other items)
- **Security procedures** (check locks, doors, gates, headcount)
- **Emergency response** (planning/training for fights or riots)
- **Maintenance and repairs** on the prison facility
- **Employee training & scheduling** (office staff, guards, warden, lunchroom staff, etc)
- **Budgets and spending** (all of this would require a huge budget)

Joseph had an *enormous* level of trust and responsibility. But it developed his leadership skills and prepared him for this monumental task of saving entire nations from starvation. You see, God had hurt Joseph deeply so He could bless Joseph (and the world) greatly!

And, in the process, Joseph learned three important life lessons:

- **Past hurts don't have to define us.** During those years of betrayal, false accusations, imprisonment, and abandonment; nothing seemed fair. All the ups and downs (mostly downs) – one setback after another! But, in the end, all those things changed Joseph's life for the better. He didn't allow those past hurts to define him.
- **Bad memories don't have to defeat us.** You and I can choose what will hold us hostage. There isn't a person in this room who doesn't have painful memories that could easily defeat us if we let them.

You may need help in turning that open wound into a healed scar, but it doesn't have to hold you captive for the rest of your life. You might need a friend, mentor, or counselor to come alongside you, but your bad memories don't have to defeat you!

- **Great blessings don't have to disqualify us.** It's easy to root for Joseph when he's the underdog – we can relate to him when he's suffering. But will you root for him now that he's extremely wealthy and powerful?

Because your generation often assumes that a wealthy and powerful person is automatically corrupt. For example, do you find it hard to celebrate people who are billionaires? Do you naturally look at them with suspicion – like they couldn't possibly be a generous, honest person of integrity?

Be careful because, when I asked you the opening questions, every one of you got *really* excited about the thought of becoming a billionaire. So, does that mean *you* would automatically become evil and corrupt? No, not necessarily. So, be careful about assuming someone's motives simply because, deep down, you're jealous of what they have.

You see, we find it easy to “weep with those who weep,” but we find it harder to “rejoice with those who rejoice” (Rom 12:15). We find it harder to celebrate people when they...

- Own what we may never own
- Get the promotion or position we wanted
- Purchase what we can't afford
- Have the popularity we may never have
- Enjoy the beauty and abilities we won't ever enjoy

But Joseph shows us that, with God's help, a person can have:

- Great authority and still have accountability.
- Great popularity and still have humility.
- Great prosperity and still have integrity.

So, let's ask God to make us like Joseph!

Small Groups