

God Providentially Guided Joseph's Life to the End Which He Had Chosen

Message 7 of 7 in the series: "Providence: The Story of Joseph"

Providence = "God's faithful and effective care and guidance of everything which He has made toward the end which He has chosen." Holman Bible Dictionary

A. God providentially used the wicked actions of Joseph's brothers and many hardships/injustices in his life to get Joseph exactly where he needed to be in order to save his entire family 22 years later.

- Providentially, Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and taken to Egypt.
- Providentially, Joseph learned how to manage resources in Egypt while serving as a slave.
- Providentially, Joseph was imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit.
- Providentially, Joseph interpreted dreams for two of Pharaoh's officials who were imprisoned with him.
- Providentially, Joseph interpreted some troubling dreams Pharaoh had about seven years of plenty and seven years of famine coming in the near future.
- Providentially, Pharaoh appointed Joseph Prime Minister of Egypt and empowered him to direct Egypt's Famine Preparation Program.
- Providentially, God brought Joseph's ten older brothers to Egypt to buy grain from him and to be tested by him.
- Joseph recognized that God had providentially placed him as a ruler over Egypt so he could save the lives of his brothers and their families. He also recognized that God had radically changed the hearts of his brothers and he invited them to come live with him. "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. **It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives...** Now hurry back to my father and tell him, "This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately! **You can live in the region of Goshen**, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. I will take care of you there..." Genesis 45:4b-5 & 9-11a (NLT)

Life Application: "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:28 (NLT)

"So Joseph sent his brothers off, and as they left, he called after them, '**Don't quarrel about all this along the way!**' And they left Egypt and returned to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan. 'Joseph is still alive!' they told him. 'And he is governor of all the land of Egypt!' Jacob was stunned at the news—he couldn't believe it. But when they repeated to Jacob everything Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, their father's spirits revived. Then Jacob exclaimed, '**It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I must go and see him before I die.**'"

Genesis 45:24-28 (NLT)

Life Application: God's providence is NOT limited by our unbelief. "What then? If some did not believe, **their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? Far from it!**" Romans 3:3-4a (NASB)

B. Joseph was providentially used by God to relocate his extended family to Egypt which fulfilled the first part of a promise that God had made to Abram, Joseph's great-grandfather.

"Then the Lord said to Abram, 'You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth.'" Genesis 15:13-14 (NLT)

- Joseph was certain that God would keep His promise to Abram. "'Soon I will die,' Joseph told his brothers, 'but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, '**When God comes to help you and lead you back, you must take my bones with you.**'" Genesis 50:24-25 (NLT) (*Exodus 13:19, Joshua 24:32, Hebrews 11:22*)
- On the night of the first Passover, God fulfilled the rest of the promise He had made to Abram. "The Lord caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the Israelites, and they gave the Israelites whatever they asked for. So they stripped the Egyptians of their wealth! ...The people of Israel had lived in Egypt for 430 years." Exodus 12:36-37 & 40 (NLT)

Life Application: We can be certain God will keep His promises to us, too. "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and **I will give you rest.**" Matthew 11:28 (NLT) "For God so loved

the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**” John 3:16 (NKJV) “And I will ask the Father, and **he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.** He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.” John 14:16-17a (NLT) “**When everything is ready, I will come and get you,** so that you will always be with me where I am.” John 14:3 (NLT)

C. Joseph was able to completely forgive his brothers and treat them kindly because he trusted in God’s providence.

“When Joseph’s brothers had seen that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!’ So they sent instructions to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father commanded us before he died, saying, “This is what you shall say to Joseph: ‘Please forgive, I beg you, the offense of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.’” And now, please forgive the offense of the servants of the God of your father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, ‘Behold, we are your servants.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for **am I in God’s place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good** in order to bring about this present result, to keep many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.” Genesis 50:15-21 (NASB)

- Joseph didn’t hold grudges or seek revenge against his brothers because he trusted God and understood that, in His providence, God had used their evil plans to bring about more good than anyone could have imagined.

Life Application: “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work **within us**, to accomplish infinitely more than **we** might ask or think.” Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

- Joseph allowed God, in His providence, to settle accounts with his brothers. This allowed him to let go of the past and left him free to be used by God and make the most of his opportunities in every circumstance.

Life Application: “Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘**I will take revenge; I will pay them back,**’ **says the Lord.** Instead, ‘If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.’” Romans 12:19-20 (NLT)

- Joseph’s brothers had a wrong understanding of God’s character that caused them to question His providence and live in perpetual fear of His judgment.

Life Application: We must believe that God loves us and is for us, NOT against us. “We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So **we will not be afraid on the day of judgment**, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. **If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.**” 1 John 4:16-18 (NLT)

D. Provisionally, there were many parallels between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus.

Joseph was dearly loved by his father, a shepherd of his father’s sheep, hated by his brothers, taken to Egypt, 30 years old when he began his public service, stripped of his clothing, sold for the price of a slave, tempted to sin, falsely accused, placed with two other prisoners (one who was saved and the other lost), and highly exalted after he suffered. Joseph wept for his brothers, forgave those who wronged him, and saved them from certain death. What evil men did to Joseph, God used for good.

- The entire Bible points us toward Jesus! “Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:27 (NLT)

Life Application: We can trust the Bible to be our guide in all matters of faith and practice. “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read Genesis 45, 46, & 50, and then discuss the following questions:

1. What has been your biggest takeaway from this message series on the life of Joseph?
2. Read Romans 3:3-4 & 2 Timothy 2:13. How does it make you feel to know that even if we are faithless, God still remains faithful?
3. In Genesis 15:12-14, God made promises to Abram that were fulfilled during the lives of Joseph (Genesis 45:24-28) and Moses (Exodus 12:36-41).
4. Why do you think Joseph's bones are mentioned four times in the Bible? (Genesis 50:24-25, Exodus 13:19, Joshua 24:32, Hebrews 11:22) What kind of faith did Joseph have? Where did he get it?
5. Compare/contrast the views of God's providence held by Joseph and his brothers:
 - Joseph didn't hold grudges or seek revenge against his brothers because he trusted God and understood that, in His providence, God had used their evil plans to bring about more good than anyone could have imagined. (Ephesians 3:20)
 - Joseph allowed God, in His providence, to settle accounts with his brothers. This allowed him to let go of the past and left him free to be used by God and make the most of his opportunities in every circumstance. (Romans 12:19-20)
 - Joseph's brothers had a wrong understanding of God's character that caused them to question God's providence and live in perpetual fear of His judgment. (1 John 4:16-18)

6. Discuss the following parallels between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus:

Joseph was dearly loved by his father, a shepherd of his father's sheep, hated by his brothers, taken to Egypt, 30 years old when he began his public service, stripped of his clothing, sold for the price of a slave, tempted to sin, falsely accused, placed with two other prisoners (one who was saved and the other lost), and highly exalted after he suffered. Joseph wept for his brothers, forgave those who wronged him, and saved them from certain death. What evil men did to Joseph, God used for good.

How important is it to you that the entire Bible points us to Jesus? (Luke 24:27, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

7. Some quotations to consider:

"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good..." Genesis 50:20 (NKJV)

"...our God turned the curse into a blessing." Nehemiah 13:2b (NLT)

"Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign Lord. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live." Ezekiel 18:23 (NLT)