



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

Faith and Faithfulness!

Genesis 41:1-57

Message #42 of 50 – S948

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Sunday Morning Service

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Faith and Faithfulness!

Genesis 41:1-57

Opening Comments

- Good morning – we will be in **Genesis 40**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- As I look back on my life, I wish I had been more like Joseph
- This is a long chapter
- Let's pray and then look at the next chapter of this remarkable man's life
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Faith and Faithfulness!**
- In the last chapter, Joseph is in prison after being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife
- Two new prisoners show up – Pharaoh's chief butler/cupbearer and chief baker
- They both have dreams and are upset because there is no one there to interpret them
- Joseph's offers to go to God on their behalf for an interpretation
- Butler/cupbearer gets good news – baker – bad news
- Joseph asks the butler to remember him – tell someone about him
- Butler gets out and promptly forgets about Joseph
- Joseph believes the whole situation was arranged by God
- But then nothing happens
- **Genesis 41:1**
- Two years had passed, and it may have seemed to Joseph that everyone had forgotten him
- God never forgets His people
- As Joseph slept in that dark, dismal dungeon – little did he know that it would be his last night there
- When the time was right God spoke to Pharaoh in a dream
- **Genesis 41:2**

- The river = the Nile
- Played a huge role in the livelihood and religion of Egypt
- Believed to be the source of all life
- The Egyptians depended upon it for food and water
- So far, a very pleasant dream
- **Genesis 41:3-4**
- From pleasant dream to nightmare
- **Genesis 41:5-8**
- Pharaoh is troubled by these dreams – a portent of something bad, but what does it mean
- In Scripture Egypt is often used as a symbol/picture/type of the world
- Specifically, the world that has rejected God
- At this time in history, Egypt was the most powerful nation in the world
- And Pharaoh was the most powerful man in Egypt
- And has access to the greatest minds of the times
- But there was no one who could interpret his dreams
- He is struggling with the same thing most of our world is struggling with today
- He was trying to find answers to spiritual problems while rejecting the source of spiritual answers
- Most of the problems this world has are not social problems, or justice problems, or race problems, or gender identity problems – they are spiritual problems **1 Corinthians 2:14**

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

- Everything that happens in life is meant to draw us deeper into the light of God's glory, grace, mercy, and love
- If you reject God and His word – all that is left is darkness **John 12:46**

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

- Faith in Jesus brings us out of the darkness and into the light
- We come out of the darkness by faith in Jesus Christ
- We walk in the light by obedience to His revealed Word – the Bible

- The chief butler (cupbearer) would be standing nearby, ready to serve the king instantly.
- He watches as Pharaoh expresses his concern about not knowing what these dreams mean and then listens as the wisest men in Egypt fail to give Pharaoh an interpretation.

- **Genesis 41:9-14**

- Try to imagine what that was like for Joseph
- The slave/prisoner is suddenly ushered into the presence of the most powerful man in Egypt – was associated to the gods of Egypt
- This powerful man says to this socially and politically unimportant and powerless man – I need your help

- **Genesis 41:15-16**

- Joseph's character comes out powerfully in his response to Pharaoh
- Joseph doesn't know what the future holds for him
- Doesn't know if he is headed back to prison after this visit with Pharaoh
- He has a perfect opportunity to exalt himself to make his life easier
- Instead, Joseph exalts God – I can't do it, but the One True God can
- One of the remarkable things about Joseph's response is that he promises Pharaoh that God's answer will give him peace
- This reminds me of Paul's words, written from a Roman prison

Philippians 4:6-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- Peace is not a product of circumstance – it is a fruit of faith
- Pharaoh seems to accept Joseph's response

- **Genesis 41:17-25**

- Both dreams mean the same thing
- Notice again, no exaltation of himself – simply tells Pharaoh what God wants him to know

- **Genesis 41:26-32**

- Famines were unusual in Egypt because the Nile provided all the water they needed
- And extended famines were unheard of

- Joseph is confident that he has heard from God and interpreted Pharaoh's dreams accurately
 - Before we read the next verses, remember that just an hour or so earlier, Joseph was an unknown Hebrew slave in prison
 - **Genesis 41:33-36**
 - Not only does Joseph interpret the dream, he counsels Pharaoh on what should be done about it
 - One of the truest signs of a heart that has been redeemed by Jesus is love for those who are hard to love – those we don't have to love – those who are not like us – those who hate us **Luke 6:27-28**
- But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.**
- In less than a decade we have seen a dramatic shift in this country
 - We have never been a perfectly united United States
 - But there is great division in our nation
 - There are groups actively promoting hate along lines of race, sexuality, and political opinion
 - And not just out in the world – there are churches fueling the fire of hate in our culture
 - Joseph had every human reason to hate the Egyptians
 - As an expression of God's love for all humanity, Joseph, with the confidence of his faith, tells Pharaoh how to save Egypt
 - **Genesis 41:37-44**
 - Within the span of an hour or two Joseph goes from prison garb to palace robes
 - From the dark dungeon to the golden chariot
 - Notice in verse 43 'Bow the knee!'
 - I wonder if his dreams from thirteen years earlier of his brothers and parents bowing before him came to mind
 - Everything is changing for Joseph
 - **Genesis 41:45-51**
 - For thirteen years life had been hard, probably not continuously, but enough that he would refer to it as misery
 - God will give Joseph two sons – Joseph gives them Hebrew names, not Egyptian names
 - Even though he was deeply entrenched in Egypt, it was not his home

- ‘Manasseh’ “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.”
- When Joseph says ‘forget’ – doesn’t mean he doesn’t remember – means he isn’t in bondage to his past **Jon Courson**
- “Those who can’t forget about their past, walk through life crippled.”
- Our past can be a prison to our soul and body. God saves us so that we can be free of our past **Philippians 3:13b-14**
...but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- You cannot ‘press on to the prize’ if you are clinging to the past or the past is clinging on to you
- It can feel impossible to break out of the prison of your past – ask for help
- The name of Joseph’s second son shows us why that is so important
- **Genesis 41:52**
- You cannot be fruitful to God AND live in the past
- Fruitfulness comes when we are living in a moment-by-moment relationship with God by faith
- And just as Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams – the seven years of abundance were replaced by famine
- **Genesis 41:53-56**
- So, 3,700 years ago the world had a problem with climate change
- The final verse in this chapter sets us up for chapter 42
- **Genesis 41:57**
- Next time we will see the fulfilment of the first of Joseph’s two dreams from twenty years earlier
- If I had to pick one word to describe Joseph it would be ‘faithful’
- In chapter 37 Joseph was being faithful to his father when he told Jacob what his brothers were doing
- In chapter 39 Joseph was faithful to Potiphar by working hard and refusing to sleep with Potiphar’s wife
- He was faithful in chapter 40, while in prison to work hard, and when he interpreted the dreams of the butler and the baker
- In this chapter, Joseph was faithful to Pharaoh by interpreting his dreams and then working hard to save Egypt from the coming famine

- Joseph was faithful wherever he was, whether his circumstances were good or bad
- In reality, his father, Potiphar, or Pharaoh were not the object of his faithfulness
- Joseph was being faithful to God
- At every opportunity, Joseph referred to God as his source of morality, hope, wisdom, and power
- When God is the object of our faithfulness, we stop focusing on our circumstances as good or bad – they are what they are – they are life
- Instead, we are focused on how to faithfully serve God in that circumstance
- It will take three things for you to do that
- First – **Let go of the Past!**
- As long as your past has a hold on your life you will not be free to do what God is calling you to do today by faith
- Second – **Accept the Present!**
- Joseph didn't mope around when things got hard or painful – he got to work – being faithful right where he was
- He sought ways to change his circumstances, like asking the butler to remember him, but he stayed busy being faithful
- Third – **Trust God for the Future!**
- As Joseph stood before Pharaoh, he could have exalted himself to get himself permanently out of prison
- Instead, he trusted God with his future
- God did more than just get him out of prison – promoted him
- Trust God for the future – He has a better plan for you than you do for yourself
- Whatever your circumstances are today – be faithful to God and work hard
- If your circumstances change – be faithful to God and work hard
- Letting go of the past – accepting the present – trusting God for the future – Be faithful to God
- **Prayer!**