



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 41: 1-57

“From Prison to Prime Minister”

TRANSCRIPT

Now when you turn with me to the 41st chapter of the Book of Genesis? This is a rather lengthy chapter for scripture reading, but I think it would be helpful to us to read the entire chapter and in the message that follows, we will therefore be able to omit some sections in the exposition. So let us read together Genesis chapter 41. I will read and you follow along in your text. For some of you who I recognize may be here for the first time, I am reading from the New American Standard Bible.

“Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream and behold he was standing by the Nile. And lo from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed on the marsh grass. Then behold seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. And he fell asleep and dreamed the second time and behold seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. Then behold seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke and behold it was a dream. Now it came about in the morning that his spirit was troubled so he sent and called for all the

magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

“Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh saying, I would make mention today of my own offenses. Pharaoh was furious with his servants and he put me in confinement in my house with the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker and we had a dream on the same night. He and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. Now a Hebrew youth was with us there. A servant of the captain of the bodyguard and we related them to him and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one, he interpreted according to his own dream. And it came about just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me in my office but he hanged him. Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I’ve had a dream but no one can interpret it, and I have heard it said about you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it. Joseph then answered Pharaoh saying "it is not in me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”

“So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph. In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile and behold seven cows, fat and sleek, came up out of the Nile and they grazed in the marsh grass. And lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I have never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt. (That is one slight addition that he makes in the retelling of his dream.) And the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows. Yet when they have devoured them it could not be detected that they had devoured them, for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke, (that’s another slight difference.) I saw also in my dream and behold seven ears, full and good came up on a single stalk. And lo seven ears withered, thin and scorched by the east wind sprouted up after them. And the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians for there was no one who could explain it to me.

Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same. God has told Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows were seven ears and the seven good ears are seven years. The dreams are one and the same. And the seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind shall be seven years of famine. It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh, God has shown the Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt and after them seven years of famine will come. And all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt and the famine will ravage the land. So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine, for it will be very severe.

“Now as for the repeating of the dreams to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about. And now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. (That's the windfall profits tax [laughter] of ancient times. This is his economic program and it is very similar to the President's, because at the end of this period of time everything will be the government's. Just wait and see.)

“Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority and let them guard it. (It is a surprise that someone has not though calling their plan Joseph's plan, Operation Joseph. That would have a biblical support for it. Now we were reading the Scriptures, weren't we [laughter], Verse 36,) “And let the food become as a reserve for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish during the famine. Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants then Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find a man like this in whom is the divine spirit? (Now here we do have differences of course.)

“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. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, see, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh took of 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, and he had him ride in the second chariot and they proclaimed before him, bow the knee, and he set him over all the land of Egypt. 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. Then Pharaoh named Joseph, Zaphnath Paaneah, and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah 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. (Is it not interesting in the typology of Joseph has over against Christ? Even when Joseph begins his public ministry in Egypt, it's approximately the same age of our Lord when he began his and special mention is made of it.) 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 the famine came, two sons were born to Joseph whom Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bore to him. And Joseph named the first born Manasseh, for he said, God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household; and he named the second Ephraim; for he said, God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. 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 after 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 up all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. And the people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe in all the earth.”

May God bless this reading of his word.

The subject for this morning in the exposition of Genesis chapter 41 is "Joseph's Exaltation, or From Prison to Prime Minister." A few weeks ago, in one of the messages in this part of the Book of Genesis, I made reference to a statement by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to the effect that our greatest mission is to rescue omitted truths from the neglect caused by their universal admission. Now that is a wise saying and it certainly has application here. We have again some of the greatest of the truths of the Bible. We've mentioned them so often they may seem very hackneyed or they may seem like cliches to you by now. But their repetition saves us from forgetfulness.

And they are first of all, the providence of God. The multitude of minute seemingly insignificant events, but all evidently necessarily contribute to the accomplishment of the will of God. In fact, as I had been reflecting on chapter 40, the chapter that we looked at last week, there is really no reason for that chapter being in the Bible at all except to explain how it happened that Joseph was introduced to Pharaoh. But from the beginning of Joseph's life, the providence of God is manifested. From the jealousy that his brothers expressed, from his sale as a slave into Egypt, from his faithfulness under temptation, for his sympathy with the sadness of the men who had the dreams and could not interpret them, for his endurance of the harsh treatment in the prison. His loyalty to God; then the dreams of Pharaoh himself; the memory of past

mercies. All of these things were the threads that linked the pit in Canaan with the power that Joseph is now going to exercise in the land of Egypt.

Not one of these little links so seemingly insignificant is unnecessary. Each is essential and by form part of the all things that work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called that according to his purpose. So a multitude of small events but they contribute to the overall plan of God. It seems to me that one way we should look at our own lives as in the light of this as well for all of the things that happen to us. Even those little the tiny things just form part of the one overall program by which God deals with each one of us individually. He does not deal with any other similarly. He deals with us each individually and all of the little things in our lives contribute to the ultimate overall plan and program that he has in mind.

Now the second truth that one notices here in this chapter is the necessity of trust in God and not in man. “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,” the Prophet Isaiah exhorts us, and Joseph's life illustrates that. And we think of the passage in the Book of Proverbs, the 3rd chapter, those very familiar verses. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your path straight.” Joseph is a man who illustrates very beautifully the acknowledging of the Lord God in all of his ways and he will not take advantage of the circumstances, which might have been taken advantage of to secure his release from prison.

And then overriding all of this is the beautiful parallel that exists between the times of Joseph and the times of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both of these men had to travel the road of humiliation on the way to exaltation. It's almost as if the Spirit of God has anticipated the life of Jesus Christ in the life of Joseph. That's what we believe. That's what the New Testament tells us and Stephen's speech is one illustration of it. So we have some great and familiar truth here but the repetition of them themselves should impress them upon our mind.

Now the preceding chapter closed with yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph but forgot him. Perhaps there is one more parallel here because Joseph is forgotten by someone to whom he has rendered great service, and is it not one of the perils of our life we too forget so often the benefits that have been shown us by our greater than Joseph, the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well the story is the story of the dreams of Pharaoh their interpretation and the means by which Joseph comes to be exalted in the land of Egypt. God has great facility for gaining his ends and here he does it by means of two dreams. But Joseph says they are really one because they have the same message. It’s now two years from Pharaoh's birthday party when the baker was hanged.

They always liked nice entertainment for birthday parties in those days the Pharaohs did, and that was the entertainment but it's all forgotten now. The cupbearer has been restored to service and Pharaoh has two dreams. And in the first dream, lying upon his bed, in his palace, he finds himself standing by the Nile River. These dreams incidentally are very Egyptian in nature. He stands by the Nile River and he notices that seven cows, sleek and fat, came up from the Nile and they grazed in the marsh grass. The marsh grass was a grass from which papyrus is taken and from which the papyrus sheets were formed, and he sees the seven well-formed heifers appear.

It was customary incidentally for the animals of Egypt like the cows to go down into the Nile River and swim with much water over them as possible to keep off the flies and the other insects that bite them, and today if you travel to Egypt so I am told you will see the same thing. That was evidently the background of his dream. And so he sees the heifers in the midst of the Nile coming up and they are grazing in the marsh grass.

Then seven other cows come up and these are different. These are ugly and gaunt. Not sleek and fat. And suddenly they fall on the good ones and consume them. Pharaoh awakened and had another dream then and the second dream was the dream of

seven ears of grain. He saw one single stalk rise up suddenly, seven full ears of grain, and then he saw another stalk and evidently seven ears thin and scorched by the east wind sprouted up after them, and suddenly in this dream just as it had happened in the first the seven thin and scorched ears fell on the others and consumed them and he awakened. Now he was troubled because it was clear to him that these dreams had some meaning but he could not fathom them. It almost appears that he should have been able to fathom them simply because he was an Egyptian. Obviously the lines have interpretation there for anyone to see whose mind is open but he could not see. So he did the first thing that one did. In Egypt they love interpreters of dreams, astrologers and others who practiced the scientific arts so called, and so he called for the Egyptians. They were men who were versed in hieroglyphics, astrology and the various other types of things that characterize those arts, and he told them the dream but there was no one who could interpret them to him. This is I think a beautiful illustration of the fact that the world does not understand the things of God. So just as Joseph was opposed to the Egyptian interpreters of the dreams, just as Moses as they were opposed to the sorcerers from Egypt, just as the Lord Jesus Christ is opposed to the scribes and the Pharisees and just as the Apostle Paul is opposed to those who propound heresies in his day divine wisdom and the wisdom of this world are different.

As the apostle puts it in a very familiar text that we often cite the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God they are foolishness to him neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned. Incidentally, if you are in the audience this morning and you are getting nothing out of it is not entirely my fault. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, it is impossible for you to understand spiritual truths until you have received the one who interprets truth the Holy Spirit and he comes only if we have come to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

YouOne might also ask the question, why did God speak to them in dreams, why did he not speak to them directly? Well it is helpful to remember that we are in the early

stages of the progress of the divine revelation. This is in essence the childhood of the world. And he spoke to them on a level that they could easily or more easily comprehend. He spoke to them by dreams -- that is why in the Old Testament we do have some of this. Well at this point the chief cupbearer who has forgotten all about Joseph remembers him. And I gather myself that the reason that he remembered Joseph is not because he had really forgotten him, but he senses that now he might be able to make a few points with Pharaoh by reminding Pharaoh of the fact that Joseph is in prison. And so in other words, he remembers Joseph in order to gratify his master and gain some recognition from him.

So he tells Pharaoh about his experiences when he and the baker were there and about their dreams and this Hebrew youth, the servant of Potiphar who was able to interpret the dreams and things came out just as Joseph had said. And so immediately Pharaoh, wanting to know the significance of that dream that may indicate -- incidentally, that this Pharaoh was a Pharaoh who was interested in the well being of his country. He recognized that these dreams had something to do with him and with Egypt and anxious to find out what it was.

He hurriedly sent for Joseph. I wonder what Joseph had been thinking all of these two years. Was he reflecting on the bitterness of these experiences, how his brothers had sold him into slavery, how he had stood for the Lord God revealing his dreams to them and suffered for it, how then finally he had worked himself up to having an important position in Potiphar's house, and how he had stood again for the truth of the divine revelation that he knew at that time, and was mistreated and put in prison and put in fetters?

And then was he reflecting also upon the fact that the cupbearer, after he had extended him the mercy of the interpretation of his dream which came to pass, had forgotten him? You can imagine that Joseph by this time might have been a bitter young man. But there was no evidence of bitterness in Joseph's heart at all. It seems to me that

they are more correct to say that undoubtedly while he was in prison he had just a few more years to reflect on what is the really important thing in life. And the really important thing in life is, what is the will of God for me? And Joseph, when he might have been tantalized by his experience and have come out a bitter young man comes out and in the midst of a great opportunity to get himself out of prison by saying, yes I have authority to interpret dreams. He even denies that. He says that it's not in me, not I; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer. So he reflected on what is the purpose of God in our life.

That's something that doesn't hurt us ever to reflect upon. What is the purpose of God in my life? And it delivers us from bitterness over the experiences that we have and it also delivers us from undue rejoicing in the blessings of life that we have. Finally, the most important thing in our life is, what is the will of God for me? In the accomplishment of that, be it in a very insignificant place, even a place of suffering or in a place of influence and prosperity, the response to the will of God is really the important thing in life, and it is on the basis of that that God ultimately rewards his saints.

Well, he made haste to come out, the Scriptures, the text says that they made him run out of the dungeon. So they were really carrying him out in a hurry. A vivid picture of the turn of fortune that came to him. One moment he is in prison, the next he is appearing before the king of the land. So he gets his hair cut, and he puts on the proper clothes to appear before the king. That's not a bad idea even, and I have often reflected upon the fact that in the local church when we come together we come together to have fellowship in Christ. And the Scriptures say that when people meet together in his name that he is there, and it's not so bad after all to dress accordingly. Now I think that when a person is unable to dress accordingly, God of course does not look upon our appearances but if we are meeting with someone who is very important, well it doesn't hurt a bit to dress properly. But that's advice, that's not in the Bible. So, you can reject it if you like and you won't make me mad.

Well Pharaoh says that he has heard that Joseph is the kind of person who can interpret dreams. And Joseph says, not I, incidentally that is one word in the Hebrew text its a compound of a couple of prepositions in another route but nevertheless it is simply, not I. Verse 16, God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer. So, flattery does not decompose him, nor will he seek release as a payment for the interpretation. He does not take advantage of the occasion. Someone has given me a little book in which a lot of stories about grandpa who was a preacher as if I am a grandfather who is a preacher. Well I have been interested in these stories.

One of them is to the effect that grandpa had the ability to rise to the occasion. In one of his series of meetings in which some young toughs decided to harass him, so that he would pack up and leave the little community. One of them stood up in the midst of a sermon and said what is the difference between preacher and a fool? And he replied, Stand here beside me a moment I think the audience will see the difference. [Laughter]

And these young men were still determined however to do something about this and so the next morning in the town as he was walking down the street, one of them stood and took off his hat and bowed and said good morning, Father Abraham. And then a few feet down, another one stood in the same way, and followed the same gesture and said good morning Father Isaac and the third one bent over and tipped his head and bowed and spoke and said good morning Father Jacob and he stopped. Then he said I am neither Abraham, Isaac, nor Jacob. I am really Saul the son of Kish; and I am out seeking my father’s assess and just found three of them. [Laughter] Now if you have any books you would like to send to me, I’d be happy to read them. [More laughter] You see they send me very scholarly literature.

Now, Joseph did not take advantage of the situation, he didn't look around and say well the reason that Pharaoh these fellows cannot interpret dreams is because they are dolts, they are dunderheads, they are dunces. Come to the Hebrews and we will tell you where the truth lies. But he gives a rather gutsy witness, not I but God will give you a

favorable answer. Now is it not interesting that Joseph, a man of God is given insight, and that is true to our life today. It is the man of God who has insight in spiritual things. We were talking in the office, I was not talking, I was listening to the girls talk – pardon me, I was listening to the ladies, the young ladies talk in the office the other day and they were talking about Joseph, and Joseph’s plan, and they were making the simple statement that a Christian today in our country could do so much for the United States of America for the very simple things that Joseph did in order to bring this particular land through this difficult time are principles that might be applied in any country.

And they were commenting on the fact that if we just follow the teachings of Scripture, the simple teachings of the Scripture, we would not be in the economic mess that we are in. Insight is given to men of God and so Joseph is a man of God and he has insight given to him. Pharaoh records his dream to Joseph small differences are found in it to emphasize certain points. But nevertheless it is essentially as he has told it previously and Joseph interprets with as one of the commentators has said "deft skill and a sure touch."

He comments upon the fact that God is merciful to the Egyptians in letting them know the future. Twice he says God is showing to Pharaoh what he is about to do and that repetition itself emphasizes the certainty of the things that is going to come to pass and also one gathers from reading this that this is a call to action. All prophecy, all prediction is a call for action, and it was a call for action and therefore there must be a response to it. And so Joseph in Verse 33 to Verse 36 unfolds his economic program.

Now it does include a kind of windfall profit tax, which incidentally, should not give the President any comfort in his own particular windfall profits tax, but it was something like that and essentially it was this: that a fifth of the produce of the land in the abundant years would be given into the government in order that they might be preserved through the seven years of famine that was to follow.

There are some interesting things about Joseph's program incidentally. I am not sure that we can say that this is a very good program. Let me remind you of this. When this whole program had unfolded, everything belonged to Pharaoh, because the packs came in a fifth of the produce, and then in the years of the famine it was doled out to the people, and then when they could not buy anything or they did not have anything, Joseph said all right, give me your cattle and then finally the land; and so the land and the cattle and everything at the end of it belonged to Pharaoh.

It's no wonder that we read down here that the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and all his servants because everything is winding up in the hands of Pharaoh. I almost lost a friend at breakfast this morning when I suggested that, in humor incidentally, I suggested that may be after all Keynesian economics is biblical. And he almost was unable to digest his breakfast after I said that. [Laughter]

But on the other hand Joseph is the means for the preservation of life of the Egyptians, and at the conclusion of it they are very happy over the things that have happened because in the 47th chapter we read that the people said, “You have saved our lives, let us find favor in the sight of my Lord and we will be Pharaoh's slaves.” And so it may be that for their life it was worth it but in the end of Joseph's program everything finally is in the hands of Pharaoh.

It was of course a very practical kind of proposal that Joseph suggested. Let me read it to you again—beginning with verse 34: let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance, then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority and let them guard it. And let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish during the famine. It was evidence to the fact that Joseph, the man of God, is very practical in the application of the prophecy that he has been enabled by God's grace to unfold.

And a little book that my friend has given me, there was another little story that I thought was pretty good. He said that a young minister was preaching a trial sermon in a village church hoping to be called to the pulpit, the officials were anxious that they should have a man who was an educated man and they were not sure of him and so they decided to with the help of a school teacher give him a slight examination afterwards.

And so as they sat down the lead man with an air of scholarship began by saying, Preacher, would you say that a hen sets or sits, and the young man who came from the hills said I don't really care whether she sits or sets. What I am interested in is when she cackles, is she laying or lying? Now that's supposed to illustrate practicality. Whether it does or not Joseph was a practical man and after his prophecy he suggests a program, and Pharaoh likes the program. And all of his servants like the program and in fact Pharaoh says can we find a man like this in whom is a divine spirit?

Now if you have a New American Standard Bible you will notice that the word “spirit” is spelled with little s. Now frequently this has been said to you and I am sure you know this. In a Hebrew text as well as in the Greek text, there are no capital letters in the manuscripts and consequently this is a matter of interpretation if the context suggests that the reference is to a divine spirit, the Holy Spirit, then the translator will translate with a capital S. But it’s clear that they do not think that Pharaoh would know about the divine Holy Spirit and so they have translated it this way, in whom is a divine spirit.

It is on the other hand possible to render it the other way. Pharaoh may have more information about theology than they the translators have given him credit for, and in that sense if it should be rendered “in whom is the Spirit of God” as the text reads literally, the Spirit of God, then it would be the first mention in the Bible of the Holy Spirit in his activity of enduing man with power. And in this case, enduing Joseph with power to interpret dreams.

Old Testament you read about the Holy Spirit being in someone it is not the permanent indwelling of the New Testament, which the Lord Jesus says on two occasions has not yet occurred. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual giving them power to accomplish specific tasks. For example, the Holy Spirit was in those who constructed the Tabernacle -- so with skill they conducted it. It is the work of the Spirit; it's the Spirit in the endowment of power. In this case that is meant is that Joseph has a spirit that is not human or supernatural kind of spirit then this translation would be correct. Can we find a man like him in whom is such a divine kind of spirit? That may be all that Pharaoh understood. But at least he understood that there was something special about Joseph.

And as a result of this he says, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are, you are the one that ought to administer this program." And so he is given the task of doing it. Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, he put it on Joseph's hand and he clothed him with garments of fine linen, he put a gold necklace around his neck, he had him ride in the second chariot which indicates that he was not simply the head of a department under Pharaoh but he was the second in the land. And furthermore no one should raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt except Joseph should give permission.

And he also gave him a wife, and he gave him a wife from an important family as well. Now, it is possible to interpret this as a mistake on Joseph's part and perhaps it was. I will say more about that in just one moment. But we'll just leave it at that. He gave him a wife and so Joseph has an Egyptian wife, a Gentile wife.

Now then the remainder of the chapter is the record of the administration of Joseph. The seven years of plenty and then the sons of Joseph's are mentioned and that is an interesting little insight into Joseph because it indicates that even in the midst of all of the things that were happening in Egypt his thoughts were still thoughts about his God that he had learned about in the land of Canaan, for he names the first child Manasseh and names the next one Ephraim, for God has made me fruitful in the land of my

affliction. Even in the midst of his prosperity Joseph remains the man under God, interested in the will of God. As a result of Joseph's work, disaster was averted in the land of Egypt and Egypt influence actually is preserved throughout the whole of the world.

Now let me conclude by just saying a few words about things that at least for me have made an impression upon me. Again I mention this is a magnificent example of the sovereign providence of God in the accomplishment of his purposes. F.B. Meyer who has a little book on Joseph has I think some interesting and helpful words concerning Joseph. He says, “It was a wonderful ascension in a single bound from the dungeon to the steps of the throne. His father had rebuked him. Now Pharaoh, the greatest monarch of his time, welcomes him. His brethren despised him. Now the proudest priesthood of the world opens its ranks to receive him by marriage into their midst, considering it wiser to conciliate a man who was from that moment to be the greatest force in Egyptian politics and life. The hands that were hard with the toils of a slave are adorned with a signet ring. The feet are no longer tormented by fetters. A chain of gold is linked around his neck. The coat of many colors torn from him by violence and defiled by blood, and the garment left in the hand of the adulteress are exchanged for vestures of fine linen drawn from the royal wardrobe. He was once trampled upon as the ox carrying of all things, now all Egypt is commanded to bow down before him as he rides in the second chariot, Prime Minister of Egypt and second only to the King.”

Now our thoughts of course turn again to the parallel between the life of Joseph and the life of Christ. In the chapter that we discussed, chapter 37, I made reference to some of these things. Let me remind you of them because Stephen in his speech in the Book of Acts makes reference to them. There are so many things about Joseph's life that picture our Lord Jesus that Stephen was not making a mistake but really studying Scripture when he likened Joseph's life to our Lord Jesus Christ's life.

For example, Joseph was a man in whom the Father's affection found its delight. Jacob loved Joseph more than all the other children. Our Lord Jesus Christ at the baptism hears the voice from heaven, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Joseph has a commission from Jacob to go out and find the brethren. The Lord Jesus is one sent forth in the fullness of time to redeem them that were under the law. Joseph is rejected by his brethren. In the New Testament we read that he the Lord Jesus came unto his own and his own received him not. He was rejected by his brethren. Joseph was then exposed to the humiliation of slavery and ultimately the jail in Egypt. The Lord Jesus Christ was exposed to humiliation.

The Apostle Paul speaks about the fact that though he was in the form of God, he did not think it robbery or a thing to be grasped after to be equal with God but he emptied himself, took upon in the form of a servant, came in the likeness of men and ultimately became obedient unto death and even such a death as the criminal death of a cross. Such a thing as a cross. The apostle puts it in words that stress the character of that humiliation. Now of course Joseph is not a man who suffers vicariously in the sense that our Lord Jesus did. But that suffering in that jail was on the way to the blessing of the children of Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ's humiliation was the humiliation of the suffering of death by which the blood was shed for our redemption.

There is always another degree in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus as over against the sufferings of men. And then just as Joseph is exalted hurriedly out of the prison, so the Lord Jesus Christ on the third day is resurrected and becomes the exalted Lord at the right hand of the Father able to save unto the uttermost woes that come unto God by him. Just as Joseph is exalted to be a Savior, so the Lord Jesus is exalted to be a Savior.

While Joseph was in Egypt as the exalted Prime Minister, he obtained a Gentile bride. I don't want to make too much of this, but you will remember that the church of Jesus Christ today is primarily a Gentile bride. Now the church of Jesus Christ today arose out of the Jewish people who were on the day of Pentecost, it was first of all Jewish in its

character and has always had Jewish people in it down through the centuries. There is a [indistinct] that according to the election of grace forming part of the church of Jesus Christ all through the ages. But this is the time of the fullness of the Gentiles and when the time of the fullness of the Gentiles comes to an end the Apostle Paul says then all Israel shall be seen. Our Lord Jesus acquiring a Gentile bride in the present day is very close to that which Joseph did in illustration in his day.

ethren are reconciled to him threw the work of Joseph. And so Israel, the nation dwelling apart now in rejection, scattered to the four corners of the earth, the Scriptures tell us will eventually be reconciled to their brother the Lord Jesus Christ. I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplication, it is the work of god who in the future works in Israel. I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplications that efficacious for the Nation Israel. And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, Zechariah continues. And there shall be a grand reconciliation of the Nation Israel, and I want to tell you this that all the saints of heaven are going to rejoice over what happens when Israel, that crucified the Lord Jesus, makes that great confession in Isaiah Chapter 53, confession of having crucified their Messiah. And mourn before the Lord God as one mourns for an only son.

ThatIt almost always brings tears to my eyes to think of that glorious day, when Israel is reconciled to the lord Jesus Christ. I remember later on in this great Book of Genesis, Joseph went off by himself and wept, and so our Lord Jesus Christ will be touched by the repentance of the Nation Israel. That’s a remarkable picture that the Holy Spirit has constructed through the life of Joseph to represent the life of Christ.

Now Joseph became a benefactor, and in his decree that in the political and material way he became a savior of the land of Egypt. He was the absolute master of the land politically and materially. And of course they came to him, they all said go to Joseph and saved them. We have of course a Joseph greater than that Joseph. He too is

a Savior. And if you want to know what it is to be saved from the guilt of sin and to have the assurance of eternal life, and to have your future mapped out by God, go to Joseph.

Go to our greater than Joseph. He is more competent than Joseph. He has a kingdom of greater spiritual breadth and greater administrative capacity and also greater justice. And he welcomes those who come to Him to receive the forgiveness of sins. If you are here this morning and you have believed him the Lord Jesus Christ will invite you to come to him who laid down his life that you might live. May God help you to recognize your lost condition, the famine of your own spirit apart from God and may you come and receive as a free gift everlasting life. Come to Christ. Come to our greater than Joseph. Come to our great Prime Minister of the affairs of God, the eternal second person of the Trinity himself and receive everlasting life. We invite you to come as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus, come now. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the word of God. For these wonderful glorious experiences that one of the saints of the old covenant had. And we thank Thee for the grace manifested in the dealings with Joseph. Lord help us to learn from Joseph’s life. Enable us O God to learn the important submission to the will of God. Enable us to learn the lesson of courage before kings or before our friends. Enable us Lord to realize that the most important thing in life is not our money, our possessions, our friends, even our families. The most important thing is our relationship to Thee. Oh, God. Lord, there are probably some in this audience who have never come to Christ. Give them no rest or peace until they rest in him.

May at this very moment within their own hearts the Holy Spirit bring the sins of guilt and condemnation to them. May there be confessions, and then the glorious gospel Christ died for our sins, and may there be response. Give salvation Lord. May grace, mercy, and peace be with the us as we part.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

“From Prison to Prime Minister” by S. Lewis Johnson
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