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Series: The Providence of God #1469
Title: Genesis 39, 41
Joseph Goes to Jail

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world! If I asked you to name someone whose story you think you know best from the Bible's Old Testament, whom would you name? Abraham? King David? Daniel? Would it be Esther or Ruth? I will venture to guess that a more popular answer to this question is *Joseph*! Many of you already have a very good, accurate, biblical kind of working knowledge of this man's life. You know him well, because you have studied the chapters in Genesis that tell us, in fascinating detail, about his life and you know his mention in Hebrews chapter 11.

Joseph is a popular personality in the Bible to preach and teach. If you stay tuned to this radio station throughout the day and night, you will hear about him. And on the multitude of really good podcasts available others who teach the Word of God to you will inevitably come to Joseph.

Others of you know him better from the Broadway or London's West End musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*. Andrew Lloyd Weber wrote the music. Perhaps you have seen it? Well, let's make it so the foundation of our knowledge of Joseph's life comes directly from the Bible, but a little healthy entertainment can certainly serve as a good memory device if you catch your toe tapping to one of Weber's songs.

Our purpose in following Joseph along in Genesis is to make a direct line between his life and the providence of His God and our God. There is only One God and this is He. Yesterday we read how Joseph's brothers sinned against him, *but* how God directed their evil act, how God overruled their sin in order to get Joseph to where *God* wanted him to go: Egypt. We said God did not cause the brothers to sin. They sinned with their own volition. And the Lord did not approve of their sin. But God providentially guided their sinful actions towards a good end, even though what is good about this end does not appear on the surface of these events!

And that is where we pick-up the story today. Once again, Joseph bears the brunt of someone else's sin, but God puts His invisible hand on Joseph's life and directs this evil action such that God will be honored and glorified. And when we left off last time I had read down to Genesis 39, verse 6, which reads, **"Joseph was handsome in form and appearance."** This is a subtle, but key detail as we go into verse 7. I hope you are able to look at your Bible with me, as I read Genesis chapter 39, verses 7-21. If you have your hands on the wheel or are otherwise occupied, read this later when you have time. Genesis 39, verse 7 begins…

"It came about after these events…" A quick comment from me. Whenever you see a sentence begin with something like "it came about after these events…" that is often our clue in reading Scripture to look for something important that is about to happen. *And*, often this signals the providence of God in someone's life. (Or something's life.) "It came about…" can often be translated "in the providence of God." And that is what we will see here. I continue at verse 7.

"It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me.' 8 But [Joseph] refused and said to his master's wife, 'Behold, with me *here*, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?'"

This merits another interruption from yours truly. I hope you caught that. Joseph has the strength of character to say, with no one else around (except Potiphar's wife), how could I commit this great evil and sin against *God*? This shows how godly Joseph is.

And please notice the emphasis: evil and sin. It would not be just sin to slip into the bed with this woman, it would also be *evil*. And that would be evil committed against God. Joseph understands that all our sin is a sin against God.

Would Joseph have been sinning against Potiphar's wife if he had sex with her? Yes. Would Joseph have been sinning against Potiphar if he had sex with his wife? Yes, of course. Would Joseph even have sinned against himself if he gave into the temptation? Yes. And yet his main concern is offending the Lord God. Consensual sex between two adults, outside the bounds of marriage, is an evil made against God. We will do well to keep this on our minds and in our conscience. It is easy to make excuses if/when we are in Joseph's place, but there are no acceptable excuses for adultery. The spiritual maturity and physical discipline over his body comes to the forefront in this episode of Joseph's young life.

Verse 10: **"As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her *or* be with her. 11 Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. 12 She caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me!' And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.**

13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, 'See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. 15 When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside.' 16 So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. 17 Then she spoke to him with these words, 'The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; 18 and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside.'

19 Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, 'This is what your slave did to me,' his anger burned. 20 So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. 21 But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer."

Ah, here we go again. At first Joseph's brother's sinned against him. And now Potiphar's wife sins against Joseph. She is flat out lying to her husband about what happened. But it seems to Potiphar that his wife is telling the truth. And he's angry. What husband would not be? And so he punishes the Hebrew Joseph by sticking him in the jail with Pharaoh's other prisoners. And we look at this and think, how could this be the providence of God? And you might ask me, "Are you saying that it was God's will that Joseph go to jail for an evil and a sin he did *not* commit?" And I will answer you, yes, that is exactly what I am saying because I believe that is exactly what the Scripture is saying.

God's will was that Joseph go to jail. And God supernaturally directed the clear sin of Mrs. Potiphar in order that God's purposes be fulfilled in His servant Joseph's life. God has permitted this sin and is so directing it that what Satan meant for evil, what Potiphar's wife meant for sin, God will turn around for good. And let me make an important connection now to what happens from here.

In Genesis chapter 40, down in that very jail, Joseph becomes the fellow prisoner of Pharaoh's chief cup bearer and chief baker. They each have a dream and Joseph interprets their dreams (accurately, by the way). In Genesis 40, verse 14 Joseph specifically requests the chief cupbearer remember him to Pharaoh when the cupbearer was released. However, later in the chapter the chief cupbearer, restored to his position, fails to remember Joseph. That is, until in Genesis chapter 41 the Pharaoh himself starts dreaming.

And when his magicians and all his supposedly wise men could not interpret the Egyptian king's dreams, at that point the chief cupbearer brought up Joseph's name. I love verse 14 of Genesis 41. I have gone all the way down in the text to Genesis 41, and verse 14, **"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, [Joseph] came to Pharaoh."**

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Ah, again this is the providence of the Living God. Over the course of time Joseph has gone from visiting his brother's at Dothan in Canaan, out tending sheep, to in chains and dragged as a slave down to Egypt, purchased by Potiphar and put in charge of his household, then exiled to jail as a prisoner, and now clean shaven and wearing the proper attire here is Joseph standing before the mightiest ruler in the world: the Pharaoh of Egypt! And all of this because God permitted evil and sin against Joseph, but then God directed, restrained and limited, and overruled such evil and sin so that here Joseph is. Right where God wants him.

We will return to Joseph tomorrow. But let me draw all of this back to Eve and Adam in the Garden in Eden. We ask: why did God even allow evil and sin into the garden? Our answer: because God can direct evil and sin such that He will be honored and glorified. As Joseph's life demonstrates God has a purpose for permitting that which is evil. OK, much more on this tomorrow on God Is.

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