

Sermon Notes for May 22, 2016

Sermon Series on Questioning God In Our Trials
“How Do I Respond To All Of The
Unfairness That Has Happened In My Life”
Selected Scriptures

The story is told of an airliner which began to develop trouble in mid-air. One engine began to smoke. Over the speaker came the pilot’s reassuring voice informing the passengers of a small problem. One engine had caught fire, but it had been extinguished. With three remaining engines, the plane would easily reach its destination. Then a second engine failed. Once again, the pilot calmly assured the passengers there was no danger; two engines would suffice. A third engine failed. Now the pilot informed the passengers that it would be necessary to land short of their destination. **Finally, the fourth engine failed, and from their windows the passengers saw the plane’s crew in parachutes descending to the earth.**

The pilot’s calm and reassuring voice again came over the speaker: **“Ladies and gentlemen, we are having a problem with the airplane. We will need to make an emergency landing. The pilot and crew have abandoned the plane and are parachuting to safety. There is no need to panic. The plane is operating on automatic pilot, and everything is under control . . . control . . . control . . .”**

Introduction

A. Today, We Continue Our New Sermon Series Entitled: “Questioning God In Our Trials”

1. Many in our church family have been experiencing all kinds of trials, so I wanted to preach a sermon series to encourage them
2. As well, am I preaching this series to those of you who will **eventually** go through a time of trial

B. During This Sermon Series, We will Be Looking At The Trials Of Many People In The Scriptures

1. I am always confused about Christians who believe that they should have a happy, great, fulfilled and stress-free life
 - A. HOW CAN A PERSON HAVE A STRESS-FREE LIFE IN A WORLD OF SINNERS?**
 - b. AND, WHERE IN SCRIPTURE DOES GOD PROMISE ANY OF US A STRESS-FREE LIFE?**
 - c. After all, what did Jesus say:
John 16:33 – “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. **In this world you will have trouble.** But take heart! I have overcome the world.”
 1. I used to get upset when I traveled and there was a problem with the flight
 2. when I travel now, I **expect** a problem and if the problem does not occur, I am happily surprised

2. Last week, we looked at the trials of Noah
 - a. who could argue that Noah had a “few trials” in his life?
 1. God called Noah to build a big, big boat
 2. it took him some 100 years to build this boat
 3. he and his family were in the boat with about 50,000 animals for some 370 days
 - b. so; did Noah have a stress-free life?
3. Today, we will look at another Old Testament saint; Joseph
 - a. I am fully aware that I have preached on Joseph before
 - b. however, I do not think that there is a better picture in the Old Testament of a man;
 1. who went through multiple trials
 2. who had done nothing to “cause” these trials
 3. but, all the while, was dependent during his trials, on the sovereignty of God
 - c. **ultimately, the only thing that the believer can do in times of trials is to hang onto and rest in the sovereignty of God**
4. Today, I want to address those of you who have gone through hurtful trials **caused by other people**
 - a. examples:
 1. hurt by a parent
 2. hurt by a sibling
 3. hurt by friend
 4. hurt by a boss
 - b. and, perhaps, you could say to God:
 1. **“WHERE WERE YOU WHEN I WENT THROUGH ALL OF THAT HURT?”**
 2. you will see today that Joseph was hurt many times by other people; and none of it was his fault.

C. Depending On The Sovereignty Of God When One Goes Through Trials

1. If we are to depend on the sovereignty of God as we go through trials, what is the sovereignty of God?
A.W. Pink - The sovereignty of God. What do we mean by this expression? **We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the god-hood of God.** To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that **God is God.** To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the **Most High**, doing according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the **Almighty**, the **Possessor of all power** in Heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is "**The Governor among the nations**", setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the "**Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.**" **Such is the God of the Bible.**"
2. Now that we have defined the sovereignty of God, let us witness it in the life of Joseph

I. Joseph's PAST.

A. Joseph's POSITION IN THE FAMILY.

1. Joseph was the **12th son** of the twelve sons of his father; Jacob.
2. However, Joseph was the **first-born of Jacob's second wife; Rachel.**
 - a. all of the other brothers were not the children of Rachel, but of Jacob's other wives and relationships
 - b. because Jacob loved Rachel the most of all of his wives, Jacob considered Joseph to be his first-born son, although he actually had 11 other sons!**

B. Joseph's PREFERENCE WITH HIS FATHER.

1. Because of Jacob's special love for his wife, Jacob loved Joseph **the most** of all of his twelve sons and it was very, very obvious to all of his brothers.
Genesis 37:3 – "Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him."
 - a. because of his special love for Joseph, Jacob made Joseph a special coat that he did not make for his other sons
 1. most coats that were worn had no color
 2. most coats were a piece of cloth with a hole cut out for the head. It had no sleeves. A simple rope would be used to secure the coat to the waist.
 3. however, Joseph's coat:
 - a. had many colors
 - b. AND had sleeves
 - b. this special coat, besides being a **STATEMENT** of Jacob's preferred love for Joseph, also indicated that he would be the one who would ultimately get his father's blessing
2. Obviously, the older brothers were jealous of Joseph.
Genesis 37:4 – "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, **they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.**"
 - a. they hated him
 - b. parents, are you surprised?
3. Can you really fault Joseph because his father showed him special attention?
 - a. Joseph did not "deserve" his brothers' wrath
 - b. it was Joseph's father who made the mistake to show special preference to Joseph

C. Joseph's PROBLEM WITH HIS BROTHERS.

1. In addition to the coat given to Joseph by his father Jacob, we see some of the other problems that the brothers had with Joseph:
 - a. Joseph **reported on his brothers**
Genesis 37:2b – Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, **and he brought their father a bad report about them.**
 1. once, while tending the flocks with his brothers, Joseph saw something that bothered him about his brothers
 2. so, he "tattled" on his brothers to his father, Jacob

b. **Joseph revealed to his brothers**

Genesis 37:6-9 - He said to them, "**Listen to this dream I had:** We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and **bowed down to it.**" His brothers said to him, "**Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?**" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "**Listen,**" he said, "**I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.**"

1. at another time, Joseph shared a dream that he had about his brothers
2. where they were bowing down to him
3. I have two older brothers
 - a. trust me, you don't ever tell your older brothers that you are better than them
 - b. I will always be a "little brother"
2. Once again, it is not surprising that Joseph's brothers hated him.

II. Joseph's PROBLEM.

A. The JEALOUSY of Joseph's Brothers.

1. The "**coup de grace**" of the relationship between Joseph and his brothers came when Joseph's father Jacob sent Joseph to "check up" on the brothers who were tending the sheep, some 75 miles away.
Genesis 37:12-13 – "Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem. and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. **Come, I am going to send you to them.**" "**Very well,**" he replied."
 - a. all of the brothers, except Joseph, were taking care of the sheep and sleeping on the ground
 - b. while Joseph was back home "watching Sports Center"
2. After searching for his brothers, Joseph found them in Dothan. **NOTICE THE BROTHERS' RESPONSE TO JOSEPH'S ARRIVAL:**
Genesis 37:19-20 - "**Here comes that dreamer.** Come now, **let's kill him** and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."
 - a. as the brothers saw Joseph riding up to them, the brothers expressed their absolute hatred for him
Ephesians 6:4 – "**Fathers, do not exasperate your children;** instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
 - b. **ESPECIALLY** since he was not working like they were

B. The JEOPARDY Of Joseph's Future.

1. At this point, we see that Joseph's life could have been over.
 - a. upon his arrival, the brothers physically overtook Joseph
 - b. and; the brothers threw Joseph in a deep well and were going to leave him to die

c. **BUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT. . .**

Genesis 37:25 – “As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.”

1. “amazingly” a caravan of Ishmaelites, who were on their way to Egypt, were spotted **AT THAT VERY MOMENT!**
2. the brothers then altered their plan and decided to sell Joseph to the traveling caravan
- d. to cover up their crime, they took that “special coat” of Joseph’s, killed a goat and poured blood all over the coat
 1. when they got back home, they showed the bloody coat to their father Jacob
 2. Jacob believed the story and was totally devastated over the apparent death of his son
2. so, Joseph now found himself being taken all the way to Egypt.
 - a. he was seventeen years old
 - b. he had never left home
 - c. he had been deserted by his brothers and was on his way to become a slave in a culture and country hundreds of miles away from home
 - d. Joseph CERTAINLY must have asked . . . **WHERE IS GOD?**
 - e. **WHAT HAD JOSEPH DONE WRONG BUT OBEY HIS FATHER?**

III. God’s PROVIDENCE.

A. The Unfairness Of POTIPHAR.

1. No sooner did Joseph arrive in Egypt than he was bought as a slave by a man named Potiphar.
 - a. Potiphar was a high ranking military officer in Egypt (like the Pentagon)
 - b. soon after beginning his service to Potiphar, after serving his master faithfully, Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his money and household. **Genesis 39:2-4** – “**The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.**”
 1. it is very interesting to me that Joseph “made the best of a bad situation,” perhaps because his trust in the sovereignty of God
 2. and God blessed Joseph and consequently, God blessed Potiphar
 3. what would you or I have done in this situation?
 - a. **WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?**
 - b. **WHERE ARE YOU GOD?**
2. But, this was not the worst that would happen to Joseph in Potiphar’s house
 - a. because Joseph was good-looking and virile, Potiphar’s wife began to make sexual advances to him

Genesis 39:6b-7 – Now Joseph was **well-built and handsome**, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "**Come to bed with me!**"

- b. **REPEATEDLY**, Joseph refused her advances
- c. until one day, when no one was home, Potiphar's wife made a blatant, obvious sexual advance on Joseph

Genesis 39:11-12 – "One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, '**Come to bed with me!**' **But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.**"

 - 1. this proposal by Potiphar's wife was as blatant as you could get
 - 2. so, Joseph had no choice but to run out of the house to get away from her
- d. Potiphar's wife responded in anger

Genesis 39:14-15- "Look," she said to them, "**this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.**"

 - 1. "**Hell hath no fury like that of a woman scorned.**"
 - 2. Potiphar's wife, humiliated and embarrassed, responded to Joseph's refusal by telling her husband that Joseph had tried to rape her
 - 3. and, as a result, Joseph was thrown into prison
 - a. we must note that Potiphar could have executed Joseph as a slave
 - b. perhaps Potiphar didn't believe his wife, but he had to do something to "save face"
- e. **ONCE AGAIN, WHAT HAD JOSEPH DONE TO DESERVE THIS?**

B. The Unfairness Of PRISON.

- 1. As soon as Joseph was thrown into prison, he once again, began to serve, so much so that he was placed in charge of the prison.

Genesis 39:20b-23 – "**But while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him**; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. **So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.** The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and **gave him success in whatever he did.**"

 - a. notice what Joseph **DID NOT DO** – once again, He did not look at what had been done **TO HIM**
 - b. instead, he only considered what could be done **THROUGH HIM!**
 - c. Joseph must have thought that a sovereign God had "allowed" these things to happen to him, so he saw it as "another opportunity" to serve his God
- 2. After being in jail for some time, Joseph met two men who had worked for the Pharaoh a baker and a cupbearer.
 - a. each man had been thrown into prison by Pharaoh

- b. while in prison, each man had a dream and Joseph was able to interpret each man's dream
 - 1. the cupbearer's dream showed that he would be released
 - 2. the baker's dream however, showed that he would be hanged
- c. after the cupbearer was released . . . **Genesis 40:23-41:1** says, "The **chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.** When **two full years had passed**, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile."
 - 1. Joseph was forgotten by the cupbearer
 - 2. and Joseph stayed in prison FOR TWO MORE YEARS!
 - 3. **AGAIN, WHAT HAD JOSEPH DONE TO DESERVE THIS?**

C. The Unfairness of POWER.

1. At the end of the two years, Pharaoh himself had a dream but could find no one to interpret his dream.
2. The cupbearer remembered that he had been in prison with a fellow prisoner **TWO YEARS BEFORE** who had interpreted his own dream.
3. So, INSTANTLY Joseph was summoned from the jail to appear before the Pharaoh.
4. and Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream:
 - a. the dream revealed that Egypt would go through seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine
 - b. Joseph said to the Pharaoh:
Genesis 41:28-31 - "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. **Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them.** Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the **famine will ravage the land.** The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be **so severe.**"
5. After the dream was interpreted, Pharaoh immediately announced that Joseph would be placed as second in command only to Pharaoh.
Genesis 41:38-40 - "**Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?**" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, **there is no one so discerning and wise as you.** You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. **Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.**"
 - a. Joseph was given the signet ring FROM PHARAOH'S HAND
 - b. he was dressed in fine linen and given a gold chair
 - c. and rode in a chariot directly behind the Pharaoh
6. Joseph was now 30 years old.
 - a. he was captured as a slave at 17 years of age
 - b. and now he was second in command of all of Egypt working for Potiphar or in prison some 13 years!
7. As a result of Pharaoh's dream and Joseph's interpretation –
 - a. grain was stored during the seven years of abundance
 - b. and, when the seven years of famine occurred, Joseph was highly revered throughout Egypt for his wisdom.

Genesis 41:53-57 - The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, **just as Joseph had said**. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "**Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.**" When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. **And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.**

8. In a sense, the power that was placed on Joseph was not earned; "Just like his trials were not 'earned.'"

IV. God's PURPOSE.

A. The PROBLEM In PALESTINE.

1. At the same time that Egypt was going through a famine, so was Palestine – the home of Joseph's father and 11 brothers.
2. Because of the famine, Joseph's father Jacob sent some of his sons to Egypt to buy some grain.
 - a. little did these brothers know that **their little brother Joseph** was still alive
 - b. and most importantly, little did they know that Joseph was second in command to Pharaoh
 - c. boy, were the brothers in for a big surprise!

B. The PURPOSE of PROVIDENCE.

1. The PRESENTATION of Joseph.
 - a. the brothers entered a room to ask for grain and guess who they were to make their request to?
 - b. you can only imagine the scene:
 1. Joseph is clean shaven
 2. with Egyptian make-up on
 3. dressed in royal robes
 4. not easily recognized by his brothers
 5. after all, it had been some 27 years since his brothers had seen him
 - c. however, Joseph was so overcome with emotion in seeing his brothers after all of those years that he had to excuse himself to weep
2. The PERSPECTIVE of Joseph.
 - a. a **word to the brothers:**
Genesis 45:4 - Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "**I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!**"
 1. amazingly, instead of ranting or yelling or sending his brothers to the same death they had consigned him to, Joseph told his brothers not to be pained or angry about themselves because they had sold him into slavery
 2. even though it **was** a sinful act

b. a word about God

1. the **Hebrew** is very clear here about God's **INVOLVEMENT**
Genesis 45:5 – “And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that **God sent me ahead of you.**”
 - a. despite Joseph's brothers sin, Joseph showed his understanding of God's sovereignty by saying that **God** had sent him to Egypt ahead of them
 1. the Hebrew tense is an active tense.
 2. it shows that **God is the subject** of the action
 3. so Joseph was saying; you (the brothers) did not send me to Egypt, instead, **GOD SENT ME TO EGYPT!**
 - b. the Hebrew word can't possibly be misunderstood
 1. God sent Joseph
 3. **NOT HIS BROTHERS!**
2. the **Hebrew** is also very clear about God's **INTENT**
Genesis 45:7 – “But God sent me ahead of you **to preserve for you a remnant on earth** and to **save your lives by a great deliverance.**”
 - a. for, not only did God send Joseph to Egypt, there was a **REASON** that God sent Joseph to Egypt;
 - b. it was **TO PRESERVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE!**
 - c. the word preserve:
 1. to set, put, lay violent hands on
 2. to direct, ordain, establish, appoint, constitute, make, determine, fix, bring to pass
3. so . . . you **CAN'T** misunderstand this text, if you understand the Hebrew
 - a. **EVEN** though the brothers sinned in selling their brother into slavery
 - b. God planned through all of Joseph's trials and suffering to save His people from extinction: **DESPITE:**
 1. being sold into slavery by his brothers
 2. working as a slave for **13 years** for Potiphar
 3. sitting in prison for **2 years**
4. look also at what Joseph said later to his brothers after the death of his father Jacob –
 - a. Joseph had taken care of his brothers for several years by allowing them to remain in Egypt
 - b. however, after their father Jacob died, the brothers feared that Joseph would harm them now that their father had died
 - c. **HOWEVER, NOTICE ONCE AGAIN WHAT JOSEPH SAID** to his fearful brothers:
Genesis 50:19-20 - But Joseph said to them, "**Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.**”

1. NOTICE – although the brothers intended to harm Joseph
2. **GOD INTENDED IT FOR GOOD!**
 - a. God turned a terrible, sinful situation to His purpose
 - b. **THAT IS HOW SOVEREIGN GOD IS!**

Conclusion

1. As you look at the suffering that people have put you through, you cannot minimize it:
 - a. abuse by parents
 - b. abuse by bosses or co-workers
 - c. abuse by spouses, children or other relatives
 - d. abuse by well-meaning Christians

2. However, every Christian must ask this question: **DO I TRULY BELIEVE IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD?**
 - a. no, God did not “cause” your abuse
 - b. but, HE COULD HAVE STOPPED IT, AND HE DIDN’T
 - c. just like God did not stop the abuse of Joseph!

3. Did God stop the abuse of Jesus Christ?

Acts 2:23-24 – “This man was handed over to you **by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.** But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”

 - a. was Jesus Christ sinned against by those who crucified Him?
 1. the Jewish authorities?
 - a. they broke every rule of Jewish law to indict Jesus
 - b. for a crime that He did not commit
 2. the crowds?
 - a. had a choice to free a convicted murderer or Jesus
 - b. and chose the convicted murderer to set free
 3. the Roman soldiers?
 - a. chose to humiliate Jesus; for fun!
 - b. and, then nailed Him to a cross; brutally and forcefully to KILL Him!
 - b. **HOWEVER**, if Jesus was not crucified “unfairly,” we would have no savior!
 - c. **HAD JESUS DONE ANYTHING WORTHY OF SUCH TREATMENT?**

4. Just how sovereign is our God?
 - a. **Romans 8:28** – “And we know that **in all things God works for the good of those who love Him**, who have been called according to His purpose.”
 - b. **R. C. Sproul’s book; The Invisible Hand**
 I had just pulled my car into the garage and stepped out of it when the door to the kitchen opened and my daughter, Sherrie, appeared. Her face was ashen, and there was a look of horror in her eyes. She rushed into my arms, blurting out the words, “**Oh, Daddy! My baby is dead!**”

I held her against my chest as she sobbed and sobbed. She was in the ninth month of her pregnancy and had just returned from a checkup with her obstetrician. **He could not detect a heartbeat.** As gently as he could, he explained what that meant: her unborn child had died in the womb.

Sproul goes on to say that the very next day Sherrie entered the hospital, went into labor, and gave birth to a stillborn daughter.

I have found it difficult to recognize newborn infants by their facial features; they all seem to look alike to me. But the image of that tiny child was burned into my memory forever. As I held her, after her birth, I was overwhelmed by this incredible conjunction of life and death. **The child was perfectly formed in every respect, but she was not breathing.**

Sherrie and her husband, Tim, named their child Alicia. She was buried with a regular funeral service attended by our family and our Pastor. We stood by the grave and wept together as we committed her body to the earth and her soul to our heavenly Father.

Every woman who has delivered a stillborn baby knows the devastation it brings to the heart. Who can experience such a thing without crying to heaven and asking, **“Why?” It is normal to wonder where God is in such circumstances. It is where the rubber of human anguish meets the road of divine providence.**

5. Let me, also, say that I don't know what your pain is or who caused it.
 - a. please rest in the sovereignty of God, for He is sovereign and He allowed your pain to occur
 - b. but may I also say to you:
 1. whatever happened and whoever caused it
 2. forgive them – for that is EXACTLY what Jesus Christ did WHILE HE WAS BEING CRUCIFIED FOR SOMETHING HE DID NOT DESERVE.

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 - b. AND, WHERE IN SCRIPTURE DOES GOD PROMISE ANY OF US A STRESS-FREE LIFE?**
 - c. After all, what did Jesus say:
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 4. hurt by a boss
 - b. and, perhaps, you could say to God:
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 2. you will see today that Joseph was hurt many times by other people; and none of it was his fault.

C. Depending On The Sovereignty Of God When One Goes Through Trials

1. If we are to depend on the sovereignty of God as we go through trials, what is the sovereignty of God?
A.W. Pink - The sovereignty of God. What do we mean by this expression? **We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the god-hood of God.** To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that **God is God.** To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the **Most High**, doing according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the **Almighty**, the **Possessor of all power** in Heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is "**The Governor among the nations**", setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the "**Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.**" **Such is the God of the Bible.**"
2. Now that we have defined the sovereignty of God, let us witness it in the life of Joseph

I. Joseph's PAST.

A. Joseph's POSITION IN THE FAMILY.

1. Joseph was the **12th son** of the twelve sons of his father; Jacob.
2. However, Joseph was the **first-born of Jacob's second wife; Rachel.**
 - a. all of the other brothers were not the children of Rachel, but of Jacob's other wives and relationships
 - b. because Jacob loved Rachel the most of all of his wives, Jacob considered Joseph to be his first-born son, although he actually had 11 other sons!**

B. Joseph's PREFERENCE WITH HIS FATHER.

1. Because of Jacob's special love for his wife, Jacob loved Joseph **the most** of all of his twelve sons and it was very, very obvious to all of his brothers.
Genesis 37:3 – "Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him."
 - a. because of his special love for Joseph, Jacob made Joseph a special coat that he did not make for his other sons
 1. most coats that were worn had no color
 2. most coats were a piece of cloth with a hole cut out for the head. It had no sleeves. A simple rope would be used to secure the coat to the waist.
 3. however, Joseph's coat:
 - a. had many colors
 - b. AND had sleeves
 - b. this special coat, besides being a **STATEMENT** of Jacob's preferred love for Joseph, also indicated that he would be the one who would ultimately get his father's blessing
2. Obviously, the older brothers were jealous of Joseph.
Genesis 37:4 – "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, **they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.**"
 - a. they hated him
 - b. parents, are you surprised?
3. Can you really fault Joseph because his father showed him special attention?
 - a. Joseph did not "deserve" his brothers' wrath
 - b. it was Joseph's father who made the mistake to show special preference to Joseph

C. Joseph's PROBLEM WITH HIS BROTHERS.

1. In addition to the coat given to Joseph by his father Jacob, we see some of the other problems that the brothers had with Joseph:
 - a. Joseph **reported on his brothers**
Genesis 37:2b – Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, **and he brought their father a bad report about them.**
 1. once, while tending the flocks with his brothers, Joseph saw something that bothered him about his brothers
 2. so, he "tattled" on his brothers to his father, Jacob

b. **Joseph revealed to his brothers**

Genesis 37:6-9 - He said to them, "**Listen to this dream I had:** We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and **bowed down to it.**" His brothers said to him, "**Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?**" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "**Listen,**" he said, "**I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.**"

1. at another time, Joseph shared a dream that he had about his brothers
2. where they were bowing down to him
3. I have two older brothers
 - a. trust me, you don't ever tell your older brothers that you are better than them
 - b. I will always be a "little brother"
2. Once again, it is not surprising that Joseph's brothers hated him.

II. Joseph's PROBLEM.

A. The JEALOUSY of Joseph's Brothers.

1. The "**coup de grace**" of the relationship between Joseph and his brothers came when Joseph's father Jacob sent Joseph to "check up" on the brothers who were tending the sheep, some 75 miles away.
Genesis 37:12-13 – "Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem. and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. **Come, I am going to send you to them.**" "**Very well,**" he replied."
 - a. all of the brothers, except Joseph, were taking care of the sheep and sleeping on the ground
 - b. while Joseph was back home "watching Sports Center"
2. After searching for his brothers, Joseph found them in Dothan. **NOTICE THE BROTHERS' RESPONSE TO JOSEPH'S ARRIVAL:**
Genesis 37:19-20 - "**Here comes that dreamer.** Come now, **let's kill him** and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."
 - a. as the brothers saw Joseph riding up to them, the brothers expressed their absolute hatred for him
Ephesians 6:4 – "**Fathers, do not exasperate your children;** instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
 - b. **ESPECIALLY** since he was not working like they were

B. The JEOPARDY Of Joseph's Future.

1. At this point, we see that Joseph's life could have been over.
 - a. upon his arrival, the brothers physically overtook Joseph
 - b. and; the brothers threw Joseph in a deep well and were going to leave him to die

c. BUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT. . .

Genesis 37:25 – “As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.”

1. “amazingly” a caravan of Ishmaelites, who were on their way to Egypt, were spotted **AT THAT VERY MOMENT!**
2. the brothers then altered their plan and decided to sell Joseph to the traveling caravan
- d. to cover up their crime, they took that “special coat” of Joseph’s, killed a goat and poured blood all over the coat
 1. when they got back home, they showed the bloody coat to their father Jacob
 2. Jacob believed the story and was totally devastated over the apparent death of his son
2. so, Joseph now found himself being taken all the way to Egypt.
 - a. he was seventeen years old
 - b. he had never left home
 - c. he had been deserted by his brothers and was on his way to become a slave in a culture and country hundreds of miles away from home
 - d. Joseph CERTAINLY must have asked . . . **WHERE IS GOD?**
 - e. **WHAT HAD JOSEPH DONE WRONG BUT OBEY HIS FATHER?**

III. God’s PROVIDENCE.

A. The Unfairness Of POTIPHAR.

1. No sooner did Joseph arrive in Egypt than he was bought as a slave by a man named Potiphar.
 - a. Potiphar was a high ranking military officer in Egypt (like the Pentagon)
 - b. soon after beginning his service to Potiphar, after serving his master faithfully, Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his money and household. **Genesis 39:2-4** – “**The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.**”
 1. it is very interesting to me that Joseph “made the best of a bad situation,” perhaps because his trust in the sovereignty of God
 2. and God blessed Joseph and consequently, God blessed Potiphar
 3. what would you or I have done in this situation?
 - a. **WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?**
 - b. **WHERE ARE YOU GOD?**
2. But, this was not the worst that would happen to Joseph in Potiphar’s house
 - a. because Joseph was good-looking and virile, Potiphar’s wife began to make sexual advances to him

Genesis 39:6b-7 – Now Joseph was **well-built and handsome**, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "**Come to bed with me!**"

- b. **REPEATEDLY**, Joseph refused her advances
- c. until one day, when no one was home, Potiphar's wife made a blatant, obvious sexual advance on Joseph

Genesis 39:11-12 – "One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, '**Come to bed with me!**' **But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.**"

 - 1. this proposal by Potiphar's wife was as blatant as you could get
 - 2. so, Joseph had no choice but to run out of the house to get away from her
- d. Potiphar's wife responded in anger

Genesis 39:14-15- "**Look,**" she said to them, "**this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.**"

 - 1. "**Hell hath no fury like that of a woman scorned.**"
 - 2. Potiphar's wife, humiliated and embarrassed, responded to Joseph's refusal by telling her husband that Joseph had tried to rape her
 - 3. and, as a result, Joseph was thrown into prison
 - a. we must note that Potiphar could have executed Joseph as a slave
 - b. perhaps Potiphar didn't believe his wife, but he had to do something to "save face"
- e. **ONCE AGAIN, WHAT HAD JOSEPH DONE TO DESERVE THIS?**

B. The Unfairness Of PRISON.

- 1. As soon as Joseph was thrown into prison, he once again, began to serve, so much so that he was placed in charge of the prison.

Genesis 39:20b-23 – "**But while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him**; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. **So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.** The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and **gave him success in whatever he did.**"

 - a. notice what Joseph **DID NOT DO** – once again, He did not look at what had been done **TO HIM**
 - b. instead, he only considered what could be done **THROUGH HIM!**
 - c. Joseph must have thought that a sovereign God had "allowed" these things to happen to him, so he saw it as "another opportunity" to serve his God
- 2. After being in jail for some time, Joseph met two men who had worked for the Pharaoh a baker and a cupbearer.
 - a. each man had been thrown into prison by Pharaoh

- b. while in prison, each man had a dream and Joseph was able to interpret each man's dream
 - 1. the cupbearer's dream showed that he would be released
 - 2. the baker's dream however, showed that he would be hanged
- c. after the cupbearer was released . . . **Genesis 40:23-41:1** says, "The **chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.** When **two full years had passed**, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile."
 - 1. Joseph was forgotten by the cupbearer
 - 2. and Joseph stayed in prison FOR TWO MORE YEARS!
 - 3. **AGAIN, WHAT HAD JOSEPH DONE TO DESERVE THIS?**

C. The Unfairness of POWER.

1. At the end of the two years, Pharaoh himself had a dream but could find no one to interpret his dream.
2. The cupbearer remembered that he had been in prison with a fellow prisoner **TWO YEARS BEFORE** who had interpreted his own dream.
3. So, INSTANTLY Joseph was summoned from the jail to appear before the Pharaoh.
4. and Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream:
 - a. the dream revealed that Egypt would go through seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine
 - b. Joseph said to the Pharaoh:

Genesis 41:28-31 - "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. **Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them.** Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the **famine will ravage the land.** The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be **so severe.**"
5. After the dream was interpreted, Pharaoh immediately announced that Joseph would be placed as second in command only to Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:38-40 - "**Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?**" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, **there is no one so discerning and wise as you.** You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. **Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.**"

 - a. Joseph was given the signet ring FROM PHARAOH'S HAND
 - b. he was dressed in fine linen and given a gold chair
 - c. and rode in a chariot directly behind the Pharaoh
6. Joseph was now 30 years old.
 - a. he was captured as a slave at 17 years of age
 - b. and now he was second in command of all of Egypt working for Potiphar or in prison some 13 years!
7. As a result of Pharaoh's dream and Joseph's interpretation –
 - a. grain was stored during the seven years of abundance
 - b. and, when the seven years of famine occurred, Joseph was highly revered throughout Egypt for his wisdom.

Genesis 41:53-57 - The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, **just as Joseph had said**. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "**Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.**" When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. **And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.**

8. In a sense, the power that was placed on Joseph was not earned; "Just like his trials were not 'earned.'"

IV. God's PURPOSE.

A. The PROBLEM In PALESTINE.

1. At the same time that Egypt was going through a famine, so was Palestine – the home of Joseph's father and 11 brothers.
2. Because of the famine, Joseph's father Jacob sent some of his sons to Egypt to buy some grain.
 - a. little did these brothers know that **their little brother Joseph** was still alive
 - b. and most importantly, little did they know that Joseph was second in command to Pharaoh
 - c. boy, were the brothers in for a big surprise!

B. The PURPOSE of PROVIDENCE.

1. The PRESENTATION of Joseph.
 - a. the brothers entered a room to ask for grain and guess who they were to make their request to?
 - b. you can only imagine the scene:
 1. Joseph is clean shaven
 2. with Egyptian make-up on
 3. dressed in royal robes
 4. not easily recognized by his brothers
 5. after all, it had been some 27 years since his brothers had seen him
 - c. however, Joseph was so overcome with emotion in seeing his brothers after all of those years that he had to excuse himself to weep
2. The PERSPECTIVE of Joseph.
 - a. a **word to the brothers:**
Genesis 45:4 - Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "**I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!**"
 1. amazingly, instead of ranting or yelling or sending his brothers to the same death they had consigned him to, Joseph told his brothers not to be pained or angry about themselves because they had sold him into slavery
 2. even though it **was** a sinful act

b. a word about God

1. the **Hebrew** is very clear here about God's **INVOLVEMENT**
Genesis 45:5 – “And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that **God sent me ahead of you.**”
 - a. despite Joseph's brothers sin, Joseph showed his understanding of God's sovereignty by saying that **God** had sent him to Egypt ahead of them
 1. the Hebrew tense is an active tense.
 2. it shows that **God is the subject** of the action
 3. so Joseph was saying; you (the brothers) did not send me to Egypt, instead, **GOD SENT ME TO EGYPT!**
 - b. the Hebrew word can't possibly be misunderstood
 1. God sent Joseph
 3. **NOT HIS BROTHERS!**
2. the **Hebrew** is also very clear about God's **INTENT**
Genesis 45:7 – “But God sent me ahead of you **to preserve for you a remnant on earth** and to **save your lives by a great deliverance.**”
 - a. for, not only did God send Joseph to Egypt, there was a **REASON** that God sent Joseph to Egypt;
 - b. it was **TO PRESERVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE!**
 - c. the word preserve:
 1. to set, put, lay violent hands on
 2. to direct, ordain, establish, appoint, constitute, make, determine, fix, bring to pass
3. so . . . you **CAN'T** misunderstand this text, if you understand the Hebrew
 - a. **EVEN** though the brothers sinned in selling their brother into slavery
 - b. God planned through all of Joseph's trials and suffering to save His people from extinction: **DESPITE:**
 1. being sold into slavery by his brothers
 2. working as a slave for **13 years** for Potiphar
 3. sitting in prison for **2 years**
4. look also at what Joseph said later to his brothers after the death of his father Jacob –
 - a. Joseph had taken care of his brothers for several years by allowing them to remain in Egypt
 - b. however, after their father Jacob died, the brothers feared that Joseph would harm them now that their father had died
 - c. **HOWEVER, NOTICE ONCE AGAIN WHAT JOSEPH SAID** to his fearful brothers:
Genesis 50:19-20 - But Joseph said to them, "**Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.**"

1. NOTICE – although the brothers intended to harm Joseph
2. **GOD INTENDED IT FOR GOOD!**
 - a. God turned a terrible, sinful situation to His purpose
 - b. **THAT IS HOW SOVEREIGN GOD IS!**

Conclusion

1. As you look at the suffering that people have put you through, you cannot minimize it:
 - a. abuse by parents
 - b. abuse by bosses or co-workers
 - c. abuse by spouses, children or other relatives
 - d. abuse by well-meaning Christians

2. However, every Christian must ask this question: **DO I TRULY BELIEVE IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD?**
 - a. no, God did not “cause” your abuse
 - b. but, HE COULD HAVE STOPPED IT, AND HE DIDN’T
 - c. just like God did not stop the abuse of Joseph!

3. Did God stop the abuse of Jesus Christ?

Acts 2:23-24 – “This man was handed over to you **by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.** But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”

 - a. was Jesus Christ sinned against by those who crucified Him?
 1. the Jewish authorities?
 - a. they broke every rule of Jewish law to indict Jesus
 - b. for a crime that He did not commit
 2. the crowds?
 - a. had a choice to free a convicted murderer or Jesus
 - b. and chose the convicted murderer to set free
 3. the Roman soldiers?
 - a. chose to humiliate Jesus; for fun!
 - b. and, then nailed Him to a cross; brutally and forcefully to KILL Him!
 - b. **HOWEVER**, if Jesus was not crucified “unfairly,” we would have no savior!
 - c. **HAD JESUS DONE ANYTHING WORTHY OF SUCH TREATMENT?**

4. Just how sovereign is our God?
 - a. **Romans 8:28** – “And we know that **in all things God works for the good of those who love Him**, who have been called according to His purpose.”
 - b. **R. C. Sproul’s book; The Invisible Hand**
 I had just pulled my car into the garage and stepped out of it when the door to the kitchen opened and my daughter, Sherrie, appeared. Her face was ashen, and there was a look of horror in her eyes. She rushed into my arms, blurting out the words, “**Oh, Daddy! My baby is dead!**”

I held her against my chest as she sobbed and sobbed. She was in the ninth month of her pregnancy and had just returned from a checkup with her obstetrician. **He could not detect a heartbeat.** As gently as he could, he explained what that meant: her unborn child had died in the womb.

Sproul goes on to say that the very next day Sherrie entered the hospital, went into labor, and gave birth to a stillborn daughter.

I have found it difficult to recognize newborn infants by their facial features; they all seem to look alike to me. But the image of that tiny child was burned into my memory forever. As I held her, after her birth, I was overwhelmed by this incredible conjunction of life and death. **The child was perfectly formed in every respect, but she was not breathing.**

Sherrie and her husband, Tim, named their child Alicia. She was buried with a regular funeral service attended by our family and our Pastor. We stood by the grave and wept together as we committed her body to the earth and her soul to our heavenly Father.

Every woman who has delivered a stillborn baby knows the devastation it brings to the heart. Who can experience such a thing without crying to heaven and asking, **“Why?” It is normal to wonder where God is in such circumstances. It is where the rubber of human anguish meets the road of divine providence.**

5. Let me, also, say that I don't know what your pain is or who caused it.
 - a. please rest in the sovereignty of God, for He is sovereign and He allowed your pain to occur
 - b. but may I also say to you:
 1. whatever happened and whoever caused it
 2. forgive them – for that is EXACTLY what Jesus Christ did WHILE HE WAS BEING CRUCIFIED FOR SOMETHING HE DID NOT DESERVE.