



## Forgetting Your Hardship

### God Meant It for Good, Part 3

Genesis 40-41

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Genesis 41:

*After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, <sup>2</sup> and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. <sup>3</sup> And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. <sup>4</sup> And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. <sup>5</sup> And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. <sup>6</sup> And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. <sup>7</sup> And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. <sup>8</sup> So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.*

*<sup>9</sup> Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my offenses today. <sup>10</sup> When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, <sup>11</sup> we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. <sup>12</sup> A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. <sup>13</sup> And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."*

*<sup>14</sup> Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. <sup>15</sup> And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." <sup>16</sup> Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." <sup>17</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the*

Nile. <sup>18</sup> Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. <sup>19</sup> Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup> And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, <sup>21</sup> but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke. <sup>22</sup> I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. <sup>23</sup> Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them, <sup>24</sup> and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”

<sup>25</sup> Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>26</sup> The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. <sup>27</sup> The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. <sup>28</sup> It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>29</sup> There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, <sup>31</sup> and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. <sup>32</sup> And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

<sup>33</sup> Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. <sup>34</sup> Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. <sup>35</sup> And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. <sup>36</sup> That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.”

<sup>37</sup> This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. <sup>38</sup> And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” <sup>39</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. <sup>40</sup> You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.” <sup>41</sup> And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” <sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in

*garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. <sup>43</sup> And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. <sup>44</sup> Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."<sup>45</sup> And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.*

*<sup>46</sup> Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. <sup>47</sup> During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, <sup>48</sup> and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. <sup>49</sup> And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.*

*<sup>50</sup> Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore them to him. <sup>51</sup> Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house."<sup>52</sup> The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

*<sup>53</sup> The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, <sup>54</sup> and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. <sup>55</sup> When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do."*

*<sup>56</sup> So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. <sup>57</sup> Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.*

I want to speak to you today about an exercise that every Christian needs to master if we want to remain faithful and fruitful in our faith over the course of a lifetime. It's the exercise Paul describes in Philippians 3:13-14 where he says, "*Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" I want to speak to you today about the discipline of forgetting what lies behind. If you want to be fruitful for Jesus, you must learn to be forgetful of your hardships—and that's easier said than done.

This week I was reading the story of Calvin Luke Dedert, an eight-year-old boy born in 2009 to his parents when they were missionaries in Cambodia. He was their fourth child and was born with microcephaly. His limbs are rigid. He can't move any part of his body without assistance. His stomach muscles can't prevent the acids from going back up into his esophagus, so he writhes in pain. He has severe visual impairments. All of this has been going on for eight years.

His mother wrote a blog post she called, "The Settling Years," those years when—after a trauma and everyone else's life has gone back to normal—you're still adjusting to living with a loss that has changed everything in your life. Calvin's father said in that post, "The older I get, the more I see people settling in two ways. Either they become angry and bitter, resigned in their faith, or they serve with love out of their brokenness."

That resonated with me. Each one of us is going to face disappointments in life. People are going to let us down. Hopes are going to be deferred. When we face disappointments and dreams that have been shattered, when our hopes have been deferred and the difficulties in our lives go on and on and on, we too are going to have to decide: Either we will become faithful and fruitful in the midst of our affliction and will choose to serve with love out of our brokenness, or we will become angry and bitter and resigned.

Look at Joseph in these two chapters. When chapter 40 starts, Joseph is about 28 years old. He's been sold into slavery by his brothers. He's been carried off to Egypt in a caravan. He rises to a position of trusted service in the house of Potiphar, an Egyptian official. Then he's framed and falsely accused by Potiphar's wife of attempting to rape her. And now he's sitting in the king's prison, which in Genesis 40:15 Joseph calls "the pit." Rats and spiders are crawling around him. Psalm 105 says his feet were hurt with fetters and his neck with a collar of iron.

Joseph's youth has been seeping away from him in this prison. Is there anyone in this room today who is 28 years old right now? You can just imagine what it would be like for those years—28, 29, 30—to be going through what Joseph is going through—the monotony of a night that never ends in the dungeon of hopelessness.

But even here, Joseph proves himself faithful. He rises to prominence in this prison, because of what we read last week at the end of Genesis 39. Look again at verse 21: "*The Lord was with Joseph*"—Yahweh, the covenant God, was with Joseph—"*and showed him steadfast love.*" That's that word *hesed*, the covenant, loyal, faithful love of God that continues to show mercy to us in our need and distress and will not quit. God was with Joseph, gave him covenant love, "*and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*"

Continuing in verses 22-23:

*And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.*

So now as Joseph spends these years in prison, described in Genesis 40-41, we can learn from him how not to be hardened by our hardship, how to fight against bitterness, how to forget what lies behind and press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). How is it possible not to be defined by your hardships, but instead continuing to be fruitful even in the midst of them? I believe Joseph shows us how in these chapters, and I want to draw four resolutions from his example which—if we make these the guiding commitments of our own hearts—will keep us from being hardened by our hardships.

### **Resolution #1: Serve when and where you suffer.**

Genesis 40 shows us that no matter where God has placed you, it can become a place of fruitful service. You don't have to wait for a better situation. You don't have to look for greener grass. You don't need to move to a new place. You don't need to graduate with another degree. If Joseph could serve God in the pit of an Egyptian prison, you can serve God right now where you are, no matter what you're going through. Resolve that you will serve when and where you suffer. The value of your service is not determined by the place where you serve.

In chapter 40 we get a couple hints as to how we can serve when and where we suffer. The first thing we see is that we need to be people who notice other people. Notice the people around you. If you're in a place of suffering, you will likely be surrounded by others who are also suffering. Will you be sensitive to their condition? In Genesis 40:1-6 we read:

*Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody. And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation.*

Here's the key verse, verse six: "*When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled.*" Now, you can imagine Joseph being tempted to think, "Well, they're trouble. I'm troubled. What else is new? We're all troubled here. We've all got to get about our day. I'll leave them to worry about their dreams on their own."

Iain Duguid asks:

Isn't that what we often do in the midst of suffering? Suffering turns us in on ourselves. Our own fears, our own worries, become all-consuming, leaving us with little time or energy to think about others. We desire and expect others to inquire about our sorrows, but the last thing we want is the burden of someone else's troubles. We have enough of our own already.

Yet Joseph saw these men as human beings and cared enough about their concerns to ask them what was going on. Verse seven, "*So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, 'Why are your faces downcast today?'*" This is one way you can serve when and where you suffer: notice the people around you. I can guarantee that if you are noticing, almost every day of your life you will find someone whose face is downcast. Will you be sensitive? Will you care enough to stop and listen?

They said to Joseph, verse eight, "*We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.*" Here's the second thing you can do when you are trying to serve when and where you suffer: you can share God's Word with people. Joseph said to them, "*Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.*" Today we have more than dreams from God as the way to receive revelation from Him. We have God's final Word in the Bible. We have Jesus. "*In these last days He has spoken to us by His Son*" (Hebrews 1:2).

Someone wrote on Twitter, "If you want to hear God speak, read the Bible. And if you want to hear God speak aloud, read the Bible aloud and you will hear God speak." One of the best things you can do, if you notice someone in your life who is troubled, whose face is downcast, who's going through a hard time, is simply to come alongside them and ask them the question, "Would you like to read the Bible with me?"

Patrick was leading our elders through a retreat recently on one-to-one Bible reading. He read a book that said, "Seven out of ten people, when you ask them that question, will say, 'Sure. I'd like to read the Bible with you.'" That's something any of us can do. You don't need to have extensive preparation. You don't need to read a commentary to get ready for it. All you need to do is open the Scriptures and read God's Word. There are all kinds of people who know there's a God, who are troubled in their souls, who need a word from God, who need revelation from

God—and don't know where to find it. If you are a Christian, you know where God's Word is found and you can share God's Word.

For Joseph, that meant interpreting the dreams of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. The interpretations for these two dreams were exact opposites. One was a message of life—that was for the chief cupbearer—and one was a message of death, for the baker. Just as we go into the world bearing the gospel of Jesus, we are a fragrance of life to some and a fragrance of death to others (2 Corinthians 2:16).

As the cupbearer tells his dream to Joseph about a vine with three branches that bud and shoot forth blossoms and the clusters of grapes ripen, he says in verse 11, "*Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.*" Beginning in verse 12, Joseph interprets the dream:

*Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer."*

Here's a man who is confident in God's revelation. He's confident that God is speaking through him. "Three days and this is going to happen in your life." Likewise, when we open the Bible to people, we can be confident that God is speaking through us.

With the chief baker, it's very different. He has a dream with three baskets of baked goods. You can kind of imagine a guy walking around with baskets of donuts and muffins and cupcakes and all kinds of great stuff on his head. Then a bunch of birds come on to the top baskets and eat up the cupcakes. Joseph answers in verse 18:

*This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.*

Friends, everyone you meet in the world is either in the position of the chief cupbearer or the chief baker. Everyone you meet—including ourselves—has committed a capital offense against the King of Kings. We all deserve death. Some people hear the message of God and repent and believe in Jesus, receiving the wonderful news of sins forgiven and the hope of restoration to the service of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Eternal life and glory awaits them, and they can walk through the rest of their lives with a spring in their step, knowing that soon we will be set free.

Many other people in this world, having not repented and believed in the gospel, are walking around with doom—the sure expectation of wrath and fury from God hanging over their heads. The only way of deliverance is through the message of life that we are called to share. And friends, when you are going through hardships, when you are going through sufferings, God is putting you on a platform where you can share that message of hope if you will heed what God says to us in Philippians 2:14:

*Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.*

That's our calling. We are in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, but we have light and life to share. We have the word of Christ, and we shine as lights in the world when we hold fast that word of life. So resolve that whenever and wherever you suffer hardship, you will serve where you suffer. You will hold fast the word of life. Be a suffering servant, just like your Master, Jesus. That's the first resolution.

### **Resolution #2: Always give God all the glory.**

That's what stands out to me in Joseph's encounter with Pharaoh in Genesis 41. He gives God all the glory all the time. Make that your resolve, friends. When you're going through hardship, resolve to give God all the glory.

The first words of chapter 41 are bleak: "*After two whole years...*" Joseph is 30 now. What did he ask the chief cupbearer after he told him the interpretation of his dream? Look back at Genesis 40:14-15. This is what Joseph requested:

*Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.*

"I'm innocent! Please, just remember me. Just say a word to Pharaoh on my behalf." I can imagine Joseph sitting in that prison after the chief cupbearer leaves—three days later, just as he had prophesied. He's waiting. "Maybe next week they'll come and get me out." No one comes. A month goes by. He's waiting every morning. "Is today going to be the day of my deliverance?" No one comes. A season passes, then a year, then another year. In this dungeon of hopelessness, things have gone from bad to worse. Two years of silence, two years when Joseph's life and future are on hold. That's 730 days. That's a long time to be waiting in prison.

Then Pharaoh has a dream and we read in Genesis 41:8, *“So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.”* Then lo and behold, in verse nine, the chief cupbearer comes to his senses: *“Today I’ve been reminded of my failure.”* He comes to Pharaoh embarrassed. He tells Pharaoh about this young Hebrew who was with him back in the prison a couple years ago. *“Remember when I had that dream, Pharaoh? Remember when you hanged the baker on the tree and you let me go? There was a man there who was able to interpret my dream for me.”*

I love what happens in verse 14: *“Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh.”* Joseph’s attitude before Pharaoh is not one of having a chip on his shoulder. He’s ready to serve. He speaks to Pharaoh with gentleness and respect. He comes to Pharaoh with a rare combination of humility and confidence. I picture Joseph like a doctor who’s on call. He’s got the beeper beside his bed at night and he never goes into the REM sleep, because he’s always waiting for that beeper. As soon as he gets that signal that he needs to serve, he’s ready. That’s the way Joseph was. He was ready to serve.

Then verse 15: *“And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.’”* You’ve got to imagine this austere scene. Pharaoh is the all-powerful one. He can kill you on the spot. He did kill the chief baker. You can just imagine Joseph trembling and afraid—but that’s not at all how Joseph is. His answer in verse 16 is amazing, because he doesn’t say to Pharaoh, *“I can do it. I’ll get you out of this crunch.”* Joseph’s first words to Pharaoh are these: *“It is not in me.”* Humility. *“I can’t solve this problem either.”*

Along with the humility there’s great confidence in God: *“God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”* Isn’t that the combination we need as we live in this world? We need the combination of humility about ourselves, plus great confidence and boldness in our God. When we see that combination in a person, the world can recognize the Spirit of God is at work in us. That’s what Pharaoh recognized in verse 38: *“Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?”*

As Pharaoh retells the dream to Joseph, and Joseph interprets the dream of the seven good years that would be followed by seven years of famine, what stands out to me is how relentlessly Joseph gives all the glory to God. We see it in verse 25: *“Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.’”* God has revealed it. Again in verse 28: *“It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh*

*what he is about to do.” And in verse 32: “And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.”*

So the humility, the confidence and the glory that is being brought to God enables Pharaoh to see that the Spirit of God is at work in Joseph. When all this does come to pass, Pharaoh recognizes that the God of Joseph is stronger than all the gods of Egypt and that this God rules over all.

The lesson for us is that in every trial and hardship, if we will make this our motto, “Not I, but God,” God will make us fruitful in our afflictions for His glory and for many people’s good. Give all the glory to God. If you are committed to that, God will make that attitude—that commitment—bear fruit in many lives.

### **Resolution #3: Wait for God’s vindication.**

Jesus asked a question in Luke 18:7: *“And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.”* God will vindicate His elect—speedily. *“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”* Will He find people who trust God to vindicate them? Will He find people who are waiting for God’s vindication? Joseph was such a man. His faith persevered through hardship. He served when and where he suffered. He gave God all the glory. Pharaoh recognized the presence of God’s Spirit in Joseph. He saw that there was no one as wise and discerning as Joseph (verse 39).

So Joseph woke up one morning in prison—unshaven, dirty, hadn’t had a shower in who knows how long. Then he went to bed that same night as prime minister of Egypt—second in command over Pharaoh’s entire house. Pharaoh’s signet ring was on his hand. He was clothed in garments of fine linen with a gold chain around his neck, and a chariot like Air Force Two was available to carry him around all of Egypt. Everywhere he would go, people were to bow the knee before him. All in one day—from rags to riches, from humility to exaltation.

He uses that authority to bless the nations. He institutes a tax. He organizes this great storage plan. The result in verse 49 is that *“Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea”*—bringing us back to God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 22:15-18), only this time it’s grain, not people—*“like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.”* Joseph uses his authority to bless the nations. He wants to be a channel of blessing toward Pharaoh’s kingdom, even though Pharaoh is the one who had locked him up in prison. He wants to be a blessing to the nations.

When the famine finally reaches Egypt, “*when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread*” (verse 55). I love what Pharaoh says to all the Egyptians: “*Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.*” It reminds me of Mary, Jesus’ mother, at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, saying to the servants, “Go to Jesus and do whatever He tells you to do” (John 2:5).

The pattern we see in Joseph’s life of great humiliation followed by supreme exaltation is a foreshadowing of what we see in the life of our Savior as explained in Philippians 2:8-11:

*He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

That same pattern will be the pattern of Jesus’ followers. Humble yourself and you will be exalted in due time. Under the mighty hand of God, humble yourself by casting all your cares on Him. Trust Him to vindicate you and He will exalt you in due time. Just think about the providence of God in Joseph’s life and you’ll agree with what we sang today:

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

[God Moves In A Mysterious Way by William Cowper]

God knew 20 years in advance that the land would cease to produce, that the people would starve without intervention, that Egypt would have resources sufficient to store grain during the plentiful years prior to the famine. So He sent a dream to Joseph in Genesis 37, foreshadowing what He was going to do. Then He proceeded to use the murderous hatred of Joseph’s brothers to send Joseph to Egypt. In Egypt God made sure that Joseph would land in Potiphar’s house and He preserved him from adultery. He orchestrated his imprisonment so that he was there to meet and interpret the dreams of the king’s baker and cupbearer.

All of this happened so that the cupbearer, two years later, would remember Joseph when God sent Pharaoh a dream that Pharaoh could not interpret, and Joseph’s ability to interpret the dream led to his own exaltation, the preservation of grain, and Egypt becoming the one place in the world where the covenant people of God would be able to go, buy grain and survive. That’s

God's amazing providence. It was painful for Joseph. It was full of rejection and betrayal and disappointment. But God was working through all that.

Voddie Baucham, who wonderfully traced that whole description I just gave you, ends with this sentence: "God sent Joseph to Egypt, not to become rich and powerful, but to preserve the Promised Seed and to insure the salvation of God's people, both in the short run and in the long run." Think about that, friends. I want you to ask Jesus' question again, "Will not God vindicate His elect?" I want to ask you: do you trust Jesus' answer to that question in your life? "Truly I tell you, He will vindicate them speedily." God will do that.

So will you trust God to vindicate you when you've been betrayed? When you are falsely accused, will you wait for God's vindication? When you are suffering unjustly, will you wait for God to vindicate you? When people who promise to help forget all about you and let you down, will you wait for God's vindication?

A few years ago, I was telling my friend Mike Bullmore about something I was struggling with at the time. I felt like I was being misunderstood and falsely accused, and I was wishing there was something I could do to set the record straight. He said, "There's this prayer of Augustine: 'Lord, deliver me from this lust of constantly vindicating myself.'" I wrote that down and I've prayed that many times. "Lord, deliver me from this lust of constantly trying to vindicate myself. Instead, may I humble myself under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt me." Cast all your anxieties on Him, knowing that He cares for you. Resolve to wait for God's vindication. b

#### **Resolution #4: To not be defined by your past hurts.**

Finally, resolve to not be defined by your past hurts, but instead be defined by your future hope—the glory that's going to be revealed. One day you're going to wake up in this world in the rags of this flesh. You're going to wake up with all the marks and scars of the sorrows that you've faced in this life. You're going to wake up in this world, and you're going to go to bed that night in glory. You're going to shine like the sun in the Kingdom of your Father. You're going to be exalted along with Jesus. You're going to be clothed in glory and honor. And you'll see that all the troubles and all the hardships you've endured in this life have been woven into a beautiful tapestry of grace and redemption.

The question is what are you going to let define you? Is it going to be the hurts of your past that you cannot change? The disappointments, the rejections, the unfair accusations, the unjust punishments that you've had to endure in this life? Is that what you're going to feed on? Is that what's going to control you in this life? Or are you instead going to be controlled by the

glory that is going to be yours when Jesus comes again and when you're with Him? Resolve not to be defined by your past hurts, but instead be defined by your future hope in Christ.

That's why I love the little insight we're given in Genesis 41:50-52. Joseph has been given an Egyptian name we don't understand the meaning of—Zaphenath-paneah. He is married to the priest's daughter. He's riding around in his chariot as rich as can be. And we might wonder, "Will he forget Yahweh? Will he forget where he came from? Will he become puffed up with pride?" We have the answer in the names he gives his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. These are Hebrew names and it's Joseph's way of saying, "Pharaoh, you can change my name, but I'm going to give my sons the names I choose for them. And those names are going to reveal where my true loyalty lies. I'm loyal to Yahweh and to His people. I am a Hebrew at heart. Egypt and all its gold necklaces isn't going to steal my heart away from God."

He gives them Hebrew names and I love what those names mean. Manasseh means, "*For God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house*" (41:51). Joseph's never going to literally forget what his brothers did to him. But he's saying, "I'm not going to hold on to those things with resentment. I'm not going to let them define me. I'm going to see how God has graciously worked through my hardships and through my sufferings to bring about redemption. I'm going to see the hurts and scars I bear through the lens of the beauty of God's redeeming grace."

It's just like one day we're going to look at the scars on Jesus' hands, and although they will remind us of the agony He endured on that cross, they will be beautiful in our eyes because of their fruitfulness in the lives of the redeemed. Joseph says, "That's how I'm going to view my hardships. I'm going to forget them, because of God's redemption in them."

The name of the second son is Ephraim which means "*For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction*" (41:52). How many times did Joseph want to get out of that land of affliction? But now he says, "God made me fruitful here."

How many times do you want to get out of suffering, out of brokenness? Someone wrote, "We typically want God to make us into fine decorative china plates, which sit comfortably in a glass cabinet being admired by everyone. Instead, God makes us into serviceable water pitchers that get chipped and scratched and dented through repeated use."

That's God's plan. So don't be defined by your parent, your sibling, your teacher, your spouse who hurt you, who disappointed you, who rejected you, who criticized you. No hurt you've suffered is stronger than the blood of Jesus. The scars you cannot erase will become beautiful emblems of God's redeeming grace. Trust God to make you fruitful in the land of your affliction.

Let's bow before the Lord in prayer. I want to ask you: what do you need God to help you forget today? Is there a hurt, a disappointment, a sorrow that you keep playing over and over again in your mind—and it's starting to control you, because you think about it so much? It's your "default." I want you to plead with God to give you a Manasseh—to make you fruitful in the land of your affliction, to make you forget the sufferings and to strain toward what is ahead. I want you to ask God to erase the bitterness of that pain, that wound, that keeps reopening, and though there will always be a scar, that you will begin to see the beauty in the scar. You'll begin to see how God is redeeming that for His glory.

God, I pray for Your people today—and for myself—that we would not feed upon the pains and the wounds we will inevitably experience in this fallen world, but that we would look above them and through them to You, a God Who is sovereign over us and working for our good. And God, by Your mercy and grace, as only You can do, help us to forget what lies behind and strain toward what is ahead for us: the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Oh, lift our eyes upward and help us move in that direction, even when we're going through the darkest trials. We worship You as sovereign over us. Amen.

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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