

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
Paul Gunn, Pastor

**JOSEPH'S GET-OUT-OF-JAIL CARD**

Genesis 41:1-40

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There are three points for today's sermon:

- Joseph waited with God.
- Joseph relied upon God.
- Joseph hoped in God.

In our series on the life of Joseph, we've covered:

- Some of his family lineage.
- The sins that passed from one generation to the next, such as deception, jealousy, and extreme favoritism.
- We know that Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery.
- We saw how Joseph went to Egypt and was a trusted servant of Potiphar.
- Then we saw how Joseph avoided temptation and was thrown into jail.
- In jail, he met a baker and a cupbearer and interpreted their dreams.
- The baker was put to death by the pharaoh, but the cupbearer was released.
- Joseph hoped the cupbearer would remember him and help him get out of jail but he did not.

**JOSEPH WAITED WITH GOD**

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 41:1-8

*When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, <sup>2</sup> when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. <sup>3</sup> After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. <sup>4</sup> And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. <sup>5</sup> He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good,*

were growing on a single stalk. <sup>6</sup> After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. <sup>7</sup> The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. <sup>8</sup> In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

**EXPLANATION:** Two years had passed since God through Joseph accurately interpreted the cupbearer and baker’s dreams. For more than 700 days, Joseph lived and worked in what he described as a dungeon, and he was there because of no wrongdoing of his own. While the cupbearer kept serving the Pharaoh (the king), Joseph was waiting in prison.

**ILLUSTRATION:** A young man named Rob had two sisters who both got married and had children before he did. Neither of the sisters chose to discover their babies’ sex before their children were born. However, when Rob and his wife got pregnant, they took full advantage of technology and discovered they were having a boy. When the sisters found out, they teased Rob. “That’s like opening a Christmas present before Christmas,” they said. To which Rob replied, “No one waves a Christmas present under my nose for nine months!”

**APPLICATION:** Waiting is hard. It’s hard to wait for good things when you know they are coming.

- When you know the waiter is going to bring you a nice, juicy steak, and you’re really hungry, it’s hard to wait patiently.
- When you know your spouse has planned a special birthday surprise, it’s hard to wait.

But waiting is even more difficult when you’re in a bad spot, and you do not know when—or if—things are ever going to get better. Two years is a long time to be in a dungeon, and remember, Joseph had been enslaved much longer than that. Waiting had to be hard. He had to wonder if, like the cupbearer, God had also forgotten him. Sometimes we wonder that too—especially when we are in a season of waiting. When we are waiting for God to answer a prayer, it may not seem as if he’s listening. When we are waiting for God to rescue us from a bad situation or change a bad circumstance, he can seem further away than ever before.

- Joseph waited with God.

## JOSEPH RELIED UPON GOD

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 41:9-16

*Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. <sup>10</sup> Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. <sup>11</sup> Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. <sup>12</sup> Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. <sup>13</sup> And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled.” <sup>14</sup> So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. <sup>15</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” <sup>16</sup> “I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.”*

**EXPLANATION:** As a trusted servant of the Pharaoh, the cupbearer was in a position to hear and see many things that occurred in the Pharaoh’s personal and professional life. At some point, he understood what was going on. He heard about the Pharaoh’s nightmares. He saw the Pharaoh’s frustration as one after another of the professional dream interpreters failed to explain the dreams. It jogged the cupbearer’s memory. He remembered his own dream, and he remembered Joseph. After Joseph got cleaned up, he was brought before the Pharaoh. Here is Joseph’s big chance. The possibility of freedom is within his reach. The Pharaoh explained the problem, and what were Joseph’s first words? “I cannot do it.” What a chance he took. Pharaoh was not used to being denied, especially by a prisoner. Joseph could have been taken back to prison before he had time to say anything else. He could have been killed on the spot before he uttered another word, but Joseph would not take credit for what only God had done and could do.

**ILLUSTRATION:** There was a woman in poor health who needed outside help. Her daughter worked a full-time job and still managed to spend every night with her mom. She drove an hour, and for many nights slept in the chair next to her mom's bed. Other female family members stepped in to help. The elderly woman's granddaughter was very concerned about the caregiving responsibilities. She was very uncomfortable with the thought of doing these tasks, but she knew that God wanted her to help. She knew that in herself she could not do it but that with God, she could. So, she asked for God's help and signed up for her turn. Years later, when she looks back at the experience, she is amazed. "It was not a big deal," she said. "I helped Grandma, and I was glad I did, and I never even felt uncomfortable. God took care of it all."

**APPLICATION:** There are things I cannot do. There are things you cannot do. God knows what we cannot do. But God sometimes asks us to do those things anyway. Pharaoh wanted Joseph to interpret his dreams. Joseph could not do it, but he knew that God could, and he relied upon him to give Pharaoh the answer. When God asks us to do a job that is too difficult for us - too big, too hard - it's OK to say, "I cannot but God can." Ask God for his help and rely upon him for strength and wisdom beyond your own.

- Joseph waited with God.
- Joseph relied upon God.

## **JOSEPH HOPED IN GOD**

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 41:25-40

*Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. 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 heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. <sup>27</sup> The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. <sup>28</sup> "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>29</sup> Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. <sup>31</sup> The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. <sup>32</sup> The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the*

*matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.* <sup>33</sup> “*And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.*” <sup>34</sup> *Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance.* <sup>35</sup> *They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food.* <sup>36</sup> *This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.”* <sup>37</sup> *The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.* <sup>38</sup> *So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?”* <sup>39</sup> *Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.*” <sup>40</sup> *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.”*

**EXPLANATION:** Pharaoh explained the dreams to Joseph, and God gave Joseph the interpretation. Then God gave Joseph the wisdom to provide a solution to the problem. Joseph may have been hopeful that this opportunity would lead to his freedom. I doubt he had any idea that it would lead to a promotion. In some respects, I have to wonder if he was not a bit disappointed. After all, Joseph’s greatest desire was most likely to return home. Pharaoh’s command elevated Joseph to a position of high power, but it gave little room for negotiation. Joseph was still in Egypt. He was second in charge of a nation, but he was not in charge of his own life. Pharaoh had commanded, and Joseph had no choice but to obey.

**ILLUSTRATION:** A little girl asked for a dollhouse for Christmas. On Christmas morning, she was so excited. She knew that she would receive what she had wished for, and she did. The only thing is, the dollhouse was not what she expected. She wanted a Barbie dollhouse, one of those rectangular ones with three floors and an elevator, one that was big enough for her Barbies. What she received was a treehouse dollhouse, and her Barbies were too tall to stand up in it. The little girl knew that her parents had purchased the best dollhouse they could afford, and it was a really nice present. Still, she was disappointed. It was not exactly what she had hoped for.

**APPLICATION:** Who would have imagined that Joseph would start the day in prison and end the day as the Pharaoh's right-hand man? I'm sure he was happy. The beds in the palace had to be better than the prison bunks, and I'm sure the food was a major upgrade. But I bet he was also disappointed. After all, Egypt would never be home. Pharaoh would never be Joseph's father. The Bible does not really elaborate on Joseph's feelings but based on his character, we can be sure that Joseph never quit trusting in God. Joseph knew the same God who allowed him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams had given him dreams many years before. Joseph was waiting to see those dreams come true. Joseph's disappointment would not define him because:

- Joseph waited with God.
- Joseph relied upon God.
- Joseph hoped in God.

I do not know what you are going through in life. Maybe you are in a season of waiting. Maybe you feel as if God does not hear you or see you. I can assure you, based on his word, that he does.

Maybe you are facing a challenge, and you are concerned that you do not have what it takes to do the things you are being asked to do. I am telling you, based on God's word, that with Jesus, you can.

Or maybe you are disappointed. Life is not going how you thought it would go. Things have not worked out how you thought they would. Can I encourage you to keep your eyes on Christ? Our hope is never in our circumstances. Like Joseph, we need to wait with God. We need to rely on God, and we need to put our hope in God. God had not forgotten Joseph. In fact, Joseph was exactly where God wanted him to be. I promise you. He has not forgotten you either.

**INVITATION:** The altar is open if you need to come and pray. Whatever stage of life you are in, God wants to hear from you. If you have never developed a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ, please come forward. I would be happy to discuss that with you in more detail today.

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