

<sup>41</sup> So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” <sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. <sup>43</sup> He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

<sup>44</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.” <sup>45</sup> Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout 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 Pharaoh’s presence and traveled throughout Egypt. <sup>47</sup> During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. <sup>48</sup> Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. <sup>49</sup> Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

Can you imagine it? One moment, Joseph is wearing prison garb; the next, he’s wearing royal linen. One moment, he’s got chains around his wrists; the next, Pharaoh’s hanging a gold chain around his neck. One moment, he’s a prisoner; the next, he’s the 2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful man in the most powerful nation on earth.

Of course, he couldn’t take any credit for this. It was all God’s doing. God had promised him this through two dreams 13 years earlier...remember those dreams? In which sheaves of grain and sun moon and stars were all bowing before him. And God made it happen – interestingly enough, through another two dreams. God gave Pharaoh two dreams: One of 7 skinny cows eating 7 fat ones, another of 7 full heads of grain being swallowed up by 7 withering ones. But what did they mean? Pharaoh didn’t know. None of his wise men knew. Then Pharaoh’s cupbearer remembered: There was a Hebrew prisoner whose God had helped him with a dream of his own a few years back. And so Joseph is brought from the prison to the Pharaoh. Pharaoh tells him the dreams, and God gives Joseph the explanation: There would be 7 years of abundance unlike Egypt had ever seen followed by 7 years of famine unlike Egypt had ever seen. So Joseph suggested, “Choose a wise and discerning person to store up the grain during the good years so Egypt will survive the bad.” And Pharaoh says to Joseph, “Clearly your God has made you pretty wise and discerning. The job is yours.” Just like that, Joseph goes from prison to palace.

You know, as Joseph rode in his royal chariot with his royal robes and royal attendants shouting, “Make way!” before him, I can’t help but wonder if he thought back on the last 13 years and smiled. All the while, everything was going according to God’s plan, and God’s plan was to bless.

It was easy for him to see that – there, in his royal chariot. It wasn't so easy for him to see that before. As a 17-year-old in Canaan, he was his father's favorite son, and had a bright future ahead of him...and it was all ripped away from him in an instant when his envious brothers sold him as a slave to some traders passing by. And as they hauled him off to Egypt and sold him as property to a man named Potiphar, we'd understand if the thought crossed Joseph's mind: This is God's plan? This is God blessing me?

Or in Potiphar's house. Joseph worked hard there, and Potiphar noticed. Puts him in charge of his whole household. And in an instant, it all gets ripped away again. Potiphar's wife had noticed Joseph, too, and when Joseph refused her advances, she accuses him of rape. And as they're locking Joseph in prison for a crime he didn't commit, we'd understand if the thought crossed his mind: This is God's plan? This is God blessing me?

Or after a few years in prison. When finally it seems like Joseph has found his ticket out. One of his fellow inmates is being release – Pharaoh's cupbearer. And he promises Joseph he'll remember him and ask Pharaoh to release him. And the cupbearer forgets. And as Joseph languished in prison for another year...and another year...well, we'd understand if the thought crossed his mind: This is God's plan? This is God blessing me?

We'd understand...because the question crosses our mind from time to time, doesn't it? God hasn't ever promised us royal power or royal riches. But he has told us his plans are always to bless us. We don't deserve it...but for Jesus' sake, all of God's ways to us are love, and he's always at work to bless us. And there are times in our lives when that's pretty obvious – like it was for Joseph as he rode in his royal chariot. But there are also times when it's not so obvious. In fact, there are times when it seems the opposite is true.

It's easy to see God is blessing us when he's giving us health or wealth or happiness or loved ones...but then God takes those things away. Whether it's in a moment, or whether he's slowly letting them slip through our fingers...this is God's plan? This is him blessing me? It's easy to see God is blessing us when he's removing hardship from our lives, but when he lets it linger as we groan under its weight...this is God's plan? This is him blessing me? It's easy to see God is blessing when he's setting us free from the prison of our problems, but when he leaves us all alone in them, seemingly forgotten...this is God's plan? This is him blessing me?

We don't know if Joseph wrestled with the question. But we have. And when we do, the problem isn't that God's promise has failed. The problem is we stop trusting it's true. We have our own idea of what God's plan for our lives should look like, of just how and when God should bless us, and what those blessings should be. And when his plan isn't ours, we doubt whether his is best, whether he's really doing what he says.

God doesn't tell us whether Joseph wrestled with the question or not. But God does answer that question for us. Read through Joseph's story when you get home. At each of those low points in his life – when he's a slave in Potiphar's house, when he's thrown into prison – there's a phrase that God repeats four times, so we can't miss it. **The LORD was with him.** God

hadn't forgotten him. God hadn't stopped loving him. God's promise hadn't failed; he was keeping it. Even when it seemed like the opposite was true, the LORD was with Joseph, blessing him.

And the same is true for you. Even when it seems like the opposite is true, even when we fail to trust it's true, the LORD is with you, blessing you. There's only one reason that he does, and it's Jesus. Our sins earned us God's curse, not God's blessing! We deserve for God to abandon us now and forever because of our sins.

But God loved you and from eternity planned to save you. And his plan has some striking similarities to Joseph's life. Joseph is dad's favored son; Jesus is God's beloved Son from all eternity. Joseph becomes a servant; Jesus makes himself a servant to save us. Joseph is punished for a crime he didn't commit; Jesus is punished for the sins we've committed. Joseph is given a throne to rule; Jesus rises, ascends, and rules over everything.

It was all God's plan – and through it, you are blessed! Jesus carried your sins to the cross...and won you the blessing of God's forgiveness. Jesus was abandoned by God for your sins in your place...to give you the blessing of God's presence every day of your life. Jesus suffered God's curse for your sins and mine and took it away...guaranteeing you God's blessing now and forever in heaven.

In fact, this is really what Joseph's story is all about. It's not just God keeping his plan to bless Joseph – it's God's keeping his plan to bless you. God uses Joseph to collect grain – so much grain they stopped counting – during those 7 years of plenty. So that during the 7 years of famine, thousands of lives are saved. Among them are Joseph's family. The family God promised to send the Savior from one day – God saves them through Joseph. So that one day, through that Savior, God could save you.

Already 4000 years ago, everything was going according to plan, and God's plan was to bless you. It's no different today. Even when his plan doesn't make sense...even when it seems like he's not...Jesus is your proof: Everything is going according to God's plan, and God's plan is to bless you.

As Joseph sat in his royal chariot wearing royal robes and thought back on his life, I wonder if he didn't thank God for his time as a slave, his time in prison. Not just because God used those times to get him to where he was now – but because God was blessing him through them. Taking away what he had so that he'd cling to God and his promises more tightly. Keeping him close to him through those hardships. Training him to trust God's good plan for him.

God hasn't promised us we'll rule a country like Joseph. He has promised us that, because of what Jesus did, we'll reign with him forever in heaven. Right now, we might not always understand God's plan or see how he's blessing us. But once we get there, we'll be able to look back on it all and see just how perfect God's care was. How he sent us just the right mix

of plenty and want, of hardship and happiness, to keep us as his children. How through it all, everything was going according to God's plan, and God's plan was to bless.

Until then, see what God did for Joseph. Better yet, see what God did for you in Jesus. And believe it: Through good and through bad, God is blessing you. Amen.