

Has God Abandoned Me?

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[0 : 00] All right, well, good morning. How are you all doing this morning? Well, after singing songs like that, I don't know how you couldn't be doing well.

Those are just fantastic songs. That last one's actually a new one for me. But that line, you're awesome in beauty. Those are words we use kind of flippantly.

We use the word awesome all the time or beautiful. Just think that the awe that God should inspire in our hearts. Awesome in beauty. I love that.

Well, like I said, it's just great to be here with you all this morning. My name is Zach Hilton. This is my wife, Jenna. And we have a one-year-old son named Ezra who is in the nursery, no doubt wreaking havoc right now.

That's his new favorite thing to do. But, no, he's a true blessing. So just a little bit about myself. I actually grew up for the first ten years of my life in Canada.

[1 : 03] I was born in Newfoundland, Canada, on the island, if you know Newfoundland, Labrador. My parents were missionaries there. And so I grew up there. My parents started a small church. And then in 2008, moved to the state of Maine.

So I was talking with Greg earlier. And to me, moving to Maine, where I lived until I went to college, felt like moving to the south. Okay. So we moved to the deep south state of Maine, where I just couldn't believe how hot it was.

And so then when I moved down to South Carolina for college, for undergrad, it was another shock. Anyway, so went to Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina for four years.

Graduated from there in 2020. Moved back to Maine, where Jenna and I were married. And then stayed in Maine for about three years as an associate pastor at my home church.

Had a lot of opportunities to organize the music, to lead the music, and then to teach weekly. So that was just a blessing. And during that time, I was connected to Virginia Beach Theological Seminary.

[2 : 09] I had some friends in college that had kind of told me about the seminary and the work going on there. And I knew that the Lord was leading me into continued studies.

And I wanted to prepare as well as I could for future ministry, whatever that looked like. And so the Lord led me to begin a degree there at Virginia Beach Theological Seminary, an online degree, which I completed in Maine.

Completed about 90% in Maine. And then as we were nearing the end of that degree, I just felt like I needed more. I needed to dig into the languages a little more. I needed to spend a couple more years.

So in November, last November, my wife and I moved to Chesapeake. And so we're still getting used to the area, getting used to the weather we all have around here.

It's insane. The last couple days have just been, you walk outside and you can feel the air touching you. And so, but no, so the Lord allowed me to graduate with that master's degree this May.

- [3 : 15] And then I stepped into the MDiv program. So we've got, Lord willing, two more years. Two more years in the MDiv program and then see what the Lord is after that.
- I'm just so excited to be here with you all. And we're going to dig into God's Word this morning. I hope you're ready for that. I'm super excited. And before we do that, we know, I was just considering 1 Corinthians chapter 2 this morning and the role of the Spirit illuminating and applying God's Word to our hearts.
- And as we consider that, I think it's entirely appropriate that we just begin with a word of prayer before we look into God's Word and just ask Him to give us hearts that would be tender and open to receiving what He would have for us.
- So would you join me in that this morning? Our Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for the many, many blessings you have given to us. We know that if you had not revealed yourself to us, we would not know you.
- So I praise you, Father, that you have given us your Word, that we can open it here together and learn about you, learn about your character, learn how we are to relate to you through your Word.
- [4 : 28] Thank you so much for Jesus and the work that He finished on the cross on our path. Lord, would you take your Word this morning and apply it to our hearts? Would you help us to be tender and receptive to what you would have for us this morning?
- And it's in Jesus' precious and holy name I praise you. Amen. Let me just begin with a question this morning before we dig into the text.
- That is this. How many of you have ever ridden on a roller coaster? Okay. Many of you, most of you. And I saw some of you chuckle. I know there's some different views about roller coasters.
- Some of you say, I used to, but I would never anymore. I just wouldn't do it. What is the draw that people have to roller coasters? Because if you go to an amusement park, if you go get in line for a roller coaster, often you'll be waiting 30 minutes, an hour sometimes, more.
- I've heard of crazy stories of people standing in line. I just read an article a couple weeks ago about an amusement park ride that got stuck upside down for 30 minutes while they were trying to fix it.
- [5 : 38] And guess what? In a few weeks, there'll be people lined up again for it. That's just the way it works. We're just drawn to these things. Why is that? For some, it's the speed.
- They love that rush, the sudden speeding up, slowing down. For others, you know, those quick corners and turns, ups and downs. I think what all of that has in common is that there's something that we really love about the unexpected.
- There's that thrill of the unexpected. I think that's just part of being humans. Well, in some ways, a good story is like a roller coaster.
- Some of you, I'm sure, love to read or maybe you like to watch movies. And you know, a good plot is one that just kind of surprises you. It has those corners, those ups and downs. You go, man, I never saw that coming.
- What we might call a page turner, right? I'd like to invite you into one of those stories this morning. So go ahead and grab your Bible. I hope you have a Bible with you.
- [6 : 38] Genesis chapter 39. Genesis chapter 39. This is one of those stories. Just a lot of unexpected twists and turns here. As we come to Genesis 39, we pick up in the middle of Joseph's story.
- Joseph. But I want to kind of step back before we begin reading the text. And I want to consider Genesis as a whole. Now, I found out yesterday and I was reminded this morning that Pastor Jeff has actually been teaching through Genesis.

So some of you are going to be really familiar with the first few chapters. But Genesis as a whole, what is it about? What's happened up to Genesis 39? There's a lot that's taken place.

Now, you can kind of divide Genesis, at least in my thinking, into two main parts. You get chapters 1 through 11. And those first 11 chapters really focus kind of on a universal level.

A universal level. So, of course, Genesis 1 and 2, God is creating the world. He speaks all things into existence. And then in a special act forms man and woman and places them in a garden.

[7 : 46] Remember that. Genesis 3, man chooses to rebel against God. And so the curse and sin enter the world. Of course, affecting all people after them.

Chapter 4, we have those tragic events. Cain and Abel. Chapter 6, things have gotten pretty bad. The thoughts of man are continually evil.

And so God judges the world through a flood. Chapter 9. Come to chapter 11. You have the Tower of Babel. Again, these are all kind of stories. And by the way, there's a lot of time passing in those first 11 chapters.

A lot of time passing. And again, the focus is kind of on this universal level. But you get to chapter 12 and something really interesting takes place. The story kind of slows down a lot, actually, and narrows in on one man.

Remember who that man is? Chapter 12? Abram. And from chapter 12 to chapter 50, that's kind of the, in my thinking, the second main section of the book. We're focused in on this man and his family.

[8 : 54] In chapter 12, God comes to Abram and says, I just want you to trust me. I want you to obey me and step out. And I'll step out in faith and I'll show you where to go.

And God gives Abram three promises. First, he promises Abram that he will make him into a great nation. Secondly, he says, Abram, not only am I going to make you a great nation, I'm going to give your descendants, this nation, a land that will be their own.

And then the third promise there in chapter 12, right at the beginning, if you remember, he says, Abram, through you, I'm not just going to bless your family and your descendants, but I'm going to bless all the nations of the world.

Of course, we see that fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, the Savior of the world. Well, the story follows Abram, and it's really that first promise that the story focuses in on.

How in the world is God going to fulfill this promise he's just made to Abram? Abram is 75. His wife Sarai is 65 at this time. They have no children.

[10 : 02] How in the world is God going to make of them a great nation? Well, you remember 25 years later, after Abram has already tried to take things into his own hands, 25 years later, God begins to fill these promises, and Isaac is born.

And the story follows Isaac. After Isaac, Jacob. Jacob, of course, you remember, kind of in the middle section of Genesis, Jacob has two wives.

There's this whole debacle that takes place with Laban, and Jacob ends up marrying Rachel, and also Leah. And Rachel can have no children, but eventually, by God's providence, she gives birth to Joseph in chapter 30, and Benjamin in chapter 35, at which point she dies.

So again, this second section of Genesis really slows down and focuses in on his family. Beginning in chapter 37, we start to see Joseph's story.

It narrows in on Joseph. And we find there that Joseph is the beloved son of his father, Jacob. Jacob has a special affection for Joseph.

[11 : 19] And we see this special affection. I think it's extremely evident in chapter 37, verse 4. You don't have to turn there, but I'm just going to read it for you. And Jacob's love for Joseph is so evident that his brothers absolutely hated him.

These are actually his half-brothers absolutely hated him. Chapter 37, verse 4 says this, His brothers, as Joseph's brothers, saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

That word not there in the Hebrew is an emphatic negative. This could be translated, they could never speak to him on friendly terms, or they could never speak to him in peace with you.

This is a continually ongoing thing that they're festering this bitterness in their heart towards Joseph as they see their father have all this special affection for Joseph.

Remember the story about the coat of many colors and all of that. Well, as you remember, as the story continues, if you're familiar with these chapters, Joseph begins to have dreams.

[12 : 28] Remember that? There's something taking place in these dreams that his brothers don't quite like. In his dreams, Joseph is being elevated, and all of his brothers are coming, and they're bowing down to him.

And he begins to tell them these dreams. And that doesn't really make things any better. They just continue to have this bitterness, this hatred toward Joseph.

Well, eventually, the events of the narrative continue to unfold, and his brothers become so enraged that one day, as Joseph is sent by his father to check on them, they're shepherds, they're tending a flock, and Joseph is sent to check on them.

They see him coming in the distance, and they say, you know what, let's take care of this guy. Let's get rid of him. And so they devise a plan to kill him. So they grab him, and they throw him into a pit.

After some discussion, Joseph's brothers realize, it's not really going to profit us at all if we kill our brother. Let's instead sell him. Okay? Let's just make a few dollars, we'll lie to our father, and the problem will be gone.

[13 : 34] And so we see, as chapter 37 ends, Joseph goes from being this foremost object of his father's affection to now being sold into slavery by his very own brothers.

Again, this story is just up and down. And as we get to the end of 37, and we come into chapter 38 and 39, we might be tempted to think, man, what is going on?

Things are so out of control. And in a sense, you would be right. Joseph has no control over any of this. But you see that someone does. So they take him down, they throw him into a pit.

In chapter 37, he's sold into slavery. And we're going to pick it up here in 39. Now, if you're not familiar with the way these chapters work, remember 38 is kind of a, you could say it's a parenthesis.

Kind of take a break from Joseph's story and go and talk about Judah and Tamar. But then in 39, we come back to the story and we pick up right where we left off at the end of 37.

[14 : 36] So what I'd like to do here is just begin by reading just the first six verses of Genesis 39, and then we'll stop and we'll talk about it. The Bible says this, Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, brought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.

The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant, and he made an overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph.

Thus the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge, and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. Again, our story here in Genesis 39 begins with a little bit of a recap of what we've just talked about at the end of 37.

[15 : 57] Joseph has been taken against his will by his brothers. He's been sold to a band of traveling Ishmaelites who are headed down to Egypt.

And what you need to understand is during this time in Egypt, the slave trade was booming. And so these Ishmaelites, as they're traveling by, they just see an opportunity to buy this young Hebrew man for a small price.

They just think, you know, we'll just turn a profit. We'll just sell him to the highest bidder once we get to Egypt. That's exactly what they do. The text says they sell him to a man named Potiphar.

Well, there's some details given about Potiphar. What does the Bible tell us? The Bible says that Potiphar was an Egyptian officer, the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard.

Potiphar is like the leader of Pharaoh's own personal security detail. We might read over that. As you read Genesis 39, you might kind of miss that detail.

[17 : 02] But I think we need to just pause and consider this. Egypt is a huge place. Hypothetically, couldn't Joseph have been sold to any one of many different slave owners?

And yet, he's sold to a man named Potiphar who is in close proximity with Pharaoh, the highest ranking person in all of Egypt.

The most influential person in all of Egypt. We find, as the story unfolds later on, that this proximity that Joseph has to Pharaoh through Potiphar is actually providential, that God uses that.

So he's sold to Potiphar. And we're told that he becomes his slave, his servant.

But it's interesting, as you look at this text, if you look back here, verses 2 and following, we're told that Joseph is not just any slave. He's not working in the fields.

[18 : 00] He's not common labor. Instead, he ends up in Potiphar's own house. See that there? He's in Potiphar's own house. You might say that Joseph was on Potiphar's residential staff.

What was he doing every day? Not entirely sure. No doubt he was involved just in the daily affairs and daily operations of Potiphar's household. Which you might have noticed here in verse 2, and I want you to just look back there, if you would, with me.

Verse 2. Something begins to take place. Remember, here's Joseph having gone from having his father's affection being this kind of an elevated position, being sold now into slavery.

Something begins to happen in verse 2. Things begin to turn around. It's kind of one of those unexpected twists. Look back at verse 2. What begins to happen? It says, The Lord was with Joseph.

So he became a successful man. A successful slave, a successful servant within Potiphar's house. Potiphar begins to notice that as he gives Joseph tasks, everything that Joseph does turns out well.

- [19 : 15] Every project that he undertakes is successful. Well, maybe some of you, I don't know, most of you, maybe some of you have owned a business before. You've hired people. You've been an employer. What do you do when you hire someone and you start giving them tasks, and they do a really good job? I mean, things are successful. What do you do? You give them more responsibility.
- You perhaps promote them. You give them more and more tasks, and that's exactly what Potiphar does. He begins to give Joseph more and more responsibility.
- I mean, this is the type of guy that you want working for you. And so eventually we're told here in the text that he makes Joseph his personal servant, there in verse 4. It says, I mean, this is a meteoric rise.
- He comes in just as a slave that Potiphar buys, and before you know it, the text says he's the overseer over the house. And God begins to bless Potiphar's house because of all this.
- [20 : 26] You'll notice in verses 5 and 6, all of these kind of universal words. Joseph is put in charge over all that he owned, verse 5.
- So the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge at the end of verse, middle of verse 6. Potiphar did not concern himself with anything.
- So Joseph is given so much responsibility that Potiphar, he's not even concerned. Joseph is running the operations of his household. Again, we might stop in the text here at verse 6 and say, okay, so at the beginning of the chapter, things were looking pretty bad.
- But now, I mean, all things considered, yes, he's a servant, but things have kind of turned around for Joseph. He's doing pretty well in Egypt. But I want you to look at the end of verse 6 because there's something really significant here.
- And if you have a Bible that indents paragraphs, you might notice the middle of verse 6 has an indentation. It's a new paragraph, a new thought, a new idea. But we have a detail here at the end of verse 6 that's really significant.
- [21 : 36] It says this, Now Joseph was handsome in form of appearance. That's not just a random thing thrown in there, right? The author is setting us up. There's something that's about to be introduced into the narrative that is going to be a serious complication.
- I want us to read on here. Let's continue. Verses 7, we'll read down through 10. It came about after these events that his master's wife, Joseph's master's wife, looked with desire at Joseph's.
- And she said, Lie with me. But he refused and said to his master's wife, Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house. And he has put all that he owns in my charge.
- There's no one greater in this house than I. And he has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?
- As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her. So here's the complication.
- [22 : 45] Potiphar's wife, and we don't know how long, but she had been observing Joseph for quite some time. Again, we don't know how long Joseph has been in the house. Maybe it's months.
- I would assume it's been years at this point. If Potiphar has had the time to see all of these projects become successful and give them more responsibility, it seems like just probably years have gone by.

But she's extremely bold. She puts it right out there in verse 7. He says, Lie with me. But I want you to notice Joseph's rebuttal here, and I've just kind of highlighted three reasons that he gives.

I want you to notice these three reasons that Joseph gives why he cannot and why he will not do this. First, he recognizes that this would betray the trust his master had placed in him.

Look back at the text. Verse 8 says, Behold with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house. He's put everything he owns in my charge. My master, Potiphar, has so much trust in me.

[23 : 50] How could I betray that trust? Secondly, he notes that this act would be an offense against him as her husband. He just says, Look, you are his wife.

You're his wife. But thirdly, and most significantly here, and I want you to notice this, jump down to verse 9. End of verse 9, Joseph realizes that committing this sin would be not only against Potiphar, not only against his own conscience, but ultimately against God himself.

See that there at the end of verse 9? He puts it in question form. How then could I do this great evil and sin against who? Against God.

I just want to pause here and just ask the question, What is your motivation for resisting temptation? What is my motivation? I think oftentimes we are motivated by consequence.

We know that a certain action will bring about a certain consequence, and so we say, Well, I really shouldn't do that because X, Y, and Z will take place. Joseph here gets it right.

[25 : 05] He goes right to the heart of it. Sin ultimately is an offense against God Almighty. I just ask if that's our motivation this morning.

Joseph gets it right. He is absolutely resolved here in verse 10, and we see this. The text says in verse 10 that this isn't just a one-time thing that she does, but continually she speaks to him day after day, and yet he does not listen to her to lie beside her or even be with her.

Well, the text and the narrative kind of escalates. After a while, she gets a little bit tired of this rejection, so I'm going to continue reading in verse 11. We're going to keep moving through. Verse 11.

I will read down through 18. Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside.

She caught him by the garment, saying, Lie with me. And he left his garment in her hand and fled and went outside. When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, she called to the men of her household and said to them, See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us.

[26 : 21] He came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside. So she left his garment beside her until his master came home.

Then she spoke to him with these words. The Hebrew slave whom you brought to us came in to me to make sport of me. And as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside.

No doubt, Potiphar's wife is emboldened by the fact there's no one else in the house. They're alone. And so she grabs onto Joseph, and as she's been doing day after day, she once again insists that he have this improper relationship with her.

What does Joseph do? Is he still resolved? You see that he is. And it's interesting that the text uses very urgent language to describe his response here.

He left his garment in her hand, he fled, and he went outside. Joseph is still as resolved as he was earlier as we saw in verse 10. Potiphar's wife has a bit of a problem, doesn't she?

[27 : 32] How in the world is she supposed to explain that Joseph has just run outside of the house and she's left holding his clothes? Well, perhaps she considers to herself, I have an advantage.

There are no witnesses. And so she takes the story, she takes what has just happened, and she turns it around entirely and essentially accuses Joseph of assaulting her.

The text doesn't tell us her thoughts, but evidently she just decides she's going to turn the tables on him. And so she calls everyone into the house and she creates a scene and she blames Joseph.

It's interesting here as I was studying and considering this, I noticed she's not only blaming Joseph. Do you see that? This is really interesting. Verse 17.

Who else does she blame? She blames her husband. She blames Potiphar. She spoke to him with these words, the Hebrew slave whom you brought to us. So she's blaming Joseph, she's blaming Potiphar, she's blaming everyone she can find except herself.

[28 : 51] She says, you brought him and he's come to make sport of us. I was doing a little bit of a study on that expression. It's kind of an ambiguous term in the Hebrew text. It's used in different ways.

It's the same word that's used in Exodus chapter 32 verse 6. It says, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. It means to make light up. It often has kind of a sexual connotation.

So she accuses Joseph of this. Turns everything on its head. But notice how Potiphar reacts in verse 19.

We're going to finish up the text here. Verse 19 through 23. And I just kind of want to note, many of your translations here will have the word now.

If you've noticed as we've gone through the text that word now has come up. This is the fourth time. And just kind of as a side note, as you're studying narrative in the Old Testament, sometimes these little words can be indicators that there's a shift, a new scene taking place.

[29 : 52] And now is a really good indicator. So this is kind of the last scene here. Verses 19 through 23. Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, this is what your slave did to me, his anger burned.

So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the jail. But the Lord was with Joseph.

Does that sound familiar? Have we read that? I'm ready today somewhere? And extended kindness to him and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. Does that sound familiar at all?

Okay? The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail so that whatever was done there he was responsible for. Getting a little deja vu here, right?

This is, this is, seems like this is just what happened earlier. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the Lord was with him and whatever he did the Lord made to prosper.

[31 : 01] So for the third time here we as a reader get an echo of Potiphar's wife's story. And we're told that Potiphar is extremely angry.

The text says his anger burned. It's very vivid language. It's interesting here as you consider this story, it doesn't say why. Is Potiphar, does Potiphar believe his wife?

Maybe. If he does, he has every right as a slaveholder to put his slave to death. That was his right. Yet he doesn't, we're just told he's angry. Is he angry with the situation as a whole?

This is obviously his most profitable servant, the one whom he has entrusted everything, to put everything in his charge. And now he has to send him to jail. But for whatever reason we're not told exactly, Potiphar is angry, takes Joseph, puts him in jail.

And so once again, as we've gone through this story, the story takes this drastic downward turn. Again, it's just up and down and twists and turns all throughout.

[32 : 06] From being thrown into a pit by your own brothers, now sold into slavery, then ascending within Potiphar's house, you get all this responsibility. Now being falsely accused, here we are again, you're thrown into prison, up and down.

And as a reader, as you get to this point, it just seems to us, man, Joseph did not catch a break. But I hope you noticed, and I tried to highlight this, in verse 21, once again something begins to happen.

We're told that the Lord was with Joseph. And he begins to extend kindness to him and gives him favor. He gives him favor in the eyes of the jailer, and all of a sudden, Joseph begins to get all this responsibility.

We're told that the Lord made everything he did to prosper. We get to the end of the chapter, and we have to ask the question, what's the point?

I mean, this is a crazy story. It's an exciting story. It has all these unexpected ups and downs, but what's the point? is the story intended to be a warning against sexual temptation?

[33 : 18] Well, I think we can certainly look at Joseph and look at Joseph's character and look at the way that he resisted that temptation. We can learn a lot, and we should learn from his integrity.

But I personally don't think that that's the main idea here. I want you to look back at the structure of the text. I've tried to highlight this, and I just want you to look at it again. At the beginning, Joseph is mistreated.

His brothers have sold him into slavery, he's taken to Egypt, and yet the narrator highlights something. It's not something about Joseph, it's something about God. What's highlighted is God's presence, his presence and his blessing, as Joseph advances.

Now he's in Potiphar's house, he's falsely accused, he's treated unjustly, and finds himself in an Egyptian prison. But guess what? The narrator highlights something. What is it?

God's presence, God's blessing, God's activity. He says the Lord was with Joseph, he's present, but he's not just present in the same way you might be present when your friend is going through something, right?

[34 : 29] Your friend is going through a hard time and saying, I want to be a good friend, I want to be present. And so, you know, Yahweh is not here just patting Joseph on the back and saying, everything's going to be okay. You know, things will turn out, I'm sure.

You know. Instead, he is present and he is active. He is sovereignly, intricately moving along the details of the story.

See, I don't think that God's presence and activity here in Genesis 39 is a footnote to the narrative. I don't think it's a footnote. I actually think it serves as the theological framework for the entire thing.

It's at the beginning, it's at the end, that's what's being highlighted. In the midst of these, what we would say, seemingly horrible circumstances, these injustices, God is still sovereignly working to carry out his plan.

God is still fulfilling his promises to his people. I would argue that God himself is the main character of the story here.

- [35 : 37] He is the one moving the details along. He is the one that is organizing all of these, what we would say are coincidences, from Joseph being even sold to Potiphar, that proximity to Pharaoh, Joseph ending up in prison, we know what happens there, right?

God is intricately organizing and carefully advancing the story. As you continue the next few chapters, we find that it's a connection that Joseph makes in prison that eventually gives him audience with Pharaoh himself.

Shortly after, Joseph finds himself in a position of authority, not just over Potiphar's house, over all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.

And if you know the story, you know that God uses that to do what? To save Joseph's family through famine, and to fulfill his promise, which he had promised way back to Abram, that I will make of you a great nation.

And he saves that family, and they come down to Egypt, and it's while in Egypt that they expand. And so over and over again in the story, as things look bad, and we look at these circumstances, and we say, what in the world is going on?

- [36 : 58] God is not done. God is still working. He's still active. I just want to draw your attention just for a brief moment to the original audience.

Who would have been the first people to read these words after Moses wrote? I think oftentimes when we study a New Testament book, we're prone to consider that.

Okay, so the letter to the Romans, who is Paul writing to? We consider that audience. But you know, the Old Testament writings had an original audience.

They were written to a group of people. Moses here would have been writing to the children of Israel as their parents are on the brink of the promised land.

They had not entered the land. They had failed by not believing that God would do what he said he would do. And so here they are.

- [37 : 59] Moses is writing to this group of people. And the main question I have to believe in their minds is this. Is God still working? Will God be faithful to fulfill his promises?

And the story here in Genesis 39, I just think, answers that question of a resounding yes. Look at what God has been doing all along in this story.

I think that this lesson is instructive for each of us this morning. I know it is from my own life. Because if you haven't noticed, I'm sure you have, life isn't all roses and butterflies.

Life is not all good, what we would say are good circumstances or situations. Each of us faces difficulties. Each of us faces hardships.

Perhaps you face even injustices. And we may be tempted at times as we look at our circumstances, as we look around, even look around at the world around us.

- [39 : 02] And everything that's going on, and I don't really have to get into the details, you know what I'm talking about everything that's going on in you. You might be tempted to think, what in the world is God doing, or is God doing anything at all?

When you let go from that job, that dream job, you worked so hard to get, when your finances are tighter than ever before, and you really don't see a way out, you feel like there's no hope, and you suffer the loss of a loved one, and I heard about that a little while ago, and your heart is broken, may this text assure you this morning that God in those times has not abdicated his throne, he has not left, he has not given up, he's still at work to the hardships of Joseph's story, and God is present, God is actively carrying out his plans for our good, but ultimately for his glory.

He's the main character in Joseph's story, and he's the main character in Alice. For me, as I consider this text, those truths are an incredible comfort to my heart, as I consider how little control I really have, as I consider how God is an absolute truth, God is active and working to fulfill his plan for his glory.

A favorite passage of mine, and perhaps some of you would share the sentiment, is Romans 8, 28. It says this, God is and we think that God, no it doesn't, it says and we, what?

Know, it's confident here, we are convinced, we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose, and then Paul goes on and details what God has done in salvation history to bring people to himself, ultimately to bring them to a state of work creation.

[41 : 22] And he uses that to say, look, if God is in control over this, then he is in control over even the smallest details of the purpose. What a comfort. What a comfort that is. A few chapters later, Joseph will affirm the reality of God's activity in all of these events.

I mean, Joseph's story takes up more than ten chapters of the Bible. And Joseph comes to a place, and I don't know if he understood this back in chapter 39, but in chapter 50, he sure does.

Understands that God was doing something. I want to show you some verses here. Chapter 50, Genesis chapter 50, verses 19 through 20.

These are often read and considered, but I just want to circle back around to them. Genesis chapter 50, verses 19 and 20. Here's the context. Jacob, Joseph's father, and all of Joseph's brothers have now come to Egypt.

Jacob has now died, and Joseph's brothers are terrified that Joseph now is going to take revenge on them for what they did to him years prior.

[42 : 37] It's a logical conclusion to come to, right? Nothing's stopping him, we would see. And so they essentially come crawling on their faces to him, asking if he would spare their lives, and this is his response.

Verse 19, but Joseph said to them, do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? Essentially, I'm not God.

There's only one God. It's not me. Verse 20, as for you, you meant evil against me. And he's referring back to the time when they threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery.

You meant evil against me. But, God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

So you see that Joseph now has this perspective as he looks back on his life and he sees, again, I don't know if he saw it when he was in the pit, I don't know if he saw it when he was in the prison, I have no idea, the text doesn't tell us, but here he sees that God had a plan all along, all along, to preserve many people alive, which of course is the fulfillment of the promise that we considered in Genesis 12.

[44 : 00] God had a plan. So for us, again, as we go through, as we consider our own lives, I don't know all of you, I know very few of you.

I just found out about this church yesterday, okay? This is, this is, it's been very rapid events happening here, but I don't know many of you or what's going on in your lives, but I know that you're people and people have hardships and difficulties, and we are often tempted to ask the question, has God abandoned us?

And I just want to encourage you as believers in Jesus Christ, as you consider Romans 8, you consider Genesis 39, we would be confident in the fact that God does indeed have a plan, and that he is active even when we cannot see it, even when we are tempted to throw our hands up in despair and say, things are out of control.

God is still in control. I would just ask that God would grant us grace to believe these truths. My heart is often so prone towards self-reliance that truths like these don't quite break in right away.

May God grant us the grace to believe these things, to entrust our lives to his wise and powerful hands, to live faithfully for him, as Joseph did, even if we don't understand exactly what he's doing, knowing that he is good, that he has a plan, and that he is accomplishing his purposes for his glory.

[45 : 43] Would you go with me in a word of prayer as we close this morning? Father, I thank you for your word. It is sharp and powerful.

Father, I ask that you would take the truths in this text and that you would apply them to my heart, to our hearts, that you would help us in those times, Father, when we are tempted to despair, to throw up our hands and question you, that we would simply trust that you are active, that you are sovereign, that you have a plan.

Lord, would you help us to live faithfully for you in the present? I pray all these things in the precious name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.