

# Joseph: A Case Study of God's Providence

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[ 0 : 00 ] Genesis 37. Genesis 37. We'll read the entire chapter. Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

! This is the account of Jacob.! Joseph, a young man of 17, was attending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

Now Israel, that is Jacob, now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made a rich ornamented robe for him.

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

He said to them, Listen to this dream I had. We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field, when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.

[ 1 : 12 ] His brothers said to him, Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us? And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. Listen, he said, I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.

And when he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?

His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem.

Come, I'm going to send you to them. Very well, he replied. And so he said to him, Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks and bring word to me.

[ 2 : 14 ] Then he sent him off from the valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, What are you looking for?

He replied, I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks? They have moved on from here, the man answered. I heard them say, Let's go to Dothan.

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan, but they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

Here comes that dreamer, they said to each other. Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.

When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. Let's not take his life, he said.

Don't shed any blood. Throw him into the cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him.

Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

[ 3 : 15 ] So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the richly ornamented robe he was wearing, and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty.

There was no water in it. As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm, and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, what will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.

His brothers agreed. So when the midnight merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for 20 shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt. When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. He went back to his brothers and said, the boy isn't there. Where can I turn now?

[ 4 : 24 ] Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, we found this.

Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe. He recognized it and said, it is my son's robe. Some ferocious animal has devoured him.

Joseph has surely been torn to pieces. And Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son many days.

All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. No, he said. In mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.

So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Mennonites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

[ 5 : 24 ] Well, for some weeks now, we have been studying what God's word teaches us about his providence, which we have defined as God's upholding and controlling all his creatures and all their actions all the time.

We've seen many features of God's providence and even some of the problems that people have with it. We saw in Isaiah 46, 11 that God says, what I have said, that will I bring about.

What I have planned, that will I do. So there's the plan made from all eternity in the secret counsel of God, his hidden decree.

Some of those hidden decrees have been revealed to us in scripture. That's how we know them.

There's the plan. And then there's the working out of the plan in the real space-time world.

That's the role of God's providence. God's providence, as it were, rolls up its sleeve and goes to work in this world to bring about God's purpose, God's plan, to the very detail, every detail.

[ 6 : 42 ] And the reason God is able to do this is because he controls all of his creatures and all their actions all the time. Now this morning we're shifting gears and we're going to take a case study in God's providence from the life of Joseph.

And my aim is not to preach verse by verse through the 13 chapters that are found at the end of the book of Genesis, but rather just to go through it noting the providence of God that shaped Joseph's life and that fulfilled God's eternal plans and purposes.

It underscores some of the very lessons of providence that we have seen thus far. Now I think it might be helpful for us to first see the purpose of God.

We're going to be looking at the providence of God at work in Joseph's life, but let's first go back and see what's the purpose? What's God accomplishing through the life of Joseph?

So turn with me to Genesis chapter 45. This is several chapters behind the chapter we read, chapter 37.

[ 7 : 56 ] Genesis 45, it's where Joseph reveals his identity to his stunned brothers and it's such a moving account I weep almost every time I read it. Joseph is no longer the 17 year old they sold into slavery, but he's now 39 and he's second only to Pharaoh in Egypt.

And he says to them, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt. And in verse 5, he says, and now do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

For two years now, there's been famine in the land and for the next five years, there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So here's the secret purpose and plan of God that lies behind all the ups and downs of Joseph's life. This is what God was out to do, to save many lives, indeed many lives, throughout all of Egypt and the surrounding nations, but especially, he says, to preserve for you, you sons of Jacob, a remnant on earth.

You, the 12-son family of Jacob that will make up the nation of Israel, the 12 tribes of Israel. And then later in Genesis chapter 50, if you want to turn over there, when Father Jacob dies and the 11 brothers are afraid that Joseph's just been holding his knife of revenge until Daddy dies and now he's going to get them.

[ 9 : 45 ] And Joseph is going to reassure them of only kindness on his part in return for their wickedness. And so he says in verse 20 of Genesis 50, you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

That's the secret plan that God has had from all eternity for Joseph's life, to take him down to Egypt, to exalt him there to a position where he would be the instrument of saving many lives, especially the lives of his 11 brothers the family of Jacob, some 70 in all.

Now, this is a big deal. God gives 13 chapters to it in his word here in Genesis. But this account of Joseph's life is then followed by Exodus and by 64 other books, which is to say that this story of Joseph's life fits into a bigger story, doesn't it?

The bigger story, the very story of salvation that God is working in the world that continues to this very day and will until the return of Christ.

So Joseph's life is an important piece of the puzzle of God's big story of saving many sinners through Jesus Christ, his son.

[ 11 : 18 ] Now, you'll see this more clearly as you think about the human ancestry of the Lord Jesus as to his human nature.

The family of Jacob was the lion of Abraham. Jacob's the grandson of Abraham, from which a male seed was promised who would bring salvation, blessing to the whole world, all nations.

that this is the one who would bruise the, in bruising his heel, would crush the head of the serpent and so redeem a people for God. And Genesis chapter 49 reveals God's plan for this savior king was to be born in the line of Judah.

Judah, one of Joseph's brothers that we read about in chapter 37. So this is more than an interesting story about a 17-year-old teenager.

It's an essential part of God's plan of salvation. And what I want you to see is that if your faith is in the Lord Jesus this morning, this is part of your story.

[ 12 : 27 ] Your story. Your history of salvation and how Jesus Christ saved you from eternal torments. So you and I need Joseph to get down to Egypt and to provide life for his brothers so that from his family, namely Judah, his brother Judah, the savior might be born.

Born to obey God's law for us. Born to die for our sins on the cross and thereby to make us right with God. So let's read and let's listen with personal interest knowing that our own salvation is at stake here.

if Judah is not spared, we don't have a savior. And there's no remnant on earth to be saved by Jesus Christ.

Those are not small losses, are they? A whole lot hangs on God's ability to pull off the salvation that he planned. So let's see how God's arm of providence then works this all out in this chapter in the history of salvation.

It was a long and winding road, wasn't it? And the story begins with Joseph, a lad just 17 years old. Is anybody here 17 years old? Put your hand up.

[ 13 : 49 ] Better yet, stand up. Stand up. I don't want to have you stand long. Come on. Sam, Reese, anybody else? 17? All right. This is what we're talking about.

A boy this size, a boy this age. All right? Thanks, guys. An older teenager. And as we begin, what we need to remember is that Joseph knew nothing of God's secret plan for him to save his whole family.

In other words, Joseph, as a 17-year-old teenager, was encountering the hiddenness of God. Just like these 17-year-olds are encountering the hiddenness of God. They have no idea what their lives are going to be.

What God's plan has been from all eternity for them to do. That was Joseph. Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O Savior and God of Israel.

So, all Joseph had were the natural dreams of any 17-year-old hoping for a bright future. And a little later, we'll find he had some supernatural dreams given to him also by God, but he had no clue what God had planned to accomplish by his life.

[ 15 : 04 ] He experienced the mystery of God's providence just as we do in this life. So, let's dig in.

Chapter 37. Familiar account to us. But the repeated factor throughout the chapter is the fact that Joseph is hated by his brothers.

And there were many reasons for that. First of all, he brought their father, Jacob, a bad report about them, verse 2 tells us. So, the brothers would go out to graze the sheep, sometimes far from father

and far from home.

And while they were away, out from under father's gaze, they would satisfy some of their evil desires that they would not satisfy under father's eye. And they thought they could get away with it because father wasn't there.

And they might have if it hadn't been for their ratting younger brother, Joseph. Because when he got home, he went straight to father and he gave a bad report. Dad, you know what they were doing out there?

[16:09] And he told them the wicked things that they had done. And unless you're pursuing holiness, unless you want to kill sin, you will not appreciate having your sins exposed.

The wicked have always hated the rebukes of the righteous. And these brothers especially couldn't stand having their younger, goody two-shoes brother telling on them.

And that was a cause that fomented hatred in their hearts for Joseph. Secondly, he was their father's favorite son. Jacob, or Israel as he's called here, loved Joseph more than any of his sons. Now, we understand why. Not that it was right, but we understand why Joseph had been born to him in his old age. That made him special. Furthermore, Joseph was the son of his favorite wife, Rachel, whom he loved more than Leah and more than the other two concubine wives that he had taken.

So we understand that he would love the son of his most loved wife more than the other sons of his less loved wives. father Jacob did not hide his greater love for Joseph in his heart.

[17:32] He showed that favoritism in very obvious ways, preferring him in such ways that the other boys couldn't miss.

And most obvious of all was that special coat. The coat of many colors, the robe of richly ornamented robe. We're not sure exactly what it was. But he gave, made, had this special robe given, made and given to Joseph.

And that meant that his brothers couldn't even lay eyes upon Joseph without the sad reality staring them in the face that dad loves him more than me.

Because he's wearing this robe all the time. And so they were jealous and they hated Joseph for it. Parents, if you want to provoke your children to wrath, then just show more love and preferential treatment to one above the others.

It was Jacob's favoritism that made Joseph the target of his brother's hatred. And that was father Jacob's sin.

[18:43] And it would cost him dearly, wouldn't it? We'll see that. So the brothers hated him and could not speak a kind word about him. That's interesting, isn't it?

Jesus says, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. And the writer of Genesis is saying that even when Joseph was deserving of praise and of a kind word, the hatred in the hearts of their brothers gave them lockjaw.

they could not speak a kind word to Joseph. Kids, let that search your hearts if you're not able to speak kindly to your brothers and sisters.

It could be that it's just pointing to the problem of hatred in the heart. And that goes for adults as well. they hated him because he was the favorite.

And thirdly, his dreams of domination over his entire family. Dreams used to be one of the ways God made direct revelations to men, especially to prophets.

[19:54] Numbers 12, 6 says, God says, I reveal myself to him in visions. I speak to him in dreams. Now that was true essentially of the prophets, but we'll even see God making a revelation of his mind to the wicked pagan pharaoh, won't we?

In his dreams. Though it will take Joseph to interpret them. So, those dreams were supernatural revelation from God, different from the ordinary dream that you and I have.

Now in both of the dreams, he had two of them, his brothers were bowing down to him. And in the second dream, so were his parents. He told the dreams to his brothers, I'm not sure that was wise, especially under the circumstances, and they said to him, do you intend to reign over us?

Will you actually rule us? And they hated him all the more, as if they didn't already have enough reasons to hate him. He gave them another. In fact, two more reasons, two dreams.

They despised the very thought of them ever bowing down to their sniveling younger brother and favorite son of their father. And that hatred will ripen into even greater sins against Joseph and eventually lead to selling him as a slave.

[ 21 : 20 ] But I want us to pause at this point just for a moment and consider one of the problems of providence that we've looked at. And it's the problem that does God's providence include the sinful acts of sinful men?

Does he govern and use their sinful acts to pursue and fulfill his good purpose? And nothing could be clear in our passage.

If they hadn't hated him, they never would have sold him off to Egypt. God used their hatred, didn't he? God wants Joseph down in Egypt for a saving mission and he'll get him there through the sinful hatred of his brothers.

And then it was a hatred, a sinful hatred, aggravated by a sinful favoritism by Jacob for his son. And by the sinful inner family rivalries and jealousies that were spread because of Jacob's sinful polygamy and greater love for Rachel, Joseph's mother, over the other three wives.

You can't look anywhere in chapter 37 without seeing sin, sin, sin. And yet, that's the raw materials with which God is working to bring about not evil and wicked but his good purpose of saving many alive.

[ 22 : 52 ] So yes, the hand of providence uses sin. Yes, he uses even this wicked sin of hatred. Even though God himself hates sin, is not the author of it and is not responsible for it, he uses it.

They were responsible, as Joseph said, you intended to harm me. So it's your fault that you hated me and wanted to harm me. That's not God's fault. But God intended it for good.

So don't miss the obvious. God's providence has planted Joseph in a messed up polygamous family with all the trappings that go with it.

Sinful, hateful sibling rivalries. So, children of God, I don't know every one of your family situations and how good or messed up they were, but I do know this.

It was God's providence that planted you in that family. Just as much as it planted Joseph in his family. And he will use your family for the fulfilling of his purpose in your life.

[ 24 : 02 ] And nothing is going to stop that. It is a good purpose. So, embrace God's providence and trust him for the ride. Now let's go on and we'll keep a providence watch as we go.

As Jacob woke up that fateful morning, he had no way of knowing that his reasonable plan of sending Joseph to Shechem to check out how his brothers were doing in the grazing of the flocks, no idea that this would be the last time he laid eyes on his favorite son for 22 years.

Why Jacob didn't keep Joseph at home or send a servant with him must have just gone through his mind millions of times in those 22 years.

We don't know the human reason but we know the divine reason. It was providence. God had a plan. He was working. Well, when Joseph gets to Shechem, the place where the brothers were supposed to be, they weren't there.

But why weren't they there if that was the appointed place for their grazing? Did they find that the scrub there was sparser than they had anticipated? That they hadn't had as much rain there to cause it to grow?

[ 25 : 16 ] Did the sheep quickly eat up everything green? Did they run into hostility there in that region as Jacob's name stunk in that region because of what his sons had done to the men of Shechem earlier in chapter 34?

We don't know but there's always a human side and a divine side to everything that happens, isn't there? And the divine side is that this is an important link in the chain of God's providence.

It doesn't have in the margin a sign providence of God exclamation point but maybe you ought to put one in there just to remind you this is an important link in the chain.

If he had found his brothers here in Shechem, they would not have been on the Ishmaelite caravan route to Egypt so Joseph would have missed his free ride to Egypt the place where he must get to be elevated and bring salvation to his family.

And though his brothers aren't there, a man was there who found Joseph just wandering around in the fields looking for his brothers.

[ 26 : 28 ] Who was this man and why was he there? Why was he there that day at the same time that Joseph was there? Why was he there when his brothers had been there and why did he overhear them saying we're going down to Dothan?

He's an unnamed man in the fields of Shechem. But he's another crucial link that God had planted there to work out his purpose in Providence.

So sure enough Joseph takes his word, finds them near Dothan. But as they saw him approaching they no doubt couldn't miss him in that robe coming at them.

They saw him approaching they plotted to kill him. And now we see why Jesus and John taught that hatred is murder in the heart. That's what it naturally ripens into.

That's what it's aiming at. I wish they were dead. You'll sometimes hear people say you're dead to me. That's it. That's murder in the heart. It's hatred. And in a perfect world where you could get away with what you wanted to do, you'd be murdering them.

[ 27 : 38 ] That's what hatred does. And that's what they have in their heart. This ripened hatred is now ready to commit the act of murder.

Just as it did with Cain and Abel and many other examples in the Bible and so many murders today. trace it back to its source. There's hatred in the heart for the murdered one.

Here comes that dreamer, they said to each other. Come now, let's kill and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams.

Can you see what was eating at them? What was stirring their hatred? Those dreams he had. They just couldn't bear it. Coming from him. We're going to bow down to him.

Fat chance of that happening if we kill him. They're plotting his murder. But little did they know that they were opposing God's plan. So if they kill Joseph, God's plan is foiled, it's thwarted, it's history.

[ 28 : 47 ] But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever. The purposes of his heart through all generations. So God's hand of providence must frustrate their plan and must change their plan to line up with his.

And again, we need to be listening with more than just a historical interest in some story of a teenager's life. We need Joseph to live. That from the saved family of his brothers might come forth the savior for our sins.

So Reuben also has a plan to save him. Interesting, isn't it? God has someone there. And here's Reuben and he's got a plan to save him. Evidently moved by pity or more likely the fact that he was the firstborn who would have to answer for the absence of Joseph to his father.

We don't know, but he says let's not dirty our hands with his blood. Let's just throw him into this cistern. Let him starve to death and rot there under the wilderness sun. So he said this because he planned to come back and rescue him and take him home to father.

But you see, Reuben's plan was also opposed to God's plan, wasn't it? Because if Joseph is taken back home to dad, he'll miss his ride down to Egypt.

[ 30 : 10 ] So that too has to be foiled. That can't be. And God's providence sees to it. So that happens as he's arriving. Then Joseph comes among the camp of his brothers and they stripped him of that colorful robe.

You can just see their joy of tearing that thing off of him. And they threw him into the cistern. Later on, they said to each other, speaking of this incident, that they remembered his distress.

And Joseph pleading with his brothers for his life, death, but they would not listen. So they didn't just throw him in and that was the end of it. He pleaded with them for his life.

He knew their murderous plan. He cried for mercy over and over in distress. And they turned a death-hardened ear to him.

Well, he no doubt was crying as they sit heartlessly and chewed their sandwiches. But just then in the distance, they see this approaching caravan of Ishmaelite traders laden down with their goods, clearly on their way to the market down in Egypt.

[ 31 : 28 ] Far off. And the arrival of these traders is the next link in God's providence. Why hadn't they arrived the day before? If so, Joseph would have missed his ride, wouldn't he?

Was it slow camels? Was it too much stuff? A late start due to a sick kid back at home? We don't know why they didn't come a day earlier.

But we do know who orchestrated the timing of this event. And caused all these second causes to affect his plan for Joseph's life.

Had them come by when Joseph was there. Why hadn't they passed through here two weeks later when it was too late and Joseph is a skeleton perhaps eaten by the vultures.

We don't know but the divine reason is that God's providence is always perfectly timed and has his people in place just at the right place and at the right time.

[ 32 : 35 ] But even if they come by the brothers might just wave them on on their way as they plan to hide their murderous plot of killing their brother.

But just then Judas ever the brother for making a buck has an idea. And he says let's not kill him. Let's get something out of this kid for all of our troubles.

Let's sell him. Let's sell him as a slave. He'll still accomplish the goal. that will still accomplish the goal of getting him out of our life forever a slave in far away Egypt.

Now we know where that idea came from. It was his hatred. It was his greed. But we also know that it was the hand of God's providence that brought this all to pass in perfect timing.

And it was a further act of providence that the whole band of brothers agreed with the plan because they wanted him dead.

[ 33 : 44 ] So providence providence providence God acting through the sinful acts of sinful men. But now they had their own reasons and behind it all is God keeping his plan on course.

So the deal was struck. The Midianite merchants gave 20 shekels of silver for the slave. And again we're asking why did they even want him? Won't he just be another mouth to feed along the long route to Egypt?

Maybe they thought we'll make him unload our wares when we get there. And maybe water the camels along the way. Who knows? But they must have known what a slave goes for in the Egyptian market and they knew they had a winner here and could make money on the deal.

So the invisible hand of providence again behind all those reasonings of those Midianite merchants that we'll never know perhaps or at least not in this life why they bought him.

And now the great cover up with no Joseph to give father a bad report. These brothers they're not only murderers they're liars. They're heartless liars at that.

[ 34 : 53 ] They kill a goat, dip Joseph's robe in the blood and at home they hand it to their dad saying we found this. We found this.

Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe. And their cover up worked perfectly. He took the bait and believed the whole lie. Jacob the converted deceiver is here deceived by his own sons. It is my son's robe. Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.

And he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and mourned for his son for many days. And he refused to be comforted. And while he might by the hypocritical comfort of his lying sons.

What an act they must have put on trying to comfort him when they knew all along that Joseph was alive. But he refused to receive it. No, in mourning I will go down to the grave to my son.

[ 35 : 56 ] I'm going to be weeping until I die. Matthew Henry points out that his inordinate love for Joseph is revealed in his inordinate grief when he loses him.

I'll never be happy again. How wrong he was. As even then his God of providence was treasuring up his bright designs and working his sovereign will.

And behind his frowning providence he held a smiling face. Can you see the Lord just smiling while Jacob is weeping? And why is he smiling?

He's treasuring up his bright designs. How happy he's going to make Jacob when he saves him and his family out of such loss of life.

And he sees his son again. He's treasuring up. He's delighting as he's fixing to do him good. Such is the heart of the God of providence.

[ 37 : 02 ] He loves, he delights to do good to his children. And so with his father weeping the chapter ends with a final glance back at Joseph. Meanwhile verse 36 the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar one of Pharaoh's officials the captain of the guard.

And all of this that we've read today was working together for good. So how did things look to Joseph?

Not good. Things were darker than they'd ever been before in his short life. He's been pampered. At least treated as the pet son to the hatred of his older brothers.

And now he's been sold twice into slavery. And he's about as far from his dominating dreams as he could get. He's in a strange land far from father and brothers and was a slave.

It's like a dream gone bad. Not very bright on the horizon. But now for the reality check. That's how it looked to Joseph.

[ 38 : 22 ] But how is God's plan looking? Never better. Never better. Right on time. Advancing according to schedule as it always is.

Joseph is now in Egypt. The place he needs to be to become the instrument of salvation to his family. And what's more, he's in Potiphar's house.

You say, well, who's Potiphar? Well, verse 36 tells you he was an official of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

Pharaoh, his name is now dropped in at the end of chapter 37. Joseph is not only in Egypt, he's, what's more, he's in one of Pharaoh's officials' houses.

Moses. He's his property. So, so Potiphar is the link to Pharaoh. Joseph needs to get to Pharaoh to be in a place and an instrument to bring about God's saving act.

[ 39 : 27 ] Isn't God's providence amazing? And we wonder why did providence, or why did Potiphar even want another slave? That's a question to ask, isn't it?

Fair question. Did one get sick? Did one die? Did one run away? Did he, had he just bought more land and needed more slaves to work it? Were the others too lazy to get the work done and so he needs one?

His work was falling behind. There were reasons. And all of them under the strict control of divine providence. So that Potiphar was fined in the marketplace that day wanting another slave.

Providence down to the desires of this Egyptian man Potiphar. But why is he there this day?

Why hadn't he bought a slave the day before or last week at the slave auction whenever it was held? Why not the day after Joseph was being sold? There were earthly reasons again but all under the governance of God's providence.

[ 40 : 29 ] Why did Potiphar want Joseph bad enough that he was willing to pay more than anybody else that day? And why was there no one in the crowd with more money to give for a slave that day who would have outbid Potiphar for Joseph a good-looking slave?

You see all the variables under the control of God's invisible hand. And that made all the difference in the world so that in the end Joseph went home as the property of Potiphar an official of none other than Pharaoh himself.

So God's providence is over all their creatures. All his creatures, all their actions, all the time to bring to pass his purposes.

Kids, how many links in a chain? I've got a chain here. It's made up of links, steel links. How many links of a chain need to break for the whole chain to be broken?

One, right? If it's this chain link that's broken, then it will detach and now the chain is broken. If it's the one in the middle, it's detached. Any one link in the chain is broken, the whole chain is broken.

[ 41 : 45 ] How many links of God's providence need to happen for his plan to work out? Every single one of them.

A break in any one of the links will mean the plan of God was not fulfilled as he decreed it, as he planned it. If the brothers hadn't hated Joseph, God's plan is foiled.

If his brothers hadn't moved on with the sheep to Dothan, his plan was foiled. If the man at Shechem had not found Joseph wandering in the fields and hadn't heard his brothers say they were going to Dothan, if the brothers' plan to kill Joseph had been carried out, God's plan would have been foiled.

If Reuben's plan to rescue him had succeeded, God's plan would have been lost. If Judah hadn't come up with a plan to sell him, if his brothers hadn't agreed, and if the Midianite merchants hadn't arrived on the right day, at the right place, in the right time, or hadn't wanted Joseph, if Potiphar hadn't bought him, or had a different job other than working for Pharaoh, you see, at any point, if one of those links in God's plan is broken, God's plan falls to the ground, unfulfilled.

But God's providence always fulfills God's plan down to every link in the chain, every detail of the plan. So as we lead Joseph in Egypt on the path to Pharaoh's house, that's good news for us because remember, this is all part of God's plan of salvation.

[ 43 : 27 ] We need Joseph down in Egypt. We need him meeting Pharaoh and saving his whole family, that from that family a Savior might be born who would bring salvation to the ends of the earth, yes, even to your heart and mine.

So brothers and sisters, this is your God. how is your life looking? We saw what it looked like to Joseph and then what it looked like from God's plan. So what does your life look like?

Got some real family problems. I wonder, are they like Joseph's messed up family? Perhaps. Financial problems, health problems, sorrow upon sorrow, bleak outlook, overcast sky, people hating you, lying about you.

