

Genesis, pt3: Joseph's Character, part 2: Where Hope Rests

Genesis 41

MPS Christians set their hope fully on Jesus Christ because we know that only He is life.

OBJ Every person should set their hope on Jesus because of three promises of God.

INTRO HOW do you know what or where your hope really rests?

TRANS Joseph has now been in prison for several years. Though forgotten, he continued to guard his heart and serve.

READ Genesis 41:1-8

After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, ² and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. ³ And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴ And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. ⁵ And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. ⁶ And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. ⁷ And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

⁸ So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men.

*Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh. **Genesis 41:1-8***

TRANS Two years and Joseph's situation does not changed. Every day grows dimmer in the hope that he might get out of prison. Until, of course, God works to use His instrument for His greater glory.

Pharaoh has a dream.[.1-8] Seven plump cows come out of the river, followed by seven “*ugly and thin*” cows, who eat the plump cows. Pharaoh awakes, evidently startled by his dream. When he falls back to sleep, he dreams again. This time he saw “*seven heads of grain health and good, growing on a single stalk*” grew up. Then “*seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and absorbed by the east wind*” sprouted after them. The thin heads swallowed the seven healthy. This time when Pharaoh awoke it says he realized it had been a dream. But it was one of those dreams he could not forget. He calls for the magicians and wise men of Egypt, but none can interpret it for him. None of his resources are able to help.

The cupbearer remembers his time in prison.[.9-13] He tells Pharaoh that he remembers what Joseph had done in prison and how it had come true. Pharaoh sends for Joseph and he is cleaned and brought before Pharaoh. Joseph tells him that he cannot interpret the dream, but God will.

Pharaoh recounts his dreams to Joseph.[.14-24] Pharaoh provides more information about the dreams as he recounts them, and we see how much the dreams upset him. None of his magicians could explain the dreams to him.

Joseph tells Pharaoh that the dreams are one.[.25-32] God is telling Pharaoh what He is about to do. Seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine. The severity of the years of famine will make the years of abundance to be forgotten. That there were two dreams with the same message means God has established it to happen, and soon.

Joseph recommends a plan.[.33-36] He tells Pharaoh to appoint someone discerning and wise over the land to manage the years of plenty to prepare for the years of famine. Twenty percent of the crop is to be stored in years of plenty to provide for the years of famine.

Pharaoh appoints Joseph to oversee the plan. [.37-45] Pharaoh likes Joseph's plan and asks if there is anyone like Joseph in whom the spirit of God resides. There is no recorded response to Pharaoh's question. I cannot help but think that they were all stunned, not only by the interpretation, but the immediate plan that was so confidently and succinctly set forth. As well, Pharaoh is looking for someone with the spirit of Joseph's God, not just Joseph, because that's who he gave credit to from the beginning. Pharaoh appoints Joseph in charge of his palace, with all his people submitting to Joseph's orders.



Only Pharaoh will be greater than Joseph. He gives his signet ring to Joseph, the sign of his authority, clothed him so people would recognize his Kingdom prominence, provided a chariot for him to ride in, and people bowed before him when he went out. Pharaoh then gives Joseph his final authority in all the land by stating, *“I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”* He changes Joseph’s name to represent his new status, and gives him Potiphar’s daughter, Asenath, in marriage, to seal the partnership. And the narrative climaxes by stating, *“So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.”*

Joseph begins to serve Pharaoh at thirty years old. [46-57] Joseph went out through all of Egypt and went to work gathering and storing food. The grain became so abundant it was like sand of the seashore and could not be measured. The same success Joseph enjoyed in slavery and in prison continued when he was put in charge of the whole kingdom. Finally we are told that before the famine occurred, Joseph’s two sons were born, Manasseh and Ephraim. Even in the naming of his sons Joseph recognized God’s hand of blessing on his whole life, and glorified Him. Genesis 41 ends by showing that all Joseph had said came true. *Joseph became the single person to whom “all the earth” came to be saved.*

Genesis 41 culminates Joseph’s rise from shame and prison to power and glory. He was not a perfect man, though he surely stands out in moral excellence against his brothers. His character is revealed as unchanging between the repeated worst of times, to his rise to power and stewardship of it. *Joseph was the same man when everything went right for him as when nothing went right for him.* He served Pharaoh in the same way he served in every other position, with his whole heart, because he was not serving man but God. He served wholeheartedly because his hope was set, anchored to and established in God. His character was not great because he was a great guy. Joseph’s character was faithful and consistent, full of integrity, because he lived his life in light of what he knew to be true, even when falsely accused and wrongly treated. We know where Joseph’s hope was set because we hear his motive, and see his integrity and faithfulness. *The steadfast love and favor of God continued on Joseph in his high position, just like in his lowly position, because Joseph’s hope remained set in God.*

When your hope is set in God, your life is not thrown and tossed, and turned upside down by your situation. When your hope is set in God, you may be hit from every side, but not turned upside down. You may be knocked down, but not out. You may be under a heavy burden, but not crushed by it. You may be threatened in fear, but not without faith. You may be angry over wrongs and injustices, but not fueled by unrighteousness. You may be filled with sorrow, but not without joy of soul. You may be stricken with grief, but not stripped of hope. You may say, *“But Pastor, you don’t know how weak I feel.”* The strength you feel is not as important as the power God has! I remind to encourage you, *“You have no idea how great a fire the smallest ember can create. Let God breathe on your ‘smoldering ember’ of faith and stoke a burning zeal for His glory.”* *When your hope is set on God, you hold to Him in faith because you know He is the One holding you.*

Joseph’s character was consistent because his hope was anchored not in his situation or circumstance, his position or prestige, nor other people; Joseph’s hope was in God! What we see in Joseph’s life can be easier to accept because we know what the next chapters will bring; he will rise to victory and power. But Joseph’s story is not intended to only make us feel good about God because we know things work out for Joseph. Joseph’s life is recorded to bring us courage and conviction by showing us what God does, so we will trust and obey because the God who set His steadfast love and favor on Joseph is the same One who sets His steadfast love and favor on us in Jesus Christ. The question is NOT *“Can you trust God?”*, but *“WILL you trust God?”*

Setting our hope is not a passive activity performed on us, but an active participation whereby we direct the wholeness of our life in accordance with the One we know. *And what is it, or rather WHO is it, that we know?* The living God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ that gives us a living hope; *“born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*^{1Peter1:3} Peter goes on to tell us what we are to do because of the One we know.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13

Revelation infers something unknown, but that will be made known. And the reason a Christian performs this action is because of what will come at the revelation, not allowing one’s mind to stray away by any other factor.



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HOW do we ensure that our hope is set to hold us to Christ as our anchor in any and every circumstance?

ILLUS GPS uses 3D trilateration by satellite for positioning. More satellites mean more accurate location, but three are minimum.

OBJ **Three Promises** provide reference points to locate and anchor the Christian's hope in Jesus.

1. God's sovereign purpose in redemption.

The doctrine of God's sovereignty anchors our faith, and the promise of His redemption secures it. Learning to trust God when things are out of our control and beyond our understanding is essential for remaining faithful. Joseph's life shows us that God puts His people in these situations to both us for His purposes, and to make us into the people He wills for us to be so He can use us for the work He wills to complete through us. **God's will is for us to trust Him because we know Him.**

*So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. **Hebrews 6:17-20***

Christian, in Christ Jesus, YOU are a co-heir of God's promise. God anchors our soul NOT in the events of this world, but "behind the curtain". **The promise of God's sovereign purpose in redemption through Jesus Christ IS our strong encouragement to hold fast because God is our guarantee.**

Who is determining the grand purpose of your life? Is it you, OR are you fully submitted to see God's purpose FOR your life come TO your life by His work THROUGH your life? Only when our life is surrendered to God's sovereign purpose, His will, the greater glory that He is worthy of and we desire to see from our lives. God's salvation is not an accessory to add to improve your life, it IS life.

ILLUS THIS is what has held me in my father's death; in the fallout and chaos of Covid; and in leading, counseling, and guiding my children into adulthood. And THIS is what will hold me here until God is finished with me.

ILLUS Lottie Moon: "I am convinced that I am immortal until God's work for me is done."

Are you fully surrendered to God's greater glory of His sovereign purpose for your life, however He chooses to use me, is my deepest desire and greatest glory?" When I was younger I regularly returned to this question to find myself wrestling with God. As I have matured in my faith, asking this question of my life has become stating this claim over my life. **The promise of God's sovereign purpose in redemption is the first anchor for our soul that sets our hope in Jesus.**

2. Jesus' resurrection power.

Joseph's rise to power gives us a picture of God's resurrection power as set forth in Phil 2:8-11; God took Jesus from the grave and exalted him to the highest place. When by faith we are united with Jesus in His death, God promises we will be united with His resurrection too.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:5

Jesus' resurrection power at work in the life of every Christian, and this power is like none other! Because the ultimate issues of life have been settled by His victory, the daily issues of life can be faced with full confidence that we will overcome. When my hope is set in Jesus' power, death and the grave does not scare nor hold sway over me because it is not final for me. When my hope is set in Jesus' power, sin will not master, consume, nor control me. When my hope is set in



Jesus' power, unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances do not shake me because His unchanging grace anchors me. When my hope is set in Jesus' power, disappointment, heartache, attack, nor even the collapse of this world does not overwhelm me because He shall come in trumpet sound and in Him I will be found; dressed in His righteousness alone, I will stand before His throne! [The promise of resurrection IN Jesus Christ is the second anchor for our soul that sets our hope in Him.](#)

3. Holy Spirit's presence in daily living.

Jesus promises that the Father will send the Holy Spirit to live in us so He would 'work out' what had been 'worked in' us!

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. **John 14:26***

And what is it that Holy Spirit is working out but the completion of our perfection in Christ. Paul reminds us,

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

Christians do not walk alone, but by keeping in step with God's Spirit. We cannot live the Christian life in our strength because we are not supposed to live in our strength. Holy Spirit brings the reality of Jesus' resurrection power to our daily living to complete God's sovereign purpose in redemption in and through us. Holy Spirit is NOT merely a feeling or emotion about God, but an all-consuming presence that pervades our whole being, to control our thoughts, our willful actions and responsive emotions, by the Word of God's truth applied to the area of life in real time. [The promise of Holy Spirit's presence in daily living is the third anchor for our soul that sets our hope in Jesus.](#)

Christian, do not neglect nor despise the work of God. He is cultivating eternity in our hearts now. THIS is what our new life in Jesus is all about! And this is what causes us to see everything around us with new eyes and understanding!

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