

The sovereignty of God and suffering

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[0 : 00] Our first reading this morning will come from Genesis chapter 40, that's on page 40 of the Bibles in the seats.

Beginning at verse 1. Sometime after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offence against their lord, the king of Egypt.

And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined.

The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody. And one night they both dreamed, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation.

When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. So he asked Pharaoh's officers, who were with him in custody in his master's house, Why are your faces downcast today?

[1 : 32] They said to him, We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them. And Joseph said to them, Do not interpretations belong to God.

Please tell them to me. So the chief cupbearer told him his dream to Joseph and said to him, In my dream there was a vine before me, and on the vine there were three branches.

As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

Then Joseph said to him, This is its interpretation. The three branches are three days. In three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer.

Only remember me when it is well with you. And please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and say, Get me out of this house. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.

[2 : 47] When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favourable, he said to Joseph, I also had a dream. There were three cake baskets on my head, and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh.

But the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head. And Joseph answered and said, This is its interpretation. The three baskets are three days.

In three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat the flesh from you. On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants.

He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. Second reading continues. Chapter 41, Genesis on page 40.

[3 : 56] After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile. And behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass.

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. And the ugly thin cows ate up the seven attractive plump cows.

And Pharaoh awoke. And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of corn, plump and good, were growing on one stalk.

And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke.

And behold, it was a dream. So in the morning, his spirit was troubled. And he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men.

[5 : 00] Pharaoh told them his dreams. But there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh. Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, I remember my offenses today.

When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation.

A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream.

And as he interpreted to us, so it came about, I was restored to my office and the baker was hanged. Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph and they quickly brought him out of the pit.

And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have had a dream and there is no one who can interpret it.

[6 : 08] I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it. Joseph answered Pharaoh, it is not in me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, behold, in my dream, I was standing on the banks of the Nile. Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass.

Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows.

But when they had eaten them, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke. I also saw in my dream, seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good.

Seven ears, withered and thin and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them. And the thin ears swallowed up them, the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians.

[7 : 12] But there was no one who could explain it to me. Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, the dreams of Pharaoh are one. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

The seven good cows are seven years. And the seven good ears are seven years. The dreams are one. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years.

And the seven empty ears, blighted by the east wind, are also seven years of famine. It is as I told Pharaoh. God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. But after them, there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt.

The famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

[8 : 20] Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years.

And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it.

That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.

This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find a man like this in whom is the Spirit of God? Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.

You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.

[9 : 34] Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him ride in his second chariot.

And they called out before him, Bow the knee. Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without your consent, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zephanath-Panir and gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. During the seven plentiful years, the earth produced abundantly.

And he gathered up all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it.

[10 : 42] And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured. Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph.

Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, a priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. For he said, God has made me forget all the hardship and all my father's house.

The name of the second he called Ephraim, for God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end.

And the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph has said. There was famine in all lands, but in the land of Egypt there was bread. When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread.

Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, go to Joseph. What he says to you, do. So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians.

[11 : 51] For the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

Good. Well, we're still in Joseph, as you'll have noticed from the readings. And this week, we're looking at the idea of the sovereignty of God and suffering.

And you're going to follow through on the screen here, the points I'm going to make. If you're following with a handout on the back, we've scrubbed at point number two. So we're just going two points, numbers one and three.

And do make notes on that. Let me start with a prayer before we begin. Father God, please, we pray, would you be with us to convict us, to challenge us? Would you give us a mind which comprehends, which understands the life of Joseph, which puts ourselves in his shoes?

Would you help us to understand the life and motives of Jesus Christ? And would you help us to follow in his footsteps? Would you help us to be a model, servant as he was?

[12 : 58] Please help us to understand. We ask for your glory of your name, we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, this week, the title is this, The Sovereignty of God and Suffering.

And we're thinking about this issue of suffering. And I think suffering is the kind of question that all of us ask at some stage in our lives, don't we? It may be that you're here today and you're not a Christian, you wouldn't call yourself a Christian.

And suffering is something that's blighted your life and you're wondering why it happens. It's a common question, isn't it? It may be actually that you're here and you're a Christian. And actually, the question has even deeper impact because if you're a Christian, well, God's your father and he's in charge of all things and he loves you.

Why am I suffering? He's God, isn't he? It may be that you've never suffered much in your life and you don't know much of suffering.

But you will. I mean, you will. Everyone does at some stage in their lives. Maybe you've known great hardships in your life. Maybe you're going through great suffering in your life at the moment.

[14 : 08] Maybe it's relationship problems. Maybe you've struggled with singleness or divorce or marital difficulties. Maybe it's the death of a loved one, particularly if that loved one is a younger person.

It's really hard. Maybe you've known personal sickness or someone else close to you has been very sick. Cancer, chronic fatigue, depression.

Maybe you've had disappointments in work or in business. Maybe you've lost a business or maybe you've been suppressed in your business or it hadn't worked out as you'd hoped it would have done. Maybe you've struggled with stress at work or with exams.

Maybe it's with children. Maybe you've had difficulties having children. Maybe you've had difficult children. All of these are hardships we cope with in our life. We all have burdens to bear and we all ask God, why?

Why do these things happen? This is something that C.S. Lewis famously said in one of his writings. God whispers to us in our pleasure.

[15 : 14] He speaks to us in our conscience but he shouts in our pain. It's his megaphone to rouse the deaf world. It might be that you're not a Christian here today and you're wondering about suffering and it might be that you've been drawn here partly because you're wondering if there's something greater.

Why is these things happening to me? And it might be that God's megaphone, you've heard it and that's why you're here. It may be for those of us who are Christians who know God's megaphone very well because we've had that hardship.

We've ourselves cried out to God in great hardness. Well today I think Joseph is an extreme and wonderful example to us.

Not only in God's sovereignty over suffering but how to be a faithful servant in suffering. Joseph from the age of 17 to the age of 30 was either a slave or a prisoner both completely unfairly.

He lost his 20s you know the great years of his life by being a slave or being a prisoner and it wasn't his fault but all under God's sovereign hand. And I think in thinking about Joseph in taking ourselves into Joseph we'll be thinking about Jesus because Jesus lived and died in a hard way and died as a young man himself.

[16:37] But all of these were under God's sovereignty under God's purpose to make them into the kind of person that could be Lord and Saviour over the world. And I think in both Jesus and in Joseph we've got a brilliant model in how to understand God's sovereignty in suffering and how to be in that suffering.

And I'd love to commend that to you today as we look through this. So first of all and this is the main point really I guess Joseph served under God as a faithful servant despite his suffering.

So remember he was a slave under Potiphar he was sold there by his brothers we looked at that last week and he was a faithful servant under Potiphar and he rose to prominence in Potiphar's house and was the chief servant there.

And even when faced with temptation do you remember he didn't sleep with Potiphar's wife as she wanted to and she played him day after day he was faithful and because of that he was then charged with attempted rape which he didn't do and was thrown into prison.

But even in prison he was a faithful servant under the prisoner the jailer and so again he rose to prominence under God's hand because he was faithful he was a faithful servant.

[17:50] And we start our chapter in chapter 40 and the cup bearer and the baker of the king of Egypt the pharaoh have been thrown into prison. We don't know why they've done something that the pharaoh didn't like and these two prominent guys under pharaoh have been thrown into prison and Joseph's like their pastor he's the one that's charged to look after them.

And so when they have their dreams Joseph's the first one in their cell in the morning how are you going guys and they look really troubled they look really anxious. We've had these dreams and Joseph says well Joseph's the guy when he's younger do you remember he had those two dreams when he's younger and he was able to interpret and they were all able to understand dreams there so Joseph's a man who understands about interpreting dreams and so when the two guys there say well we've we've had these dreams Joseph of course goes straight in there and goes guys I can sort this out.

Actually that's not exactly what he says. Have a look at verse 8. We've had dreams and there is no one to interpret them and Joseph said don't worry boys I can sort this out.

He says do not interpretations belong to God. Please tell them to me. Here's a guy who isn't after glory for himself look watch this guys I can do this.

Here's a guy who wants to give God honour and glory at all times. And anyway they tell him the dreams there's three so the chief cup bearer here's the guy whose job it was to give Pharaoh his wine so he was a professional wine taster pretty good job I'd say don't you mean the professional wine taster for the queen that's a good job except there was a downside if it was poisoned you died that was the I guess there's always a drawback to every job isn't there that was the drawback to his job and he had this dream there's a vine with three branches with grapes and he presses those grapes into the cup and gives them to Pharaoh and Joseph says well it's good news it's good news God has told me that that is three branches in three days Pharaoh will raise you up and you'll be passing him the wine just like you used to brilliant and of course he's really pleased about this but look at verse 14 he also says this Joseph says only remember me when it's well with you please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house for I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews and here I've done nothing that they should put me into this pit so he's in a really hard place but he just honourably says just remember me well of course verse 16 the chief baker saw that interpretation was favourable that was a good dream well let me tell you about my one can I have some good news please here as well

[20 : 32] I had this dream three baskets on my head birds eating the bread out of my head what is that all about now I don't know about you are you the kind of person that's good at giving bad news I find I'm great at saying nice things to people but it's when it's harder things to say but Joseph is a guy who just tells it straight verse 19 in three days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and hang you on a tree and the birds will eat the flesh from you I wonder what those three days were like in the prison Joseph chief baker chief baker knows what Joseph said must have been a difficult time I imagine so there we have Joseph giving interpretations to dreams as a faithful servant in this prison chapter 41 after two whole years so they've been in prison for some time now he's 30 years old now Joseph Pharaoh has his dreams isn't it interesting how God has Joseph sold as a slave sold as a slave and then in prison and he keeps in there for years and years and years how must it have been day after day having been forgotten languishing in a prison when you haven't done anything wrong it's not your fault and then and only then after those many years have been there then God gives

Pharaoh these dreams God wanted Joseph right there he was teaching it he was learning and Pharaoh has these dreams the first dream is another pair of dreams the seven fat healthy good looking you know tasty looking cows come out of the Nile and then seven skinny wretched ugly supermodel type cows come out of the Nile and they eat the fat ones another dream seven good you know ears of corn and then seven blighted famine infested pestilence ears of corn and they eat the healthy ones none of the magicians have an idea and it's only then that the wicked cup bearer who'd completely forgotten him he was fine now he'd got his job back he remembered Joseph and he went to Pharaoh and he said there was a Hebrew bloke in the prison and he gave me interpretations to the dream so why don't you haul him out and we'll do it so they get him out of the pit have a look at verse 14 when he'd shaved himself and changed his clothes and put on some deodorant and he was fresh again so he could approach the king

Pharaoh says these words to Joseph verse 15 I've had a dream and there's no one who can interpret it I've heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it yeah of course boss I can do that please get me out of prison I can do that I'm great at this sort of dream interpreting again look what Joseph actually says it's not in me God will give Pharaoh a favourable answer and he does Pharaoh explains it to Joseph and Joseph is able to interpret the dream he sees again and again and again Joseph is humble he's a servant of God two things to quickly notice here firstly he's a man who wants to honour God rather than himself it's not about what I can do it's not about me bigging me up but it's about God and what he does how do you find speaking of yourself to others

I'm the sort of person that's very quick to big myself up if I lie I don't know about you if I notice I lie it's often to cover up my failings or things I'm not quite so good at but Joseph here is a guy who wants to put God first and not himself secondly it's really interesting here's Pharaoh king of Egypt God in Egypt here's a guy that on his birthday has chief bakers hung that's because that's what he can do here is a man who was worshipped in Egypt as a God and yet here is a man who has no idea how to interpret the dream none of the magicians can help him and Joseph has the balls to say to him he says to God of Egypt what you need Pharaoh is God here's a guy who's just hung a baker on his birthday because he fancies it Joseph is not only a guy who wants to give honour to God rather than to himself but here's a man who boldly say the hard things just as he did to the baker here's a man who will say the truth even if it hurts let me make a few comments four things very quickly about Joseph the faithful servant of God and I take it in this as being like Jesus and therefore he's an example to us let me give you these four things the first one is this he was trustworthy despite his lowly circumstances so whether he was shackled as a slave or whether he was shackled as in the prison he faithfully served God always now there are some people here who have got in a society sense exalted positions some of you are top lawyers some of you are accountants some of you are working on big multi-million pound deals some of you have got exalted positions but there are others of you here who are students or are housewives or are retired or don't have the exalted position in that solicitor's firm but just have a very ordinary job some of you are at school and you just wish you were a bit more important or doing something better whatever your role wherever you are however exalted or however lowly

I think Joseph is an awesome model for us as someone who served faithfully God so there you are scrubbing the bathroom as a housewife on Monday morning thinking why can't I be at work I've got a good degree and you remember Joseph who faithfully served God as a slave as a prisoner and waited and waited and waited and it was only at the end that he was exalted by God the second thing is not only is it lowly circumstances but unfair circumstances I mean here's a guy who was sold by his brothers as a slave here was a guy who was thrown in prison for not raping anybody his whole life was thrown away or so it would have seemed with unfair circumstances and it may be that you think that you're in unfair circumstances I don't know the reasons maybe you've been unfairly overlooked at work or at school maybe in some sense you think life has been unfair to you people I know who exhibit that way are often people who moan and don't people love to moan in our culture do you not notice that?

[27 : 30] everybody moans life is really hard to me and there are also people full of self pity oh woe is me things are really hard you know Joseph of all people had those reasons to moan and to be self pitying but he was a guy who just faithfully served who got on with it I just think he's a wonderful model to us as the Lord Jesus was indeed thirdly he gave honour to God and not to himself both with the chief with the baker and the cup bearer and with Pharaoh time and time again he is a guy who says it's all about what God can do and not about what I can do it's not about me and my glory but about God and I think like I said a moment ago most of us are quick to brag to show off our talents or to lie to cover up our short failings because deep down most of us are so desperate for others to think well of us and I think

Joseph sets a standard for us as the Lord Jesus did here's a guy who always wanted God to look good and not me and the challenge for me as I was thinking through this this week am I someone who wants God to look good or am I someone in what I say and what I do someone who wants me to look good and fourthly and lastly in this little bit I was very struck by the fact that Joseph is someone who obeyed God even when it cost him there he was a young man in his twenties in Potiphar's house and the wife Potiphar's wife a glamorous and wealthy woman says sleep with me I mean it appeals to his pleasure I'd like to have sex I'm not allowed to I'm a slave I'm a young man it appeals to his power I'd like to sleep with a woman of great exaltedness but even more than that he knows that if he doesn't do it he loses his job and he goes to prison that's exactly what happened at the moment when she said sleep with me and he ran for it he had a decision do I obey

God or do I just do this one little thing that nobody will notice and it's only a small thing and it doesn't matter and then I'll get to keep my job and anyway I'm more useful to God in my job than I would be in prison so this is the best thing to do surely and actually that reasoning was false isn't it it's do I obey God or do I disobey God and in the long run God honours the person who obeys him not the person who disobeys him for whatever good and reasonable reasons now all of us live in a world where it's difficult to obey God and some of us more than others maybe at school or maybe at work you're asked to do things which are just wrong or you're in a company of people in which it's the norm to do wrong or to say wrong to lie or to slag people off or to fill the books whatever it is and you're faced with exactly the same choice that Joseph had do I obey God or do I just get through and disobey him and it's only this small little thing and it might cost you it might cost you your job it might cost you your reputation it might cost you your it might people laugh at you as a result of it and I just want to encourage you to think and be in the mind of

Joseph here was a guy who whatever would happen to him wanted to obey God and not himself and it was only in the long run that God honoured him and exalted him and in all these things Joseph is just being like Jesus do you remember you did this last year I know when you looked at Philippians do you remember Jesus your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus be like him who being the very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped he didn't want to hold on to greatness but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant a slave being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross therefore God exalted him to the highest place the first will come last and the last will come first he who exalts himself will be humbled but whoever humbles himself will be exalted Joseph was a forerunner of Jesus and we are to have the mind of Jesus do you know what life might be hard for you all of your life you might be in lowly unfair circumstances you might have to obey God when it's difficult but in all these things you're just being like

Jesus you're just being like Joseph and in the long one and I'll say more about this in a moment God will exalt you so I want to hold up Joseph and go look at what a great bloke he was and be like him be a faithful servant like Joseph just be a faithful servant like Jesus the second point and this is the last of the two points God then made Joseph Lord and Saviour of the world he made him Lord and Saviour of the world so Pharaoh recognises verse 38 of chapter 41 can we find a man like this in whom is the spirit of God because he honoured God and was powerful because of that and so verse 40 over the page this is what Pharaoh does Joseph you should be over my house and all my people shall order themselves as you command only as regards to the throne will I be greater than you he's greater than Pharaoh in everything apart from the throne

[33 : 22] Pharaoh says to Joseph see I've set you over all the land of Egypt and Pharaoh took his signet ring his signet ring was like his signature so he could sort of stamp Pharaoh's name at the bottom of any bit of paper and it would get done and he took and he put on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of fine linen he gave him the robes of power which had been stripped from him earlier in his life now he had power and favour and he put a gold chain around his neck and made him ride in his second chariot and they called out before him bow the knee you know everywhere he goes there are people just bowing frustrating themselves before him thus he set him over all the land of Egypt Pharaoh said to Joseph I am Pharaoh and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt it's an amazing meteoric rise the man who through 13 years of hard living who was trained and who was faithful servant who God had put in difficult circumstances now

Pharaoh exalts to the highest place God has him now at the highest place and do you know what just as he was a faithful servant under Potiphar just as he was a faithful servant in the jail under the jailer guess what he's a faithful servant under Pharaoh that's exactly who God wants to be ruling over his new creation people who are faithful servants in his current creation but God doesn't just want Pharaoh to have Joseph rise to being lord over the world just for power's sake but he's made lord over the world so that he can be the saviour of the world so of course he's interpreted the dreams the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine imagine the massive organisation of organising all this food to be gathered so that you can feed the whole world for seven years and look what happens in verse 54 there was famine in all the lands but in all the land of Egypt there was bread because of Joseph when all the land of Egypt was famished the people cried out to

Pharaoh for bread Pharaoh said to the Egyptians just go to Joseph what he says to you do just like Potiphar just like the jailer they don't have to worry about it Joseph deal with it because he's so faithful and trustworthy so when the famine had spread over all the land Joseph opened up all the stall houses and sold to the Egyptians for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt moreover all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain because the famine was severe over all the earth at that place in that time God had trained this man through hardship so that as a faithful servant he would be faithful as a saviour for the whole world lord and saviour of the world and of course just as Joseph was that in those years lord and saviour of the world so Jesus is the lord and saviour but not just for that particular time and that place but for all time I don't know if you've understood this it might be the new to Christian things what does this mean lord and saviour that Jesus is lord and saviour when Jesus died on the cross

God brought him back from the dead and he is right now at God's right hand you can't see him but he's the king of the world he's the lord over the world even now because in his life he suffered terribly he had an awful life he was God who had to serve as a carpenter in a miserable place and he suffered a horrible death unfairly just as Joseph was unfairly treated and because he was faithful through all of that that is the person that God wanted to be at the top therefore God made him lord of the world that at Jesus' name every knee shall bow just as it was to Joseph and because he was the faithful servant that makes him saviour of the world when he died on the cross it wasn't it wasn't because of a famine that we needed Jesus to die it was because of our sins and just as starving people had life instead of death under Joseph so instead of eternal death and hell for our sins

Jesus' death means that we are saved from that we can have life he saved us just as all those people came begging to Joseph please help us Christians are people that go to Jesus and say begging please help us and we have eternal life we have heaven forever because of his saving of us let me finish with a conclusion let me think about this for the last few moments the sovereignty of God and suffering I asked the question at the beginning why does God allow suffering why does he allow his own children to suffer and I think we've seen how God led Joseph into slavery God led Joseph into a situation where he'd be put in prison so that as he was tested through the training school of slavery in prison and as a faithful servant came through it all that was the guy who God could make Lord and saviour of the world and the same is true of

[38 : 38] Jesus I've been pondering on this verse for some while now this is said of Jesus although Jesus was a son and we're God's sons and daughters he learned obedience through what he suffered and once made perfect he became a source of eternal salvation for all who obey him this is a fascinating verse Jesus had to be made perfect that doesn't mean he wasn't perfect he was perfectly moral he didn't do anything wrong in his life what that means there being made perfect is finished completed there was something that Jesus had to do before he came to earth that he had to complete there was something he hadn't done what is it he had to learn obedience through what he suffered to be made the saviour of the world who could bring eternal salvation for all of us he had to learn obedience through suffering he had to live a life and go through his death in the hard training school the hard call knocks which is life and do you know what this has just made us realise this week made me realise this week is that that is exactly what God is doing for all of us he is training us in our lives through our hardships through all the difficulties we have just as he did with

Joseph just as he did with Jesus and as faithful servants if we keep going if we keep obeying him he won't make us lord and saviour of the world but we will rule with Christ in the new creation we will reign on his throne with him the kind of people God will put first for the rest of forever are the kind of people who are faithful servants who might well be last in this life we just walk in the footsteps of Jesus so what will you be will you be a faithful servant I don't know about you but what I've been really struck by this week as I've been thinking this through and this is my prayer for all of us and for me is that however hard it gets however tough life is I know that God is in charge I know that he's my father I know that he'll give me everything I need to get through this but I also know that in his kindness as a father he is training me as a son and if

I'm faithful through my hardships I will grow and grow and grow and I will be worthy by God's grace and grace alone to reign with him for the rest of forever so will you be like Joseph will you like Jesus be faithful servants let's pray shall we oh Lord Jesus we admire you so very much you came down from heaven you were born in an animal's feeding trough you lived in relative poverty you had nowhere to lay your head you lived with the muck and grime and sin no you did no sin in your life and you allowed wicked men to try you and put you to death and you said nothing against them you were faithful in all temptation you were faithful for all suffering you neither moaned nor complained and now you reign at high at

God's right hand God our Lord Jesus would you help us to have your mind would you give us your attitude would you help us when things are tough for us would you help us to endure patiently would you help us to be kind and good and always obey you would you help us not to moan in our circumstances would you help us to honour God and not honour ourselves and in all these things we just want to be your faithful servants we pray these things by the power of your spirit Amen