

Something Beyond Success

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[0 : 00] Our scripture reading for this morning is taken from Genesis chapter 41 beginning at verse 46. Genesis chapter 41 beginning at 46.

! 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. 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 my hardship and all my father's house.

[1 : 30] 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 had 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.

For the famine was severe in all of Egypt. Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt, to Joseph, to buy grain.

[2 : 41] Because the famine was severe over all the earth. Thank you very much for reading, Faye.

One of the desires of people everywhere that they share in common is that they want to be successful.

And success is generally defined in terms of material possessions or accomplishments.

People consider what you have accomplished or what you possess. And countless numbers of people around the world are convinced that if they achieve a particular thing if they possess a particular thing it would make them happy or happier fulfilled or more fulfilled whether that is more power more money more education or even marriage and children they believe they believe that by accomplishing those things they would attain success or additional success and would bring them happiness and fulfillment.

But this morning as we continue our sermon series in the book of Genesis we come to an account of success that tells a different story. Joseph went from being the lowest in Egyptian society as a slave he was among the lowest in Egyptian society to becoming the second most powerful man in Egypt and indeed all the surrounding region.

[4 : 48] And what we see is that for Joseph success was not enough. Joseph needed something beyond success and only God could give it to him.

And this morning I want us to consider what Joseph needed beyond success and may the Lord help us all to hear it. May he help us to heed it because we also like Joseph we need something beyond success something bigger than success.

Whatever success in your mind might be. That's one prayer. Father we pause in this moment to look to you and we pray that you would do what we just sang that you would speak to us.

Lord you know where each one of us is. You know what lingers in our hearts that we consider to be desirous to cause us to be successful or to gain more success.

Lord you know what the longings of our hearts are and what we desire so much and we do so Lord absent-minded to the fact that that in and of itself is not enough.

[6 : 19] that what we desire deep in the depths of our souls is something only you can give. And I ask Lord that as we are gathered this morning that you would speak to us collectively.

I pray you'd speak to us individually. God cause us to hear what you say to us in your word and through your word. I pray that your name alone will be glorified.

And I ask once again Lord that you'd anoint me with your spirit that I would be faithful to care for these who are gathered. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Before getting into the text I want us to just consider I want to put into context where we are as we work our way to the end of the book of Genesis.

We have nine more chapters to cover in Genesis to complete it. And those nine chapters can be briefly summarized in a few statements.

[7 : 25] In chapter two we'll see how the famine brings Joseph's brothers to Egypt. They came in search of grain. Joseph recognizes his brothers but they don't recognize him and that's because Joseph has been assimilated into Egyptian culture.

he embodies everything about Egypt and they don't recognize him. And after some suspense and delay Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers and they are gloriously reconciled.

And Joseph sends for his father and the rest of the family and they all come to Egypt. They all come from Canaan to Egypt. And on his deathbed Jacob blesses some of his sons and he withholds blessings from some of his sons.

And in the process he points out that Judah is going to be the one through whom the rule of the nations is going to come who we later would find out is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then in the book of Genesis at the very end we have this brief account of the death of Joseph. He's 110 years old and as he is about to die Joseph still confident in the promise that God made to Abraham that he was going to have his people to sojourn in a foreign land but he's going to take them back into the land of promise.

[9 : 00] Joseph says to his brothers I want you to swear to me that when God visits you you are going to take my bones and you're going to take them back to the promised land.

And this ending in Genesis prepares us for the beginning of Exodus because it situates the children of Israel in Egypt and it tells us how they got into Egypt and then in Exodus God is going to deliver them out of the land of Egypt and take them into the promised land.

and so that's where we are going to go over the next several weeks as we finish our study in the book of Genesis.

But Joseph rising to prime minister in Egypt facilitates all of that. Facilitates every detail of that. Now let's consider the passage before us this morning. What else did Joseph need beyond his great success in Egypt? From this morning's passage I hope to show that Joseph needed two God-given gifts.

[10 : 18] Two God-given gifts that no amount of success could ever give him. In fact, these two God-given gifts that Joseph needed were essential to attaining and retaining the success that he came to have.

And these two God-given gifts were also essential for the nation of Israel who were the original audience to whom Joseph was writing, to whom Moses was writing. And the example of Joseph was an example for them, it was a lesson for them, because what happened to Joseph was happening to them.

The same way that he went into Egypt and was a slave, the Lord delivered him. God had done that for the nation of Israel, and he was taking them into the promised land.

And although their longing when they were in the bondage of Egyptian slavery would have been for deliverance, and thinking that once delivered, that's all that we needed, I think what we can see is in the same way that Joseph needed something more than that success of deliverance and elevation, the children of Israel likewise needed something more than the success of coming out of Egyptian slavery.

And so in our remaining time this morning, I want us to consider these two God-given gifts that Joseph needed. And the first is the gift of divine transformation.

[11 : 54] transformation. Not just transformation, but divine transformation, not personal transformation. Divine transformation, something only God could do.

In verse 46, we're told that Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh the king. This is the second time we're given his age.

The first time is in Genesis 37 verse 2, and we're told that he was 17 years old. And in Genesis 37, we also are able to see that that's when Joseph was sold into slavery at the age of 17.

And so since Joseph is now 30 years old, when he became prime minister, it means that he had spent 13 years in the land of Egypt as a slave and as a prisoner.

13 years period, although we can't tell how much of it Joseph spent as a slave and how much of it he spent in prison, it was still a horrific time for him.

[13:06] He had been sold into slavery by his brothers, he had been lied on by Portipha's wife, and he was unjustly imprisoned by Portipha, threw him into prison, no trial, nothing.

And yet, we see Joseph, after going through all of this horror, at the hands of his brothers and the hands of strangers, Joseph is suddenly and unexpectedly elevated from prison to the position of prime minister.

He interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and he was elevated just like that in a moment on the spot. And in that moment, Joseph moves from being among the lowest in Egyptian society to being the second in command in Egypt and indeed, that whole region surrounding Egypt.

Egypt. And we saw last week how Pharaoh took the signet ring off of his finger and placed it on Joseph's finger. And Joseph was the person, he was the man.

He had enormous power, enormous wealth, enormous responsibility. And he went right to work. We see in verse 46 that Joseph went about, he went throughout all the land of Egypt.

[14:37] He was a hands-on leader, storing up the grain in the different cities during the year of plenty. But you know, when we read these accounts in scripture, it's easy to read them quickly.

It's easy not to slow down and really try to take in that this is not fiction. This is history. This actually happened.

And we can quickly read over how Joseph was elevated from prisoner to prime minister and not consider how is it possible for Joseph to make that transition so quickly.

How is it possible for Joseph to be in the mental frame to move from being a prisoner to being prime minister? You can only imagine the trauma that Joseph would have gone through in those 13 years. as a slave, as a prisoner. I remember some years ago I sat with a gentleman who had spent a considerable amount of time in Fox Hill Prison.

[15:50] And he was sharing with me about how people take for granted and don't really understand the serious adjustment a prisoner has to make after being incarcerated for a long period of time.

He said to me that when he came out he had forgotten how to cross the street. They would stand on the side of the road and he'd be confused and almost paralyzed and not have any appreciation of how and ran to cross the street.

He told me about how he lived with his sister when he came out. and he was so accustomed to being told what to do and when to do it that he would get up and he would just sit in his room and he initially had to wait.

This is where he was mentally. His sister would have to tell him to do the most basic things. Go and take a shower and get cleaned up and then come for breakfast. He could go outside but he wouldn't on his own initially go outside because he'd been so accustomed to people telling him what to do.

He was institutionalized and it had an effect upon him. All that Joseph went through I think it's fair to say left to himself Joseph would have been a wreck.

[17:21] Joseph would have been in no frame of mind to stand before Pharaoh. He would have been in no frame of mind to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Joseph would have not been of any use to himself much less to Pharaoh.

And brothers and sisters the only reason that Joseph was able to move suddenly and seamlessly from prison to prime minister was because of divine transformation. God transformed him.

And not just moments before he became prime minister. God transformed him during those 13 years of slavery and imprisonment and through all the hardships that he experienced and even through the responsibilities that he had in Portipha's house and in the prison.

It wasn't a success that transformed him. God transformed him. And it wasn't just emotional and psychological transformation, although it certainly had to have been that.

At its core, Joseph's transformation was spiritual transformation. Joseph belonged to God. He was a servant of God. And throughout all of his suffering, we see that he was God-centered.

[18 : 35] He focused on God. All the sin that he experienced, the effects of those sins, God was with him. And God transformed him.

And God made him better despite what happened to him. And God protected him from becoming bitter in the midst of it.

Look again at Joseph's own testimony in verse 50. Starting in verse 50, we read, But the year of famine came, before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph.

Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph named the first, sorry, Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh.

For he said, God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house. Note again, brothers and sisters, it was not the newfound success of Joseph that caused him to forget the hardship and the pain and his father's house.

[19 : 49] It was God who did that. God divinely transformed Joseph and God divinely transformed him in the midst of his hardships. Manasseh means making to forget.

And it wasn't like God gave Joseph amnesia so that he couldn't remember anything. Joseph was still able to remember the sinful acts committed against him.

He was still able to remember his brothers. We see this in chapter 42. When his brothers came, he remembered them. And no doubt he still remembered Portipha's wife, still remembered Portipha, still remembered the cupbearer who selfishly forgot him.

the way that God caused Joseph to forget was not amnesia, but God caused him to forget through the transformation that God brought so that those sins against him and the resulting hardships of those sins were no longer bitter and no longer lingering in his soul.

He could recall them, but they no longer affected him. And it's clear that they did affect him at one point because he said, God did something.

[21 : 12] God enabled me to forget my hardships and to forget all of my father's house. Joseph doesn't use his newfound power to take revenge on Portipha's wife and on Portipha and on the cupbearer.

And even in his position, he could have used resources to go back against his brothers and exact revenge upon them, but he doesn't do that.

He doesn't do that because God transformed him, God enabled him to forget the effect and the pain of all that he had gone through.

Brothers and sisters, no amount of success will do that. It matters not what dream you may have, what plan you may have, and what you may think. If I can get this done, if I can achieve this, it'll fix this or fix that.

It will not do so, brothers and sisters. We need something beyond success. The most successful man, however he sees himself, whether it's by wealth or other attainments, if you could talk to him today, there will be things in his life that his success and his accomplishment can't fix.

[22 : 36] And in some cases, we'll be willing to part with the success in order to get it to be fixed. Brothers and sisters, the same is true for us.

No amount of success could ever do what only God can do. The transforming work that we need in our hearts, only God can do that.

Here's our reality. Our reality is all of us, without exception, are broken people. The only question is, in what way and to what degree?

But all of us who are descendants of Adam, who are part of his fallen race, we are living in a fallen world and we are broken by sin, broken by our own sin, broken by sins against us, broken by the acts of those near to us and those far from us and we've all been affected in so many different ways.

And no amount of success can transform that. No amount of success can change that. Only God can do that. And so we must entrust ourselves to him.

[23 : 49] We must look to him to transform us. When we look to successes or potential successes to do for us what only God can do for us, brothers and sisters, we've made an idol.

We have looked to success to do for us what only God can do. Only God can satisfy the deep longings of our souls. Only God can heal the deep wounds that we bear and that we carry, however we got them.

we must look to him and not place a dream that success will do it for us.

If we do that, brothers and sisters, it is an exercise in futility and it will end in frustration and disappointment every single time. Notice that Joseph also credited God with the success that he achieved.

In verse 52, we're told that he named his second son Ephraim. And the reason he gave is, God has made me fruitful in the land of my affection.

[25 : 08] Ephraim means twice fruitful or double fruitfulness. Joseph recognized that God was the one who blessed him in part of his house.

God was the one who blessed him in Pharaoh's prison. God was the one who gave him the wisdom and discernment and the ability to interpret dreams and gave him the plan that moved Pharaoh to appoint him as prime minister.

It wasn't his ability. It wasn't his natural giftedness. Joseph recognized my success has come from God. He has made me fruitful in my affliction.

And brothers and sisters, only God can do that. Only God can take what was meant to destroy a person and cause them to be fruitful in the midst of it.

In the naming of his two sons, we see Joseph's God-centeredness. Joseph had no problem taking on an Egyptian name.

[26 : 15] He had no problem embracing Egyptian culture, wearing the clothes and shaving his head and shaving his face. Had no problem taking an Egyptian wife.

But although Joseph forgot all of his father's house, he did not forget his father's God. He did not forget the God of Yahweh, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob who made a promise.

And he was going to make Abraham's offspring so grave they couldn't be numbered and he was going to give them a land. He was going to give them the land of Canaan. And we see that Joseph retained the God of his father.

He retained his faith even though in Egypt and he demonstrates this in the naming of his two sons. He didn't give them Egyptian names. He gave them Hebrew names and he didn't just give them generic Hebrew names that was after a tree or after the sun or after the moon.

He gave them God centered Hebrew names that told the story of what God did in his life. The gracious work that God did in him and all of his hardships and all of his affliction.

[27 : 41] and each time he would call Manasseh he would remember God has caused me to forget my hardships and my affliction and all of my father's house.

And when he would call Ephraim or somebody else would call Ephraim's name he would remember God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.

not my good looks not my charisma not my gifts but God. God was the one who took the credit for all of it.

Brothers and sisters Joseph needed something beyond success and what he needed was divine transformation that only God could give. and the same is true for Israel.

They were the original recipients of this book of Genesis. As they were making their way across the desert going into the promised land they needed to hear and be reminded of this truth that God is the one who transforms his people.

[29 : 01] God is the one who is able to work in their hearts. God is the one who is able to bring productivity out of affliction. God brought them out of Egypt and when they came out of Egypt they had abundant wealth.

And they were going to a place that was described as so fruitful that it was described as being a place flowing with milk and honey. God but that wasn't enough to transform them.

They needed God to do for them what only he could do and that was divine transformation. They needed something beyond success and brothers and sisters again we do as well.

However we define success whatever we believe will satisfy us in this life. Whatever we believe that if we attain it it will do what we desire brothers and sisters it will not it cannot.

No amount of it can. We need something beyond that. We need God. We need we need we need the divine transformation that only he can bring.

[30 : 24] He alone can meet our deepest needs. And he does that through the gospel. He does that starting with regeneration with the new birth where he brings us from spiritual death to spiritual life and he continues that through the process of sanctification.

He continues that through the work of the spirit in our lives. As we've been learning in our discipleship groups as we are reading through and studying why small groups.

Regeneration is what God does unilaterally all by himself. But sanctification is that cooperative work that God does by the spirit with our involvement with our cooperation.

We have nothing to do with the new birth. We can't regenerate ourselves. We couldn't regenerate ourselves. And it's not a 50-50 cooperation in our sanctification.

The line shares what the spirit does. But brothers and sisters we have a part in that transformation. God has given us his word. He has given us prayer. He has given us corporate worship.

[31 : 39] He has given us the gift of singing and the ability to be praying and hearing his word read and hearing his word preached and fellowship. And in all these ways he transforms us.

As we're going through life and as we are affected by life and all the brokenness in this world. God is using these means and he works in the midst of them to transform our lives.

The power of the spirit working in us. Brothers and sisters our deepest needs are divinely met.

They can only be divinely met. Well that's the first divinely given gift that we need beyond success. Divine transformation.

The second divinely gift that we need beyond success is divine preservation. Divine preservation.

[32 : 48] It's easy to read about this sudden and enormous success that Joseph came into overnight and not consider the enormous dangers and temptations that came with it.

Joseph was second in authority in Egypt and the surrounding region. Everyone came to him for everything. Look again at a description of the kind of power that he had starting in verse 53.

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 had said. There was famine in all lands but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

And when all the land of Egypt was famished the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians go to Joseph. What he says to you do.

When the famine had spread over all the land Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.

[34 : 14] Joseph was the man who controlled all the grain and all the money in the time of great famine. everyone in Egypt looked to him.

Although Pharaoh was king, Joseph was in charge. But not only that, we're told in verse 57 that all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain.

Because the famine was severe over all the earth. Imagine that. everyone in Egypt, all the surrounding regions, they're coming to Joseph.

I think it's fair to say that Joseph would have been in a position to do whatever he wanted to do.

And I don't think that Pharaoh would have cared much. If he wanted to, he could have thrown Potiphar's wife in prison, he could have thrown Potiphar in prison, he could have thrown the cub bearer in prison, he could have resorted to corruption, he could have been dishonest, he was controlling all the grain, controlling all the money from the sale of it, something that would have been very easy to do in a time of crisis.

[35 : 38] He could have abused his authority and turned to sexual immorality. when you think about Joseph, Joseph is quite a remarkable character.

There's no other biblical character in all of scripture. Obviously, Jesus Christ is not considered a biblical character. He's beyond those characters.

But when you consider all the biblical characters, there's no one else who had the position, power, authority, and all that went with it over people like Joseph did.

No one had that kind of power and success. The nearest to him was Daniel, and Daniel is a distant second. I think it's fair to say that all the temptations that went with that territory, Joseph faced them. there are people who have been entrusted with far less who succumbed to the temptation of it. So we can only imagine the kind of temptations that faced Joseph in this position of power and control of enormous resources in a difficult time of famine.

[37 : 10] corruption. And yet, there's not even the hint of corruption or deviation on Joseph's part. And why is that? There's only one reason, brothers and sisters, God preserved him.

God preserved Joseph in this position where many have fallen to corruption over far less.

You know, many of us think that we need God to attain success. But we don't remember and we don't realize that we need God more to be able to retain success.

Our temptations having achieved success are far greater than the temptations on the way to success. success. God prepares us for our success, but he also needs to preserve us in our

success.

We especially need him in our success because in our success we have more opportunity to live sinfully. and left to ourselves we will.

[38 : 24] If God leaves us to ourselves, brothers and sisters, every one of us will shipwreck. We need God in our successes.

We need him to preserve us. Not so much to preserve our success, but to preserve us in the midst of it. That we are not destroyed by it. The very last verse of the book of Genesis, Genesis 50 verse 26, tells us that Joseph died at 110.

This means that he lived in Egypt for a total of 93 years. 13 as a slave and as a prisoner, and then 80 as prime minister, assuming that he retained the office until he died.

But here's what's not in doubt about Joseph. What's not in doubt about Joseph is that Joseph was a faithful servant of God. Joseph was faithful to the very end based on the witness of Scripture.

he held on to God's promise to Abraham to make a great nation from him and to take him into the land of Canaan and give that to him.

[39 : 51] And Joseph, as he was dying, made his brothers swear that they were going to take his bones out of Egypt. We're told that they remained in Egypt for some 400 years.

And this would have only been about maybe 78 or so in it when Joseph's family would have come to Egypt.

And so this was very early on, but Joseph had this conviction of heart that though the time was not imminent, he said, you take my bones. Don't leave my bones here.

You take my bones into the land that God has promised. He was that persuaded that God could be trusted in his word and he didn't even want his bones to remain in Egypt.

Joseph lived a God-centered life to the very end. In his childhood, we were able to see his obnoxiousness, his sin and pride.

[41 : 05] But after he would have gone through those 13 years in Egypt, we don't see a hint of anything else, of corruption or sin in Joseph.

But brothers and sisters, as wonderful an example as Joseph is, we would miss the whole point of his inclusion in the storyline of the Bible if we only look to him.

Instead of looking to Joseph, we need to look to the one to whom Joseph points, and that is the Lord Jesus. Joseph was exalted from the lowest place of slavery in Egypt to the highest place of ruler in Egypt and in the region.

The Lord Jesus was humbled from the highest place of being God and equal with the Father and equal with the Spirit, the highest place in all the universe.

And he took on the lowest place. He came in the form of a slave. And while Joseph experienced healing from the anguish and the grief that he suffered from his brothers and others, Jesus embraced the anguish and the grief connected to coming into this world, a world that is sinful and broken.

[42 : 46] And he did sort of bear sin. And to pay the penalty of sin, on the cross. The prophet Isaiah says of him that he was a man of suffering.

He was accreted with grief. And God did not transform him from suffering and grief.

He fully bore! He bore the suffering and bore the grief in his living and in his dying. Joseph was tempted in many ways and yet he appeared sinless.

The Lord Jesus was tempted in every way and he was in fact sinless. Joseph's life was exemplary. The Lord Jesus was perfect. perfect. And Joseph would go on to live 110 years and die a natural death. The Lord Jesus lived a short life.

[43 : 57] He died a sacrificial death on behalf of sinners, including Joseph. So that undeserving sinners like Joseph, like you, like me, who put their trust in him, can be saved.

And brothers and sisters, he died that he could give us something more than what success can give us.

It is in his living and it is in his dying that he's able to do that for us. he's able to give us what we need beyond success because he came and he lived and died in our place.

And we can be the recipients of his living and in his dying. And so this morning I pray that all of us, that there's none of us this morning who has a lingering desire, a lingering plan in our heart thinking that that would make us, that's the thing I need.

No, what we need is what only Jesus Christ can give. And I pray that all of us would look to him and lay whatever else we consider to be the apex of success for us.

[45 : 30] Let's lay it aside and let us trust in Jesus because he's the only one who will never disappoint. Let's pray. Oh, Father, would you once again draw near to us, speak to our hearts as we need to hear from you?

would you convince us all that we need something beyond success that only can come through the Lord Jesus Christ?

Speak to our hearts, oh Lord, as we leave this place today. Lord, speak to our hearts. we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.