

dreamed?

Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you? And his brothers were jealous of him.

But his father kept the saying in mind. This is God's word. I pray you put your seatbelt on as we go for a ride tonight and look at Joseph's life and how it turned to ashes.

[4 : 58] Let's pray together. God, thank you for this time. Thank you for this time to study your word. And you know how encouraged I am by the story and life of Joseph.

I pray that my other brothers and sisters in Christ here tonight would be encouraged by your word. Pray, Holy Spirit, that you would guide me to speak words of truth.

And that it would be declared to your people to edify them as they live by faith every day. Meet us here right now, I pray in Christ's name. And God's people said, Amen.

Amen. You can be seated. Jared Wallace was born with running in his blood. Even before he could walk, he was pushed in a stroller the full length of a marathon.

In high school, Jared won almost every race that he entered. In fact, his junior year, he set a Georgia State Championship record in the 800 and 1600 meter races.

[6 : 04] Whispers of going to the Olympics were constantly happening in his life. In fact, it became Jared's lifelong dream.

A dream that he became obsessed with. A dream he thought God had given him. He signed with the University of Georgia on an athletic scholarship not long after.

He signed with the University of Georgia. He began to experience some pain whenever he would run. And that would go along with swelling in his legs.

The problem got worse. The pain never seemed to go away. So he decided that he'd have surgery to correct the problem. However, after the surgery, serious complications set in.

And Jared lost 60% of the muscle in one leg. He was still determined that he was going to run.

[7 : 07] God had given him a dream. He was certain of it. Five months later, on a beautiful day in April, he's running on the track. And the pain becomes so excruciating that once he crossed the finish line, he fell on his face, began weeping and screaming on the ground.

And it occurred to him in that moment that he may never run again. Jared, in his own testimony, says that he remembers laying there on that track, screaming to God, Why me?

What did I do to deserve this? He thought that his dream was over. So Jared decided he'd start running a different way.

And for the next several months of his life, he started drinking, doing drugs, living out of control.

While he was trying to numb the pain of his soul, the pain of his legs continued to get worse.

One day, in a doctor's office in Wisconsin, he received the news that would change his life. His leg would have to be removed.

[8 : 27] He was devastated. Six weeks later, he would walk pain-free with a prosthetic leg.

And all of a sudden, his dream was reborn. Jared would go on to run in the Paralympic Games.

But my friend, he would not go on just to run. He would go on to become a four-time record holder. Three-time world champion.

And two-time Paralympian. But there was a time when he thought his dream was dead.

Anybody here tonight relate to Jared? Faith family, any of you ever had a dream that turned to ashes? Something that you had your heart set on?

[9 : 25] Something that you knew was going to happen? Something that maybe you even felt God had called you to? And it was as clear as day. There was absolutely nothing that could possibly keep it from coming to pass.

You could just envision yourself with kids playing in a front yard. You could just see that in your future. You could just see yourself holding the trophy at the end of the game.

You knew that's how it was going to turn out. You could just see yourself living in that kind of home, driving that kind of car. You could just see yourself in the future performing on some kind of a stage.

Or maybe going to that particular university. Or doing research in that particular occupation. Or spending the rest of your life with him.

You could just see it. It was as though God had given it to you. And somewhere along the way, that dream turned to ashes.

[10 : 37] It appeared as though that dream died. The sky got cloudy. The windows got foggy. The vision became blurry. And the dream that used to be so clear was nowhere to be found.

And that's the life of Joseph. That's exactly what Joseph goes through in his life. Because as we just read a few moments ago in Genesis chapter 37, God gives Joseph a dream. Look at verse 5 again. Joseph had a dream.

And when he told his brothers, they hated him even more. And he said, hear this dream. We were binding sheaves in the field. And my sheaf arose and stood upright. And yours gathered around it and bowed.

And his brothers said to him, are you going to reign over us? Are you going to rule over us? And they hated him because of his dream and his words. And then in verse 9, he dreamed another dream.

[11 : 36] And now we've got the sun, moon, and 11 stars were bowing down before him. Verse 10, he told it to his father and to his brothers. And even his father rebukes him and says, you must be outside your mind.

That's not what it says. It says, what is this dream you've dreamed? And your mother and I and your brother is going to bow down before you. Here's the first thing to jot down in your notes.

Joseph was given an unconditional promise. Joseph was given an unconditional promise. God gave him a dream. Now, I need you to hear this for just a moment because you've got to understand this biblically.

Dreams in the Bible are not like our dreams. Our dreams, when we think about having a dream, it's kind of like the examples that I gave earlier.

You know, we dream of getting married or we dream of retirement or we dream about something in our future. But listen, dreams in the Bible are associated with divine revelation.

[12 : 38] In other words, they're prophetic. God gave Joseph a divine word about being in a position of leadership over his family and people.

And what made that dream, that promise even better is that it was unconditional. There are no strings attached to this dream.

Joseph doesn't have to do anything to earn it. He doesn't have to work for it. It is the full and entire responsibility of God to make sure it comes to pass.

An unconditional promise is based on something that is far greater than you and I. It's based on the character of God.

Look at what the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 6, verse 13. Hebrews 6, verse 13. When God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself.

[13 : 39] And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.

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.

This kind of stuff happens all the time. Have you ever known anybody that when they're making a promise, they appeal to something greater than themselves so that you understand how serious they are?

This means yes. I promise on the Bible. You ever heard somebody do that? Not that I'm recommending this, right? But I swear on my mother's grave or something like that.

They're trying to appeal to something bigger than themselves so that you will realize I really, really mean it. The point of the passage here is that God can't promise on anything greater than himself.

[14 : 39] So God says, I swear, some of you may be comfortable with that and uncomfortable with that. I promise, I swear on me.

Because there's nothing greater than me on which to base the promise. It's based on the very character of himself. So Joseph is given this unconditional, divinely revealed promise about his future.

And so if you're anything like me, reading along in Genesis chapter 37, it's like, here we go. Strike up the band. Get the party started.

Cash in the 401k. Light the cigars. I prefer Cubans. Kick the tires and light the fires, baby. I mean, this is going to be the best year ever.

Right? We all know that God's promises always come easy, right? Right? And if you're about to crown Joseph in Genesis 37, don't.

[15 : 45] Because the next 20 years of his life is going to be anything but easy. And what we're about to walk through in the next few moments takes 20 years and 10 chapters of the Bible.

He's given a dream. An unconditional promise from God. And we would anticipate that that will go easy. But notice the unusual path that Joseph is going to go through even though God has given him this promise.

It starts with the path of family betrayal. Joseph tells his family this dream. And some of you, how many of you, show of hands, have siblings?

Okay? Show of hands. How many of you have siblings? Be honest. How many of you, if one of your brothers or sisters said, I just had a dream, and that dream is that you're going to bow before me?

Ha! No chance!

You must be outside your mind. There is no way that would ever happen. Joseph tells them this dream, and they hate it. Joseph's already a daddy's boy.

[16:58] The text tells us that we read earlier that Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons. He had 12 children with four women. But Joseph came from Rachel.

And if you remember your Old Testament, Joseph or Jacob loved Rachel. And so Joseph is this special child that he loves more than any of his other sons.

Which is why Jacob treated Joseph a lot more like a grandparent than he did a parent. You know what I'm talking about? Any grandparents in the room? You just spoil them and send them home, right?

You don't have to deal with all the other stuff. So Jacob here spoils Joseph. Treats him with special treatment. He has more toys and a later curfew.

And he gives them this royal coat that Joseph wears with pride. And so as if there's not already enough family tension after Joseph tells them this dream, a dream that involves them bowing down before him, as Doc Holliday would say in the movie Tombstone, now they really hate him.

[18:09] They cannot stand him. He is an arrogant punk as far as they are concerned. And in chapter 37 verse 12, Joseph is sent out to check on his brothers in the field.

And as they see him coming, they start plotting. You think your family's bad? Listen to this. They start plotting to kill their brother. That's how bad they hate him.

They want him dead. Reuben, the oldest, knowing that this will break his father's heart, decides that it's best to throw him in a pit. We're not going to kill him.

You remember the story. We're going to speed up here. A Midianite trader comes through, and they figure that they'd make a few coin off of Joseph. And so they sell him.

And now he's in the back of a pickup truck headed to Egypt. He has gone from a son loved by his father to a slave. How's that dream working out for you, Joseph?

[19:13] But we ain't done yet. The second stage that he goes through is a path of false accusation. In Genesis 39, he arrives in Egypt.

There he is sold to a man by the name of Potiphar. Potiphar is an officer in the Pharaoh's court. But rather than grumble of his circumstances, Joseph gains a good reputation with Potiphar, and he's placed in charge.

And so life is starting to look good again, all right? We got a little promotion, a little recognition. The food is better. I mean, all right, all right, all right.

Things are looking good again. Name it and claim it. Here we go. But Potiphar is not the only one that likes Joseph. His wife does too.

And she seduces Joseph. Joseph runs, and she makes up a story. And here's how Potiphar responds. Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 39.

[20:15] And verse 10, Genesis 39 and verse 10. And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her and lie beside her or be with her.

But one day when he ran into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house were there in the house, she caught him by his garment saying, lie with me. But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.

And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of her household and said to them, see, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us.

He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And as soon as he heard that, I lifted up my voice and cried out. And he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.

And then she laid up his garment by her until her master came home. And she told him the same story saying, the Hebrew servant whom you have brought among us came in to laugh at me. [21 : 14] But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house. And as soon as his master heard these words and his wife spoke to him, this is the way your servant treated me, his anger was kindled.

And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in prison. He's gone from blessed to behind bars. But it gets worse. He's now going to go through the path of being forgotten.

You remember what happens in the prison cell, right? Joseph, this is Genesis chapter 40. He's in the prison, and in prison with him is Pharaoh's former cupbearer and baker. And they have a dream. And Joseph is able, he's given this God-given ability to be able to interpret dreams. And when the cupbearer is released, Joseph pleads with him, remember me when you get to Pharaoh.

[22 : 22] Remember me. Maybe I can get out of this prison. Maybe there's still hope for my future. And you remember what happens. Look at Genesis 40, verse 23.

Genesis 40. Yet the chief cupbearer did what? But not remember Joseph. Say it. But forgot him. At this point, I imagine Joseph must be thinking this. Wait a minute. What was all that one-in-a-million talk? I mean, what in the world gives?

What was all that talk about a dream, God? What was all that you were saying back in chapter 37? I mean, what was all this hope for my future? God, where are you?

What are you up to? I don't understand what's going on. The dream has turned to ashes.

[23 : 23] And I want to ask you at this point, is there anybody here or watching online that can relate to any part of Joseph's story? You can just kind of whisper amen.

If you don't want to say it loud, just amen, right? Let me ask you a few questions. Have you ever been abandoned? Left behind? Sold out? Your hopes run dry?

Your heart stomped on? You ever been through a season of loneliness? Ever been stabbed in the back? Ever had someone twist a narrative about you? Ever had somebody tell lies about you?

Anybody relate to Joseph? Joseph, if your dreams, if your hope has ever turned to ashes, Joseph's story is not meant to discourage you.

It is meant to encourage you. Because through all of his journey, there's some things that he learns. And these things are critically important for us in our journey as well.

[24 : 26] Notice the third point is God's unfailing providence. God is not asleep. He's not on vacation.

He hasn't checked out. He's not up in heaven saying, never saw this coming. How are we going to deal with this? God is absolutely in every second in charge.

Two years later. And you let that sink in. Two years later. Two years after being forgotten. Two years after prison life.

Two years after being a slave. Two years of staring at the walls. Two years of doubt and frustration with God. Pharaoh has a dream. And he demands that someone interpret that dream, but no one can.

Finally, the cup bearer remembers Joseph and calls Joseph in and Joseph interprets the dream for Pharaoh. And as a result, as you know, Joseph is given a high place of authority in Egypt.

[25 : 40] Look at Genesis chapter 41 and verse 38. Genesis 41 and 38. And Pharaoh said to his servants, Come, we find a man like this in whom is the Spirit of God.

Those of you that went to the conference this weekend, you should know what that means. The Spirit of God is on Joseph for this task. And 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.

Wow. Are you dizzy yet? Like anybody like, Hello, we've gone from dream to a pit to slavery to promotion to prison, to appreciation, to forgotten, and now over everything minus the throne of Egypt.

What a journey. And Joseph interprets the dream, and you remember what the dream is. The dream is about a famine that will soon come to pass in the land.

[27 : 00] And so they are to store up so that they can be prepared when the famine comes. And when the famine does arrive, Joseph's family comes to Egypt for food.

Think with me. Twenty years later, Joseph comes face to face with his brothers.

What would you do? I tell you what I would do. It would look something like this. And again, and again, and again.

there are people in my life I wonder what will I do if I walk into them at Walmart?

How will I respond in that moment? You say, well, I don't know that I like a pastor that struggles like that. Well, you're probably at the wrong church then. Because this pastor is just like you.

[28 : 12] What will I do when I see them again? What will I do when I look them in the eyes? What will I do when I come face to face with the people who hurt me?

What would you do? What have you done? Well, by God's grace, Joseph responds this way.

Look at Genesis 43 and verse 26. Genesis 43 and verse 26. When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground and he inquired about their welfare and said, is your father well?

The old man of whom you spoke, is he still alive? They don't know it's Joseph. They haven't seen him in a long time. He knows it's them. They said, your servant, our father, is well.

He's still alive. And they bowed their heads and were prostrated themselves and he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me?

[29 : 20] God, be gracious to you, my son. And Joseph hurried out. Why? Because he wanted to put the smack down on them.

No, he hurried out for his compassion grew warm for his brother. And he sought a place to weep. Then he entered his chamber and wept there. That is only by the grace of God.

How in the world could Joseph respond this way? I think it's because through the journey, he believed some things, he knew some things, and he learned some things.

Y'all with me? Through the journey, he believed some things, he knew some things, and he learned some things. Here they are.

[30 : 26] Number one, in the ashes, God was with Joseph. In the ashes, those moments when it seemed as though the dream was over, God was with him.

In fact, look back at chapter 39 and verse 20. chapter 39 and verse 20 says, and Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.

But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

God was with him. You know, one of the greatest promises in all the Bible, do you agree, is this, I will never leave you or forsake you.

Hey, Joseph, I'm not going anywhere, buddy. If you go high, if you go low, wherever you go, I am with you.

[31 : 40] Listen to me, faith family, some of you are here tonight for this very point. God brought you sovereignly for this very point. Notice it on the screen.

Child of God, there will be times when God seems out of sight, but his presence is never out of reach. He will appear out of sight, but his presence is never out of reach.

He never leaves his people. Ever. God was with Joseph, and Joseph knew that God was with him in the pit and with him when he was sold to a traitor.

He was with him on the auction block. He was with him in the prison cell. He was with him when he was forgotten, and he was with him when he was raised out of the ashes. And faith family, I hope that this encourages you that in every circumstance of your life, if you are a child of God, he is with you.

Number two, in the ashes, God sent Joseph. In the ashes, God sent Joseph. Here's what some people will say.

[32 : 50] I know that they will say it because I have talked to them, and I want to be gracious to your view, and your view would be this. You know, God never takes his children through suffering. He only wants good things for you.

He would never take you through any kind of difficulties. God is just a God of love, to which I would respond, you don't need to take my word for it that God sent Joseph in this direction.

You should take Joseph's word for it. Look at chapter 45 and verse 5. Chapter 45 and verse 5. And now do not be distressed or be angry with yourselves because you sold me here. Who sold him? His brothers sold him for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth to keep alive for many survivors and so it was not you who sent me here but God you're giving yourself too much credit brothers.

[34 : 16] You screwed up. You messed up big time and you're not off the hook because you did it out of hatred. You did it out of anger. You were accountable but my God was sovereign and he sent me into the ashes.

He sent me into the prison. He sent me on the auction block. Why? Because he was getting me somewhere.

somewhere Joseph would never have had the wisdom to get there on his own. I guarantee you if it were up to Joseph he would have gotten the dream in Genesis 37.

But God is sending him according to his plan. It's why in chapter 50 verse 20 this is probably the most familiar verse in the whole story.

He says this. As for you you meant this for evil against me but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.

[35 : 23] You meant it for evil God meant it for good. God was with Joseph and God sent Joseph.

Number three. In the ashes God was good to Joseph. In the ashes God was good to Joseph. this is what I need you to get tonight and this is very important and trust me I've been in the ashes you've been in the ashes and it's very easy in the ashes to question God is it not?

And what was all that one in a million talk? What was all that dream you promised me? Look at this on the screen. Faith family the character of God does not change just because your circumstances do.

the character of God does not change just because your circumstances do. In the midst of hating family strife and brothers that will backstab you and seductive women that lie and unfair bosses and fair weather friends there's enough evil from Genesis 37 to Genesis 50 to fill all the lakes in Minnesota there's a lot of evil there but guess what?

God was good every moment of every second every day of Joseph's life because your circumstances do not determine the character of God he is the same yesterday today and forever amen?

[37 : 01] Number four in the ashes God was faithful to Joseph in the ashes God was faithful to Joseph remember the dream back in Genesis chapter 37 you think God forgot that not for one moment look at chapter 50 verse 18 makes me want to leap off the stage look at it chapter 50 verse 18 his brothers came and of course they did fell down before him and said behold we are your servants it may have taken 20 years but there was never a doubt let me say that again it may have taken 20 years but there was never a doubt it may not have been the path that Joseph would have chosen but

God never forgot his promise not for a moment Joseph understood that the overall purpose of his life was to fit his small story as a part of God's larger story don't you realize Joseph this just isn't about you buddy this is about saving my people when famine comes don't make too much of yourself and I'm not belittling what you went through Joseph but you need to understand buddy you're a part of a much bigger redemption story that I am doing I will always be true to my word y'all with me tonight anybody need this I'm the only one I guess all right faith family we need a vision of God's sovereignty because when crisis hits or the tests are positive adversity is out of control at least at faith family we do not believe that seven practical steps type sermons will sustain you Joseph endured 13 years in prison 20 plus years separated from his family and was able to stand before his brothers not with bitterness but with grace why because he had a deep rooted vision of God's sovereignty it got him through the ashes now last point and then we're done and that is God's unwavering plan God's unwavering plan why does all this matter anyway anybody like yawn boring like who cares about dreams in Genesis 37 like what in the world does this have to do with me I don't care I mean I learned this story in Sunday school like what is the big deal with dreams and famines and family fights well why does God place Joseph in a position of authority answer to prepare for the famine why so that in the famine his family will not die so well

Joseph's family becomes the tribes of Israel you tracking with me you say and what's the big deal about that well it's through one of those tribes that God will send his son listen to me if you've zoned out zoned back in if Joseph isn't sold to a Midianite he doesn't end up with Potiphar if he doesn't end up with Potiphar he doesn't end up in prison if he doesn't end up in prison he isn't given the opportunity to stand before Pharaoh if he doesn't stand before Pharaoh and gain his trust Israel is not saved from famine if Israel is not saved from famine there is no Messiah and if there is no Messiah you and I are forever in our sins spending eternity separated from God this story has everything to do with you and your eternity it may not have been Joseph chosen path but it was God's sovereign plan for him and you to bring all things together in

Christ this story matters to us because our salvation depended on God coming through and he did time and time and time again so do you think your life is any different do you think child of God that he's any less concerned about his promises to you oh no our God has an unwavering plan and you can trust him you really can trust him and so tonight if like in Jared's life his promises seem like they've turned to ashes my plea to you is to trust him he is at work in your life and you say well how can

[42 : 29] I be certain that that is true pastor how can I know is there any certainty that I can trust God has a plan for me oh yes because my dear friend we have something greater than Joseph's story we have the true Joseph's story there's a Joseph greater than Joseph that is a man that was betrayed by his brothers and sold for a few coins and falsely accused a man that was treated like a criminal forgotten by the very ones he served a man who when he was hanging on the cross knew exactly what it was like to be abandoned a man who walked out of a grave took the exalted seat at the right hand of his father and get this offers salvation to the very people who sinned against him that's your guarantee that he has a plan for your life and so trust him with your life and he will give you the guarantee and promise of eternal life a future that will never turn to ashes and all

God's people said amen pray with me pray with me God thanks for tonight I may have been the only one in the room that needed to go through this journey again of Joseph's story a dream that turns to ashes moments over 20 years where it just seemed like you were nowhere to be found and yet from the ashes you were at work every moment along the way and I need that and we need that to give to give us perspective on our life right now there are people in this room and they are doing everything they can to raise children and to pay their bills and to get through the week and they look at the mundane and they just wonder God are you anywhere in this and it's stories like Joseph that remind us that yes in family division and false accusations and being mistreated and getting a promotion and all of those details of our life

God you really are at work and you really can be trusted so lift us up tonight from the ashes lift us up from those broken dreams any hopelessness that anyone may feel tonight and renew us and restore us in the finished work of Jesus Christ the guarantee of a glorious future speak to us tonight oh God I pray in Christ's name and God's people said amen amen amen amen