

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**

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**JOSEPH: Our God Is Always Faithful (But, God Will)**

**Genesis 41:1-40**

As I'm sure you already know, there are only 100 days until Christmas. That means, it's about time for my annual reference to one of the all-time great movies: *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Kids, if you haven't seen it, let's make this the year. And I'll warn you that I'm going to spoil the ending a bit, but since it was released in 1946, that's on you. Plus, you really can't spoil the ending. It's that good.

For those of you who've been living in a cave since birth, *It's a Wonderful Life* is a story about a man named George Bailey. George is a really good guy who just can't ever quite get ahead. As much as he wants to get out and see the world, he finds himself trapped in his little hometown of Bedford Falls. His dreams always seem just out of reach.

But that final scene always gets me. Even though I've seen it countless times, every year I get a bit more choked up when everything comes together for good old George Bailey. As the whole town tries to squeeze into the living room of 320 Sycamore, I find myself sitting in my own living room thinking, "Good for you, George. I'm happy for you."

That's how I've felt this week as I've studied our text. This is the turning point in the life of Joseph. This is when things start coming together for the guy who hasn't been able to get ahead. It's moving day for Joseph. From the prison to a palace. It's promotion day, from a slave to Prime Minister of Egypt. For the first time in a long time, it's a good day to be Joseph.

**Genesis 41:1–8**

***After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, 2 and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. 3 And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. 6 And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. 7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. 8 So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.***

Here is the third set of dreams in the life of Joseph. The first two dreams came to Joseph when he was 17 years old in his father's house. The second set of dreams came to the cupbearer and baker who were in prison with Joseph in the last chapter. Two full years after that, Pharaoh has this set of dreams.

Seven big, healthy cows are hanging out when suddenly a gang of seven scrawny cows come up out of the Nile like a bunch of crocodiles. In a scene that must have been pretty brutal to visualize in a dream, the skinny cows ate the cows that were destined to become New York strip...which understandably made Pharaoh wake up in a cold sweat.

Pharaoh gets back to sleep and has another dream. Seven healthy ears of grain sprout up on the same stalk. They're minding their own business, blowing in the wind, when seven withered ears of grain sprout up, grow mouths like the some twisted Veggie Tales cartoon, and eat the plump grain.

Pharaoh wakes up again. And He intuitively knows these dreams mean something important. He's deeply troubled. So, he calls together all the wisest magicians in the entire nation.

And notice what verse 8 tells us, "***but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.***"

No one could do it. No one. Pharaoh needs someone who can interpret dreams. But who could he get? Who could possibly interpret these dreams?

Do you know anyone from the story of Joseph who might fit that description? Raise your hand if you have someone in mind.

### **Genesis 41:9–13**

***Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my offenses today. 10 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, 11 we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. 12 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. 13 And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."***

The chief cupbearer remembers Joseph. How many of you thought of Joseph, too? He tells Pharaoh that Joseph interpreted his and the baker's dreams and that the interpretations came true. Oh, man, this might be Joseph's big break.

### **Genesis 41:14–16**

***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. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me..."***

Hold up. What's going on here? Joseph finally gets his big break and what's he say? He says, "It's not in me." The NIV translates that phrase this way: "I cannot do it."

What in the world is going on here? In the last chapter, Joseph interprets two dreams. We all saw it. The cupbearer remembers it the same way all of us did. Joseph interpreted the dreams, right?

Well, not quite. Look back at chapter 40, verse 8.

### **Genesis 40:8**

***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."***

Joseph is crystal clear: only God can interpret dreams. Only God could do that. But, Joseph believed something. He is convinced that God would do through him what only God could do.

Let me say that again. Joseph was convinced that God would do what only God could do, and He would do it in and through Joseph. So, as he stands before Pharaoh, he clarifies the situation. "I cannot do it. It's not in me."

Look at the rest of verse 16 of our text.

**Genesis 41:16**

**16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me, God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."**

In the most important moment of Joseph's life, he lives out one of the most important truths there is to know. "I cannot do it but I'm confidently trusting God to do it through me."

That's the heart that enjoys the experience of all the blessings God has to offer His people. That's the heart that enjoys the blessing of being sustained even in suffering, the heart that enjoys the blessing of not growing bitter when others sin against us, the heart that enjoys the blessing of being delivered from slavery and captivity into the freedom Jesus alone can give.

And that gives us our big idea for today.

**God's blessings are poured out on people who know they cannot do it but are confident God will.**

This is the key to the Christian life. It's the key to experiencing and enjoying all the blessings God has in store for His people.

And there are two parts to enjoying a life blessed by God.

1. Be convinced you cannot do it.

Listen to the way Paul says it in *Romans 7:18*, *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.*

That's just another way of saying, "I know I cannot do it." I can't do what's good and right in a way that would bring the blessing of God. It's not in me.

Listen, to the way Jesus says this same thing in *John 15:5*, *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing good. We cannot produce the fruit of a blessed life apart from Jesus.

Friends, the second-best thing that will ever happen to you is when you realize that you cannot do anything good apart from Jesus.

- You cannot live a life that's pleasing to God.
- You cannot defeat the power of sin.
- You cannot make your own destiny or fix the deepest problems of your life.
- You cannot produce my joy or peace or satisfaction.

Right now, there may be some in this room who are doing their very best to live a blessed life. You're trying to fix all your weaknesses. You're trying to solve all your problems. You're trying to work out a

good deal with God where He will bless you if you just do enough good works. Maybe that's the kind of thinking that brought you here today.

Listen closely to the truth of the gospel. If you could do it, God would not have sent us Jesus. He would not have needed to come and live the life we have all failed to live. He would not have needed to die on the cross for our sins. He would not have had to rise up from the dead and display His power to raise people who are helpless and hopeless and dead in their sins.

But Jesus did come and live and die and rise in our place to forgive our sin and make us right with God and give us His resurrection power to live a brand-new life through His Spirit. Why did He choose to do that? Because we cannot do it for ourselves. Period.

The second-best thing that will ever happen to you in this life is when you realize you cannot do anything good apart from Jesus. So, what's the very best thing that will ever happen to you in this life?

It's the second part to enjoying the blessed life.

## 2. Be confident God will do all He has promised to do.

(2 Cor. 1:20) We receive the blessings of God through faith in Jesus – relying on Him to do in and for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

That's different from the name it, claim it faith that is at the heart of prosperity theology. The blessed life isn't a life that tells God what to do as though He is nothing more than a cosmic butler. The blessed life is the one that receives from God all that God has actually promised, like joy in the midst of pain, like hope in the place of grief, like power to endure suffering.

Joseph is confident that God will do exactly what He said He would do. That's exactly what you see playing out in the rest of our text.

### **Genesis 41:17–32**

**Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. 18 Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. 19 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. 20 And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, 21 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. 22 I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. 23 Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them, 24 and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me." 25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 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. 28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29 There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, 30 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, 31 and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. 32 And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.**

As God does what only God can do through Joseph, Joseph is able to interpret the dreams. Notice the focus of Joseph's words.

- **25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.**
- **28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do.**
- **32 And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.**

Do you see what Joseph is making abundantly clear? He is saying that God has promised to do something. This is about what God says He will do.

The faith that experiences the blessings of God isn't a name-it-claim-it faith that tells God what to do. It's a humble response to what God has promised to do. It's a confidence that God will do exactly what He says He will do. With that in mind, notice what Joseph says next.

#### **Genesis 41:33-36**

**Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 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. 35 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. 36 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."**

What is Joseph's response to what God says He will do? The first thing Joseph says is, "Now therefore...". In other words, Joseph says, "Pharaoh, we need to live like God is going to do exactly what He said He will do."

Joseph knew He couldn't do it but was confident that God would do what only He could do through him. And, when God made it clear what He was going to do, Joseph stepped into God's promise and lived like God would do exactly what He said. And what happened as a result?

#### **Genesis 41:37-40**

**This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. 40 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."**

When Joseph lived with ZERO confidence in himself but complete confidence in the Lord, God poured out His blessings on Joseph. Namely, He poured out the power of His Spirit into Joseph's life. He put Himself and His power into Joseph to enable him to live, a life that only the Lord can empower. A kind of power that doesn't spare you from experiencing famine and hardship. That's not what the blessed life means. The blessed life is the life that Jesus lives in and through you that sustains you despite the famine and hardship and pain and grief that are inevitable in this dark world. We'll pick up there next week.

But, as we close, I just want to press in on how we are seeing the Christian life portrayed here in the life of Joseph. Joseph knew he couldn't do what only God could do and neither can we. But Joseph was convinced that God would do what only God could do and that He would do it through Joseph because Joseph was trusting confidently in Him, that's called faith. And that wasn't a one-time

decision. It was a way of life. When God made it clear what He would do, Joseph believed God and lived like God would do what He promised. That's called living by faith.

That's the life we are called to live in Christ. A life that lives by confident faith that God will do exactly what He has promised to do. And you might say, "Well, it would be great if I were in Joseph's place and God would reveal exactly what He's going to do." Good news. He has. Let me share a couple with you.

### **If you will trust in Him...**

- He will give you rest– Mt. 11:28
- He will give you fruit – John 15:5
- He will give you perfect peace– Is 26:3
- He will never leave or forsake you – Deut 31:8
- He will make His grace sufficient for your every need - 2 Cor 12:9-10
- He will cause His power to be perfected in your weakness – 2 Cor 12:9-10
- He will guard your heart and mind from anxiety – Phil 4:6-7
- He will provide all your needs according to His riches – Phil 4:19
- He will repay every wrong that is perpetrated against you – Rom 12:17-19
- He will work everything together for your good and His glory – Rom 8:28
- He will give you wisdom when you ask – James 1:5
- He will prepare a place for you in God's house – John 14:2-3
- He will come again and bring you to Himself – John 14:2-3
- He will return in glory to judge this world – 2 Thess 1:7-10
- He will wipe away every tear from your eye – Rev 21:4
- He will make all things new, including you – Rev 21:5

God works on behalf of those who trust in Him and not themselves. We don't have to understand, we simply have to trust.

I want to close with two things God has said He will do for those who trust in Jesus.

#### 1. God will save anyone who calls on Jesus.

*Romans 10:9-10;13*

*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved...For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

There is no greater need you have than to be right with God. And you can't do it. All of us have sinned against God and are separated from Him and every blessing that comes from being in a right relationship with Him. Similar to Joseph, we find ourselves enslaved in a prison from which we cannot escape by our own power. We are trapped in our own sin.

But God is rich in mercy and has provided a way for anyone and everyone to be saved from the penalty, payment, and presence of sin. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. And everyone who believes the truth about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and calls on the name of Jesus as their Lord and Savior, will be saved. That's what God has promised to do.

So, are you trusting in Jesus? Do you believe He will do what only He can do and that He'll do it in you?

2. God will answer the prayers of those who ask aligned to His will.

1 John 5:14-15

*And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

God has promised to answer the prayers of His people when we pray according to His will. I used to think that was something like the fine print on God's contract for prayer. As though He has this secret will that He already plans on doing, so if you just so happen to ask for something that He had already planned on doing, then He would answer that prayer. That's not what the Bible is saying here. Simply put, the will of God is most clearly revealed in the Word of God. So, the way we pray according to God's will is by praying in alignment with God's Word, the Bible.

If we pray in alignment with God's word, we can be confident that He will do all that we ask. What an amazing promise from God about what He will do. But do you know why so many people have such an anemic prayer life? It's because they believe someone else can do what only God can do.

- They believe they can save their marriages, so they roll up their sleeves and get to work rather than bowing their knees in prayer.
- They believe a politician can save their nation, so they become passionate about political action rather than becoming passionate about persistent prayer.
- They believe their children can provide meaning and satisfaction for their lives, so they try to spend all the time they can with their kids rather than spending time in the presence of God.

Many of us simply do not pray the way Christ calls us to pray because we believe someone else can do what only God can do.

So, what would it look like if you were convinced that no one can do what only God can do and began to ask Him to do it in you and your spouse and your family and coworkers and classmates?

God has told us what He will do. He will answer the prayers of His people when they ask according to His will by praying in alignment with His word.