A manger under a star

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Let me say what a privilege it is for me to be here, and I mean that most sincerely. All of us know what it is like to have your life influenced by those men whom God uses so tremendously---to listen to them on the radio, to read their books and so on. But there is little that can compare to getting a call on behalf of one of those men saying, "Will you come and participate in the conference that I'm putting on?" And when that happened, Dr. Sproul, I have to tell you, my first inclination was to say, "Absolutely not!" There's no way that I'll do that. I'm not going to. No, I'm not going to do that… That's RC Sproul. No!!" But it is an honor, and it is indeed a privilege for me to be here; and I'm grateful for having this opportunity to be here. I'm grateful to you for the ministry that you have had in my life, and I want you to know how much it has meant to me and how much it continues to mean to me and how much you have taught me over the years. I'm grateful for this ministry---for the Ministry of Ligonier and for all of you who participate in that ministry in various ways, in the investment and contributions that you have made. I'm grateful for this conference and for the privilege of being able to participate in this small way in this conference. And so, what I will do is say my peace and allow the rest of the conference to continue on.

***God is the Rescuer and Redeemer of His Fallen Creation***

As I say my peace, my responsibility here in dealing with *'The Autobiography of God'* is to address the issue of God as ***RESCUER***, and particularly God's work in the person of ***CHRIST*** in rescuing his people. Now, the central theme of the Bible is God himself, God as the sovereign, creator and Lord of the universe. However, that manifests itself very particularly in the way that God ***RESCUES*** and ***REDEEMS*** his creation. We find in Genesis chapter one, God creating the world. We find in Genesis chapter two, that more focused picture of God making man. And then right after that in Genesis chapter three, we find the fall of man. So, things go awry rather quickly. And then in Genesis chapter three and verse 15, we have the thesis statement of the whole Bible. We heard it earlier. God speaks to the serpent, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; you will bruise him on the heel, he will bruise you on the head."* And the rest of the Bible is the outworking of that redemptive plan. As we look forward to the coming of the person and work of Jesus Christ, we see his cross work, and then we see the anticipation of the consummation of all things in him at his second advent, for which we wait anxiously.

***Our Redemption Story is Rooted and Veiled in the Old Testament***

And yet we have come to a place where we treat the Bible as though this ***REDEMPTION*** is only a ***MINOR*** theme; or as though this ***REDEMPTION*** is something that we see ***ONLY*** in the New Testament. And as a result of that, there are a couple of things that I would like to address in the time that I have been given. And one of those things I'd like to address is this: There's an argument over the ***VERY NATURE*** of the rescue that God performs on behalf of his elect. Steve Chalky, speaking about the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement, says that it amounts to *'cosmic child abuse'*. The Reverend Jeffrey Johns says that it is an *'insane and cruel doctrine'*. Emergent church leader, Brian McLaren says that the doctrine of rescue that we see in the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement makes God out to be a *'butcher'*.

And so, somehow there is this picture of God's ***RESCUE*** that changes from what we see in this scripture, and you cannot change the nature of the ***RESCUER*** without changing the nature of the ***RESCUE*** itself. For example---if we are talking about ***RESCUE***---imagine if you will, I think of myself... I'm sleeping in my bed at night in my home and I awaken to the smell of smoke, and I see flames. I need rescue, my family needs rescue. I turn to my wife, and I say, "Call the fire department!" And then I go and try to attend to the fire myself, and try to attend to my family and get us out. But what we need is the fire department... because the nature of our rescue calls for a fireman.

However, if I awaken in the middle of the night and hear a burglar coming into my house, I don't call the fire department. That's a different kind of rescue. You don't call the same rescuer. You must change the ***NATURE*** of the rescuer because of the ***NATURE*** of the rescue. If I wake up at night and I hear a burglar coming into my house, I don't turn to my wife and say, "Call the fire department." I turn to my wife and say, call the,"... no.... "call the ***AMBULANCE***! You get your gun. I get mine. You go left. I go right... make sure you don't shoot me. But when you change the ***NATURE*** of the rescue, you inevitably change the ***NATURE*** of the rescuer. But you also change your understanding of the ***NEED*** of the one rescued.

What do we ultimately mean? If I don't need penal, substitutionary atonement, what do I need? And there are various commentaries offered. There are those who argue that what I need more than anything else is to be at peace with myself---I need therapy. I need to learn how to deal with the world and be at peace.

There are those who would argue that what I really need is social justice---I need for the scales to be balanced and somehow that will make everything all right.

Others would argue that what I really need is to be educated. By that, what they mean is I need information and certification; because after all, that's the key to answering all of my greatest problems.

See, when we determine that man's greatest need is something ***OTHER THAN*** the rescue that he finds in the person and work of Christ, it changes the way we look at ***GOD*** and it changes the way we look at ***MAN***. It changes the way we look at the ***SCRIPTURES***. Now all of a sudden when we look at the Bible, we are looking through a lens that is ***NOT*** a lens that says God is the rescuer who brings about this rescue that he pronounces through bringing the promised seed and crushing the head of the serpent. But somehow now God is the rescuer who makes us more ***INFORMED***, more at ***PEACE*** with ourselves, or just more just in our ***DEALINGS*** with one another. Nowhere is this seen more profoundly than in the way that we read the Old Testament. And if you listen to the way that we teach the Old Testament, what you hear time and time again is the idea that man needs something ***OTHER THAN*** the rescue that comes from the ***REDEMPTION*** we find in Christ Because Christ and his redeeming work---if you listen to the way we teach the Old Testament---is ***NOT*** the central theme found therein. But that's ***NOT*** the way Jesus looked at the Old Testament!!

In Luke chapter 24, on the road to Emmaus, for example, when Jesus is finally revealing himself to these men on the road to Emmaus... I love this encounter on the road to Emmaus, because one of the most profound questions in all of the Bible is asked there on the road to Emmaus. They're talking to Jesus about what's been going on, and they look at him and they say, *"Are you the only man in Jerusalem who doesn't understand what's been going on here these last few days”?* And he doesn't say it, but what he could have said was, *"No, I'm actually the only one who* ***DOES*** *understand what's been going on here."* He makes a statement there in verse 25, *"And he said to them, 'Oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.' "* Jesus does not say, *"You should have understood my redemptive work on the cross because of what I've been telling you all this time."*: He says, *"You should have understood it because you have the Old Testament!"* In John chapter five... what do we have recorded there in John chapter five... at the end of John chapter five?

Listen to these words. Beginning of verse 45. *"Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words??"* Moses wrote of you? What are you talking about, Jesus? Do you mean that we can go to the Pentateuch and find you and your redemptive work? Do you mean that when we go to the Old Testament, we don't have to read it like Aesop's Fables? It's precisely what he means. This redemption is not something that is a second thought or an afterthought. It is something that we find in the pages of the Bible from beginning to end.

So, here's what I want to do. I want us to turn to a very familiar Old Testament passage and I want us to see Jesus in all his glory. Now, as we do this, we must be careful. Here's what we don't do. We don't go to the Bible and allegorize it so that every little thing that we find there has to somehow symbolize some aspect of Christ. So, we have to be careful there.

***Our Redemption as Seen in Genesis 41***

But the other thing that we do is we don't go to the Old Testament and somehow read it as though Christ's redemptive work is insignificant. So, what I want to do is go to a familiar passage in the Old Testament so that we can do a number of things. Number ***ONE***, I want us to examine the way that we're used to looking at Old Testament scripture and repent. If you can't say, "Amen," you ought to say, "Ouch," Alright, that's what I want us to do. ***TWO***, I really want to go to a familiar passage of scripture because I want us to refocus our lens. I want this to be striking. ***THREE***, I want us to see Christ in all of his redemptive glory. And then ***FINALLY***, I want us to have a pattern and a hope as it relates to the way that we deal with the Old Testament in general. All of that, yes, in that amount of time.

1. ***Our Superficial Way of Viewing Joseph’s Story in Genesis 41***

Genesis chapter 41. in Genesis chapter 41, we find the story of Joseph---and not just the story of Joseph. We find what is considered to be the ***APEX*** in the Joseph story. In Genesis chapter 41, Joseph has already been in the pit. He has already been with Potiphar; and now he's been in prison, and he find his way... he finds his way to the palace. All of that has already happened. And it is this moment at which he stands before Pharaoh, and Pharaoh announces his approval of Joseph.

Joseph has interpreted three pairs of dreams in order to get to this point. By the way, that's very important. The ***FIRST PAIR*** of dreams gets him into the pit. By the way, that's in Genesis chapter 37. There's two dreams, and the first dream, he comes to his brothers who already hate him and if though it was a good idea, he tells them about his dream that basically foretells them bowing down to him. That didn't go well. He had another dream; and now, not only does he tell his brothers, but he tells his father. That goes even ***WORSE***. It is after this that we see him in the pit.

After being in the pit, eventually we see him in the prison. In prison there's ***ANOTHER PAIR*** of dreams: the baker and the cup bearer. One ends marvelously; the other, not so much. It is that pair of dreams that leads to his eventual release, although still two years later.

And now he stands before Pharaoh, who asks for the interpretation of ***ANOTHER PAIR*** of dreams. He interprets this pair of dreams. There are the ears of corn---the healthy ears and the sick ears. And the seven sick ears gobbled up the seven healthy ears. There are the seven healthy cows and the seven sick cows. And the seven sick cows gobble up the seven healthy cows. And he looks at Pharaoh and says*, "There are going to be seven years of* ***PLENTY*** *followed by seven years of* ***FAMINE****. Store up during the years of plenty so that you have food to eat during the years of famine."* And it is at ***THIS MOMENT*** that we see what (for the most part) is considered the ***PAYOFF*** in Joseph's life.

And so, in Sunday school, here's how it goes. Joseph was hated by his brothers. "Have ***YOU*** ever been hated by anybody?" And because they hated him, they mistreated him. And after they mistreated him, he went through some bad circumstances. "Have ***YOU*** ever experienced bad circumstances?" "Yes!" But because he endured the bad circumstances, he held on and God was with him, and as a result of that, God elevates him to the second highest position in all of Egypt. The ***MORAL*** of the story is: if you will but trust God, even when people despise you, God will eventually reward you and elevate you to a position of prominence just like Joseph.

Really??? That's why Genesis 41 is in the Bible??? I beg to differ. In fact, here's what I would argue. If you are reading Genesis for the first time and you come to Genesis chapter 41... if you are an honest reader who's been paying attention, when you get to Genesis chapter 41, you don't stand up and cheer for Joseph, you fall on your face and pray for him. This could be the ***MOST PERILOUS MOMENT*** of all of the moments that he has experienced. I know that look (on your faces)! that's the look that says, "Really???" Yeah, really!!! Let me explain.

Genesis chapter 41 beginning in verse 37. Let's see this here. And we have to see this in its grammatical, historical, biblical context in order to understand where ***CHRIST AND HIS REDEMPTIVE WORK*** fits here, because we're not just going to allegorize. So, look here beginning in verse 37, "*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?' "* Pharaoh was not just converted folks. What he means there is that this is revelation that comes from somewhere beyond the human. Pharaoh's not saying *'the spirit of God'* in the same way that you and I understand *'the spirit of God'-*--Pharaoh thought himself to be a God. But what he's acknowledging here is that there is something divine about what this young man just did.

*"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 to the throne will I be greater than you?' And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' "*

Let's stop. Now all of a sudden, he's gone from the pit to Potiphar to prison, and now to power in the palace before Pharaoh; and we say this is the ***PAYOFF*** moment. I don't think so. He's part of the covenant community. God has made a covenant with his great-grandfather Abraham, and the covenant that he made with his great-grandfather Abraham is not that 'your descendants will serve pagan kings'; but that's precisely what's happening right now with Pharaoh. Joseph is second in command to a pagan king whose very existence is blasphemous before a holy God. This blasphemous king, who thinks that he is a God, says to a covenant child of the most high God, *"You are now my servant to prop up my kingdom where I am God."* Really??? ***THAT'S*** what we want for our children. Mamas come crying to their pastors when this happens to their sons: "I don't know what's wrong. We raised him right, and now he's this big powerful muckety-muck serving the pagans, giving his life to those individuals no longer committed, it seems, to the covenant people of God." It's not scriptural, but it's true. Lord Acton was right: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." And now, here he is in ***POWER***. Jesus warns about ***POWER***, does he not? About those who lord it over others, and about those who would be great being servants ***NOT*** being in power, certainly not having pagan power, but there's more.

*"Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments and 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.'”* By the way, make no mistake about it. There is an intentional reference here to ***BOWING THE KNEE*** that goes back to the first pair of dreams that Joseph has interpreted. Joseph interprets this dream: His brothers are going to bow the knee before him. Rather than bow the knee before him, his brothers would rather kill him---we see in Genesis chapter 37. And we know that they don't just mean that figuratively, because they've ***PROVEN*** that they are murderers (Do you remember the *Shechemites*?).

Your family didn't accept you, the covenant community didn't accept you; but that's okay. The ***PAGANS*** will bow the knee. But not just that. He's got the signet ring, he's got the linen clothing and he's riding in a *'Bentley'*. (To what else would you compare? Pharaoh's second chariot.) Now not only does he have ***PAGAN POWER***, but he has ***PAGAN WEALTH***! *"It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."* And now, not only does Joseph have ***POWER***, but he great ***WEALTH***. And again, in the Sunday school lesson, this is why you hold on. You hold on because, if you hold on when people mistreat you, ultimately God will elevate you and give you great power and great wealth. And after all, that's what life is all about, is it not?

We continue. *"Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I am Pharaoh, and without your consent, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name, Zaphnath- Paaneah.' "* Now he has a ***PAGAN NAME***, a pagan identity. Are you beginning to see this? Here's what's ironic to me. We get to Genesis chapter 41 and we say, this is the ***PAYOFF*** moment. Really??? This is the payoff moment. Yes, of course this is the payoff moment. All I've seen, so far, is that this man is serving a ***PAGAN KING***. He has ***PAGAN WEALTH*** and all the accoutrement that goes on with ***BEING IN POWER IN A PAGAN CULTURE***. And now he's been given a ***PAGAN IDENTITY***. Why is it that in Genesis chapter 41, we ***PRAISE*** this, but in Daniel 1we ***DECRY*** it? They get their names changed, they get a pagan identity, they're serving a pagan king, and we say, "Whoa!" to them. This guy gets the exact same thing. And in fact, it's ***HIS*** story that would have given Daniel Hananiah, Michel, and Azariah the courage to continue on in Babylon. Why? Because they want pagan wealth, and that's what Genesis 41 is all about?? No, the exact ***OPPOSITE***!!

There's a final piece of the puzzle. *"And he gave him in marriage, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. So, Joseph went out over the land of Egypt."* Now he's got a ***PAGAN WIFE***.

Let's ***RECAP***. God makes a covenant with his people. This ***COVENANT*** with his people has to do with the ***PROMISED SEED*** that is going to come and continue on. It has to do with a ***PLACE***---this promised land---and it has to do with ***BLESSING*** from them to the nations. Now Joseph, who is beginning to experience the first fruits of the covenant people of God living in the land of promise, is taken away from his father, away from the covenant community, away from the land of promise into a ***PAGAN LAND*** where he has pagan ***POWER***, pagan ***WEALTH***, a pagan ***IDENTITY***, and a pagan ***WIFE***. And we say, "Hold on children. ***YOU*** can have that too!!"

If this is the way we interpret Genesis chapter 41, why do we get angry if a young man grows up, leaves the church, marries an unbeliever, and then gives his entire life to a corporation, living in order to attain material wealth and completely ignoring the spiritual side of his life? Because if you challenge him on it, all he has to do is go back to his Sunday school lesson on Genesis 41 and say, "Why are you angry? Shouldn't you, instead, be telling your friends, 'Look at what happened to my boy because he endured hardship?' "

There's another reason why this ***CANNOT*** be the apex and what Genesis chapter 41 is all about. Look at the second reason. The second reason you find beginning in verse 50: *"Before the year famine came, two sons were born to Joseph... Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On bore them to him."* He's got two sons who were born. By the way, born by whom? Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of one of the two most powerful pagan priesthoods in all of Egypt. She's the one who bore them to him. So now he's having ***CHILDREN***. Now, watch what happens here in the ***NAMING*** of his sons and you'll discover that Joseph doesn't think that Genesis chapter 41 is the payoff moment. *"Joseph called the name of his firstborn* ***MANASSEH****, for he said, 'God has made me forget all my 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.' "*

Three things. ***NUMBER ONE***, he gave his boys ***HEBREW*** names. He did not give them Egyptian names. He says to everyone who is paying attention, "I do not consider myself an Egyptian. I'm a Hebrew. I'm a member of the covenant people of God. I am not one of these people. This is ***NOT*** my payoff moment. This is ***NOT*** as good as it gets.

***SECONDLY***, the ***NAME*** of his firstborn boy. *"I've forgotten all my hardship and all my father's house."* It's very difficult to translate this from the Hebrew, but that name ***MANASSEH*** does not mean, *"I have forgotten that I belong to my father's house."* It can't mean that. He gives him a Hebrew name!! What does it mean? It means that, *"I have forgotten all of that* ***HARDSHIP*** *in my father's house that led me to this place."* Can I give you my own translation of what the name Manasseh? The name Manasseh means, *"I let that stuff go."* That's what Manasseh means. *"I do not choose to define myself by the difficulties that have encountered me up to this point in my journey with God."*

Oh, Joseph, embrace Egypt. Egypt embraces you and your family didn't! *"I'll let that stuff go!"* Oh, Joseph, embrace Egypt. Your brothers did not want to bow these people do! *"I'll let that stuff go!"* Joseph, embrace Egypt. It was because of your brothers that you spent years as a slave. *"I'll let that stuff go!"* Embrace Egypt. It was because of your brothers that you ended up in prison. *"I'll let that stuff go! I do not define myself by THOSE things. Instead, I look to the PROMISE OF* ***GOD****!"* The name of his second born, ***EPHRAIM***: *'God has prospered me in the land of my* ***AFFLICTION'***. Did you catch that? Joseph says Egypt is the land of his ***AFFLICTION***, not the land of ***PAYOFF***. Egypt is the land of his ***AFFLICTION***.

Yeah, but you're ***RICH*** here. *"It's the land of my* ***AFFLICTION****."* Yeah, but they ***LOVE*** you here. *"It's the land of my* ***AFFLICTION****."* Why? *"This is* ***NOT*** *what I was living for. I'm a child of the covenant. I'm a child of the one true God. I'm a servant of the king of heaven. I don't exist to serve the king of Egypt!"* So, ***NUMBER ONE***, this is ***NOT*** the ***PAYOFF*** moment, because if you just look at the narrative, these are not the things that we look forward to. But ***SECONDLY***, if you look at the naming of his sons, Joseph didn't even see this as the ***PAYOFF*** moment.

1. ***Our Redemption Unveiled and Seen in Joseph’s Story in Genesis 41***

So, here's the question, ***WHY*** Genesis chapter 41? I'm so glad you asked.

Joseph himself answers this question. When his brothers show up, he finally reveals himself to his brothers. He cannot control himself anymore. And when he reveals himself to his brothers, here's what ***DOESN'T*** happen. Joseph does ***NOT*** look to his brothers and say, *"I'm Joseph. I'm the one you sent into slavery. I'm the one that you wanted to murder. I'm the one that you did not want to bow before, but you've been bowing before me ever since you came to Egypt. I'm the one that you didn't think much of, but now God has made much of me. I am the one that you thought God gave too much favor from his father. Now I'm the one that God has favored before the most powerful man in the world."* See, that's what ***YOU*** would've said. How do I know that? Because that's what I would've said. But what did Joseph say to his brothers? *"I'm your brother Joseph, when you sold into slavery."* And just when they could feel the noose around their necks, he says, *"Do not be angry with yourselves, because* ***GOD SENT ME HERE TO SAVE******YOU****.”*

What?? Joseph does ***NOT*** say, *"God sent me here to give me all the things that Egypt had to offer."* Joseph says, *"God sent me here because God is a* ***RESCUER****. God sent me here to* ***RESCUE*** *you, in spite of you. You didn't like my dreams; but newsflash, do you know that we were a wealthy family because God spoke to our father (Jacob) through dreams? And when I began to dream, why did you not realize that God was again speaking to our family through dreams? God was showing me through a dream this very moment when he would* ***RESCUE*** *you. And when God brought his word through me that said he would* ***RESCUE*** *you, your answer was to kill the* ***RESCUER****.” Familiar? “But I'm not mad. I let that stuff go and this is not my home."*

But Genesis 41 wasn't about Joseph. Who's it about? Actually, briefly let me explain. God makes a ***PROMISE*** in Genesis chapter three and verse 15, this ***PROMISE*** involves the ***PROMISED SEED***. He pronounces this promise and a curse against the serpent. The serpent believes exactly what God says, which is why in Genesis chapter four, we have the first murder. What is the first murder? The ***SEED*** of the serpent, Cain, kills the ***SEED*** of the woman, Able.

What happens after that? In chapter four---at the end of it, on into chapter five---we get the announcement of the coming of Seth and the ***RESTORATION*** of the Godly ***SEED***. Then, in chapter five, we get a genealogy. And so there are 10 generations from Adam to Noah through the godly line of Seth. God wipes out the world in the flood and he preserves Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth and their wives. Why is this important? Because you've got to have husbands and wives in order to have ***SEED***. The ***SEED*** that was promised still had not come to fruition.

Eventually you come to a man named Terah who has an offspring by the name of ***ABRAHAM***. God makes a ***PROMISE*** to that man named Abraham, and this promise involves, among other things, ***SEED***. But this promise is rather significant because he and his wife---particularly his wife---too old for seed. So, how do you get promised ***SEED*** if the seed-bearing woman is too old for ***SEED***? The answer is ***GOD*** must intervene. No, the answer is, *"We've got to find somebody else, Hagar."* ***WRONG*** answer. God didn't say *'a seed'*. He said, *'the seed'*. Ishmael was *'a seed'* but not *'the seed'*. ***ISAAC*** is *'the seed'.*

Isaac then goes on and they have ***TWINS***. Which one is it going to be? Certainly, it's going to be the older. No, this is not about birth order. This is about ***ELECTION***. The older will serve the younger. So, it's not Esau, it's ***JACOB***. Jacob goes forth, and if seed is going to come, certainly Jacob's got to find a wife. He goes to Laban, and he meets Laban's daughter and falls in love and thinks he's found the ***ONE***... ***ONE***... ***ONE***. Seven Years he works, and he gets married and wakes up next to the ***OTHER ONE***... ***ONE***... ***ONE***.

And you thought it was a love story, but it was ***NOT*** a ***LOVE*** story. It was an ***ELECTION*** story. The one whom he loves ***CANNOT*** bear children---told way later in the story when she gives birth to a son named Joseph and then one named Benjamin. And then she dies. Joseph is loved above all of his brothers, because he was the ***BELOVED SON*** of the ***BELOVED WIFE***, but he was ***NOT*** the ***PROMISED SEED***. The woman that he didn't even want when her sister couldn't have children, she did. And she proceeded to give birth to Reuben, Simeon, Levi (the father of the priesthood), and ***JUDAH***. And as we come to this story, in Genesis chapter 37 we are introduced to Joseph.

In Genesis chapter 38 there seems to be a chapter that's out of place, because now we read about Judah and Tamar---the worst moment in Judah's life. Why is that there in the midst of the story about Joseph?? Because it's not about Joseph, it's about ***JUDAH***. Well, why show Judah at his lowest point? Because God has to ***REDEEM JUDAH*** for him to take his place as the head of the family and to be identified as the ***PROMISED SEED*** because of the ***ELECTING*** work of God. And so, God ***REDEEMS*** Judah. And in what moment do we see Judah's redemption? When Judah says to his father, "*Jacob, send me with the boy Benjamin. I know you love him, and if anything happens to him, I will be his* ***SUBSTITUTE****.”* Joseph tries them, and he takes Benjamin and says, *“I'm keeping this one.”* ***JUDAH*** says, *"It'll kill my daddy. Take me instead of my brother as his* ***SUBSTITUTE****, and put his punishment upon me in order that my father may be pleased by his redemption."* Does that sound familiar? Judah goes on to have a son. It's a great, great, great, great, great grandson and his name is ***DAVID***.

David, just like his father, Judah shows up on the scene like this great, great, great, great grandfather of his, and what does he do when he shows up on the scene when he's finally identified, and the ***PROMISED SEED*** brings forth his presence with authority? He walks down into a valley where there's been a giant who made this proposition: *"Send me a man to fight with me. If he defeats me, we will serve you. If I defeat him, you will serve me."* David goes down, fights the giant as the representative ***SUBSTITUTE*** for God's people, wins victory over the giant, thereby winning ***VICTORY*** on behalf of ALL of God's people. There's a ***COVENANT*** made with him, and that covenant promises the ***THRONE*** and the ***KING***. And great king David--- descendant of Judah---eventually has a ***GREATER SON*** who is a ***GREATER KING***, who is the lion of the tribe of Judah.

The New Testament opens up with a genealogy; and basically, that genealogy screams, *"The God who made a* ***PROMISE*** *in Genesis, chapter three has FULFILLED that promise."* These are the ***LINE OF THE PROMISED SEED***, who will crush the head of the snake? And what does great King David's greater son, ***JESUS***, do like his forebearers, ***DAVID*** and ***JUDAH***. He stands as a ***SUBSTITUTE*** on behalf of God's elect, lays down his life, accepts the wrath of God poured out upon him, that he might win victory on behalf of God's people---that all of those who are found in him might be ***RESCUED***.

Why is Genesis chapter 41 important? Because God ***RESCUES*** Joseph in order to ***RESCUE*** Judah in order to ***RESCUE*** Israel in order to ***RESCUE*** me. This is not about material wealth. This is about ***RESCUE*** and ***REDEMPTION***. This is about God in his providence orchestrating **ALL OF HISTORY** in order to bring about that which we need more than anything else, and that is ***TO BE RESCUED*** ***FROM GOD***!

The ***FIRST*** Adam ***ATE***, and we all ***DIED*** in him. The ***LAST*** Adam ***DIED***; and as a result, we shall all ***FEAST*** with him. This is why, not only Genesis 41, but the whole Old Testament matters and makes sense, because it ***POINTS*** to God's redeeming, rescuing work and the person of Christ. Therefore, regardless of where ***YOUR*** story ends up, you must find its significance in the ultimate portrait of God's work of ***REDEMPTION AND RESCUE***. If you don't, you are settling for something far less significant, and you have completely missed your greatest need.

Let's pray. *God, you are good. Your mercy is overwhelming. Your grace all sufficient. Forgive us Lord for thinking so much of ourselves that we actually believe that redemption and rescue is not our true and greatest need; but that somehow, we actually believe our standing before you is such that we can move on to something else. May it never be. May we be ever-mindful of the fact that our greatest need is the redemption that is only found in the person and work of Christ, and that as we read, preach, teach this unfolding story of your redemption. We must make much of Christ and His work.*

*Our greatest need is not to be vindicated when people hate us. Our greatest need is to be vindicated because you hate us in our sin. Our greatest need is not to be delivered from the pit. Our greatest need is to be delivered from the penalty of hell. Our greatest need is not to be freed as slaves. Our greatest need is to be freed from the slavery of sin. Our greatest need is not to get out of prison. Our greatest need is to be made righteous---that we are indeed guilty. Our greatest need is not the material wealth that the world has to offer. Our greatest need is to realize that we are poor and wretched and miserable and naked and blind. Our greatest need is not to have favor with men. Our greatest need is to have favor with God. Our greatest need is not a Bible that points us to our best life now. Our greatest need is a Bible that points us to our best hope ever. Christ is that hope. He is that life. He is that rescue, and it is Him whom we love and adore. And it is in His name that we pray. Amen*.