

Joseph had become...

- A man of sensitivity
- A man of faith

- An honoured man

Joseph was...

- A man who kept to his calling
- Grippled by his knowledge of the sovereignty of God

You meant it – God meant it

Predestination and free will both – side by side

Helped him to forgive

Joseph had become a man of sensitivity. The suffering that Joseph had endured had turned him into a man of love. Suffering can push us in one of two directions: it can create bitterness in us or it can soften us. Joseph was a man of tenderness and loving graciousness to others. He was very affectionate to his father and wept over him when his father died^{□1}.

Joseph had become a man of faith. He was expressing his faith and his father's faith when he buried Jacob in Canaan^{□1}. The promises of God did not concern Egypt; they were about Canaan. Jacob had wanted to be buried in 'the land of promise'. The family of Abraham had become somewhat Egyptian in their ways. The people of Canaan called them 'Egyptians'^{□2} but their sights were set on God's promises in Canaan.

Joseph had become an honoured man. The Egyptians were treating this family from Canaan with great honour. Many Egyptian officials went with Joseph for a 'state funeral' in Canaan^{□1}. Joseph had reached high honour in the eyes of the Egyptians. God can do that for us when He wants to. But it may not last. In the very next chapter of the Bible there is 'a king who did not know about Joseph'^{□2}. We should not get too excited about honours from the world. They do not last for ever. People might one day say 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord' but a little later be saying 'Crucify Him!'^{□3□4}. However a little bit of honour is nice while it lasts!

Joseph was a man who kept to his calling. God's promises were all connected with Canaan but Joseph was not tempted to stay there. He knew his calling concerned Egypt. He took one look at the 'land of promise' which he had not seen since he was seventeen years old, and then went back to the place where God had called him^{□1}.

Joseph was gripped by his knowledge of the sovereignty of God^{□1}. The doctrine of predestination is a mysterious subject but we have it here. It is a mystery. It cannot be explained. It is like the 'doctrine of the trinity' in being a total mystery and a stumbling-block to those who wish to expound Christian doctrine by means of human intelligence. It cannot be fathomed by human cleverness.

Joseph's brothers are afraid. They lose their assurance of Joseph's forgiveness^{□1} and this leads them in deceit^{□2} and into a spirit of bondage^{□3}. But Joseph is living on the sovereignty of God. 'You meant it for evil . . . God meant it for good.' He accepts the reality of human sin and the reality of human responsibility. 'You meant it...' It was their sin. They had the spirit of hate and of jealousy. They planned Joseph's death and then decided to make money by selling him as a slave. They were responsible: 'you meant it'. But that is not the end of the story. 'God meant it' also. Joseph is happy to let the two statements stand side-by-side. 'You meant it ... God meant it.' This is the mystery of what is sometimes called 'predestination and freewill'. God predestines; man is responsible. The two statements have to stay side-by-side (as also in Acts 2:23).

Joseph's conviction about the sovereignty of God helps him to forgive his brothers, and helps him to give assurance to them. He says to his brothers: 'It is alright. Don't worry. God was behind everything. God was using your mistakes to bring about something wonderful.' Joseph can forgive them because he believes that God was powerfully at work in what had happened.

□1 50:1

□1 50:2-7a

□2 50:11

□1 50:7b-11

□2 Ex 1:8

□3 Mat 21:9

□4 Mat 27:23

□1 50:1-14

□1 50:15-21

□1 50:15

□2 50:16-17

□3 20:18

Looking back on God's work drew strength from the past

Joseph's conviction about the sovereignty of God helps him to look back at the past ('*God intended it*') and see God at work, and to look around at what is happening right now ('*to accomplish what is now being done*') and gain strength. Joseph's conviction about the sovereignty of God helps him to give encouragement. 'Don't be afraid,' he says, '*I will provide... .*' He reassured them and spoke kindly to them. It was his faith in the sovereignty of God that enabled him to speak this way.

• Rewarded by a happy family life in his older years

Joseph was rewarded by a happy family life in his older years. He became a great-grand-father and enjoyed the warmth and company of his family^{□1}. It was part of God's reward. For more than twenty years he had missed his family for the sake of what God was doing through him, but now what he had lost is made up to him.

• Joseph was a man of faith until the end

Joseph was a man of faith until the end^{□1}. The Christian life is a life of faith and more faith and faith again and again. Joseph had his eye on the purposes of God. In his last days he was giving encouragement to his family ('*God will surely come to your aid*'). He wanted his bones one day to be taken to Canaan.

Joseph's burial

• Buried in Shechem

Genesis ends at the point where Joseph has given instruction about his bones. Exodus tells us that Moses '*took the bones of Joseph with him*'^{□1}. The book of Joshua also ends by telling us that Joseph's bones were buried in Shechem^{□2}.

• Joseph's bones – a way of saying that he was holding on to the promise of God to the very end

Joseph wanted to be remembered not as a famous Egyptian but as a believer in God's promises. He wanted to be known after his death as one whose sights were firmly fixed on the promises of God. Genesis ends by saying '*he was put in a coffin in Egypt*'^{□1} but Joseph had already made sure that his story would not end in a coffin in Egypt. When Hebrews speaks of the faith of Joseph it refers only to his dying words and his instructions about his bones^{□2}. These bones were his way of saying that he was holding on to his faith in the promises unto the very end. Joseph believed in the promise of God and wanted everyone to know it.

□1 50:22-23

□1 50:24-26

□1 Ex 13:19
□2 Josh 24:32

□1 50:20

□2 Heb 11:22



slices.org.uk

Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible* (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

Slices for the Nations	Slices for Sponsors	Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the Slices web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the Slices web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations

To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk
Details of the availability of *Preaching Through The Bible* books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk