

6. Exemplum (Extended Case Study)

Joseph in Egypt: Providence Directing Evil Toward a Greater Good

Stage I — Situation

Joseph, favored by his father, was sold into slavery in Egypt by his jealous brothers (**Genesis 37**). From a human perspective, this was a profound tragedy: betrayal, injustice, and suffering, stripping him of family, home, and freedom through sinful choices.

- 📌 **Teaching Point:** Human beings act freely and commit real evil, yet these acts remain within God's knowledge and allowance. God did not cause the brothers' sin, but permitted it within His providential plan.





Stage II — Development

Joseph's suffering continued in Egypt. Though he served faithfully in the house of Potiphar, he was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and unjustly imprisoned (Genesis 39). Years passed while Joseph endured hardship that seemed meaningless and unfair.

Yet even within prison, God continued to guide events. Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's servants, which eventually led him to interpret Pharaoh's dream about the coming famine. Because of this wisdom, Pharaoh appointed Joseph governor over Egypt and placed him in charge of storing grain for the coming years of scarcity (Genesis 41).

- 📌 **Teaching Point:** Providence governs events gradually, often through circumstances that appear chaotic or unjust in the moment. What looked like misfortune was quietly preparing Joseph for the position through which he would later save countless lives.



Stage III — Resolution

When famine struck the region, Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt seeking food. They did not at first recognize the brother they had betrayed. Joseph now held the power to punish them, yet he chose mercy.

At the moment of reconciliation, Joseph revealed the providential meaning of the entire story, declaring: *"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive"* (Genesis 50:20).

Through Joseph's leadership, Egypt preserved grain during the famine and many nations—including Joseph's own family—were saved from starvation.

📌 **Teaching Point:** God permitted the evil actions of men but directed their consequences toward a greater good that none of the participants originally intended. The betrayal that seemed destructive became the very instrument of salvation for many.



Doctrinal Clarification: Providence & Freedom Harmonized

The story of Joseph vividly demonstrates the profound harmony between Divine Providence and human freedom:

Human Agency & Sin

Joseph's brothers acted with genuine freedom, making sinful choices when they betrayed and sold him.

Divine Permission, Not Causation

God did not directly cause their evil act but permitted it within His overarching plan.

Redirection to Greater Good

God sovereignly governed the unfolding events, transforming their sin into the very path to a greater good: the salvation of many from famine.

This narrative confirms the consistent doctrine of Scripture and the Church: God governs all things without nullifying the true freedom of His creatures. Even evil actions, though never desired by God, remain under His providential authority and are ultimately directed toward His wise and loving purposes.



Memoria: The Unseen Hand of Providence

Even when human freedom produces injustice and suffering, Divine Providence governs history so perfectly that what men intend for evil God can direct toward a greater good and the fulfillment of His wise and fatherly plan.