Who Caused This?

Read: Isaiah 61:11 “For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.”

**Introduction:** I once saw a cartoon that showed a youth pastor addressing a group of kids in the rain. This was the caption: “We’ve planned this picnic for three weeks and the day of the picnic, it rains. What I want to know is: Who sinned?” Why do bad things happen to God’s people? It is hard to bring comfort to really good people who are going through tough times. I remember once talking to a wonderful lady whose son was diagnosed with a fatal form of cancer. When I told her that God had a reason she reacted with venom and said: “I don’t want to hear that; my son is a good person who’s done no wrong. There’s nothing good that can possibly come of this.” Perhaps you too have felt like that before. Perhaps you have wondered: “Why me?” when you’ve suffered a loss or devastating news. Is God really in control of everything? Why does He not protect those who are, at least trying, to serve Him? I listened to Genesis yesterday in the car and was reminded of Joseph’s list of troubling things that he went through. Here they are:

Told daddy about his brother’s misdeeds…Preferential treatment by his father…Hated by his brothers…Dreamed offensive dreams & told his family…Brothers conspired to murder him…Brothers stripped him of his coat and cast him into a pit…Brothers sold him into slavery…

Potiphar buys him…Potiphar’s wife flirts with him…Potiphar’s wife attempts to trap & seduce him…Potiphar sends him to prison for more than three years.

Do you think that there might have been times when he asked: “Why me?” Do you wonder if he had his doubts as he slept in that dark/dank prison cell on false charges? We read of his excellent response to what was going on. Perhaps the writer was not aware of his secret struggles.

**God had a plan for Joseph:** He had revealed the bare bones of His plan in his dreams but was short on details. In the pit He didn’t tell him anything more about it. As a slave in Potiphar’s fields He didn’t enlighten him about it. As a young man being seduced by his owner’s wife He didn’t tell him any details of it. In prison on false charges He didn’t reveal the purpose of it. Everywhere he went he was respected by those in authority over him but always seemed to get in trouble anyway. His hope of ever being released was fading. He wouldn’t even be entitled to a trial on the charges against him as a slave. What was he to do? He’d interpreted the dreams of a couple of servants of the king and was given a promise that the freed inmate would speak to the king for him but that had been three years ago…He hears someone running toward his cell. “Get cleaned up, get shaved, get dressed Pharaoh wants to see you.” “What’s it for?” “I don’t know, just hurry.”

Here is a list of good things that came from what Joseph went through: He was Vice president of Egypt…He had a beautiful wife and sons…He developed a plan to eliminate world hunger… He made Egypt the envy of the entire world…He saved the Israelite nation… He healed his daddy’s broken heart…He modeled forgiveness.

Yesterday as we were traveling back from Cumberland, Maryland I had the pleasure of Jared’s presence in my backseat. There is only one reason to choose to ride with dad and that is the hope of stopping for food. He expressed this several times so mom and I had a talk and came up with a plan. When I got in the car Jared immediately began asking about food. I told him: “Jared, I have a plan and we will eat.” He was satisfied with that answer till we passed the place that he thought we were going to stop. I heard his voice from the backseat: “Dad do you still have a plan for eating?” I assured him that I did and he sat back waiting for it to happen. I told him to watch for exit 14A for the plan would come together there. With great expectation and complete trust he just watched for the signs and got excited every time he saw the number 14A. As you saw this morning he is well fed and it happened because dad had a plan and he went along with dad’s plan.

In Acts 28 Paul explains why he is in Roman custody he says: “For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you,* and to speak with *you:* because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”

**Conclude:** Perhaps you are wondering why you are in the various situations that you are in this morning. Maybe you feel that life has dealt you an unfair blow or two and that God surely owes you an explanation at least. Could I ask you to sit back and relax in the assurance that God has a plan even if you don’t see the fine details yet. Let’s stand for prayer.