

## God Meant it For Good

God's goodness toward us is introduced before sin, in the first chapter of Genesis, with the repeated phrase, "and God saw that it was good." God's goodness toward us is affirmed after sin, in the last chapter of Genesis, with the 2-part phrase, "You meant it for evil, God meant it for good." This sentence is theologically loaded and ever relevant. It is a banner of truth that hangs over the human experience from the fall into sin to the second coming of Jesus. When you are left asking "why?", grasping for meaning, and struggling to understand the goodness of God in a broken world, there is a sentence that you can say that will always be true and helpful; "Someone meant it for evil, God meant it for good." The aim of this study is to understand and apply this truth. I want you to know that God is good to you. I want you to trust his character.

The story I will share is a hard one to hear. It is tragic. I don't tell it for the sake of being graphic but to help us sort out what is meant by the truth, "You meant it for evil, God meant it for good."

The Bowers family served as missionaries among the Peruvian people living along the headwaters of the Amazon River. On April 20, 2001, Jim and Roni Bowers were with their 6-year-old son, Cory, and their infant daughter, Charity, in a Cessna 185 floatplane, flying over Iquitos, Peru. The Peruvian Air Force mistook the church owned plane for a drug plane. They were operating in cooperation with the United States CIA anti-narcotics program called Air Bridge Denial. The orders were given to follow the plane. Eventually, they authorized phrase 3, to shoot the plane down. The pilot was able to land in the Amazon River where he, Jim and Cory escaped before the plane sank. Roni had been holding Charity and the two were killed by a single bullet.<sup>i</sup>

The story was picked up by the media as a tragic mistake and possibly even a controversy. But it wasn't until after the memorial service that the story hit the press on a worldwide stage. Two weeks later, Jim Bowers stood in front of 1,200 people and the caskets of his wife and daughter at the Calvary Church in Fruitport, Michigan, and said, "Most of all I want to thank my God. He's a sovereign God. I'm finding that out more now. . . . Could this really be God's plan for Roni and Charity; God's plan for Cory and me and our family? I'd like to tell you why I believe so." He then gave a long list of evidences that had led him to believe that this shooting was not a random mistake. He then asked the audience, "Would you say that's a stray bullet?" He concluded with the words that made the headlines, "That was a sovereign bullet."

Convinced that the bullet was sovereign he explained that it was easy for him to forgive the shooter, "Those people who did that, simply were used by God. Whether you want to believe it or not, I believe it. They were used by Him, by God, to accomplish His purpose in this, maybe similar to the Roman soldiers whom God used to put Christ on the cross."<sup>ii</sup>

From that stage he traveled to stages around the world telling his story. The reach of this ministry affirmed that God meant it for good. He told the LA Times, "The goal Roni and I had is to convince people of the truth," he said. "Because of her death, many more people have been convinced. I have a huge open door, much more than I would have had if we went on with our life. There's so much evidence God was in this."<sup>iii</sup>

## God Meant it For Good

How do you feel about Jim’s understanding of the sovereignty of God? It is one way of applying the truth “you meant it for evil, God meant it for good.” The world reacted to his words with some of the same feelings you are having now. Some found comfort in knowing that this was God’s plan for Roni and Charity. God pulled the trigger and directed the bullet because he knew that their death would touch more people than their life. Others called it a theologically misinformed coping mechanism. Some believers affirmed that God could use it for good but denied that he planned it and caused it. How do you feel? It feels good to know that God is in control. But it hurts to think that God would desire our suffering. Is the “sovereign bullet” more of a comfort or a concern?

There is some fuzzy theology that we pass along as “comfort” in times of grief. We say, “God took him.” We offer, “I know it is hard but it is all part of God’s plan.” We try to take comfort in the idea that our tragedy “is God’s will”. What do we mean by this? How should we understand and apply the truth “you meant it for evil, God meant it for good”?

### **Pit #1**

Take these questions to the pit with Joseph.

Back in Genesis 37 Joseph is a favored son, broadcasting his favoritism to his brothers with a special coat. If there is no free will, if there is nobody else meaning evil in this story, then we will have attribute to God the favoritism of Jacob (37:3-4) and the hate of Joseph’s brothers (37:4-5, 8) Was this a sovereign favoritism? A sovereign hate?

Joseph’s brothers acted with clear intent. They “conspired” against him (37:18), first to kill him (37:20) then to simply throw him into a pit (37:21-22). It was their choice to then take him out of the pit and sell him (37:27) and they knew exactly what they were doing when they lied to their father about it (37:34). Was it a sovereign conspiracy? A sovereign toss into the pit? A sovereign sell into slavery? A sovereign lie?

This longstanding theological difference of opinion can be categorized into the teachings of determinism and free will. With a long history and extensive biblically relevant studies, we are not going to sort all that out in this message. What we can do is highlight, in very general terms, the pros and cons or truth and error on the extreme ends of these views. Simply put, extreme determinism affirms God’s sovereignty and denies free will while extreme free will teaching can do the opposite. Both extremes affirm a biblical truth. Both present a picture of God that I cannot reconcile with scripture.

<b>Extreme Free Will</b>	<b>Extreme Determinism</b>
Truth: God gives free will!	Truth: God is sovereign!
Error: God only uses evil. He is not powerful over it but only brings good out of it. (The denial of sovereignty)	Error: God causes evil. He predetermines all things even the causing people to sin and be condemned. (The denial of freewill)

First, let's briefly establish these two truths.

**Free will is biblical:**

- **We are called to choose.**  
**Deuteronomy 30:19-30** I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life...
- **God honors our choice for or against him.**  
**Revelation 3:30** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.  
**Matthew 23:37** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
- **Evil springs from our desire, not God's.**  
**James 1:13-15** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.
- **God is not responsible for the weeds. The enemy is.**  
**Matthew 13:24-27** He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, <sup>25</sup> but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. <sup>26</sup> So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. <sup>27</sup> And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' <sup>28</sup> He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

**Sovereignty is biblical:**

- **God is all-powerful.**  
**Colossians 1:17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.  
**Matthew 28:18** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
- **God knows the future.**  
**Isaiah 46:9-10a** Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done.
- **No detail escapes his notice.**  
**Matthew 10:29-30** Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.
- **Nothing can force God's hand.**  
**Proverbs 16:33** The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.  
**Romans 9:20-21** But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the

## God Meant it For Good

clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

**Psalm 135:6** Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.

- **God will accomplish his purpose.**

**Isaiah 46:10b** My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.

Where I get uncomfortable with sovereignty is when people start to attribute evil to God. Sin is not a necessary evil that God dreamed up. He doesn't need evil means to accomplish his ends. It is not true that God wills some to not be redeemed. The Bible says he wants all to come to repentance and yet not all do. I am uncomfortable with labeling all tragedies as, "an act of God".

On the other side, extreme free will makes me uncomfortable. When a determinist looks at someone like me, who believe's in free will, they are concerned. They see a belief in a small God who lacks power and chases a world that is out of control. Now, I don't believe that. But the extreme free will position, that denies sovereignty, must believe it. If God is not all powerful, then he is not guiding the course of history but playing catchup. He is calculating the odds of a future he is not certain about. The great determinist theologian John Calvin said, "They babble and talk absurdly who, in the place of God's providence, substitute bare permission – as if God sat in a watchtower awaiting chance events, and his judgments thus depended upon human will." Do you see how silly free will might look if it is stripped of sovereignty? It puts man in a more powerful position than God.

### Bring the Truths Together

These truths are compatible, and we can best make sense of the good and evil around us when we have these two truths side by side. The words of A.W. Tozer bring these two truths together most eloquently, "God sovereignly decreed that man should be free to exercise moral choice, and man from the beginning has fulfilled that decree by making his choice between good and evil. When he chooses to do evil, he does not thereby countervail the sovereign will of God but fulfills it, inasmuch as the eternal decree decided not which choice the man should make but that he should be free to make it. If in His absolute freedom God has willed to give man limited freedom, who is there to stay His hand or say, "What doest thou?" Man's will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so."<sup>iv</sup>

We don't have to choose either extreme. We can bring together the great truths that are expressed on both extremes. The truths don't oppose each other, rather each informs the other and corrects the possible misunderstanding of the other. The sentence Joseph speaks in conclusion of all the good and evil that has shaped his path affirms these two truths, "you meant it for evil, God meant it for good." These are the dual realities running parallel in all of our experiences.

## God Meant it For Good

The first part, “you meant it for evil”, affirms free will. The second part, “God meant it for good”, affirms God’s sovereignty. Take the first part out and God is a cruel dictator. Take the second part out and God is kind but powerless.

## You Meant it For Evil

The fact that there are humans and spiritual forces that can mean things for evil requires free will. They have intentions. They act with purpose. This means that God is not necessarily the cause of all things because there are others who have the free will to mean things.

It also doesn’t mean that God never causes things that we perceived as bad. I have to be careful in my resistance of the idea of a “sovereign bullet” because there are biblical examples of God causing things to happen that we would see as evil but with a larger perspective we see them as good.

God caused the flood.

**Genesis 6:13** And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh.”

**Genesis 7:4** For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.

God didn’t just used the flood, he sent it!

Most notably, God orchestrated the crucifixion of Jesus.

**Acts 4:27–28** For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Does he cause it? To affirm both free will and sovereignty requires that the answer to this question is blurry. There is cause in the flood and the cross. But only because we live in a fallen world. God didn’t cause or choose sin and in a sinless world there is no flood or cross. But since others mean things for evil we know that not all things originate in the will of God. Affirming freewill does not mean that God is unable to cause but that there are also others initiating things and they mean them for evil.

“You meant it for evil” means you don’t have to accept that God initiated it to believe that he has intentions for it. You don’t have to believe that he did it to you to trust that there is meaning in it for you. You don’t have to conclude that God planned it to know that his plan will be fulfilled though it. Sometimes he does cause it, sometimes he allows it but he always has meaning for it. You don’t have to believe that the bullet was sovereignly fired and directed by the will of God to believe that God has purpose in it. If there was no other force meaning things for evil then God would be the only one to blame. But God is operating in a world of evil means. We don’t have to blame God for it to trust him through it.

I suggest that we leave alone the question of who caused it. And at the same time move beyond the notion that God only uses it. Then we rest in the truth that God always has meaning

## God Meant it For Good

in it. It doesn't mean that he planned it but in his perfect knowledge of the future in a fallen world he has ordained this path to be full of meaning.

God does not need evil in order to accomplish his purposes. In a perfect world with no sin there would be no pit, no selling, and no slavery. Before the pit God had a plan. His plan is timestamped in a dream that comes before any of the intended evil. The plan was that Joseph would rule over his brothers (37:6-7, 9). God didn't tell why. But that was the plan. What if his brothers would have received the dream as the plan of God and not with jealousy? There would be a different story. God would have worked out a way for Joseph to rule and save people in the famine anyway. Perhaps he would have ruled from Canaan. Perhaps he would have made it to the throne of Egypt by some other means that didn't require evil intentions. He could have risen to power without the pit. God doesn't need it. But the evil is present and real because we have freedom. God will accomplish his purpose apart from evil intention or through them.

### God Meant it for Good

The central question is, "what is meant by meant?". The fact that God means things for good requires sovereignty. He does not simply use evil for good; he means it for good. Joseph didn't say God "used it", "turned it", or "salvaged it", but that he "meant it". He does have intention in it and purpose for it.

When one sibling hurts the other there are two opinions you hear as they plead their cases. The offender says, "It was an accident". The offended insists, "You meant to do it." But God does not make accidents so he can't make the first claim. We find people more at fault when they mean it. But we should not doubt God's good character by the fact that he means to do things. We mistake his intention in evil as an intention for evil. Instead, we should trust that God's meaning is for good. God is not meaning to hurt us but he is embedding meaning in the hurt.

Both uses of the word "meant" in Genesis 50:20 are the same Hebrew word. Its primary definition is to "think" or "account". It is translated in scripture as "designer", "determined", "devised", "execute", "intend". "plan", "scheme", and "skillful workman". This range of meanings suggest that God is not passive in this. God is at work when we experience evil.

The New Testament equivalent to Genesis 50:20 affirms that God's means are for our good. **Romans 8:28** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

### Back to the pit... they meant it for evil, God meant it for good.

The intentions of murder, enslavement and lies do not originate with God. These are opposed to the character of God. God is not responsible for their satanically influenced intentions. There is free will here. They meant it for evil.

## God Meant it For Good

But God meant it for good. God sovereignly embeds meaning into a story that originates with favoritism, hate, jealousy, murder, and enslavement. God is not taken by surprise. He doesn't need to quickly devise a plan of how to use this for good.

All the while that they had intentions for evil God was intending good. You can see God's intention in selling him when he convicts Reuban to say, "Let us not take his life", and then he suggested the pit (37:21-22). The pit was God's intention because death wasn't. So you see God at work here with power over the intentions of evil. The intentions of good and evil are sometimes manifested in the same actions. The pit was simultaneously their act of destruction and God's act of salvation.

Joseph was only lifted from the pit to be sold into slavery. It was intentional (37:27), but it wasn't Reuban's intention (37:39). God had meaning in the intention of Reuban to throw him into the pit and then in the other brothers intention to sell him. If God was not sovereign over their first intention Joseph would have been killed. If he was not sovereign over Reuban's intention to rescue him (37:22) then he never would have been sold. While the brothers were selling, Joseph would later see that the Ishmaelites were stealing (40:15). But apparently God was doing something else.

Joseph recognized it as a sending and David did also.

**Genesis 45:7-8** And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. <sup>8</sup> So it was not you who sent me here, but God.

**Psalms 105:16-17** When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, <sup>17</sup> he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.

In a single act there was multiple meanings. The brothers sold him, the Ishmaelites stole him, and God sent him. Their evil of selling and stealing was God's righteous act of sending.

Have you ever felt stolen from or sold out? Are there things you feel no control of or like you are a victim of someone else's evil intentions? Can you imagine that this is also God's sending? Our God is not out of control when you are thrown into the pit. And he is up to something when you are sold into slavery. Yes, it is evil. But you can trust that God is up to good anyway. God does more than give comfort in our trials. He gives meaning for them.

### Pit #2

Between the pit in Dothan and the pit in Egypt, Joseph was the target of the evil intentions of Potiphar's wife. In this place "the Lord was with him" (39:2) and God "caused" (39:3) Joseph to excel in the service of Potiphar. If you are Joseph, you can question God's intentions of sending you into slavery or you can recognize his intentions of giving you success in that slavery. You may not be sure if God sent you there, but you can be sure that he can bless you there. You might not know if God intended you to be there. But you can be sure he intends to be with you there.

## God Meant it For Good

Adultery was Potiphar's wife's intention (39:7,9). I wish to defend my God by clarifying that he did not put that lust into Potiphar's wife. God was not dependent on her sin in order to fulfill his purpose with Joseph. It wasn't her sin that moved Joseph to the next place in his story but Joseph's integrity. If Joseph submitted to Potiphar's wife he would have likely kept his job. But Joseph declares that Potiphar had not kept anything back from him except her (a statement reminiscent of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and confirming of the freedom that God gives us).

With more lies (39:14-17), that did not originate with the God of truth, Joseph was thrown into another pit where he suffered the injustice of prison (39:20). God cannot be blamed for lust, lies or injustice. Nor can these things stop his purpose. He didn't cause it or merely use it, he had meaning for it and in it. I am not telling you that God planned for you to be abused. I am telling you that the abuse has no power to mess up God's plan for you. I am not suggesting that God willed to destroyed your finances only that your financial disaster doesn't have to keep you from God's will. You don't have to believe that the Spirit of God planted the gossip on their lips, or put the divorce papers in your mailbox or inspired the unfaithfulness, or forced you into addiction, or push that car off the road, in order to trust that God means it for good.

In this second pit Joseph is trusted, promoted, and given the ability to interpret dreams. If Joseph focused on the meaning of evil, he would not have been receptive to the meaning of God in the place he was in. I don't know that God caused the cupbearer to forget the dream but I know there was meaning in him forgetting. The extra two years were not to punish Joseph but to provide the right timing when Pharaoh had a dream and needed an interpreter (41:1). Maybe if the cupbearer had remembered the dream, Joseph could have been freed or maybe even have gone home. But as it turned out, they knew just where to find Joseph when he was needed (41:9-13). We can stop trying to figure out the meaning of the evil and start trusting and looking for the meaning of good.

With the interpretation of the dream Joseph comes out of the pit again, but this time as a ruler not a slave. This was not just good timing for Joseph but it was Joseph having an awareness of the good meaning of God. Without this awareness, Joseph could have had a brief break from the pit to help the king and return. But Joseph sees the meaning. God is making a way for him to rise to power for good through this dream and the interpretation. Joseph was assertive to pursue God's good meaning. The king asked for an interpretation, not advice. Joseph suggested that the king should set a discerning and wise man over the collection of grain (41:33) and he continued to tell just what that man should do to prepare for the famine (41:34-36). Joseph saw meaning so he seized the opportunity. He could have said, "See, I interpreted your dream now please just let me out of prison." But God's meaning for the pit was not to simply get out of the pit but to get into the palace. God was not just putting him on a path to freedom but in a position of influence. Had he spent his time moping he wouldn't have discerned the meaning.

The most wise and discerning part of the story is not for Joseph to understand the dream God gave Pharaoh but the dream God had given him years earlier. It was not to answer what Pharaoh was asking him but to step into the meaning God was calling him to.



### **Palace**

In Joseph's rise from the pit to the palace he learned the lesson that "it" is neutral, so we should stop focusing on it. You will see what I mean in the names Joseph gave his two sons. They teach us two lessons about trusting God's good meaning in our struggles.

He named his firstborn Manasseh, "For", he said, "God has made me forget all the hardship of my father's house." (41:51). The injustices he experienced in his father's house were not resolved, they were just not the focus. A refusal to forget the things that are meant for evil can keep us from moving into the ways God means it for good. Sometimes we just need to forget. It took Joseph years to forget it. It isn't easy. But so long as it is our focus we are focused on the wrong thing. Don't obsess over why the evil happened. Focus instead on what the good meaning is in it.

You see "it" is neutral. It never was about the pit, or the slavery or the lies. It never was about the hardship. When we say, "you meant it for evil and God meant it for good", we must recognize that the "it" is part of their plan and God's plan. The "it" is neither evil nor good. It doesn't matter. If it is a pit or a palace it doesn't matter. We sometimes focus on the "it" as if it was the evil or the good. But the good and evil come only in the meanings that God or the devil have in it. When he forgot the hardship of his father's home he decided to stop focusing on the "it" and start focusing on the good intentions God has in "it".

Oh, but he was not done learning. He had another son. Joseph named his second son Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." (41:52). Sometimes the only way we see blessing is by getting out of the land of affliction, but it may be that God has you right where he wants you and he intends to bless you in it. Joseph's life became a picture of success in the blessing of God. Nothing happened in Egypt without his consent (41:44). He was given a wife (41:45). After all the injustice he was still just 30 years old (41:46) a young man with an incredible future. He performed his job masterfully (41:46-49). He was blessed with two sons (41:50). God poured out blessing that seemed impossible from the pit.

"It" is neutral. It is not about the affliction but what God does in the land of affliction. We love to label "it" as good or bad. Just give God some time. He will show you what "it" is all about.

There is fruitfulness in affliction because God means for good what is meant for evil. If it is only a land of affliction it would be a big loss but there is something to gain there.

Don't miss the fruitfulness in the land of affliction. Don't waste your pain. There is something meaningful in it. Don't despair because of the sickness. Don't wish away the handicap. God makes us fruitful in the land of our affliction. Don't run from failure. Don't rush past grief. Look for God's good meaning in the land of affliction. The answer may not be to quit your education, your marriage, or your job. The solution may not be to cover up your trauma, your weakness and your embarrassment. God may not be calling you out of the land of affliction, out of the

## God Meant it For Good

heavy responsibility, or out of Alaska. He may be intending to make you fruitful in the land of your affliction.

Don't assess God's purpose for you by the condition of the pit. The pit may be an obstacle meant for evil but it is also vehicle meant for good. He makes you fruitful in the land of your affliction.

The names of Joseph's sons teach us that faith does not focus on the hardship of our past or the hard place of our present. His promotion also teaches us not to focus on the hard timeline for the future.

God's good purposes are not confined by logical timelines. In a single conversation with Pharaoh God moved Joseph from the pit to the palace. We doubt God's plan because we can't imagine his timing. In our understanding there is a great distance between the pit and the palace. One moment Joseph is literally underground and the next he is set over the whole land (41:41). It works both ways. God exalts fast and humbles fast. If you are high, know that it can all go away fast. If you are low trust that your situation can change on a supernatural timeline. One moment he is the spoiled son and the next he is the missing son.

Don't focus on the timing of what God is leading you to, focus on the moment he has placed you in. Be present for whatever moment God has you in and not preoccupied with the timing of when he will take you out.

Don't focus on the condition of the pit but the condition of your heart. While we are waiting on God's timing, he is waiting on our character development. God didn't see Joseph any different on his last day in the pit or his first day in the palace. God saw in Joseph the same thing that Pharaoh saw when he asked, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" (41:38). God didn't measure Joseph's potential for influence by what situation Joseph was in but by what Spirit was in him. God wasn't looking for Joseph to get a better position but to grow in this character to be ready to receive the position God had planned for him.

"It" is neutral. Focus instead on the good meaning God has in "it".

### **Resolution**

While Joseph is saving the world in the land of his affliction (41:55-57), his brothers are sitting around hungry. Jacob says to them, "Why do you look at one another when there is grain in Egypt?" (41:1-2). You can imagine the scene. Nobody knows what to do so they all just look around defeated. They are in the promised land, suffering. Joseph is in the land of affliction thriving. The brothers listened to Jacob. The first sight Joseph has of his brothers since the day they sold him is when they come and bow before him (42:6-7). Joseph remembered the dreams (42:6). It was then that he began to see that they meant it for evil and God meant it for good. The whole story was coming together, not as a tragedy but a blessing.

## God Meant it For Good

The resolution of the story spans 8 chapters. Maybe Joseph was processing. Eventually he reveals himself. The family comes to Egypt and then his father dies. And the drama ends like this.

### **Genesis 50:15-21**

<sup>15</sup> When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." <sup>16</sup> So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: <sup>17</sup> 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. <sup>18</sup> His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. <sup>21</sup> So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

What happened between the evil potential of verse 15 and the good outcome of verse 21? Joseph said, you meant it for evil, God meant it for good."

When we believe in God's good meaning in the evil that comes, we are freed to be nice. His brothers assumed that the father was the only restraint that kept Joseph from getting revenge. But his restraint was faith in the good intentions of God. We don't have to carry resentment or hold grudges because we can see that though they meant it for evil, God meant it for good. Believing the truth allows us to behave differently and better. Joseph didn't need to pay them back. He was ready to forgive. There were many times in Joseph's experience when he probably had more words to say. But he came to a point of clarity that allowed him to simply conclude, "you meant it for evil, God meant it for good." It is a truth that led to peace. It is what we can say to all who have meant us evil. May we process life under this banner. May we take the truth that Joseph came to at the end of his journey and let it carry us through our entire journey. This world will mean things for evil. Our God means them for good.

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<sup>i</sup> If God Should Choose, Book by Kristen Stagg <https://www.amazon.com/If-God-Should-Choose-Authorized/dp/0802415881>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001\\_Peru\\_shootdown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001_Peru_shootdown)

<sup>ii</sup> Providence, Book by John Piper  
[https://books.google.com/books?id=nz4QEAAAQBAJ&pg=PT249&lpg=PT249&dq=Would+you+say+that's+a+stray+bullet?+And+it+didn't+reach+Kevin+%5Bthe+pilot%5D+who+was+right+in+front+of+Charity;+it+stayed+in+Charity.+That+was+a+sovereign+bullet.&source=bl&ots=bN4fyqrsA8&sig=ACfU3U0b4DKIsoqYryXwpdUNhbi6IH53Sg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewj2iNS1gl2DaxUCCDQIHdSjCj8Q6AF6BAgxEAM#v=onepage&q=Would%20you%20say%20that's%20a%20stray%20bullet%3F\)%20And%20it%20didn't%20reach%20Kevin%20%5Bthe%20pilot%5D%20who%20was%20right%20in%20front%20of%20Charity%3B%20it%20stayed%20in%20Charity.%20That%20was%20a%20sovereign%20bullet.&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=nz4QEAAAQBAJ&pg=PT249&lpg=PT249&dq=Would+you+say+that's+a+stray+bullet?+And+it+didn't+reach+Kevin+%5Bthe+pilot%5D+who+was+right+in+front+of+Charity;+it+stayed+in+Charity.+That+was+a+sovereign+bullet.&source=bl&ots=bN4fyqrsA8&sig=ACfU3U0b4DKIsoqYryXwpdUNhbi6IH53Sg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewj2iNS1gl2DaxUCCDQIHdSjCj8Q6AF6BAgxEAM#v=onepage&q=Would%20you%20say%20that's%20a%20stray%20bullet%3F)%20And%20it%20didn't%20reach%20Kevin%20%5Bthe%20pilot%5D%20who%20was%20right%20in%20front%20of%20Charity%3B%20it%20stayed%20in%20Charity.%20That%20was%20a%20sovereign%20bullet.&f=false)  
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## God Meant it For Good

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<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-jun-08-me-missionary-story.html>

<sup>iv</sup> A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, chapter 22 “The Sovereignty of God”

Book can be found online here:

[http://www.heavendwellers.com/hdt\\_knowledge\\_of\\_the\\_holy.htm](http://www.heavendwellers.com/hdt_knowledge_of_the_holy.htm)