

## The Man Who Knew His Place Genesis 50:15-21

preached @ Hawkwood Baptist Church  
by Shafer Parker, Jr.  
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### Genesis 50

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?"

16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died:

17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?

20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Intro. The theme for VBS: *Egypt: Joseph's Journey From Prison to Palace*

### **Outline of Joseph's life. (Gen. 37-50)**

- Joseph was born to Rachel (Jacob's favourite wife) after Leah had born to Jacob six sons and one daughter.
- As the first son of Jacob's favourite wife Joseph was his father's favourite son — proven by the special coat Jacob gave him (many coloured? Ornamented?).
- Joseph had two dreams (sheaves bowing down; sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down), but by telling the dreams he incurred his brothers' wrath.
- Joseph's brothers sold him into Egypt as a slave.
- In Egypt Joseph became Potiphar's chief operations officer (COO) until Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of attempted rape.
- He was imprisoned (probably for life), where he eventually became the COO of the prison.
- While in prison he correctly interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's servants; the cupbearer's dream meant he would be restored to favour within three days, the baker's dream meant he would be executed in three days. Both dreams came true exactly as Joseph said they would.
- When Pharaoh had a frightening dream that no one could explain the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph.
- Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream (seven fat years, seven lean years) and then went on to suggest a plan of action (store grain during the good years against the coming bad years).
- Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the program (effectively the COO of Egypt). As before, Joseph was successful in all he did.
- As the worldwide famine reaches full strength Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy

grain. They don't recognize Joseph, but he recognizes them and puts them through a series of exercises designed to bring about repentance.

- When Joseph's plan succeeds he reveals himself to his brothers, forgives them, brings his father and his entire family down from Canaan and gives them the land of Goshen, Egypt's richest land to this day (Nile delta).
- When their father Jacob died Joseph reassured his brothers that his forgiveness was real and permanent, based on his understanding of God's sovereignty and providential watchcare.

### **Joseph: the most important man in Genesis.**

1. Joseph gets more space than anyone else. Compare his 14 chapters to the three chapters that cover all of creation.
2. Joseph is the first man of whom it was said that he possessed God's Holy Spirit (Gen. 41:38).
3. Apart from Jesus, Joseph is the quite possibly the only major action character in the Bible of whom no great character flaw is reported.
4. Joseph is arguably the greatest type of Christ in the O.T.

### **Joseph prefigures Christ**

1. Both special objects of their father's love (Gen. 37:3; Mat. 3:17; John 3:35; 5:20)
2. Their brothers hated both of them (Gen. 37:4; John 15:25)
3. Their brothers rejected their claims to a special relationship with God (Gen. 37:8; Mat. 21:37-39; John 15:24-25)
4. Their brothers conspired to kill them (Gen. 37:18; Mat. 26:3-4)
5. In intent and purpose their brothers did kill them (Gen. 37:24; Mat. 27:35-37)
6. Both "deaths" resulted in salvation for their respective families (Gen. 45:7; Heb. 2:14-18)
7. Both became a blessing to the Gentiles and gained a bride from them (Gen. 41:1-45; Acts 15:14; Eph. 5:25-32)
8. Though possessed with great personal strength, courage and initiative, both lived lives of extraordinary humility and service without a trace of moral stain (Gen. 39:8-12, 21-33; John 8:46; 13:1-17)
9. At crucial moments both spoke and behaved with original authority (Gen. 41:25-36; 42-45; Mat. 7:28-29; Mark 2:1-12)
10. Both reconciled with their brothers and exalted them (Gen. 45:1-15; Deut. 30: 1-10; Romans 11:1,15,25-26)

### **What does it all mean?**

In the story of Joseph we are confronted with the fundamental, absolute choice that every person must make in life, *whether to believe that there is a God and that He is intimately involved in each life*, preserving it, loving it and giving it purpose — ultimately judging it, either rewarding it or condemning it. The only other choice is to deny the existence of God, to affirm that there is nobody out there and that life has no meaning beyond its immediate sensations.

It's the choice between *The Good Shepherd* (by Yu Jiade) and the emptiness and nihilism best expressed in art, at least, in Edvard Munch's famous painting, *The Scream!*

Joseph clearly chose the first option. His rhetorical question (Am I in the place of God?) can only be answered with a strong "no." He understood that his life only had meaning if it was lived

in acceptance of God's plan for his life.

Joseph knew his place in this world because he understood God's place in the world. God is creator, we are created. God is sovereign, we are subjects. God is working out His purposes in the world, our lives are designed to fulfill part of that overall purpose.

Joseph understood that God uses all things to fulfill His purposes, and that he is so sovereign and great that He even uses evil for His glory and our good, even the sinful actions of people with evil intentions.

Scripture clearly says that

- Joseph's brothers were wrongly jealous of him (Gen. 37:11)
- hated him (Gen. 37:4,5,8)
- wanted to kill him (Gen. 37:20)
- did wrong when they cast him into a pit (Gen. 37:24)
- did even more wrong when sold him into slavery in Egypt (Gen. 37:28).

Yet later Joseph could say to his brothers

- "God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5)
- "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" (Gen. 50:20).

This is an excellent example of how God's providential control over life is accomplished.

- evil deeds are brought about by sinful men who are rightly held accountable for their sin.
- Nevertheless, the overriding providential control of God is such that God's own good purposes are always accomplished.
- Both truths are clearly affirmed throughout Scripture and in life.

The most important thing to remember about the doctrine of providence is that ultimately God works everything for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Although that truth isn't stated plainly until Romans 8:28, it is clear that Joseph had absorbed the principle into the very centre of his thoughts.

### **What Joseph understood about God's sovereignty and providence**

- When my brothers hated me, it was God's will and God meant it for good.
- When my brothers stripped me of my robe and threw me into a pit, it was God's will and God meant it for good.
- When my brothers sold me into Egyptian slavery, it was God's will and God meant it for good.
- When Potiphar's wife lied about me, it was God's will and God meant it for good.
- When I was left to languish in prison it was God's will and God meant it for good.
- When the cupbearer finally remembered me and told Pharaoh that I could interpret dreams it was God's will, and God meant it for good.
- When Pharaoh elevated me to the second-highest position in the kingdom, it was God's will and God meant it for good. (Not self glory)
- When my brothers came begging for food it was God's will and God meant it for good.

(Not revenge)

- When my family was reunited with me in Egypt it was God's will and God meant it for good. (Not so that I could lord it over them)

### **The key to Joseph's success**

In each circumstance of life Joseph accepted what was done to him and then set about doing the best he could within the constraints that God had placed upon him. His life had a happy beginning and a happy ending, but remember two things. . .

1. That happy ending was necessarily in contrast to the miserable part in the middle.
2. There would have been no happy ending had Joseph not remained faithful to God through the miserable middle portion of his life.

In this Joseph was just like Jesus: His life began in the happiness and glory of heaven, but He gave all that up to become one of us and to suffer on the Cross for our sins. He was then raised and has ascended to the right hand of God the Father, the ultimate happy ending.

### **Christians are called to live like Joseph/Jesus**

- We must accept that evil experiences, horrible trials are also part of God's plan for our lives
- We must live by the principle that faithfulness in the bad times prepares us for glory and honour in the good times.
- We must believe that ultimately the good times include the greatest glory and honour of all, that we should be granted the privilege of living with Christ forever.

"To say that God could not make a world in which he causes us to make willing choices is simply to limit the power of God" — not to mention that it also seems to deny a large number of passages of Scripture.