

But God.....

JOSEPH

(Gen 50:15-21; 45:1-15)

Briarwood Summer Drop-in

6.18.2024

"It is the unseen and the spiritual in people that determines the outward and the actual."
(Thomas Carlyle)

The voice-over in the story speaks to the spiritual of Joseph = "But the Lord was with Joseph..."
Moses giving the theological key to the story. But Joseph didn't have these words of reassurance
at the time, so he had to trust *by faith*, even though he had *no idea how*.

"The central basis of Christian assurance is not how much our hearts are set on God, but how
unshakably his heart is set on us." (Tim Keller).....He will hold me fast.

The cliff notes of the story of Joseph:

- Gen 29:16-20 = Jacob falls for Rachel
- Gen 29:21-30 = Laban deceives Jacob and he gets Leah; works another 7 years for Rachel
- Gen 29:31-35 = Leah having babies; Rachel has fertility issues
- Gen 30:1-21 = whole family created a mess! "Joseph was born into a complex family situation. There was one father, Jacob, but four mothers (two wives and two concubines), eleven sons and one daughter. When Joseph was still quite young, his mother Rachel had another son, Benjamin, but she died in childbirth." (Liam Golighor, Joseph, the Hidden hand of God)
- But Gen 30:22-24 tells us = "God remembered Rachel" and Joseph was born = not a wonder that Joseph was the "golden child"

Gen 37 = pick up with the story of Joseph when he was 17 years old

- 37:3-4 = Jacob favored Joseph
- 37:18-36 = and his brothers hated him because his father favored him and they plotted against him, sold him into slavery and he was separated from his family for 22 years.
- As the story progresses, Joseph is depicted with almost flawless character = "He was loved and hated, favored and abused, tempted and trusted, exalted and abased. Yet at no point in the 110-year life of Joseph did he ever seem to get his eyes off God or cease to trust him. Adversity did not harden his character. Prosperity did not ruin him. He was the same in private as in public. He was a truly great man." (James Montgomery Boice, Genesis)

Joseph's heritage =

- Abraham and Sarah (great-grandparents)
- Isaac and Rebekah (grandparents)
- Jacob and Rachel (parents)

And MOST importantly, there was a **covenant promise** to this family extending back to his great-grandfather, Abraham. (Gen 17:1-8) AND to his grandfather, Isaac (Gen 26:24) AND to his father, Jacob (Gen 35:11-12).

God-fearing heritage, but often weak and lived from a place of fear and doubt; “normal” people = “But God....”

Joseph started strong: (Gen 37,39)

Joseph suffered the consequences of his brothers’ hatred and was thrown into the pit (cistern)

Not one word recorded from Joseph from the time that he found his brothers in Dothan, they threw him in the pit (cistern), the Ishmaelites passed by and bought him from the brothers and then they sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh. (until Gen 42:21)

“And the Lord was with Joseph, **so he became a successful man.**” (Gen 39:2)

- Joseph didn’t focus on the dead animals
- Joseph was “sold, sad and safe” = (Alistair Begg’s title for this chapter)
 - Sold = favored to humiliated; fear of the unknown; unfamiliar land, culture and people
 - Sad = Gen 42:21 “we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us”
 - Safe = “but the Lord was with Joseph” Ps 139:5,10 = he was hemmed in both “behind and before”
- Joseph did not become a victim of his circumstances but participated in God’s plan
- Joseph lost his coat (power and position) but he didn’t lose his character

“Christ came to prosper you, but in character. He may prosper your circumstances but He may not....Yet regardless of your circumstances, Christ will prosper your character if you will surrender to Him. Joseph led as close to a full surrender to God as any human being ever has and God prospered his character success, not circumstance success. When your circumstances fail but your character succeeds, you become a model of hope for others.” (Patrick Morley, Surrender)

Where is God in “all of this?” (37:22) = He is sovereignly in control of “all of this.”

- Brothers could have killed him
- Joseph had a sense of God’s calling on his life (the dreams)
- Brothers sold him and he was taken to Egypt
- Irony = they tried to destroy the very one that eventually save them

Joseph continued faithfully: (Gen 39-47) Gen 45:1-15 = the climax of the story of Joseph; Joseph reveals his true identity to his brothers.

Out of five verses where Joseph tries to calm his brothers' fears; the name of God is mentioned in four of those verses.

- Vs. 5 = God sent me here ahead of you to save lives.
- Vs. 7 = God sent me before you to keep you alive and preserve a remnant
- Vs. 8 = It was not you who sent me here, but God
- Vs. 9 = God has made me Lord of Egypt

Consistent responses from Joseph.....he consistently filters all circumstances through the lens of God and His hand in the circumstances of life.

- Gen 39:9 = Mrs. Potiphar seduced him; he ran. His response "How could I do this evil thing and sin against God?"
- Gen 40:8 = Joseph in prison and the chief cupbearer and baker had dreams they could not interpret. His response "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."
- Gen 41:16 = Joseph repeated the same to Pharaoh = "I cannot do it.....but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires"
- Gen 41:25, 28, 32 = "God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about do."
- Gen 41:51 = Joseph named his first son Manasseh which means "forgetting." "God has made me forget all my trouble."
- Gen 41:52 = Joseph name his second son Ephraim which means "twice fruitful." "God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

Joseph was able to see good and purpose as a result of his suffering:

- God prospered him as the "lord of Egypt" so that he was in a position to save his family (vs. 9)
- God saved the brothers through Joseph's fall and eventual rise to power; it was the means of saving the brothers – both physically and spiritually. (1 Tim 1:12)
- God saved many people (vs. 5 "it was to save lives") through Joseph – common grace

It remains most often in hindsight, that we see purpose and time can be a frustration and challenge our trust. "Lord I believe; help me with my unbelief!" And the waiting can be brutal!

But God.....is at work. ***So we can assuredly say that nothing is "by accident"*** = With Job as with Joseph, "God was in charge. Job could not see it; but God, who gives us the story, assumes full responsibility for every evil detail that occurs. God did not do the evil. Evil came from the malicious spirit of our great enemy, the devil. Yet God permitted evil and assumed responsibility for it. The reason bad things happen to good people is that God decrees it.

Joseph saw this and declared it when he said, 'It was not you who sent me here, but God.' (45:8)" (Boice)

Joseph finished well! Genesis 50:15-21: A reiteration of chapter 45 although believed so much more deeply at this point in the story. In the latter years of Joseph's life....

But God.....rules and over-rules it all!

"The key to Joseph's faithful and victorious life was the ability to see God in every circumstance as the purposeful, sovereign administrator over all of it. The selling of Joseph was a crime detestable for its cruelty and perfidy (disloyalty); yet he was not sold except by the decree of Heaven. For neither did God merely remain at rest and by conniving for a time, let loose the reins of human malice, in order that afterwards he might make use of the occasion. But, **at his own will**, he appointed the order of acting which he intended to be fixed and certain. Thus, we may say with truth and propriety, that Joseph was sold both by the wicked consent of his brothers and by the secret providence of God." (John Calvin)

THEREFORE, there was no need for Joseph to hold a grudge! (But God.....did this!)

"Joseph had endured twenty-two years of loneliness, but he had mastered his heart during those long decades and had not allowed misfortune to sour him. How? He had drawn close to God, as we have seen repeatedly. If he had allowed suffering to pull him away from God, his feelings would have hardened. As it was, he allowed suffering to bring him close to God, and he found the love of God sufficient to enrich his soul." (Boice)

Observations about Joseph:

Joseph was not petty – he was not small – he truly was "becoming." His self worth was not wrapped up in this world or what others thought of him. He had opportunity to be petty and no one would have blamed him.

- The brothers who sold him
- Mrs. Potiphar who betrayed him
- The cupbearer who forgot him
- The brothers who expected Joseph to be vengeful

His life was truly a picture of God's continuing transformation of his life. Gen 50:21 "So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."

"Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him." (I Cor 13:5-7)

Joseph had a theology of hope:

Jurgen Moltmann (German theologian) wrote "The Theology of Hope". "Its thesis, which had a profound effect on many at the time, is that eschatology (the doctrine of the last things) should not be an appendix to Christian theology – something tacked on at the end and perhaps even dispensable to theology – but should be the *starting point* of everything. ***It is faith in what God is going to do that should determine what we think and how we act now.***" – Joseph was looking entirely to the future. And then bringing the future into the present.

Joseph was grounded.....Hope deferred.....but hope nonetheless!

"Nowhere in the text does it say that Joseph gets discouraged or despairs...Moses describes how he pours out his grief and weeps copious tears when he is reunited with his brothers. That facts tell us that Joseph had a rich emotional life; he was no hard man and he felt deeply.....The Bible is quick to tell us of the feelings of others in Scripture. The book of Psalms is full of honest, even heart-rending outpourings of answer, grief, disillusionment, bafflement, self-pity, anguish, and questioning. That book is in the Bible to say to believers that we can say anything to God, we can come as we are and say what we need to say.....It is not a mark of weakness, or of unbelief. In fact, on the contrary, to express doubt and difficulty to God is a mark of faith! ***You have to believe in Him to complain to Him.*** There is nothing but tender reassurance in the Bible for those whose hearts are wrung with pain, loneliness, and regret. And there is nothing but comfort for those who suffer, whether mentally or physically. To say otherwise or to suggest that people who call out in such a way are faltering in faith or obedience is both cruel and misguided. Even our Lord Jesus cried out in anguish in the garden and on the cross. It is part of our humanity, and it is part of living in a world that is out of joint. We can't speculate about Joseph, but we can say this, God sustained Him. He always does." (Goligher)

But God....Joseph's legacy was strong and the promise rock solid:

The Lord will provide = Abraham = Gen 22

"Testimony to the grace and faithfulness of God is valuable at any period of life and in any circumstances. But it is especially meaningful at the end of life as death threatens. To stand at that point and look back over a long life in which God has neither left you nor forsaken you and praise him for it – that is a great testimony. ***It is one of the chief opportunities of old age.***"
(James Montgomery Boice)

