

Text: Genesis 43:1-45:28

Title: Joseph's Dreams Fulfilled

Truth: Joseph is an instrument of God's sovereignty.

Date/Location: June 25, 2023 at FBC (previously May 21, 2006)

Lessons

- A. Last time I mentioned “carried guilt” which we observed in chapter 42. This is not cross-generational guilt carried across generations, but individual guilt carried through one’s life for a long time. In this case, it bothered the Jewish patriarchs when they thought about what they had done to Joseph. Especially when they were confronted with a bad situation, this naturally suggested that they may be suffering consequences for past sin. That is not entirely accurate theology, but it is sometimes true and worth thinking about the possibility. There is one way to address carried guilt—that is to confess your sins to God, and, if possible, to the persons whom you have wronged. If restitution is possible, that is also helpful.
- B. God had made Joseph a “father” to Pharaoh. This language seems to indicate that the first Pharaoh had died, and a new one was in place. Indeed, it appears that Joseph first started serving around 1884 B.C. under Pharaoh Senusret II, 1894-1878 B.C. Now he was serving under Pharaoh Senusret III, 1878-1841 B.C. who may have been younger than Joseph, who was now 39 (Gen. 41:46, plus 7 years of plenty had passed 41:53, plus two years of famine had occurred 45:6). Senusret III likely served as co-pharaoh for a while, so he was very familiar with Joseph.
- C. Think for a minute about the anguished soul of Jacob. He was being asked to let his son Benjamin go to Egypt with the brothers who had lost Joseph years earlier. He had said at the end of chapter 42 that he would not permit it. But the famine has continued, and he has little choice unless he goes down with Benjamin and the rest of the family. That probably was inappropriate given his age and/or general health. He was deeply troubled because he did not want to lose another son. The reality is, however, that all of us parents must release our children into the world. We must entrust them to

God—turn them over to the Lord—surrender them to God. We cannot protect them for the entirety of their lives! They may have to go to work, earlier than we want them to, or different places than we want them to...

- D. Another matter that will strike you as you read the passage is the ethnocentrism among the Egyptians. Read Gen. 43:32—where very strong language is used about eating together being an abomination. Genesis 46:34 paints the same picture. Joseph ate in a place by himself. We can excuse his action in this one case as a culturally based “cover” for the charade he was putting on. He was a Hebrew, after all, and had no personal issue eating with his own kin. He designed the situation to last a little longer. In real life when this happens for purely ethnic reasons, it is vile.¹ We are all of one race and were designed by God to get along with one another. With Peter in Galatians 2:11-21 its evil nature is that it demonstrates a fear of man and undermines the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- E. I find it interesting to notice how humanity returned to Judah when the shoe switched to the other foot. That is, when he was selling Joseph years ago, he did not have any discernible human compassion. But now that he is the one in need of mercy, he shows concern for his youngest brother and especially for his dad. Maybe he has learned something? The text of the Bible focuses on what God was doing with Joseph, but God was also working on the other brothers, teaching them some things through all of this—the trial of the famine, their submission to Joseph (and thus to God’s previously revealed will), and the grief of their father Jacob. It is precious to see the love that Jacob has for his youngest son and how the brothers respect that love and want to protect their youngest brother, in contrast to how they treated Joseph years earlier despite their father’s similar love for him.
- F. Another factor in this text that moved my heart is the power of a leader to do good to God’s people, or any people for that matter.

¹ We are instructed not to eat with a brother or sister who have walked disorderly (1 Cor. 5:11, 2 Thess. 3:6-12). This is so that we do not pretend they are OK with the Lord, and that they might be ashamed.

Look at 45:16-20. It records that the superpower king of Egypt, the Pharaoh, was *happy* to hear about Joseph's long-lost family being discovered. He knew that things were difficult in Canaan to the northeast. He *commanded* them to come down. Not that he had jurisdiction over them in that remote area, but he had care and concern in his heart for these people because of their connection to Joseph and their general human condition. He used his power and wealth for good. Generations later, the Pharaohs used their power for evil against the same people. Today, the same principle is at work.

- G. Heart-stopping news. When Jacob heard about Joseph being alive after 20 years of thinking he was dead, his heart "stood still." You can imagine the feeling, I trust, of your heart skipping a beat because of a newfound grief or joy. He was probably silent for a few seconds or longer, digesting the news. At this time, his brain must have been reprogramming to absorb the news with the old information he had. A major shift was happening in his thinking. I wonder if he found out his brothers were lying all those years...50:17 indicates he did find out eventually.
- H. After your son has gone to Egypt and been missing for years, it is beyond joy to experience his return to you. He was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and now is found; he was a slave and now is free. This reminds me of Luke 15:24, although Joseph did not run away from home because of sin; he was pushed out. But the analogy works both for those who run, and those who are forced away. Out of Egypt I called my Son; out of Canaan I called my father!
- I. I never cease to marvel how God puts his people in high places to have some important influence. That influence may not seem significant to historians, and it may be wiped out of the history books to protect certain reputations, as it was in Egyptian history. Here is Joseph, basically running the show in Egypt. Around 1,300 years later it is Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court advising an empire that rules an even larger part of the world. The king's heart is in God's hand in any case (Prov. 21:1) but God sometimes uses His people to turn the king's heart. In modern times, He has used the church, the gospel, and the Bible to do that work as well.

I. Journey #2: Benjamin with Them, Judah Surety, Genesis

43:1-34

- A. Jacob finally relents to let Benjamin go with the 9 remaining brothers (43:1-15). Judah promised that he would be responsible for his brother's safety. Jacob instructs them to bring a) Benjamin; b) a gift of the fruit of the land; c) the money that had been returned to them; d) more money to buy additional grain. Jacob resigns himself to the fact that he might also lose Benjamin now.
- B. Joseph wants to do something nice for the brothers—invite them into his home for a noon meal. But the brothers begin to be afraid because they think they are going to be accused of stealing the grain/money on their first journey. So, on the way to Joseph's house, they tell their fear to Joseph's house-manager. But the steward encourages them by saying that he was the one who had returned their money. He also brought Simeon out of jail to them. Simeon must have been in jail for a while—the time it took for his brothers to return to their father, exhaust the supply of grain (which was probably significant), and then come back to Egypt.
- C. When Joseph then comes for the meal, they give him the gift that they had prepared. In 43:26-28 we see another fulfillment of Joseph's first dream (37:5-8) in that the brothers bowed down to him. When Joseph heard of his father and saw his younger brother, he was again overcome with emotion and went aside to cry. When he came back, he had the men seated according to their age. They were amazed because they were all adults, and had not told him who was the oldest and who was the youngest, but Joseph remembered. Joseph gave Benjamin five times as much as the others. He must have been stuffed! That was a sign of great honor.

II. Further Testing During Journey #2, Genesis 44:1-34

- A. Joseph told his steward to give the men as much grain as they could carry and return their money to them again. He also asked the steward to put his silver cup into Benjamin's sack. All of this was in preparation for testing the brothers again.

- B. The steward caught up with the brothers on their way out of town and detained them because they had “stolen” the money and the silver cup. The brothers realize that their goose is cooked now, and they offer themselves as slaves to Joseph (v. 16). But Joseph only wants Benjamin as a slave. So, Judah intervenes, for he had promised to keep Benjamin safe and return him to their father. He tells Joseph how their father’s life is bound up in the life of their youngest brother, and that if they do not return with him, that their father would die from sorrow.
- C. At this point, the chapter ends with suspense. What will Joseph do now?

III. Joseph’s Revelation During Journey #2, Genesis 45:1-28

- A. Joseph could not bear to keep Benjamin back from them, and it was just too much to continue masking his identity from his brothers. So, he breaks down and tells them who he is. I imagine the scene where he asks everyone to leave, and then speaks in fluent Hebrew (he had probably been speaking through a translator to keep up the mask). The brothers were in shock.
- B. He encourages his brothers not to be afraid (they were) because he realizes that God sent him there to preserve the lives of many people. Joseph said several times that all these events were God’s doing:
 - 1. 45:5 – “God sent me before you to preserve life.”
 - 2. 45:7 – “God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”
 - 3. 45:8 – “So now it was not you who sent me here, but God.”
 - 4. 50:20 – “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”
- C. The obvious lesson is that Joseph recognized what God had done with him. We need to carefully focus on his correct view of the sovereignty of God in 45:3-11. It goes like this: you sold me into Egypt. But do not be upset with yourselves. God sent me here to preserve the life of my family and their descendancy (posterity) on

the earth. He has made me ruler of Egypt! Without explicitly saying so, he was explaining that God used their evil to keep His promise to Abraham to protect the Abrahamic line. What previously seemed unimaginably horrifying turned into an obvious good later.

- D. This was now the second year of the famine and there were five more to go. So, Joseph tells his brothers to go fetch the rest of the family to live in Goshen, a very choice part of the land of Egypt. There he could provide for them, and they would be close enough to each other to see each other.
- E. Pharaoh was glad to hear about Joseph's family and all that had happened, so he also concurred with Joseph and invited Jacob down to Egypt to live through the famine.
- F. When the brothers returned to Jacob to tell him what happened, he was beside himself. The news was too good to be true. After it sank in for a while, he came back to himself and agreed that he would go down to see Joseph before he died.

Conclusion

The most important thing we learn from this section occurs in chapter 45, where Joseph teaches us that God had superintended the events, as bad as they seemed in the midst of them, in order to ultimately preserve many people's lives. And this is true today—God makes all things work together for good to those who are His chosen ones (Romans 8:28). He can limit sin, permit sin, permit bad sin, prevent sin, and use human sin for His purposes.

Can you think of other times when God did similarly to accomplish his purposes—either in the Bible or in your own life?

When have you been an instrument of God's sovereignty in the help of others?

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