

Series: Biblical Heroes and Zeros – week 6

CDOBC – beginning on 10/17/10

Title: “Joseph”

November 28, 2010

Genesis 37; 39-50

OBJECTIVE: To help us have faith in God – especially when life is painful.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Christmas Performances – Waypoint and Wieck Chamber Singers and Orchestra
- Christmas Poinsettias
- Advent Readers needed
- CDOBC Christmas Events / Services

Joseph – when dreams become your nightmare

God had great plans for Joseph – his dreams 37:5-11. But, early on in Joseph’s life, he seems to lack humility. He had no reason to share his dreams with his brothers, but he does so anyhow. The dreams only serve to belittle his brothers – not to help or encourage them in any way.

Family dysfunction – Joseph was Jacob’s favorite son – and he was not shy about showing it. He seems to have been a spoiled, favorite child in a family with 11 other brothers – and they were jealous of him (37:11) and they hated him. Joseph was a tattle-tale – and was used by his father to learn what his other sons were up to (37:2; 12-14). This only added to their hatred of their younger brother, Joseph.

Joseph was betrayed by his brothers – His brother’s hatred of him was so consuming that they plotted to kill him. Now think about that for a moment. His brothers wanted to kill him. Why did they hate him so much? Have you ever thought about that question? OK, so he was dad’s favorite...and he had a cool jacket that made that fact obvious to everyone. But that isn’t really enough to stir up his brothers to a murderous rage! Here’s my take on young Joseph...he was the most annoying kid in the neighborhood – and

since daddy always protected him, he always got away with everything. You know the type – you probably knew one of these kinds of kids when you were growing up. When the grown-ups were around, they were little angels – always saying and doing the right things. But, as soon as the adult turned to look the other way, they were sticking out their tongue at you! My guess is Jacob never saw Joseph committing the first offense, but he always caught his brother's retaliation!

However, when the brothers were getting ready to kill Joseph, the oldest one, Reuben, persuaded them not to kill him but to throw him into a cistern (well). For some reason, Reuben had a conscience and knew how evil and sinful it would be to murder their own brother – and his plan was to come along later and rescue him from the cistern when the brothers weren't around. They agreed not to kill Joseph, but while Reuben was gone, some traders came by, and his brothers sold him for the bargain price of twenty pieces of silver.

Now take a step back and think about Joseph's life at this point. Lot's of reasons to be thankful, huh?

When he was sold into slavery, he was in his late teens – probably 17 years old. His brothers hated him – and their hatred and jealousy were so great, that they wanted to kill him – but instead they sold him as a slave. From Joseph's perspective, he would never again see his father or his younger brother Benjamin. He was no longer to live a privileged and protected life as a favorite son. He was now in a foreign land, a slave to a powerful politician, unable to speak the language, and all alone.

How would you respond? What would your perspective and thoughts of God be if this happened to you?

That's kind of an abstract thought – a *'what if'* scenario that may be difficult to answer – or your answer may be theoretical and too optimistic of your own faithfulness. So, let me ask you this...are you in a difficult time right now? Is your life filled with pain and uncertainty right now? If not now, think of a time recently that sorrow or pain has entered your life.

Has your faith in God and your love for Him lessened because your circumstances have worsened? Has your confidence in Him shrunk because of an illness, death, loss of a job, or other difficult and painful event in your life?

Joseph's response to the horrendous circumstances of his life makes him one of our Biblical heroes.

He is a hero because of three reasons:

The first reason is that Joseph remained obedient and confident in God.

39:8-9 "But he (Joseph) refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹ No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

41:16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

Joseph was in Egypt for thirteen years (41:46) before being appointed by Pharaoh as 2nd in command - and was faithful throughout that entire time. Thirteen years of hardship, unfair and unjust treatment – and he remained faithful.

Even at the end of Joseph's life, his faith remained strong in God and the promises of God. He knew the future for Abraham's descendants was not in Egypt but in Canaan – the Promised Land – and he never doubted that the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be fulfilled.

Heb. 11:22 “By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.”

50:24-25 “Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”²⁵ And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.”

Joseph never lost his confidence in God – and he remained faithful even though it must have seemed that God's way was leading him down a dead-end road!

The second reason (that Joseph is a hero) is that Joseph was *thankful* to God despite *difficult* times.

Gen. 41:52 “The second son he named Ephraim and said, “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”

Gen. 50:20 “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Joseph was thankful for his own life's blessings – the birth of his children – and he was thankful that God used him to accomplish the saving of many lives during the great famine. He was thankful even though God's use of him brought much suffering and difficulty. He didn't blame God for his hardships...he didn't act selfishly since God wasn't taking

his pain away...he stayed obedient, faithful, and he was thankful that God worked in his life.

The third reason that Joseph is a hero is that he *forgave* those who sinned against him.

His brothers wanted to kill him, but instead they sold him into slavery. He endured tremendous suffering for thirteen years because of what they did to him. Finally, he was made the second most powerful man in Egypt – and one day as he went about his business like every other day, his brothers showed up in front of him! Here was his perfect chance. Revenge. Payback. Time to settle the score. Vengeance. If he did this – would we really blame him? It would feel like justice wouldn't it? But his trust in God was not limited to his own career – it affected his whole life. He trusted in God's sovereignty – that what his brothers did so many years before was part of God's plan to get Joseph to Egypt. So, after revealing his identity to his brothers, he told them:

Gen. 45:5-9 “And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. GE 45:8 “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ⁹ Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.’”

50:20 ““You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Do you trust God enough – to forgive those who hurt you?
Do you trust His sovereignty enough to realize that surprises
God – and He uses everything in our life to accomplish His
glory in our life?

One last point to make – a ‘big picture’ point...

God is at work in difficult circumstances.

God is never disconnected or unaware of your life. He loves
you – and He’s working with you and through you to
accomplish His glory. He never abandons you – He never
deserts you – He’s always with you!

39:2-3 “The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in
the house of his Egyptian master. ³ When his master saw that the
LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in
everything he did...”

39:20-21 “Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place
where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there
in the prison, ²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness
and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.”

39:23 “The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care,
because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever
he did.”

50:20 “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to
accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

God was with Joseph each step of the way – even when those
steps ended up in slavery and prison. God was putting
Joseph exactly where he needed to be – to prepare him for
the huge task God had already prepared for him.

Application

Give thanks for your circumstances.

Even if the circumstances of your life are difficult and painful, give thanks to the Lord. Why? Because He is working to either correct something in your life – He may be preparing you for something in your future – or He is using you to help someone who is watching you. God doesn't make mistakes. You are not a mistake and neither is what is going on in your life right now. You may be suffering because of some sin or evil – but God uses all these things in accomplishing His work...give thanks.

Obeys when you are in pain.

It's human nature to give up on something if it doesn't seem to be working. God's way is not easy – and it doesn't usually bring immediate pleasure and joy. The enticement of sin can be a strong pull when you are under duress. Resist the temptation to simply pursue your own way of life – and remain faithful and obedient to God – even when your life is full of pain. Even in the midst of the pain – He is with you – and He is working in and through you.

Forgive those who hurt you.

Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers is an amazing work of grace. Knowing that nothing happens without God's purposes in mind will help you forgive those who hurt you and intend evil against you. Trust God and His love and concern for you. His love never fails – He is always faithful – His plan always results in blessings.

Close in prayer