

THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

"The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration but its donation." –Corrie Ten Boom

God & Joseph: His Family Comes to Egypt

The Background:

- Arriving once again from Canaan, Joseph's brothers were surprised to be invited to dine in the home of an Egyptian official. What they experienced there was a two-fold test that Joseph intended to use to reveal to him the condition of their hearts toward his brother and father.

Joseph Reveals Himself: Genesis 45:1-15

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. –Gen. 45:1-3

- Judah's willingness to sacrifice himself for Benjamin moved Joseph deeply and he then revealed himself.

Joseph's Perspective

And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. –Gen. 45:5-8

Some helpful theological categories regarding the sovereignty of God:

1. **The Decretive (aka. Hidden or _____) Will of God**

This aspect of God's will recognizes that God is fully sovereign over all that ultimately comes to pass. This is His foreordained plan which cannot be thwarted by His creatures. (Ps. 33:11, Lam. 3:37, Isa. 14:24)

2. **The Preceptive (aka. _____) Will of God**

This is the aspect of God's will that has been clearly revealed in Scripture. For example, God commands that mankind is to worship Him, loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength as well as loving our neighbor as ourselves. While God's preceptive will can be disobeyed, mankind is justly held accountable for our response to God's revealed will. (Deut. 10:1, Acts 2:38, Rom. 12:2)

3. **The _____ Will of God**

God's sovereignty does not negate the freedom of His creatures. He has given to mankind the freedom to respond to His preceptive will, but even when that response is sinful, this has not occurred outside of God's sovereignty. For His own plans and purposes, God chooses to permit secondary agents to commit evil. These sinful actions, however, never thwart the ultimate plans of God. (Gen. 50:20, Ps. 37:23, Rev. 13:7-8)

→ While Joseph's brothers' actions were sinful, Joseph recognized that it was the sovereign will of God to allow such things for the ultimate good of preserving His people.

The Brothers' Return to Canaan: Genesis 45:25-46:4

- Jacob did not initially believe his sons regarding Joseph (45:26-27)

Beersheba

This was a natural stop on the way down from Canaan to Egypt. It was also the location where the word of the Lord came to Isaac and where he built an altar to the Lord and offered sacrifices (Gen. 26:23-25).

And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes." –Gen. 46:2-4

- The Lord appeared to Jacob and spoke to him using language that recalled His previous promises to him (Gen. 28:13-15, 35:10-12)

→ God's concern was that Jacob would have _____ of His presence with him in Egypt.

Embracing the Will of God in the Various Stages of Life: Genesis 47-49

For each of us, God provides the opportunity to be a blessing both to His people as well as to others. The final chapters of Genesis demonstrate for us how God can use His people in the prime of their lives as well as in their final days to serve both groups.

The Example of Joseph

- In the prime of his life, Joseph's faithfulness to the Lord allowed him to be used of God as a blessing both to his own people as well as to others. In this phase of life it is much easier to serve well in numerous capacities.

Genesis 47:13-26

⇒ Joseph was used by God to bless his employer.

So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh's. As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other. (Gen. 47:20-21)

⇒ Joseph was used by God to bless the Egyptian people.

And they said, "You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh." So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; the land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh's. (Gen. 47:26)

⇒ Joseph was used by God to bless his family and the people of God.

Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years. (Gen. 47:27-28)

→ Joseph's _____ and _____ were the means by which he served God faithfully and blessed others during this season of his life.

The Example of Jacob

- Having reached the final season of his life, Jacob was used by God for the purpose of blessing his own family as well as others. In this phase of life it is better to focus one's attention on key areas of ministry.

Genesis 47:7-10

⇒ Jacob was used by God to bless Pharaoh.

Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. (Gen. 47:7b)

⇒ Jacob was used by God to pray for and to bless his family.

The Sons of Joseph

And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn). And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." (Gen. 48:15-16)

Observations:

- He recognized the Lord as the God who was sovereign over the _____ of His people.
- He gave personal _____ about the Lord's work in his own life.
"my shepherd all my life" →
"the angel who has redeemed me from all evil" →
- He then prayed that God would carry out His will _____ the boys.

Am I trusting in the sovereignty of God and seeking to understand His will in the midst of circumstances I don't understand?

Am I allowing God to use me for His purposes in the season of life in which I find myself?