

Evil Happens...but God

Genesis 50:15-21

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connect groups

PATH

The story of Joseph is one of the Bible's most compelling tales. And the most gripping feature is the difference between Joseph's outlook and that of his eleven brothers. After all the intrigue, the ups and downs of Joseph's life and career, and the years of deception and selfishness by Joseph's brothers, the finale comes after their father, Jacob, dies. This is one of the Bible's best *but God* moments, as forgiveness eclipses failure.

I. Their Baseless Fear (v. 15)

II. Their Blatant Fabrication (vv. 16-18)

III. Their Brother's Forgiveness (vv. 19-21)

POINTS

Their Baseless Fear:

- If anyone had a reason to sell his life and start over, it was Joseph. His brothers hated him, the Midianites sold him, Potiphar jailed him, and his cellmates forgot about him. But God didn't.
- Only ten words describe how God made the universe, but one-fourth of Genesis is devoted to Joseph's life. His life is a story of tragedy to triumph, of rags to riches. Joseph went from obscurity to the second most powerful person in Egypt. In short, this is a story of providence. God worked supernaturally, naturally.
- In verse 15, we see that his brothers feared two things:
 - Joseph's personal emotion ("Joseph will hate us"). The word *hate* is *satam*, to bear a grudge.
 - Joseph's possible action ("repay us for all the evil which we did to him")
- A guilty conscience is a heavy load to bear; it needs no accuser.
- The brothers were worried Joseph would get rid of them, as they had gotten rid of him all those years ago.
- Guilt distorts reality; it is like rust on the iron of our conscience.
- **Probe:** What are some things you fear in life? Why do you fear them? How can you overcome a baseless fear or grudge?

Their Blatant Fabrication:

- In chapter 49, we find that Jacob was not afraid to call out his sons' sinful

behavior in the past as well as predict their future. Jacob knew the disposition of his sons.

- The brothers used their dead father as a scapegoat, the fall guy in their fabrication. They essentially told Joseph, "Our dad's last dying wish was that you let bygones be bygones." Joseph saw through this. Old habits die slowly. People change, but not that much.
- As opposed to Joseph's *but God* living, the brothers lived in *but we*. Think of their attitude:
 - Joseph told us dreams *but we* resented him.
 - Joseph came to give us a message from our father, *but we* despised him.
 - Joseph's coming with his coat, *but we* will show him and sell him.
 - Joseph is the prime minister and our father is dead, *but we* will outsmart him.
- First they sent messengers but then they bowed and offered to be Joseph's slaves.
- **Probe:** Have you had someone make up lies about you or spread false rumors? How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome? Did you see God's hand involved in any aspect of the remedy?

Their Brother's Forgiveness:

- Joseph was sensitive, wiping away his tears. His weeping wasn't for himself, but for his siblings—he saw their torment and trickiness. But he forgave them. His

attitude of compassion arose from his theology, what he believed about God:

- God is in charge. Our problems often begin when we take God off the throne and try to play Him (see v. 20).
- God uses bad events to bring about good results. Joseph had a clear understanding that God was at work and trusted Him for the outcome. No matter what people's intentions are, God will bring about His desired end (see v. 20).
- Read Romans 8:28. The term used for *work together* in the text is *sunergeó*, meaning synergism, a cooperation of two or more things. It means the working together of various elements to produce a result greater than the sum.
- God uses people to help other people (see v. 21). God will use your suffering to help serve other people who are suffering. He "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 2:4, NIV).
- How big is your God? Is He big enough to providentially arrange the events of your life for your good and His glory?
- **Probe:** Why can forgiveness be so difficult for some? Share about a situation in which it was difficult for you to forgive. How did God give you the grace to forgive? What were the benefits of doing so?

PRACTICE

Connect Up: Pastor Skip referred to two types of providence: natural (whereby God cooperates with created things to cause them to act in a certain way) and supernatural (a miracle). How are the two similar and different? Though we don't fully understand God's governance and use of both, how have you experienced them in your life? In what events in your life did you see God's hand at work?

Connect In: Using Joseph as an example, what characteristics should the church work hard to mimic and implement? For example: forgiveness, grace, trust, patience, etc. Discuss others you can think of.

Connect Out: How can you use Joseph's story to witness to nonbelievers? What events and scenarios within the story do you think an unbeliever might respond to?