

God Turns Oppressions Into Opportunities

Text : Genesis 50: 15-21

INTRODUCTION :

- A. Thesis of this lesson : The size of your problems in life will be inversely proportional to your view of God.**
1. The bigger you see God and the more in control you believe Him to be, the more you will view your problems as being temporary, finite and purposeful because you realize they are under His control. (**and vice-versa**)
 2. Simply put : The bigger you see your problems, the smaller you see your God.
The smaller you see your problems, the greater you view your God.
- B. This is the great lesson we learn from the life of Joseph.**
1. If anyone ever had problems, it was Joseph.
 2. 12 of the last 13 chapters of Genesis are devoted to his life's story.
 3. Joseph's life teaches us that even when terrible things happen there is a godly way to respond to our circumstances.

TRANSITION :

Our text for this lesson is from Genesis 50, but we will glean lessons from Joseph's entire life.

I. A short recap of Joseph's life.

- A. He was one of the 12 sons of the Patriarch Jacob. (Called Israel)**
1. The 11th in order of birth.
 2. The firstborn of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. (**The one he chose.**)
 3. Jacob showed favoritism toward Joseph. (**Fostered jealousy**)
- B. Joseph furthered the ill-will.**
1. He brought an evil report about his brothers to his father.
 2. He shared dreams of his brothers bowing down before him. (**sheaves, stars**)
- C. Most of his brothers wanted to kill him.**
1. He went far from home to check on his brother's welfare. (**not Shecum – Dotham**)
 2. The brothers seized the opportunity.
 - a. They sold him to passing Midianite traders.
 - b. The traders sold Joseph to Potiphar, Capt. of Pharaoh's bodyguard.
 3. Brothers convinced Jacob that Joseph was dead and went on with their lives

D. Joseph worked so conscientiously he was made Potiphar's household manager.

E. Potiphar's wife saw Joseph and wanted him.

1. She stayed after Joseph continually while her husband is out.
2. When Joseph rejected her, she falsely accused him of trying to rape her.

F. Joseph finds himself in prison for doing what is right.

1. Unjustly enslaved, then unjustly imprisoned, but he was never embittered.
2. He worked his way up to became the head trustee of the jail.
3. His virtue gets him an introduction to the Pharaoh.

G. Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh.

1. Joseph foretold what would happen in Egypt the next 14 yrs and give advice.
2. Pharaoh immediately sees in Joseph what both Potiphar and the Jailor saw.
"Can we find one like this, in whom the spirit of God is ?" **Gen. 41: 39**

H. Thus, after 13 years of slavery, Joseph is elevated.

1. He was the "C.O.O." of the whole country, in affect he was the Prime Minister.
2. Potiphar let him run the household; then the jailor let him run the jail.
3. Now he is running the whole country.

I. After 9 years of rule, the brothers of Joseph show up

1. He recognizes them, but they do not recognize him.
 - a. 22 yrs. have past (Did you go to your 20 yr. H.S. reunion ? Recognize all ?)
 - b. Egyptian high officials wore makeup and ornate costumes.
2. Joseph puts his brothers through a series of test to see :
 - a. If their character is still as bad.
 - b. If they are treating his brother (Benjamin) like they treated him.
 - c. If his father is alive and well.

J. When he ultimately reveals himself he does so with a forgiving spirit.

1. He didn't even want them for feel bad about their sin against him.
2. **Read ... Genesis 45: 1-15**

K. Joseph brought his family to Egypt and cared for them.

* **Difficult times beset us all. When they come we're tempted to ask,**
"Why would God let this happen to me ?"

As Joseph did, we must realize that God turns raw deals and into opportunities.

The Apostle Paul put it, “A things work together for good ...” **Rom. 8:28**

*** As followers of God we must get a hand on two things :
The big picture and The big program.**

II. With regards to the big picture, there are three things one has to trust.

A. First : We must trust God’s ability to accomplish His purpose in our lives.

1. God revealed his purpose to Joseph in a dream. (**rule**)
2. Joseph couldn’t possibly have understood all God would do to accomplish it.
- ill. – Young couple about to get married have no idea what will happen.**
3. God could never even have imagined the detours on which God would send him.

B. Secondly : We must trust God’s means to accomplish His will in our lives.

1. No one ever chooses pain and suffering, but God sometimes uses it to strengthen us.
2. **Heb. 5: 8-9** God’s own Son was perfected and learned by through suffering.
3. Suffering is God’s means of preparing us for His purpose.

C. Thirdly : We can trust God’s timing to accomplish His will in our lives.

1. God will not bring about His will in your life until you are ready.
2. At the time Joseph dreamed the dream, Joseph was not ready to lead Egypt.
3. God had to teach Joseph :
 - a. To follow His leadership
 - b. To seek His wisdom
 - c. To have his character. (**so Joseph could learn to see the big picture.**)

*** Only when we have grasped the big picture can we move on to the big purpose.**

III. Joseph’s life demonstrates five ways to accomplish God’s big picture in our life.

A. First : Focus on our confession, not our oppression.

1. Joseph was unjustly oppressed for 13 years.
2. What if the family you loved and trusted sold you into slavery ?
 - a. Imagine his first day as a slave ?
 - b. He was raised in privilege and had great expectations for his life.

3. What kind of slave would you be ?
 - a. Resentful ... *"I'm not going to do anything !"* (**Would be beaten.**)
 - b. Apathetic ... "I'll do just enough not to get beaten."
4. Joseph conducted himself in a way befitting a follower of God. (**Col. 3:22-24**)
 - a. As a result, he was promoted. (**Chief steward of Potiphar's household.**)
 - b. Suppose he had not ?? What would have been the future of Israel ???
5. This applies directly to our lives **and** to the live of this church.

B. Second : Strive for excellence, not excuses.

1. Why should Joseph have done a good job or worked hard ? He was a captive.
2. When we live a life with Joseph's attitude :
 - a. People notice. (**our light shines**)
 - b. We live on a plain above the world ... free.

*** Nothing can victimize us unless we allow it to do so.**

3. We must not focus on all the wrongs done to us;
rather, focus on what God wants our lives to be.

*** Joseph was not super-human; he lived by faith in God.**

4. **When you learn to live life devoted to God w/o regard to external circumstances – you're free !**

C. Third : Strive for purity rather than for power.

1. Joseph was in charge of all Potiphar possessed except his wife.
2. The wife lusted after Joseph. (**young & handsome ... husband gone a lot**)
 - a. Being property, slaves were commonly used by owners for sexual purposes.
 - b. She was most likely attractive. (**Satan wouldn't tempt him w/ ugly woman.**)
3. Joseph refused to sin against God.
Read ... Gen. 39: 7-9
4. Joseph realized that his conduct on the job reflected on God. (**had proper priority**)
5. As a result God blessed him.
 - a. Being jailed, **especially** for doing what is right, doesn't seem like a blessing.
 - b. Many would have been bitter against God.
 - c. Attitude of many ... **God if you're not going to .. make me feel good, keep me out of problems and bless me above others, why should I serve you.**

D. Fourth : We must seek victory over personal vindication.

1. When Joseph's brothers show up after 22 yrs. Joseph could have gotten justice.
 - a. He could have made his brothers slaves like they did to him.

- b. He had the power to have them put to death.
- c. He could have sent them home empty-handed to starve. (**Justified in doing so.**)

2. **Read ... Gen. 45: 4-8**

- a. He doesn't even want them to feel bad about what they did to him.
 - b. He realized that God is in control.
3. You and I may still be in the slavery or prison stage of our lives.
- a. We are not promised we'll ever understand what God is doing in our lives.
 - b. We're just told to have faith, to trust God.

*** We must go through life seeking victory, not personal and physical vindication.**

E. Fifth: We must seek reconciliation, not revenge.

1. The greatest test of Joseph's character came after his father died.
- a. Fearing revenge his brothers sent a messenger to him. (**Supposedly from Jacob.**)
 - b. They mistakenly judged him by their own character.
2. **Read ... Gen. 50: 18-21**
- a. What was his reaction ? **He wept.** (*Heartbroken because they though ...*)
 - b. He reassured them he bore them no ill will. **"Am I in the place of God ?"**
3. He did what my mentor called, **"Give them the gift of love."**
- a. Give them the reinforcement they need, NOT what they deserve. (**Grace**)
 - b. Turn whatever grievance you have over to God. (**Forgive ... Reassure**)

CONCLUSION :

A. We all need to learn these five lessons from the life of Joseph :

- 1. Focus on our confession, not our oppression.
- 2. Strive to excel in all we do - to the glory of God.
- 3. Strive for personal purity .. not advantage or advancement.
- 4. Seek victory over our circumstances.
- 5. Seek reconciliation rather than personal & physical vindication.

B. Read an article written by a preacher who was forced to stop preaching because his Parkinson's disease has advanced beyond his ability to function.

"... I'm learning many things as my body changes, but one thing I know is that God's love never changes. Speed-bumps only slow us down so we can see God's message to us and serve to remind us that we are all terminal. When we face something like Parkinson's disease we can be sure He has not forsaken us. God knows our needs and He can see the

future so we must leave the unanswered questions to Him. Christians have a tremendous opportunity to encourage one another, especially when we hit the speed-bumps that shake us all over. I'm thankful for the encouragement I can still offer others as they encourage me. ...”

*** This is a man who has truly learned that the question is never
“Why did God let this happen?” , but “How can I use this for God?”**

C. Truly, the greater our God, the smaller our problems.

INVITATION :

A. Have you gained the victory over your circumstances ?

B. Is your God big enough to merit your trust in Him ?

C. There is none greater than the God of Heaven.

TRUST HIM !!

LIVE FOR HIM !!

COMMIT YOURSELF TO HIM THIS VERY DAY !!