

JOSEPH: FROM THE PIT TO THE PALACE – PART II

Genesis 37-50

Sunday, October 2, 2011

Pastor Alan Morse

First Baptist Church of South Lake Tahoe

Genesis 45:5,7

⁵Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

⁷And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Genesis 50:20

²⁰But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

A summary of where we have been in the story of Joseph:

At 17, Joseph had a dream that some day he would be in high places in service to God. He would see his jealous brothers bowing down before him.

In jealousy his brothers had thrown him away into a pit, he was sold as a slave and carried down to Egypt. The captain of the guard to Pharaoh bought him and made him chief steward over his household. His wife lied about Joseph and he was framed for a crime he did not commit. He was thrown into prison to rot but God had a purpose for Joseph's life and in spite of all his suffering God was making the connections for Joseph to go from the pit to the prison and then to the palace.

God places a butler and a baker into prison where Joseph is bound. It will be through Joseph's connections with the butler who will be reinstated in the presence of Pharaoh, where Joseph eventually will be brought into Pharaoh's presence and made lord over the land of Egypt under Pharaoh.

The Ingratitude Of Others – Was Joseph Forgotten By God?

40:1 “And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. ² And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, and against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. ³ And put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.”

What a coincidence... really? God has these two men placed in the same place Joseph is bound. God, in His invisible hand is guiding the steps of man, and making all the connections between people to accomplish His purposes. It is no accident when we meet people or run into people that God wants to use in our lives.

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord...”

“A man purposeth in his heart but the Lord is the doer thereof.”

“The lot (choices) are cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof (the whole outcome) is of the Lord.”

It is important for us not to just run past this point that the Scriptures are making. Later in this story it is going to be the butler who Joseph helps, that will be a connection between Joseph and Pharaoh.

God places people into our lives for us to help them and for them to help us.

God uses people to take us where we need to go and to help in what we need to be doing in His work.

It has been my listening to people and paying close attention to what some people say that has directed the moving of God in my life to where I am today.

Opportunity may only come once. It may be through a still small voice or the simple encouragement of others but what they may have to say could be the most important advice you will ever hear. Pay attention to Godly people He puts into your life!

“⁵ And they dreamed a dream both of them... ⁶ And Joseph came in unto them in the morning and looked upon them, and behold they were sad. ...Joseph asked them, Wherefore look ye so sad today?”

Why would Joseph even care? He has a heart for people in all the suffering he has been through in life.

We need to be thankful for the people who care about us. They don't owe us anything. We need to care about others no matter how bad we might have it.

“⁸ And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God?”

Joseph had a dream in his life. Dreams and the interpretation of them is something he understands. God will give him the meaning.

“⁹ And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph and said to him, In my dream behold a vine was before me... ¹¹ And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup unto Pharaoh's hand. ¹² And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days ¹³ yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head, and restore thee into thy place... ¹⁴ But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this place.”

The baker also had a dream. When he saw how good the butler's dream turned out he told Joseph his dream, too (vs. 16-19).

Joseph gave him the interpretation: “¹⁹ Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee and shall hang you on a tree and the birds shall eat the flesh from off thee.”

In the next three days the butler was restored to his position, but the baker was hanged (20-25).

Now here comes the gratitude of the butler toward Joseph – “Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him”.

What a disappointment for Joseph. His expectations were running to an all-time high and then dashed to pieces. Here was his break. What a perfect opportunity to find his freedom, but he is forgotten by the butler.

Satan is setting him up for the perfect storm to destroy his spirit and faith once and for all. God had forgotten him and was nowhere to be found, the ingratitude of people and the years going by with no relief in sight. This man is lonely, betrayed, hurt and terribly mistreated by others. People had been absolutely cruel to this kind, caring, giving man. People owed their success to him and the God of his life whom they knew was with him.

Again we see the story repeated: there is no bitterness, revenge or despair. Joseph forgives! His faith and hope in God is tenacious. This man cannot be broken no matter how bleak the circumstances of his life look.

Why? God promised him a future in those dreams he had at 17 and he knows beyond a doubt God will be faithful and come through.

Joseph believes that in every step of life he takes, regardless of how loud they may shout in pain against him, God is guiding him and he is going to land on his feet.

This is the story of God in this world in the affairs of man and the story of our lives. God is above, making the connections in every step we take to bring good out of what should be disaster. Those who know and love God know this!

We can feel sorry for ourselves, get mad at the world and give up and die before our time, or we can say, "God is in charge of my life and in His love for me it is impossible for Him to fail." What we need to do constantly is to do the right thing, stay the course, keep a good attitude and forgive our enemies.

Think of all the people you have met in life, in your journey, with whom God connected you:

- Who helped you find Christ
- Who made your successes in life possible
- Who did love and care about you

Think of those you helped and could be helping if you believe that God's got your back and holds your future in His hands.

"You (Joseph's brothers) meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." What an attitude!

Taking A Closer Look At Being Forgotten – Being Rewarded

“Remember me” (vs. 14).

God gives us connections when we are in need of help. Joseph had helped the butler who was the closest man to Pharaoh, and he was now asking for the simplest thoughtfulness in return.

Nope! The butler forgets Joseph (40:23).

Our nature is twisted and incredibly selfish and thoughtless.

People come into and go out of our lives for whom we have done things in love, like it is nothing to them.

If we are going to have a special acknowledgment of God toward us, then we need His direction. We had better not “forget” those who have been there for us in our helplessness.

We are to remember others in the family of God in our prayers and thanksgiving. A card, a letter; to be there for them as a faithful friend. It is a slap in the face to take people for granted and embellish ourselves in the sacrifices they made to help us. God sees it, takes notice of it, and will remember it the next time we are in trouble. Love does not use!

Our signature and genuineness of who we are should be toward others, “In remembrance of thee”. The good news: God never forgets us. He does not come and go from us. Jesus remembered us from the cross. He said, “Father forgive them; they know not what they do.” The thief asked Him to “Remember me when you enter your kingdom.”

Joseph had hoped for connections in high places with Pharaoh through the butler. We have real connections in high places with God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ Who is at His right hand interceding for us. It is not leaning upon people to get us out of here, but to trust in the Lord!

Genesis 41: ¹Now it happened at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream ...

⁸And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and

Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

⁹Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

¹⁴Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

This is where the butler is going to remember his faults regarding Joseph. He knows the guy who knows what dreams mean.

The Scripture is making a point here on purpose of the two full years for Joseph in prison. It captures the monotony Joseph was experiencing in daily life and its struggles with no answers coming any time soon. This is a major part of the difficulty in the struggles of life to survive: waiting on the Lord and trusting Him for the future.

The casualty rate among Christians is startling. Thinking there are short cuts to success, we are not willing to wait on God. We want it now with no discipline and obligation to duty during the tough times when God is silent. In our impatience to fulfill our needs we must not disregard the Word of God, flying in the face of what is right by doing what we know is the wrong thing.

Even Jesus Himself didn't do that. He often said, "My time is not yet come."

Life sometimes runs in slow motion when we are suffering from the daily routine of monotony, but it will become a disaster if we speed things up in our foolish impulsiveness.

None of us like going to work day after day, but it is there God is developing our character. How can we live in the palace of prosperity without indulging in the filth of the flesh if there has been no self-restraint practiced in a time of testing??

Disappointment and delay with our life on hold, with nothing happening, is the best education we could receive from God. It is there where we are looking to trust in the Lord for His plan, and not for our own foolish expectations. The things we dream about when we are young and dumb are nothing compared to the great things of God which will count for eternity.

The story of Joseph's life of disappointment, broken dreams, mistreatment and betrayal by those he thought were his friends is the very story of us all and what we must endure if we are going to let God have His own way with us.

I didn't think I would be freezing the frame here in the movie of this story of Joseph but this lesson of waiting is the most important one in our life.

The flesh screams at us to be satisfied on the spot in our needs, wishes and wants.

We can't "just do it" and "get it on now" and "be done with it". Wait on the Lord and trust Him for something infinitely greater than a petty, momentarily passing feeling! Life must not be turned into moments for pleasure or we will discover too late the flesh can't be satisfied no matter how much you feed it.

We must wait on the Lord!

Joseph wasn't the only one who was beaten down by life and feeling he had been forgotten by God; there was Job.

The death of ten children and the loss of everything he owned, including his health. His friends turned their backs on him, questioning his genuineness. His wife said, "Why don't you curse God and die?"

In Job 23: 8 He said "Behold I go forward and He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him."

Job has questions and God is not answering them, yet. He wishes he could have a meeting with God and ask Him "Why?"

What God is doing he has no idea.

He snaps together, re-gathers his faith and says, "I know this... I know this, but He knows the way I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside."

God is the one who determines how long the process will take. It is only after God has made us genuine at heart and taught us what is really important in life and has opened our eyes from fantasy to reality that He can trust us to be His servants. God wants to put our life on display in a testimony to His faithfulness, ending the story of our life in a spectacular performance.

The two full years for Joseph in prison were boring, long, dull; a slow, grinding, uneventful nothingness! It is during those times of waiting on God loyally that everything is happening. Events are occurring unknown to us where God is at work, setting up the time and place without our help. God is staging the “God happening”, the “God Event” that will have a profound change in the lives of many people who will witness for themselves what God did through your life.

It is when life is put on hold and we faithfully wait for God to move that God is shaping us for a significant future to rock the world around us. Being hidden alone in silence with God will change our attitude from Why, to What, to Whom. It is in the solitude of being left alone with God that He alone will become the object of our undivided attention. When we have gotten to know and experience the Living God in a personal way, it is then all the “What’s” and “Why’s” will give way to the God we have discovered, and have learned to love.

If you find yourselves being put into a place alone with God, with no one else around, it is a special invitation for you to use that time of waiting to open up the Scriptures in a serious quest for truth, and to discover Who God is, and what He wants to do through your life.

Abraham waiting long disappointing years for the birth of Isaac: How did his waiting turn out?

Moses didn’t lead the Exodus until he was 80: One would have thought he was useless to God. Elijah waited at the brook; Noah waited 120 years in ministry while building a ship when it had never rained; Paul waited after his conversion in Arabia before God sent him into the ministry. Jesus, Himself, waited 30 years in His up-bringing and education before His ministry began.

God is working while people are waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting.

What’s happening in the present? Nothing. What’s happening for the future? Everything!!

The Turning Point – Pharaoh’s Dream (Gen. 41:1-14)

Pharaoh dreams a dream; God is giving him a future of Egypt. Nobody can interpret it.

The chief butler all of a sudden remembers Joseph who had years before interpreted his dreams that happened exactly as he said they would.

41:9 “Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, I would make mention today of mine own offenses.”

He told Pharaoh about his experience with Joseph in prison and that he would be able to give Pharaoh the meaning of his dreams.

Pharaoh says, “Go get him now!” Joseph is taken out of prison in a snap of time and finds himself standing before Pharaoh interpreting his dream.

How fast things can change: in a day, in a moment, when you least expect it. You’re in the prison one moment going about your daily routine and in the next moment you’re taken out of prison and find yourself before the most powerful man in the world, looking around at a palace, and you’re up to speak!

In spite of all our human suffering in this life, God will take us from the pit, from the prison, to the palace; God’s palace to the throne room of God.