

Ninety Nine And A Half Won't Do! Part 3 – Joseph

Description

14After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who
16So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed

Genesis 50:14-21 NLT

Joseph is a well known man from the Bible mostly because people find inspiration in his story of being sold into bondage by his jealous brothers (Genesis 37), is lied on by his master's wife which leads to him being sent to prison due to the false accusation (Genesis 39), is forgotten in prison after interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh's servant (Genesis 40), but is ultimately freed and placed into the highest position in Egypt under Pharaoh (41). Now that is a phenomenal story and testimony, but that isn't even the greatest part of his story. I believe that the greatest lesson from Joseph's life is in the text above, because it revealed someone who wasn't content with 99.5, and it gave one of the earliest examples of what Christ would do ultimately do for us.

To give a quick snapshot to catch you up to where the text is, Israel (Jacob) has recently died and his sons are completing the period of mourning for his death. As the brothers are returning to Egypt they are burdened by the guilt of the injustice they had done to Joseph decades ago, and believe that without the protection of their father, Joseph will exercise his authority in Egypt, and kill them because of what they did. What I want you to understand is that their fears were not unfounded; they deserved to be punished for what they did to Joseph previously, Joseph had the power and authority to do whatever he wanted to do with them, and Joseph was experiencing grief with the loss of his father which could cause him to act uncharacteristically. As the brothers are concocting a story to tell Joseph that they believe will cause him to spare their lives, we see Joseph presented with an opportunity to reflect Christ. The brothers are at the mercy of Joseph who has the ability to seek vengeance for the injustice they did to him, instead he demonstrates the principle of forgiveness that Jesus would later explain in his ministry, and demonstrate on the cross.

"Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? 20You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. 21No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

Genesis 50:19-21

This moment in scripture is a direct foreshadow of what Christ did on the cross not once but twice

32Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with him. 33When the
34Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

Luke 23:32-34 NLT

39One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are

40But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been crucified with me?"
43And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Luke 23:39-43 NLT

I included both of these texts because we should understand the Old Testament as a foreshadowing, and preview of the ultimate plan that God has for us. I'm not saying that Joseph was perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but what I am saying is that when Joseph was confronted with the choice to follow his flesh and emotions, or trust God that he is the restorer, and healer of all things, he chose to trust God. Joseph like Jesus, submitted his will to God, and in doing this it would seem like he was letting his accusers off easy. Joseph foreshadowed Jesus in that even in his own moment of pain, affliction, and grief, he extended grace to those in need of it. It's tough to be aware of others, and even more importantly be aware of their own feelings, emotions, and vulnerabilities. Joseph redirected his brothers concern to God who would be the ultimate judge of their behavior and deeds, and instead chose to extend grace, forgiveness, and mercy, which is at our disposal. Joseph's ability to do this I believe was the result of the 13 years he spent serving in Potiphar's house, and the prison where I believe God was working on his heart. It was in these times of isolation, loneliness, fear, sadness, anger, etc that Joseph learned that God is in control of all, and that it is only when he chose to release his the feelings of unforgiveness towards his brothers that God decided that he was capable of properly stewarding the assignment on his life. We don't have the ability to choose how God uses us, or parts of the path that we take to reach his destination for our lives, but we do play a part in how long that process takes which is often directly tied to the condition of our heart. The focus passage is important because the difference between 99.5 and 100 in Joseph's life wasn't seen or realized in his gifting to dream early in life, or later interpret the dreams of others, and act as chief executive officer of Egypt. 100% of the fullness of God's calling for his life was actually seen in the verses above when he was able to forgive those who had intended harm for him because he knew that God had ultimately received the glory in his life. 100% is choosing God's fullness over our settling for our comfort and personal desires.

Reflection Time

Do you believe that you have the ability to punish or seek vengeance on others? Have you extended grace and forgiveness to others when it was in your ability to do so? Do you believe that you accurately reflect Jesus in your encounters with others? Take some time to read the scriptures referenced in this post, and see where you need God's grace and help to move from 99.5 to 100.

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