

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #80

Genesis 37:12-36

THE BELIEVER WHO IS FAITHFUL TO GOD AND GOD’S AUTHORITY WILL DISCOVER THAT OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS WILL AT TIMES BECOME JEALOUS AND WANT TO GET RID OF HIM, HOWEVER, HE WILL ALSO DISCOVER THAT GOD WILL SOVEREIGNLY PROTECT HIM, USE HIM AND BLESS HIM.

Dr. Allen Ross said that this section taught “those who faithfully serve their Master often must endure grievous persecution but cannot be prevented from fulfilling their God-given destiny” (*Creation & Blessing*, p. 609).

REALITY #1 - Even when facing envy and hatred the faithful servant is faithful to do his work. 37:12-17

Israel gave Joseph an assignment - go to Shechem and check up on his brothers and the flocks and bring back to him a report. It is not stated exactly why Israel sent Joseph, but the Hebrew word “welfare” which shows up twice in verse 14 is the word “shalom” which indicates Israel wants to know if the brothers and flocks are healthy, safe, sound, peaceful and whole (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 824). Joseph immediately went from the valley of Hebron to Shechem, a journey to the north of approximately 50 miles (Genesis 37:14). Joseph immediately responds and when he got to Shechem, he was informed his brothers were in Dothan, which is another 20 miles. It is possible that “the man” of verses 15 and 17 was part of the conspiracy plot to get rid of Joseph. Josephus claims that the plot to kill Joseph began as soon as the dreams were revealed. He also claims that they (his brothers) purposely had moved to Shechem and intentionally did not inform Jacob of their status (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 45).

Joseph knew he wasn’t loved or appreciated by his brothers, yet he had a job to do and he did it. He was not the kind of person who made excuses for not completing the assignment.

REALITY #2 - Even when being faithful and obedient, the faithful servant may experience family elimination. 37:18-28

The words “plotted against”(37: 1 8) him are words that mean they were trying to come up with some fraudulent means to kill Joseph (Gesenius, p. 550). What we actually have here is “vile democracy” in which the majority votes for a plan of homicide. God’s Word had so pierced their hearts that they wanted him dead. From a human standpoint there is nothing to stop these brothers from killing Joseph. Notice who surfaces to want to protect Joseph - it is Reuben (37:21-22). Reuben’s motive was to take Joseph back to his father (37:22), which would probably put him back in the good graces of his father, after having committed immorality with his father’s concubine, Bilhah (35:22).

Now here is where the Sovereignty of God becomes amazing. Why would God permit Reuben to commit an immoral act with Bilhah? Why didn't God prevent it or destroy them both? 'Because this act would be something God could use down the road to spare Joseph so he could become a great leader. **God is sovereign no matter how bizarre the situation or the sin.** The brothers took Reuben's suggestion and decided they don't want to slay him but they will sell him. Both the Ishmaelites and the Midianites have the same father - Abraham (Gen. 16:15; 25:2). All the players involved in this story are related to Abraham.

If you are faithful to God, you may discover you are somewhat eliminated from some of your family. You may be eliminated from some of your friends. People who love God's Word and love God will often discover friction in -family situations. But you may rest in the fact that behind the hostility is the Sovereign hand of God that is caring for you, molding you and directing you.

REALITY #3 - When the faithful and obedient servant is gone, one right with God will mourn and not be comforted. 37:29-35

Here is true, retributive irony, for we may recall that Jacob fooled his father Isaac by using a goat (27:9), and now he is being tricked by his sons by using a goat . Truly, in the sovereign plan of God, "what goes around comes around."

Notice carefully that the text says they dipped the tunic in the blood. There is no indication that they tore the coat. Dr. S. Lewis Johnson makes an excellent observation when he says: "If Jacob had been able to control his grief, he might have wondered why the cloak was not torn, but only stained by the blood" (*Genesis*, Study #53, p. 5).

- 1) When you find yourself surrounded by emotional family situations, think factually.
- 2) When one faithful is gone, there will be a void which cannot be filled.

REALITY #4 - When negative things are happening to a faithful servant, God is leading that servant to where God sovereignly wants him to be. 37:36

Dr. Allen Ross said, "The final verse of the chapter is short but critical" (*Creation & Blessing*, p. 609). Immediately when Joseph gets to Egypt, he is sold to Potiphar, who is a very high ranking official. This is no mere coincidence, for God is at work using these ugly events to bring Joseph to where He wants him to be.

If you purpose to be faithful to God, you will face adversity sometimes from those in your own family. It may come from your immediate family - a mate, a parent, a child, a brother or sister. It may come from your own church family. Envy and jealousy often causes people in the church to do and say terrible things against one who is faithful. But the one who is faithful may be certain of this - those who are lashing out will be paid back by God and even though the experience at the present time may be painful and lonely, God is still sovereignly directing you and protecting you. Stay faithful to God and in the end it will be you who will be highly honored.