

The God of Heartbreak

The New You

Genesis 37:12-28

For several weeks before Easter we were talking about heartbreak. Heartbreak is as certain as breath and will only cease when your heart stops beating.

- 1 – The Fall insures heartbreak
- 2 – God is sovereign over heartbreak

Heartbreak is Father-filtered

God is too great to do or allow what is unnecessary.

God is too good to be unloving.

God is too wise to make mistakes.

- God knows
- God cares
- God is in control

- 3 – Jesus is our model for heartbreak

God sinlessly uses sin for redemptive good

- 4 – God’s purposes enable us to forgive

- Unforgiveness is self-love

Romans 12:19 - *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it [give place] to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”*

- Unforgiveness is immediate and a process

Don’t confuse forgetfulness with forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-22 - *²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

- 5 – Forgiveness helps us re-interpret the heartache

Genesis 50:18 - *you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good*

There is no such thing as accidental, random, senseless or even risk in God’s world. Christianity does not deny evil. It is not an escape from reality. Rather, Christianity is an eternal view of temporal life.

God's sovereignty and providence means that you are never a victim and never powerless. Instead, you are an agent of God's saving grace.

Genesis 45:5 - God sent me before you to preserve life.

Genesis 45:7 – And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.

Genesis 45:8 - So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

6 - God uses heartbreak to create a new you

All of this brings us to our text for today –

Genesis 37:12-28 - Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am." ¹⁴ So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word." So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. ¹⁵ And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" ¹⁶ "I am seeking my brothers," he said. "Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." ¹⁷ And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

¹⁸ They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. ¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰ Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits.^[b] Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." ²¹ But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." ²² And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. ²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. ²⁴ And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵ Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. ²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels^[c] of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

They took Joseph to Egypt when he was 17 years old. At 17, Joseph lost everything but his life.

First: Look at God's History of Heartbreak

Genesis 12:1-2 - *Now the LORD said^[a] to Abram, "Go from your country^[b] and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.*

This seems like a simple and straightforward text. It is however, reminiscent of Genesis 37:12 – “They took Joseph to Egypt.”

In Abraham's situation, we don't see the behind-the-scenes activity that led up to or surrounded his departure from Ur. And yet, it must have been painful, even heartbreaking for Abraham to leave his family and home.

Until you've done that, you don't know what homesickness is.

But how did Abraham get into Canaan? Look closely at the timeline and progression of Abraham's entrance into Canaan

Genesis 11:31-32 - *Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. ³² The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.*

- They went together
- They intended to go to Canaan
- They settled in Haran

Did God wait until Terah died before calling Abraham out? If so, Haran's death must have been heartbreaking. Did God call Abraham out while Terah was still living? If so, in such a patriarchal society, it must have been heartbreaking to tell his father he was leaving and then to leave him.

When God told Abraham to leave his country and kindred, Abraham wasn't in Ur but Haran.

Ur is in Iraq. Haran is in Turkey. Terah, Abraham's father, was on the way to Canaan but never made it.

What God is asking Abraham to do is complete the journey.

Why?

Have you heard of the nature vs nurture debate? Nature is your DNA and nurture is your environment; family, neighborhood, friends, school, etc.

Which makes you? Nature or nurture? Both. For God to create Israel, a wholly new and eternal community intended to change the entire world, he needed to remove Abraham from Ur and Haran. He took the boy out of the country and got the country out of the boy.

There are occasions when God intends to re-shape you, to re-make you but to do so he must tear away those influences that hinder your make-over.

God has a history of doing this –

1 – He let the first generation of Egyptian Israelites die because the golden calf incident proved he could never get Egypt out of them. He needed a new generation.

2 – Our second birth accomplishes this

2 Corinthians 5:17 - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

The context of this is the old person of flesh vs the new person of the Spirit

In the 2nd birth, God does for us what he did for Abraham, Israel and Joseph.

And yet, we all know that salvation is both positional and progressive. Salvation is both an instantaneous act and a continual one. We are once-and-for-all saved from God's wrath but are daily saved from the world, self and the devil.

God uses heartbreak to

- 1 – Prove the world's falseness
- 2 – Destroy our reliance on idols
- 3 – Point us to Jesus

Second: Understand Your Identity Versus Your Lie-Dentity

Your 'identity' is in Christ. Your lie-dentity is anything else.

God used heartbreak in Abraham's life: separation from country and family, to make him an Israelite. "*Abraham, you are not an Urite or a Haranite, you are an Israelite.*"

God used heartbreak in Joseph's life: his brothers' hatred, his loss of father and world, to make him an Egyptian. "*Joseph, you are not your father's son. I am your Father.*"

God used the long and painful heartache of a 40-year wandering to make a 2nd generation his people.

Heartache re-creates us. It's the line-in-the-sand that moves us into another world

Job 42:1-6 – *Then Job answered the LORD and said, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ³ ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ⁴ ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’ ⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; ⁶ therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*

You are a Christian and God is going to use heartache to make you a Christian.

Sometimes God says, *“This is not you. You are not dependent on the world. You are not dependent on others for who you are. The world cannot make you. Your family or friends should not make you. I am going to prove you to you how shallow, how temporal and how insufficient that ‘you’ is by breaking those things on which you depend for your identity.”*

Picture: Sometimes, you need to pray Anne Frank’s prayer to endure it. Born in Frankfurt, her family moved to Amsterdam when she was 4 when the Nazi’s took control of Germany. In 1941, when she was 12, the Germans invaded the Netherlands and revoked her family’s German citizenship. The family became stateless and without passports could not leave the Netherlands. For two years, 1942-44, she and her Jewish family hid from the Germans in a room behind a bookcase in the building where her father worked. Eventually, the family was discovered, and Anne and her sister died in a concentrating camp; Anne, just months shy of her 16th birthday and only 2 months before British troops liberated her camp. But her father survived the concentration camps, returned to Amsterdam to find Anne’s diary and publish it in 1947.

*“Work, love, courage and hope,
Make me good and help me cope!”*

When our hope is set on Christ, we can cope with heartache.

What are we hoping for? *“They took Joseph to Egypt.”* God is moving us. We are hoping in God and what he is doing. And what is God doing? He is re-creating us, not externally, it’s not a simple make-over. He’s re-making us into the Abraham that can father a nation, into the Joseph that can save two continents, into the Job who will not curse God and die because he’s waiting to see God face-to-face in this life.

*When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;*

*When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!*

*How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him*

*Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!*

*How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses,
And which every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out-
God knows what He's about.*

- Author unknown

Conclusion: If you have yet to suffer this heartbreak, you can only pray that you will. “*What, Pray that you will?*” Just like at salvation, only when your heart is broken does Jesus live in and through you.

Until God sufficiently breaks your heart you will depend on insufficient people or things, even yourself, to self-identify. God will break your heart to re-make you into a person who sees him and whose identity is crafted and dependent on an unchanging him.

Community Groups:

- 1 – How does the Fall insure heartbreak?
- 2 – How does God’s sovereignty help us cope with heartbreak?
- 3 – What does the phrase ‘God sinlessly uses sin for redemptive good’ mean?
- 4 – How is unforgiveness self-love?
- 5 – What did Jesus mean when he said we should forgive 77 times?
- 6 – What heartbreak did Abraham endure in leaving Haran?
- 7 – What heartbreak did Joseph endure in leaving Canaan?
- 8 – Why did God let the 1st Exodus generation die? **(There are multiple reasons)**
- 9 – How does God use heartbreak to re-create our identity in him?

10 – Why would we pray that God would allow us to endure such heartache as to re-create us?