

The God of Heartbreak
The View from Another World
 Genesis 50:15-21 & 45:1-8

Heartache is as real as your breath. We all endure it and we even cause it. This series is intended to help us overcome the negative effects of heartbreak and choose the good God has stored for us in it. Like valuable treasure, it is sometimes difficult to locate but it is there. Once found, the heartache is worth the good God produces in our lives.

- 1 – God sinlessly uses sin for redemptive good
- 2 – The world is fallen, ensuring our heartbreak

When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers (45:5), he encouraged them not to be “distressed or angry” because of their sin (45:5).

He did not deny their betrayal.

Genesis 45:5 – “...*you sold me here...*”

This is important. We’ll talk about it in detail next week but for now, remember that it is unrealistic and unhealthy to deny evil.

Yet, Joseph also reinterpreted what happened to him in these words:

45:5b – “...*for God sent me before you...*”

45:7 – “*And God sent me before you...*”

45:8 – “*so it was not you who sent me here, but God.*”

What did Joseph just do?

He looked beyond this world, behind the veil of what we can see, and reinterpreted what his brothers did and what happened to him with a view from another world.

That God-centered, eternal view of his life changed everything for Joseph, his brothers, Joseph’s family in Egypt and two entire continents, to say nothing of saving Israel for the Messiah’s birth.

First: The Great & Good God of Evil

Some people claim we have to choose between a great or good God.

- *God is great but not (always) good and that’s why evil exists
- *God is good but not (always) great and that’s why evil exists

The Bible declares that God is great and good, simultaneously and always.

What does that mean?

If evil exists in the world of a great and good God, there must be some great and good purpose for it.

This view doesn't deny God's greatness, goodness or the existence of evil. Rather, it looks at evil and sin from God's infinite, eternal perspective rather than our limited, temporal perspective.

Second: Seeing Life from the Eternal Perspective

We often say, "Is that true?" "Will that work?" "Will this last?" And we respond, "Time will tell."

Time is the best proof of truth

Eternity wins (the reality contest)

People in Scripture believed in tribal gods whose power could win only on home turf. To beat an enemy in their own homeland was a display of your god's strength. This is what bolstered Sennacherib's confidence.

2 Chronicles 32:13-14 - *Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to deliver their lands out of my hand? ¹⁴ Who among all the gods of those nations that my fathers devoted to destruction was able to deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand?*

We all know that God sent one angel who destroyed 185,000 Assyrians in a single night and Sennacherib returned home a defeated king.

2 Kings 19:36-37 - *Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. ³⁷ And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword and escaped into the land of Ararat.*

What is my point?

God is not just the god of now. He is the God of eternity. Each present moment quickly becomes the past. As it does, it often determines our future. But in God's forever world, the past does not determine the future. There is much about life now that eternity will resemble but it is not dependent on it. It is brand new and of God's making. There is coming a day when the 'now' of this life will fade into the forever past to be entirely forgotten and only one present will exist without any past or future.

Like the wake of a ship through the sea soon disappears, whatever has hurt you will soon be gone, even forgotten in the presence of God.

Revelation 21:1-6 - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place^[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^[b] and God himself will be with them as their God.^[c] ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.*

When you understand that the past is past and that God is moving you into an incredible tomorrow – now as now moves toward eternity, it changes the way you interact with the sorrows of now.

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.*

As Joseph began to inherit God's planned blessings for him in Egypt, his understanding of God's providence enabled his mindset to change. This, in turn, changed his heart toward his brothers, his experiences and life in Egypt.

Christianity does not deny evil. It is not an escape from reality. Rather, Christianity reinterprets evil and sin through a divine lens. We view life from another world, the truer world – truer because it is the eternal world. Our faith brings the truer reality to bear on our past or present heartbreak and that transforms the way we embrace it, interpret it and use it. Christianity looks at this broken world and proclaims by faith, "God is alone worthy of my life. I choose to focus on what good God can do and is doing, rather than live responsively to evil."

Third: Living in Egypt Now

The day came when Israel left Egypt in the great exodus recorded in that book. But Joseph didn't leave Egypt alive. (Neither did Daniel leave Babylon). In Egypt, Joseph married, had children and lived happily.

Genesis 41:45 - *And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On.*

Genesis 46:27 - *And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two." [Ephraim and Manasseh]*

Instead of bitterness or revenge, either of which could have permanently scarred Joseph and ruined his future, he recognized God's sovereign hand in the sin that had been committed against and that worldview totally transformed his response and changed his entire life. It enabled him to refocus his life on the good that God intended rather than on their evil acts or the harmful consequences he endured.

God's greatness and goodness ensures the evil others intend you is transformed into good for you.

Looking to God, rather than those who hurt him enabled Joseph to profitably conduct his life in Egypt and when confronting his brothers, to forgive them and even help them move forward in life.

His past did not imprison him and in the process of living well in Egypt, he saved nations (41:45; 45:7; 50-52).

God's goodness in the present to Joseph was so much greater than the hurt he endured in the past that when his first son was born, he confessed, "*God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house*" (41:51).

Does that mean he didn't actually remember what his brothers did or his imprisonment? No. We know that he remembered it because he recalled it to his brothers several chapters later. What does it mean?

It means God's goodness to Joseph was so pervasive that it crowded out and left no room for the lingering effects of any heartache

By faith, Joseph applied a future Romans 8:18 to his past life and discovered "*the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*" That God-centered, gospel-saturated mindset saved him while he saved the world of the Bible.

Conclusion:

Looking at the heartache of Canaan and Egypt from the throne room changed Joseph. Looking at it from heaven's throne room transforms our heartbreak.

James 5:7-11 - ⁷ *Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.* ⁸ *You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.* ⁹ *Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.* ¹⁰ *As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.* ¹¹ *Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

Unlike Joseph, Job never saw the ‘behind the scenes’ view that we read in Scripture of what God was doing his life. But God placed it in Scripture for you to read and see.

Faith in God’s compassion and mercy gives you the divine pre-sight that nonbelievers can only hope to possess in hindsight. But hindsight is often too late to gain the full benefit of what God intends from heartache. It certainly makes life more miserable in the present and delays God’s healing.

Application:

- What Scriptures provide you with Joseph’s ‘big picture’ of his world? How might you apply that God-centered view?
- Why is it important that you not deny evil or that sin has been committed against you?
- The good God intends you in heartbreak is often not seen for some time. That’s why faith is so essential. It enables you to presently experience what you know will soon transpire. What good might you have already seen as a result of your trauma?