

***YOU SOLD ME BUT GOD SENT ME*****Genesis 45**

**Intro:** Early in October of 2006 Matt Swatzell was on his way home after a 24 hour shift as a firefighter/paramedic. He fell asleep at the wheel and crashed into another car driven by pregnant 30 year old June Fitzgerald. June was killed along with her unborn child, and her nineteen month old daughter Faith was badly injured. June's husband, a youth pastor named Erik, was, of course, devastated by the tragedy. Matt was too, even without the fact that he faced harsh felony charges that would give him jail time and ensured him never working as an emergency worker ever again, he bore relentless guilt for what his accident had done. Erik, a youth minister was sharing his grief with his students some time later and one of them, a young lady, wondered out loud what Matt must have been going through. It was at that point that Erik felt moved to contact Matt and get to know him. At Matt's trial Erik pleaded for Matt's sentence to be greatly reduced. A strong friendship has persisted.

But Matt's sense of guilt continued to grow, especially when he got married and he and his wife were expecting their first child. He could not get past the fact that he had denied his friend Erik the joy of his wife and unborn child. Erik helped Matt through that – meeting with him at least twice a month. Today they are strong friends. People who refuse to forgive are the most miserable people I know.

Forgiveness is always best! We learn about that from Joseph here in Genesis 45. Listen as I read it (Read Genesis 45)

By the way, we will finish this study of Lessons from Joseph with a sweep through Genesis 46-47 next week, if you are reading ahead.

Now back to our talk for today. The quote from Bob Deffinbaugh you find on the front of our worship folder for this morning, says, *Unresolved anger leads to bitterness, hostility, and revenge. Forgiveness leads to freedom and reconciliation.* There are so many lessons from Joseph, but if you learn any of them, you need to own this: **FORGIVENESS IS ALWAYS BEST!** Even when people don't deserve it, and usually they don't, it is always best. Jesus looked at the ones who were murdering him and implored his Father to forgive them. Stephen was being executed by stoning for speaking about Jesus and as he was being pelted by rocks, he begged for forgiveness for the ones who were throwing them. Forgiveness brings redemption and we see that here in the big reveal of Joseph to his deplorable brothers who had sold him. The might have sold him but God had saved him for a redemptive purpose.

Let's look into it. Joseph's brother are a prime example of how . . .

**A life lived in anger shows itself in a myriad ways – all bad**

- All the way back in Genesis 37 we saw bitter men who were driven to a heinous act and a wide ranging deception of their father by a simmering anger that came from a life of competition between their mothers, and blatant favoritism for another brother by their father. We've heard over and over that this was the poster family for dysfunction, and that bitterness boiled over into a cheap sale of their own flesh and blood to nomadic merchants and an elaborate lie about what happened to the boy when they returned to their father.
- The problem with such an act is that you have to keep covering it up. And when you keep covering it up you will sooner or later fail, or at least you will never relax for fear that you will fail. That only makes bitter and angry people, more bitter and angry. It gets tiring always covering your tracks.
- And that just develops into full blown paranoia and these men had an obvious case of it. With each hardship, even many years after the fact, they are reminded of their treachery. They never had relief from the nagging need to look warily over their shoulders.
- What had begun as uncontrolled anger, ended up in miserable regret. Truth be told they could not forgive themselves. But for them, that was progress. At least, they learned something. And they were going to learn more when they realized this Egyptian official with power of life and death over them was the very same brother they had been so horrible to. Most of all, after their initial shock and paranoia, they realized

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**A forgiving spirit sees that God is at work even in the worst of situations.**

- After Joseph's initial outburst and inquiry after his father, whom, truthfully, he already knew was still living, it says that they brothers were immediately ...*terrified at his presence* (v 3). It was a collective "UH, OH!!!!!"
- Of course their fear didn't escape Joseph, but he knew what God had been up to all along and he called them in – maybe into the first group hug in history, and assured them with *Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.* (v. 5). And then, "*So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.*" (v. 8), in other words, You sold me, but God sent me! All those dreams I had that you hated, they meant something. They were pointing to your own salvation. That's how God does it.
- God used the treachery of some angry men to bring salvation. Hmmm, kind of sounds Good Fridayish doesn't it . . . ?

### **God plans ahead**

- You see, contrary to what some people would have you believe, God knows the future and not only that, he uses it to the benefit of humanity and to his own glory. He takes tragedy and he redeems it.
- And when he has an obedient servant like Joseph – it's all that much better. Joseph never gave up. He never gave up on God and he never flagged in his faith and integrity. God works with willing servants like that. He preserved an entire people – Jacob – now named Israel and his children. And through that preservation of the Children of Israel, all of humanity was preserved.
- All along this was God's plan. That's why he is God. And he includes us in carrying it out. Notice here in the life of Joseph how . . .

### **God's work shines through in his servants.**

- His people are beloved in their culture and Joseph's life is a picture of this. He may have been sold as a slave but he soon rose in his master's household to be in charge of all operations and second only to Potiphar – the master. All this, and still a slave. When this was ruined by the lustful advances of Potiphar's wife and her false accusations, he made the best of his prison sentence by quickly rising to be in charge of prison operations. All this and still an inmate. And, as you remember, Joseph was the only one in all of Egypt who was able to interpret the weird dreams of Pharaoh. As a result, Joseph was elevated to regent of all the land of Egypt – second only to the absolute ruler, Pharaoh, himself. All this, and only a Hebrew.
- Joseph's faithfulness to God was the fuel for his rise to prominence. So when we read in our text *When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased.* Genesis 45:16, we know the powerful and positive impact Joseph had on everyone around him, and ultimately on his entire culture. The people of God have that effect. All through history, advances in medicine, education, government, and truthfully, everything, have been brought about by the people of God. Have there been times when those who claimed to be people of God have carried out ungodly things? Of course, but the truth is, they were not truly the people of God – or at least tragically misled.
- We all know that sometimes the people of God do not have the acceptance in society Joseph enjoyed. We are entering a season of that in our society – does that mean we give up? Certainly not! We continue witnessing. That's what we do.
- All through human history, God's people are the ones who have made a difference. In the early church, when disease struck and the dying were left to die of plague in the street, it was Christians who took them in and nursed them back to health or comforted them until they died. Often they died of the plague themselves – but they were not afraid of death – it held no danger for them. Being obedient makes a difference.
- Here we go again, but it's always true, God's people also know they cannot outgive God. As Joseph was obedient to God through each mounting tragedy, God blessed him in increasing ways and he passed it on. That's a key thing, by the way – passing on God's blessing. It remains that way. God blesses his obedient servants and they pass on the blessing.
- This isn't obvious in the Joseph story, but the people of God are missed when they are gone. If Joseph had not been there, God's will would still have been carried out, but he always utilizes his willing servants.

And when they are no longer around, they are sorely missed. No matter what the world thinks, or does, God has a plan and he include his people in carrying it out.

**Conclusion:** We're almost done this studied. Joseph's big reveal first terrified his brothers and then brought great joy. The brothers thought Joseph would exact revenge but quickly realized he served a higher purpose than lowly vengeance. First of all, he knew that forgiveness is always better, also, he was all about carrying out God's perfect plan. They sold him. God sent him. Let's learn from him. Let's be about God's plan. Next week, we'll finish the study. TO BE CONCLUDED. Amen.