

The Perfecting Storm

Genesis 42:1-36

6/01/08

Intro

At this point in our study in Genesis we now turn our focus onto Joseph's brothers. We have seen that though they at first thought of killing Joseph because of his dreams, decided instead to sell him into slavery, then, in spite of finding success in the house of Potiphar his master, Potiphar's wife falsely accuses him of attempted rape and he is thrown into prison. Though he finds success even in prison, and he is given the opportunity to interpret dreams for two of Pharaoh's officials, he is forgotten for two years more.

Finally when Pharaoh had a dream that could not be interpreted, Pharaoh's official finally remembered Joseph and he was brought from prison. He then interpreted Pharaoh's dreams in that there would be seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine. He then suggested administratively creative ways to prepare for the famine and Pharaoh decided to make him essentially the prime minister of Egypt to oversee such preparations.

That is where the brothers come back into the story; when the famine ravages the land, Jacob heard word that there was grain in Egypt and sent the ten brothers to go there to purchase grain.

Spiritually, there is something very important that is taking place. Clearly there are some issues that need to be worked out of these men. Is there any question that God needed to do a work in men who are filled with such anger and jealousy that they sell their own brother into slavery?

God will be with us to the end of the age, Jesus said. And while He is with us, He is committed to working in our lives the change He desires and working out of our lives the things that are obstacles to godly character.

I. Be Perfected in Love

- God is not through with these brothers. Why? Because in spite of their sinful immaturity, He loves them.
- God loves us and is committed to working out those things in our lives that are immature, selfish, sinful, and hurtful to others.

A. God wants to set you free

- These men have been carrying a burden for over 22 years. Imagine all the times when Joseph's name was mentioned by their father Jacob that they had to play along.
- In verse 1 Jacob asks the brothers, "Why are you staring at one another?" It suggests that the brothers are standing there looking at each other wondering what they are to do since they know that Joseph was sold into slavery there. Their consciences would have bothered them at every mention of Egypt as well.
- God not only will provide for them in the famine, but there is something greater still that He wants to do, He wants to set them free.

John 8:31-36, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." ... "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

- There is a famous story in the New Testament of a woman caught in adultery. Some Pharisees brought her out to Jesus and said, “The Law says that such a woman deserves to be stoned, what do you say?”

Illus – Jesus not only freed the woman from her condemnation, but freed her from her sin, “Go and sin no more,” Jesus said.

B. God uses many different ways

- There are many ways that God uses to bring about what He desires in our lives.
- He may use a storm; in this case God is using a famine to set them free from the burden they have been carrying and to reconcile the family back together.
- The key is to understand that things are not always as they appear.
- Verse 36 – Jacob looked at all these things as the perfect storm; that everything was against Him. He didn’t realize that all these things were actually for him.

I Corinthians 13:12, For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. KJV

Illus – I had my own perfect storm once. I was attending a couples retreat when Jordi and I were attending Beaverton Foursquare many years ago. But then things took an awful turn... but God used it to accomplish what He desired and blessed us in it.

- In truth, we don't know what we think we know. We judge situations with such limited knowledge

Illus – Einstein once compared our lack of knowledge to a ten year child coming into a library of foreign languages.

And then there are all those things we thought were true but turned out to be false. For example, a dog year is not seven human years; no one eats like a bird, etc.

- Joseph's brothers have no idea yet that God is arranging things so they can be set free and be reconciled to God, to their brother, and even to their father Jacob.

C. You must want to be set free

- In verse 21 their guilty consciences are becoming clearly seen. But they are not quite ready to own up to everything they have done, it seems that their hearts will require more before they are broken.
- It's important for us to come to the place where we *want* to be free.

Proverbs 3:11-12, My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe His reproof, for whom the Lord loves He reproveth, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.

- Many people say, "Don't pray for patience because God will put you in a situation where your patience will be severely tested."

- Yet, if that is what we need, then we can trust that God will work in our lives that which is truly best and we do not have to be afraid of God's hand.

I John 4:18, There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

Illus – Whenever I moved to a new place or went to a new school, I would try to discover where I could find a piano. One day I was sitting in a church that I found had a piano and the pastor happened to come by so I played a song that I loved. He interrupted the song and said, “You shouldn’t sing that song.” I asked why he thought that. “Because God will do it,” he said. But then God should do it if I need it. The words were, “Lord, take your plow to my fallow ground; let your blade dig down in the soil of my soul. For I’ve become dry and dusty and Lord I know there must be richer lines below.”

- We are being *perfected in love* and as a Father disciplines the son whom He loves, so God can be trusted to do what is needed in our lives because of His love for us.

II. Trust God in the Storm

- The brothers wondered what God had done to them; Jacob thought everything was against him.
- The key is to trust God in the storm, because He may well be using the storm for some great purpose in our lives.

A. Lack of faith is the issue

- Verse 27-28 -- When they stopped at the first lodging place, one of them opened his sack of grain and there at the mouth of the sack was the money that to pay for the grain.
- He then asked, “What is this that God has done to us?” In other words, it must have seemed to them that God was out to get even with them, or was only bringing trouble into their lives.
- But the problem was that they lacked faith.
- I believe this sinful secret they all shared was an obstacle to their faith. It kept them from loving God; it kept them from trusting God. Yet that is what God desires for each of us.

Illus – When Jesus and the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee after ministering to a large crowd, they encountered a storm that threatened to swamp their boat, but Jesus was sleeping on a cushion, so they woke Him and *rebuked Him for not caring.*

Mark 4:39-41, Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!” NKJV

Illus – Do you think that Jesus was surprised by the storm? Perhaps the angel of storms got his dates wrong.

- If their relationship to God was right perhaps Joseph's brothers could have looked to God in faith.

Isaiah 41:10, “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

B. Faith works with love

- It's hard to trust God through a storm when your relationship to Him isn't right.
- There is a scripture that many quote, and I love to quote it as well, that comes from Romans 8...

Romans 8:28, And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- It's important to see the part in that verse that says...to those who love God.
- Faith comes from our relationship to God. In other words, loving God is essential to seeing that He is for you and working all things together in your life for good.
- God seeks to restore those who have fallen away. He desires to bring people into a place of trusting Him and walking with Him, because God is already walking with them.

C. Have a teachable heart

- If we could just keep looking for what God is doing in our lives.
- That's the key when you're going through a storm, or a famine, or a difficult time in your life.

Proverbs 3:5-8 Do not lean on your own understanding