

Truly Changed

Genesis 44:30-45:8

6/15/08

Intro

As we study through Genesis we have recently shifted our focus from Jacob, to Joseph and now recently to Joseph's brothers. Clearly what we have seen in these brothers is that there were some serious character issues in their hearts. What we need to understand is that the problem really stems from a soul that is selfish and immature.

What we have also seen in this story is that God was working in their lives to work these things out of their lives. God is also committed to our spiritual condition. There is an old saying that captures this thought very well, "God loves us just the way we are, but loves us too much to let us stay that way."

God will use even the storms of life, or a famine in the case of Joseph's brothers, to work out the character problems in their lives. God is committed to changing us as well.

But what does true change really look like? As we study the process of change in Joseph's brothers, there is a lot that we can apply to our lives as well.

I. The Apple Doesn't Fall Far

- The saying, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," tells us something about how we come to have some of the traits that we have.
- Of course, we have physical traits from our father. I have my father's chin, for example. But we often get character traits as well. This gives us great insights into what was happening in the hearts of Joseph's brothers.

A. Like father like sons

- As you read through the progression of the story of Genesis, you see something very interesting. The name *Jacob* means *heal-snatcher*. In other words, he tripped other people in getting whatever he wanted.
- He deceived and manipulated to get Esau's birthright and blessing and then spent twenty years getting Laban's goat, literally. He and his uncle Laban, who was a manipulator extraordinaire, had quite a time taking advantage of each other.
- Is it any wonder then that Jacob's boys had some serious character flaws? What is the common thread we see? ***Favoring one's self and letting other people pay the price.***
- When Joseph then had the dreams that he was going to rise above them and that they would all bow down before him, that was too much, their pride couldn't take such a thought and when the opportunity came up they took hold of him and sold him to some Midianites passing by who then sold him as a slave in Egypt. That is some serious character flaw!

Illus – Abraham told a half-lie about his wife being his sister and later you see Isaac telling the exact same half-lie.

- You see that same principle in other places.

II Kings 17:14, However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God.

- God gives fathers to teach children about God and to be an example for them. It's sad when this breaks down and becomes much less.

Illus – When I was very young I admired my father and tried to please him and help him work on cars and loved to go fishing. But later I became angry and didn't want to be like him at all. And then I was afraid that might make me like him even more.

I knew I couldn't drink alcohol because I was like him in that as well.

B. God is truly our Father now

- When you look at the failure of Joseph's brothers to have character, we can trace the roots back to Jacob, but what is happening in their lives at this point is that *God is now the one* shaping their lives.
- It is like a good father who adopts a child who has had a terrible upbringing. He will be committed to changing what the boy once was like into a man of character.

Illus – Adopting two sons has given me a new appreciation for what God is doing in my life.

I remember when the boys were first here and couldn't speak English and we were playing a game. The oldest kept cheating ...

Illus – God promised David that He would be Solomon's Father...

II Samuel 7:14-15, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him... but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him,” It was written of John the Baptist...

Luke 1:16-17, And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

C. We will bear the fruit of a new tree

- If the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, then perhaps it would be good to see that we are to bear the fruit of a new tree... and the fruit is good.

Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Galatians 5:22-23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- The question Joseph is seeking is the same, is there any change at all?
- When the sacks of grain were being filled Joseph had his silver cup put into Benjamin's sack and at first light the men left the city. But a short distance later the men were stopped and accused of stealing the cup. Their bags were searched and behold it was with Benjamin so they all returned to Joseph's house to face their troubles.
- Joseph pronounced that Benjamin was to stay as his slave and the others were free to go.

- *If they had taken the opportunity to leave Jacob's other favorite son, I believe Joseph would have let them go; meaning that no change had come in their lives.*

Illus – The story of the prodigal son is also a story of a change of heart that comes from adversity...

Luke 15:11-24 An example of change that comes from adversity

II. Strongly Desire Godly Change

- When Judah offered to become a slave in Benjamin's place, Joseph was convinced.
- This was no longer the Judah that wanted to sell Joseph as a slave. Joseph was so touched that he sent everyone out of the room and wept deeply.
- Judah was no longer seeking his own and hurting others, he was ready to sacrifice himself for the good of others – a true mark of godliness.

A. Godly character is a great treasure

- Living for yourself might sound like great fun at first, but everyone who does so will learn that it brings a lot of hurting to their lives and in the lives of those around them.
- But God says that the opposite will bring healing and refreshment...

Proverbs 3:7-8, Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.

- Later in that same chapter God speaks to the value of godly wisdom...

Proverbs 3:13-18 Nothing you desire compares with godly wisdom

- In 1 Peter, we read a similar verse about faith.

I Peter 1:6-7, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

B. Faith is most precious of all

- When Joseph had seen that his brothers had truly changed their lives, he revealed who he was to them.
- At first they were terribly afraid of what this might mean. Perhaps this was another thing against them, but then Joseph explains from God's perspective.
- First, he tells them not be grieved or angry with themselves. When we get angry with ourselves, the focus of our lives is still on ourselves.
- 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.

Illus – Faith looks at life with a godly perspective.

A young gal had her car broken into and someone stole all her Christian CDs and her Bible. Her response was touched by her faith, “What a shock he is going to get when he realizes that God is after his soul! Then he’s going need that Bible!”

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.”

Genesis 45:24-25, So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, “Do not quarrel on the journey.”