
The Messenger



"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15

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God Meant it for Good

by Sewell Hall

"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50:20).

This statement is Joseph's conclusion drawn after many years of observing God's providence in his life. When his brothers sold him into slavery he must have wondered, as so many good people do when things go wrong, "Why has God let this happen to me?" Now he knows.

Four Facts Revealed

1. The purposes and actions of Joseph's brothers were evil. They did not "mean well." Genesis 37 tells us that when Joseph was 17 years old, his brothers hated him (verses 4, 8); they "envied him" (verse 11) and "conspired against him to kill him" (verse 18). They stopped short of murder, primarily because they saw the possibility of profit from selling him into slavery (verses 26-27). Such attitudes and motives are Satan's work (James 3:15).
2. God's purpose was good. It was good for Joseph. It is always God's purpose to be "a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). His purpose was also good for Joseph's family. He had said to Abraham, Joseph's great-grandfather, "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions" (Gen. 15:13-14).
3. God had involved himself in Joseph's life in order to accomplish his purposes. He had intervened to help him and his family.
4. Although Satan caused Joseph's brothers to sell him, God was able to overrule the work of Satan and to bring good from evil.

Lessons for Us

When we are mistreated and abused, we must “not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22). Satan is always the cause of mistreatment and there is much more reason to forsake Satan than to forsake God. Like Joseph we must wait “patiently for the Lord,” confident that his purpose for us is for our good always, and that he is still in control.

It is not for us to take vengeance on those who mistreat us. Joseph’s awareness that God had used his sufferings for good was stated as an assurance to his brothers that they should not fear him even after their father was dead. “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

When we are wronged and are in no position to bring the perpetrators to repentance, we will do well to remember the example of Joseph who named his first son Manasseh, a word meaning *forgetfulness*. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household” (Gen. 41:51). Nothing is to be gained by continually “licking our wounds” and brooding over our mistreatment. The sooner we can put such things behind us and get on with our lives, the better it is.

Such forgetfulness is made easier by remembering God’s power to use it all for good. If an experienced chess player can capitalize on every move his opponent makes, much more can God overrule every action of Satan. Satan not only caused Joseph to be enslaved in a foreign land, but he motivated Potiphar’s wife to lust after him, to try to seduce him, to lie when he rejected her, and to have him imprisoned. Satan produced the ingratitude that caused the butler to forget Joseph for two years after Joseph had befriended him. Yet it was these very things that God linked together to elevate Joseph in Egypt and to put him in position to save his family and bring them to Egypt where they could become “a great nation.”

This power of God to turn evil into good is even more dramatically demonstrated in the life of the One of whom Joseph was a type (Acts 7:9-18). Just as God used the evil actions of Joseph’s brothers to accomplish their salvation and that of all their family, so he used Satan’s crucifixion of his own Son to make possible salvation, not only for those who crucified him but also for all mankind.

Our hardships may not turn out for our physical, financial, or social good as they did for Joseph. However, such temporal benefits are not the real good, nor are they God’s primary purpose for us. The real good is the molding of our lives into the image of Christ and the salvation of our souls and those of others. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Therefore, “we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance character; and character hope” (Rom. 5:3-4).

*Not now, but in the coming years,
It may be in the better land,
We’ll read the meaning of our tears,
And there, sometime, we’ll understand.
Then trust in God through all thy days.
Fear not, for He doth hold thy hand;
Though dark thy days still sing and praise,
Sometime, sometime we’ll understand.*

Maxwell N. Cornelius

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16