

God's Providence

Genesis 45:4-9

Introduction: Have you ever looked back on your life at a given situation and wondered if God had a hand in it? Rom. 8:28 states, *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* But sometimes it is hard to see the good in a bad situation.

Perhaps we experienced the loss of a loved one or we were forced to move to another locality. We think to ourselves, “What good can come from that?” Maybe we suffered injury in an auto accident or watched our marriage end in divorce. We wonder, how does God work good out of the tragedies and disappointments in life?

I. We'll answer that question by answering three other questions about the life of Joseph.

1. Why did God use so much space to relate the story of Joseph?
2. Why didn't Joseph return home when he was Prime Minister over Egypt?
3. Why did God select Joseph's evil brothers to be the leaders of His chosen nation?

II. Answers:

#1. So we can see God's providence working in Joseph's life (Gen. 37, 42). God made the evil in Joseph's life work for good!

A. Review in reverse:

- Joseph was Prime Minister for 9 years when he brought his family to Egypt. Why?
- Because he saved the grain in storehouses. Why?
- Because Pharaoh appointed him to that task. Why?
- Because Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams about the cattle and ears of corn. Why?
- Because Joseph was in prison and the Butler remembered how Joseph interpreted his dream. What would have happened if the Butler forgot Joseph in prison? Why was Joseph in prison in the first place?
- Because Joseph was a slave to Potiphar. His wife tried to seduce him so Potiphar put him into prison instead of killing him (which Potiphar could have done if he truly believed Joseph had done that evil). Why was Joseph a slave?
- Because the Ishmaelites sold him to Potiphar. Why?
- Because they bought Joseph from his brothers. Think what would have happened if Reuben returned before Joseph was sold or if the

Ishmaelites didn't pass by that location. Why did Joseph's brothers sell him?

- Because they hated Joseph due to jealousy. Why?
- Because their father was partial to Joseph. Why?
- Because Joseph was the firstborn of Jacob's favorite wife Rachel.

B. One event was dependent upon another. God only intervened twice as far as we can tell. With the exception God's miraculous intervention, do you think God works the same way in our lives?

C. How can we tell? (We can't)

- Joseph traveled 60 to 70 miles, 15 miles extra to Dothan, cast into a pit, heard arguments from his brothers about how to kill him, and sold into slavery, not hearing from them again for years.
- Do you think Joseph could understand that God would save a whole nation of people through him?
- Do you think Joseph who stood on his convictions when tempted and thrown into prison could see God bringing good out of that?
- When reviewed in reverse we can see it!

#2. Joseph became the Prime Minister over all of Egypt and had charge of the treasury, the grain supply and the government. He stayed in that position for 7 years of plenty and through 2 years of famine. Yet, he never went home to be with his father or to see his family. They lived less than **200 miles** away over a smooth road. Joseph could have gotten into any chariot and driven up there any time he wanted but he didn't go home. Why not? He didn't want to.

- Suppose your brothers took you at 17 years of age and debated to kill you and then sold you into slavery. Wouldn't you hope your father would rescue you? His father was rich but as far as he knows his father made no effort to save him.
- Joseph had a son called Manasseh (Gen. 41:51). Manasseh means, "I have forgotten."
- When his brothers came to buy grain, he called them spies.
- When he learned of his brother Benjamin, he tried to rid his brothers and retain Benjamin using a cup in his sack. Remember what Reuben said (Gen. 42:21-23)? This was the first time Joseph learned of any effort to save his life. Later the brothers argued in behalf of Benjamin's return home using Joseph as the reason. Joseph's heart melted at the words spoken by Judah (Gen. 44:18-34). It was at that moment that Joseph realized what his life was all about (Gen. 45:1-5).

#3. God selected the brothers of Joseph to be the founders and leaders of the twelve tribes of people who were called his chosen nation for 1400 to 1500 years. These brothers were mean enough to kill their brother and sell him into slavery. If God wanted to bring up a chosen nation, why did He select those men to lead a nation? Simply, that wasn't the men God selected but rather He chose the later men. Wouldn't you like to be remembered for your good rather than your mistakes?

Conclusion: Our light afflictions work a far greater weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17-18; Rom. 8:28).

- Janine was told she would be disowned if she was baptized for the remission of her sins. Not only does she have a chance of salvation but she also became my wife.
- I left a very disappointing situation in the church when I lived in West Virginia. But as a result of my departure, I became an evangelist and Jason gained access to specialized doctors who saved his life.
- Janine and I adopted a daughter which we should not have been allowed to adopt.

God can make the tragedies and the disappointments in life work for good for those who love the Lord. Our mistakes and our sins can be forgotten!