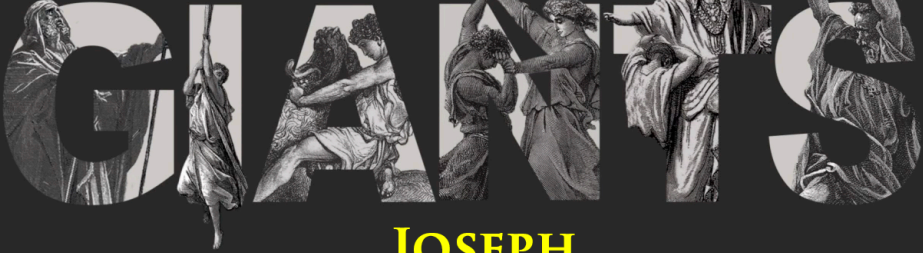


RUNNING WITH THE



JOSEPH GRADUATING FROM GOD'S CHARACTER BUILDING COURSE

Sermon #3

Genesis 37-50

May 27, 2018

The Face of Forgiveness

Eleven faces stared anxiously down at the floor. Though all eyes were on the ground, all attention was focused on the man enthroned at the front of the room. Huddled in tense silence, the eleven knelt before one of the most powerful rulers in the land, knowing he had the authority to execute them.

Garbed in distinctive fashion fitting his office and flanked by guards and servants, the prime minister looked down on these humble herdsmen as they stooped before him. His long history with these men included especially vivid memories of pain and rejection. They had wronged him unthinkably in the past. Now the tables were turned. With a word, he could enact severe retribution on those who had betrayed him.

Is that the action Joseph would take against his brothers? Their father Jacob had just died, and together they had buried him. Now they were bowing before their brother and begging him for mercy, fearful that, with their father's passing, Joseph might finally seek revenge against them for the severe cruelty they had perpetrated against him decades earlier.

Minutes felt like hours in the somber anticipation of Joseph's decision. The brothers braced themselves for the worst. Was this the day their crimes had finally caught up with them?

When the silence was broken, it was not with a voice of angry threats or harsh punishment. Instead, it was the sound of weeping. The brothers' gloomy expressions softened with bewilderment. One by one, they slowly lifted their gazes, curious to see what was happening.

Joseph looked back at them with a forgiving smile, tears tumbling down his face. His tears proved contagious, as they all wept.

Struggling to regain his composure, Joseph collected himself long enough to release the compassion that was in his heart. The Genesis account records his words:

Genesis 50:19–21 – “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 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. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Unlike those who breed a seething hatred and desire for vengeance, Joseph treated his brothers with undeserved favor. But how do kindness and love get cultivated in the heart of one so wickedly treated? The answer is found in Joseph’s theology—he had a clear understanding of God’s providence. In that moment, with his brothers before him and his trials behind him, Joseph articulated a perspective that summarized the story of his life: **God is in control and we can trust Him for the outcome.**

As New Testament believers looking back on Joseph’s example, we can see the principle of Romans 8:28 fleshed out in his life: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” As Joseph himself articulated, God intended the trials of his life for the good of his people, and though Joseph did not suffer because God was punishing him for sin, he did suffer so that God could ultimately save sinners.

- What lessons do you learn from the life of Joseph today?

Three Character Building Principle

During the message, we learned about the “Three Character Building Principles.” As you reflect upon each of these principles, begin asking how each one applies in your life today.

Principle #1 - The Principle of Patience

Character is Revealed in Times of Adversity

Principle #2 - The Principle of Persistence

Character Cultivates Your Credibility

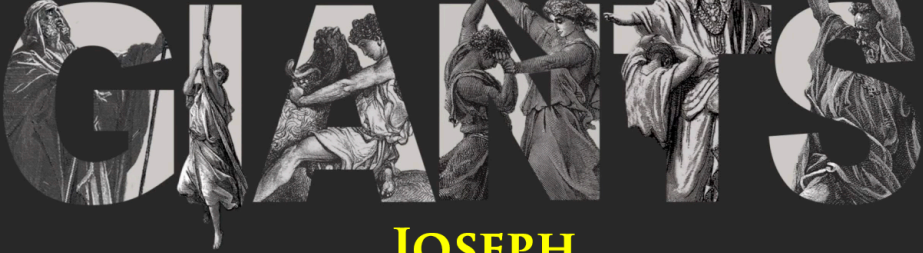
Principle #3 – The Principle of Perspective

Character Shapes and Molds Your Perspective

- How does each principle apply to your life?
- How can you apply these lessons in your own life as you minister to others?

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