

***"The Attack on the Heir and His Family Continues -
Joseph, Chosen of Almighty God but A Slave for God's Glory -
A Vale of Tears is the Heart of the Story"***

Review:

So far in our fellowship around this great theme, "The Long War Against God", we have seen God working miraculously in Abraham's life -- and then in Isaac's, as well. And then, in our last fellowships, we have considered Jacob and how through deception Jacob had revealed his parents wisdom, in naming his "Jacob", which, in the Hebrew language, means "supplanter", or, even, "thief".

Jacob demonstrated the frailty in his own nature (as his name indicates) by "stealing" from his elder brother Esau both his birthright and his blessing.

Then, out of fear for his life (for his brother Esau had intended to kill him), he learned much more about himself as an "indentured servant" for 20 years in his uncle Laban's household.

What follows is one of the most amazing historical accounts in the Bible of Almighty God meeting with a sinner. In chapter 32 of Genesis we find revealed what proved to be the critical turning point in Jacob's life as he "wrestles" nearly until daybreak with a "man" who is in fact the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Son of God himself.

But at this point in this revealed history Almighty God himself changes Jacob's name to Israel signifying not simply the truth of the sovereignty of God, but rather, Jacob's full acceptance of that truth. For his new name, Israel, means "God rules" or "God commands". Through this encounter, Jacob realizes that he has been wrestling with God himself. Consequently he is humbled and "marked" for life and for the sake of his testimony. Therefore he named that place Peniel, or, "the face of God", for, as it is written: ". . . Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

After departing from one another, most miraculously, of course, Jacob and his brother meet again after 20 years of separation but this time they meet in peace. Again, Satan's plan of destruction has been destroyed by the Lord God.

[READ] Gen. 33:4

4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

Esau's tears and Jacob's tears here certainly do reflect a deep found spring from the human heart, from the very center of their beings. However, not all tears are the same.

That not all tears are the same is made very clear in the word of God, the Bible. We will come back to the tears of these two brothers later, but just consider two scriptures from the New Testament:

You will recall several scriptures that mention crying and tears in quite a different context altogether:

- ***John 11:35*** Jesus wept. ***[Lazarus had died and his sisters and family are very distraught. As the previous verses make so clear, our Lord's tears on that occasion seem to be due to the lack of faith of Mary and Martha regarding the coming resurrection.]***
- ***Lk. 22:41-44***
41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,
42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.
43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.
44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.
- ***Heb. 5:7*** Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Here our Lord Jesus it set forth as the greatest example possible of how not all tears are of the same sort. Very sadly, not all tears are the same because not all tears are a testimony to the work of Almighty God in our hearts.

In that great encounter at the Brook Jabbok, Jacob, now Israel, had come to know, and had begun to testify boldly, that the God of his father and grandfather, the God with whom he had had an uncertain relationship for so long, was indeed his God, and that that very God was the one who had cared so tenderly for him all of his life, providing for his every need and "redeeming him from all evil."

Now, although the scene shifts to from Jacob to Joseph, Satan is not finished with Joseph yet and neither is the Lord God. His attacks continue after Jacob

has died and from Genesis chapter 37 to the end of the book the focus is on the deliverance of Jacob's family through his God's miraculous intervention in his family's affairs.

Yes, this is the Story of Joseph, A Slave for God's Glory, but it is all about how God changes the course of history to ensure that the chosen family is not only protected from the enemy seeking always to destroy it (and the Seed of the Woman promise, of course), but is blessed abundantly in the process. In our last fellowship we saw how this stage of redemptive history began with dreams God gave to Joseph as a very young man, how it continued in Potiphar's house and then in prison, and then continued in pharaoh's house and finally in Joseph's own house. We will take up the story there, in Joseph's house where we shall see how this "vale of tears" is revealed.

But for our review, you will remember how Joseph had dreams and how this led to his being carried off into Egypt as a slave. He is sold as a slave to Potiphar, the captain in charge of pharaoh's guard. However, because of lies told by Potiphar's wife, Joseph soon finds himself cast away into prison. While there, pharaoh's chief butler and baker are also cast into prison with Joseph where Joseph has opportunity to interpret their dreams.

Because Joseph had correctly interpreted the other dreams, word of this comes to Pharaoh who has also had troubling dreams. Joseph's success in interpreting the other dreams is brought to pharaoh's attention and Joseph is called by pharaoh to interpret his as well. Joseph tells pharaoh how there will be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine and how he needs to appoint a wise manager who know how to manage all of this. Pharaoh then chooses Joseph for this job and puts him in charge of everything in the kingdom:

So Joseph, having managed the entire nation's food supply and consumption for some years of plenty and abundant harvests, is not only in charge of the nation of Egypt but also their food stores as a long period of famine comes upon the nation and the entire world. This all was happening according to the dreams that Joseph had interpreted.

This sets the stage for chapters 42 through 44 of Genesis where the whole drama of God's deliverance of his chosen people unfolds. We will take up the story again once Joseph has been ruling in Egypt for some years and the famine that had been the central point of the interpreted dreams was now well underway.

I. Joseph - A Slave for God's Glory: A Vale of Tears Befalls the Royal Family

Chap. 42: "Jacob sends his ten sons to buy grain in Egypt and they are imprisoned by Joseph as if they were spies. They are set at liberty then but on condition that they will return to their land and bring back Benjamin.

Not realizing that it is Joseph, they show their regret in front of him for their evil towards him and Simeon is bound and kept for a “security” as they are sent back to their father with grain and with their money. But Jacob still refuses to send Benjamin.” Paraphrased from TSK.

[READ] Gen. 42:23-24

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept [privately]; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

- ***Joseph is overwhelmed with grief and turns away in tears. Why do you think he found himself in such a tearful condition?***
- ***Are these precious tears of healing, expressing his deep and heart felt forgiveness for the sins of his brothers as he now sees so clearly how God had planned all of this from the beginning?***

Chap. 43-45: Through this Joseph’s father Jacob finally is persuaded to send Benjamin and when he is presented to Joseph he has a feast already prepared for them.” Surely his intent was to profoundly humble his brothers. “The silver cup was found in Benjamin’s sack and they are brought before Joseph; Judah’s supplication to Joseph in in brokenness of heart and perhaps many tears were shed here as well.” TSK

Chap. 45: “And, finally, Joseph makes himself known to his brothers, comforts them in God’s providence, and sends for his father.” - TSK

[READ] Gen. 45:1-7

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

[READ] Gen. 45:8-11

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

READ] Gen. 45:12-15

12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

- *I believe this event was transformational, especially for Joseph.*
- *The previous tears shed as recorded in chapter 42 are only amplified here to an extreme.*
- *These tears shed are clearly tears shed in profound demonstration of the work of Almighty God who has continued to intersect with the lives of his people in a transformational way indeed!*
- *The key question, as always, is this: What about us?*

[Your thoughts?]

II. Joseph - A Slave for God's Glory: Tears Flowed and They Still Speak Today

There are 13 total references to tears in Genesis and half of them directly relate to this account we have been considering today. They all speak to the fact of God's intervention in the affairs of men and specifically here of his chosen people.

Gen. 42:24, And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

Gen. 43:30, And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother:

and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

Gen. 45:14, And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

Gen. 46:29, And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

[Refer also here to Gen. 49:22-26

22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:

23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:

24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.]

Gen. 50:1, And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

Gen. 50:15-17,

15 "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

16 And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him."

KEY QUESTION: What is the real meaning of these tears and why is this part of the human story of Genesis highlighted so prominently here?

- ***They signify the working of Almighty God in the affairs of men and families and nations. This is a working in the hearts and thus the tears signifying that work in the hearts. Not all tears are of this signification. In comparing Jacob's and Esau's tears, we see a***

profound difference:

- ***Example: Jacob - Heb 11:21 - Jacob's tears signify the working of God***

Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

- ***Example: Esau - Heb. 12 - Esau's tears signify the work of the flesh***

Gen. 33:1-4

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

3 And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

Heb. 12:14-17

14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

[Additionally, consider the background of this in

Gen. 27:30-41:

30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

31 And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.

33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.

34 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.”]

- ***The Sorrow of Joseph’s Brothers Compared:***

Gen. 50:17, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

- ***I believe that Joseph is grieved in his heart that his own brothers do not fully grasp what has happened here. They do do know the Lord God as he has come to know. The vale of tears has brought so much to Jacob.***
- ***Yes, Jacob suffered so deeply throughout his life because the hand of God was upon him. Satan worked against him but***

God was always for him. The conviction of this to Jacob's heart grew until it was overwhelming.

[Your thoughts? Any Testimonies?]

Conclusions / Application:

- **Our focus today has continued with the history of the Long War Against God. We have focused especially on this amazing “vale of tears”. But we have seen that the tears of men are not all the same. We have read of many, many tears being shed but some words of encouragement are in order.**
 - **God knows of every tear shed and he will not forget:**

Ps. 56:8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?
 - **Our tears may express our disappointments and our lack of faith, but nevertheless, our true worship of the Lord God must endure every trial:**

Ps. 42:1-3
1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.
2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?
3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
 - **Hard times, days that seem to bring nothing but unbearable trials, are the lot of the saints:**

Ps. 80:1-5
1 O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.
2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us.
3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.
4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?
5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.

- ***The Lord God Shall Accomplish His Eternal Plan - for Israel and for Us***

Ps. 126:1-6

1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

- ***A Tearless Future Awaits Us All Who Know Him***

Rev. 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (***see also Is. 25:8***)

“The Tears of God Fall for Us.” - Mark Heard “These Plastic Halos”.

Next time:

Ex. 2:6, And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.

Amen and amen.