**LESSONS FROM GENESIS 37 AND 38**

**GOD’S MAN IN EGYPT (The Story of Joseph)**

1. **Read Genesis 37. The warning of envy.**

Reading carefully this story of Joseph and his brothers, we are provided with a great warning for us all! In Hebrews the author warns us about allowing “a bitter root” to grow up in our lives “to cause trouble and defile many” (Heb.12:15). This is precisely what we see unheeded in the lives of Joseph’s brothers. It seems to have begun with envy, then grew into hatred, and then gave way to the plot of murder. Proverbs 14:30 says “Envy rots the bones” and James 3:16 says “Where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” Genesis 37:4, 5, and 8 tell us his brothers hated him. Verse 11 says, “And his brothers were jealous of him..” WILL YOU ASK THE LORD TO EXAMINE YOUR HEART? IS THERE ANYONE YOU ENVY, WISHING YOU HAD WHAT THEY HAD? IS THERE ANYONE YOU ARE JEALOUS OF? DO YOU REALIZE THAT ULTIMATELY RESENTMENT OF OTHERS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, IS A RESENTMENT OF WHAT GOD HAS DONE AND IS DOING?

Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote, “How unfortunate that many are not willing to take the place which God has assigned them in this world! When a man is covetous and envious, he is saying, “God, I am not satisfied; you didn’t give me what I want!” Such a man would dethrone God, and re-deal the events and possessions of life so that little he would be exalted.” WILL YOU LIVE AS JOSEPH LIVED, TRUSTING GOD TO CARE FOR YOU EVEN IN LIFE’S INJUSTICES AND DEPRIVATIONS?

1. **In view of Genesis 37: Learning about God and His ways.**

It can be said that one of the hardest things to endure during difficult times is the indifference of others. As Joseph cried out from that pit, you might ask…” Who really grieved for Joseph?” Certainly not his brothers! The Midianites didn’t care for Joseph. Reuben’s grief was less impressive than it should have been,since he was partially to blame for this. The only person that grieved for Joseph was his aged father Jacob. (v.34-35) Jacob mourned with a grief that could not be comforted!

It is important to see that we have such a Father, your Heavenly Father in heaven, and that He grieves for you in your trouble…even more than Jacob grieved for his beloved son Joseph.

A . God does indeed care for us, even when others do not. The Bible teaches us that God loves! God grieves! God agonizes over the distress and sorrow of His children. Jesus wept over the unbelieving city of Jersualem (Luke 19:41). When we go through difficult times, not knowing why they have come or why God is permitting them, we are tempted to believe that God does not care, that He is indifferent. But Jesus taught otherwise! See Matt. 6:26, 28, 30. The apostle Peter wrote, “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”(I Peter 5:7)

B. God comforts us in sorrow. David wrote in Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” God has a special way of meeting us and providing comfort in those valleys.

C. God not only cares and comforts, He preserves us and reaches out to save us in His own proper time. God does this effectively. Reuben wanted to save Joseph, but his plan failed. He was not ready with the right actions at the right time. WITH GOD, it is different! His actions are always right actions and they always come precisely at the right moment. We will see this clearly as the story of Joseph continues (i.e. At the right moment, God caused the Midianite merchants to pass by. At the right moment God saw that Joseph was sold to Potiphar, etc.)

The Bible teaches we have a Heavenly Father Who is not indifferent! He does care! He is not ineffective. One day He will return in power and judgment after He has first accomplished His own perfect purpose in our lives.

**Man’s Man in Canaan (The Story of Judah)**

1. **Read Genesis 38. The sins of Judah.**

Judah is guilty of 3 sins in this chapter. They are progressive.

First, Judah married an unbelieving or pagan wife. She is the daughter of Shua of Adullam and is identified as a Canaanite. Her character seemingly was passed on to her sons, two of whom God put to death for their wickedness (v.7 and 10) Often this is overlooked today. The Bible forbids the marriage of a Christian to a non-Christian. (See 2 Cor.6:14)

Second, Judah was unfaithful to his most solemn commitments, which is not surprising since in his marriage he was first unfaithful to God. The specific incident involved the marriage of Tamar to his sons Er and Onan. According to the custom of the day, if an older brother died without having produced children, it was the responsibility of the next oldest brother to marry the widow and thereby raise up an heir for his brother. The first son of the new marriage would be considered the older brother’s son and would preserve his name and be entitled to receive his inheritance. (Tamar should have been given to Judah’s third son, Shelah after the deaths of his first two sons.) Judah did not want his third son to marry Tamar, so sent her back to her father.

Third, Judah lived in Canaan and was becoming more and more like the pagan Canaanites. He was actually becoming quite immoral. Tamar, realizing that Judah had no intention of giving her Shelah, came up with her own plan. She posed as a prostitute, was propositioned by Judah, and first received Judah’s pledge (his seal, his cord, and the staff in his hand). Judah agreed.

THIS IS A CLEAR LESSON ABOUT SIN. It shows how one sin inevitably leads to another and how at last most sins are found out. Sin has tentacles and you will be entangled in them. WILL YOU ASK THE LORD TO HELP YOU SEE AND THEN DEAL HONESTLY WITH SIN? WILL YOU CONFESS IT (AGREE WITH GOD) AND THEN REPENT OF IT (TURN FROM IT AND CHOOSE…BY GOD’S GRACE…NOT TO CONTINUE IN IT?

1. **Picture of God’s Grace.**

As great as Judah’s sin was, we see God’s grace clearly! It was evident that God also worked in the situation for good, since from this incest came Perez, one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn’t it strange that Christ should trace His ancestry through this illicit son of Judah rather than through Joseph, who is so much like Christ Jesus and is so dominant in the Book of Genesis? The Bible teaches, “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more”. (Romans 5:20)

ALSO, it is remarkable that God chose to put Tamar in the family tree of the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 1:1-17, the genealogy of Jesus begins the New Testament. There are references to four women whom you would not normally expect to find there: Tamar (whose story is told in Genesis 38); Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho, who hid the spies at the time of the Israelite conquest; Ruth, the Moabitess, who has a book in the O.T. named after her; and Bathsheba, …who is only identified as Uriah’s wife. Bathsheba committed adultery with David.

It was not the custom for ANY women to be included or named in genealogies. It is amazing…these women were relatively unknown, were Gentiles, and in three of the four cases…were notoriously sinful at one time in their lives. The Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to include these four! What we learn from this is that God has mercy for sinners; that the mercy of God is not limited to one nation, but is for all who will identify with God’s work of redemption through the Savior, Jesus Christ. This reminds us that there is hope to all who have greatly sinned or to those who may be far from the gospel. All of Scripture teaches us that the door of salvation has been flung open to Gentiles as well as Jews, to sinners as well as saints. You will not be saved if you stand outside the door. You must enter. But you MAY enter; that is the point! It is Jesus Christ, the Savior, Who declares, “Whoever comes to Me I will never drive away” (John 6:37). HAVE YOU EVER ENTERED THROUGH JESUS ALONE AS THE DOOR OF SALVATION (John 10:7)? WILL YOU TAKE TIME TO MEDITATE ON AND PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS AMAZING GRACE? (We are women, sinners, and Gentiles….yet the door is open!)

James Boice: Genesis: an expositional commentary. Vol.3.

F.B.Meyer, Joseph: Beloved-Hated-Exalted.

Donald Grey Barnhouse, Genesis, A Devotional Exposition, vol.2.