

Sunday School Lesson for September 27, 2020

Good morning, I hope you are well and feel blessed.

Lesson for September 27, 2020, "God's Plan Revealed"

Background Scripture from Genesis 43 and Genesis 45:1-15.

Several of our Sunday lessons this quarter have involved the life of Joseph and we have seen Joseph loved by his father, and hated by his brothers. Joseph was sold by his brothers, he was enslaved by Potiphar, accused by Potiphar's wife, imprisoned, and forgotten, Joseph was exalted and last week we began to see the reason God has been up to something. Joseph's suffering hadn't been punishment for something he did wrong and his exaltation hadn't been a reward for something he did right. Both were part of a bigger plan.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

How is it that God can take a world of humanity with all their thoughts and plans and decisions, let them do what it is they want, and yet still at the end of the day cause them to fulfill His purpose? He does and accomplishes things that we would have never thought possible.

Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

From Habakkuk 1:5, when Habakkuk asked God what He was doing, God said: "Look at the nations and watch and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told."

Many people like to think that what happens to them follows some plan. Sometimes one is overwhelmed by tragic events in his or her life.

Consider this story, Melvin sat at his mother's funeral, he couldn't believe she was gone. He deliberately did not sit on the front row with the rest of

the family. Many of his relatives were treating him like an outsider, like he had no right to mourn his mother's passing. He hadn't come to visit after learning the cancer had spread. He didn't want his mother's last memory of him to be as a drug addict. Other relatives and friends had long abandoned him. His mother had known for years that he abused drugs, but she always held out hope. "Son, I'm praying for you, and I know the Lord can hear me", she would say. Melvin felt he had let his mother down for not getting clean before she passed. He began to cry. Never before had he felt so afraid, alone, and unloved. Then, he felt a firm hand on his shoulder. He looked up and saw his younger sister. "Big brother, I have missed you. I'm so glad you came", she whispered. Melvin looked over his left shoulder. It was the first time he had ever seen his father cry. "Welcome home son. Welcome home." The love he felt from his family made Melvin determined to get help immediately.

Back to our lesson text, God was doing something that neither Joseph nor his brothers would have ever guessed. The reason of course is because God knew what none of them knew. God knew about a coming famine, they did not. He knew about Israel's need for refuge to multiply and he knew about His plan to save the world through Judah's descendant. God orchestrated a plan that no one would have guessed, no one would have believed, and no one else could have accomplished. It was God's plan, and it was absolutely perfect.

In last week lesson we saw that plan begin to unfold as Joseph was reunited with his brothers. God worked all things out in a really marvelous way. After 10 years Joseph became the prime minister of Egypt. God gave him wisdom to store up sufficient reserves from the first 7 years of good harvests, so that the people of Egypt would not go hungry during the 7 years of drought that followed. When the drought came it was so severe that Jacob's family in Canaan ran out of provisions. So he sent Joseph's brothers down to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognized his brothers when they came to Egypt, but they did not recognize him because he now looked like an Egyptian official and spoke like one. He provided them with all the food they wanted, and returned their money to them. But Joseph kept one of them in Egypt to be released only when they returned with their youngest brother, Benjamin. He did this to ensure that Benjamin was alive and well.

When the brothers brought Benjamin to Egypt they were all taken to dine at Joseph's house. After they had eaten and had left the house, one of Joseph's servants was sent after them to look for a missing silver cup. The item was found in Benjamin's sack and he was accused of stealing it. As punishment, Benjamin would have to remain as Joseph's slave, while the 10 brothers were allowed to return home.

All of this had been carefully planned by Joseph to see if they had changed their ways or not. If they went home now, leaving Benjamin to languish in Egypt, he would know that they were still as wicked as they were before. But if the 10 brothers stood up for Benjamin, and refused to leave without him, it would mean that they had changed for the better. They passed the test, the brothers bravely offered themselves to be his slaves, and one of them, Judah, pleaded with Joseph to let him bear the punishment for stealing the silver cup so that Benjamin could return home with the other brothers.

When Joseph heard this, his heart was so moved with emotion, that he immediately ordered all his servants to leave him alone with his brothers, and he revealed himself to them. According to verse 2 his weeping was so loud that the Egyptians outside the house heard it. Why did he weep so loudly? Perhaps it was because he remembered how his brothers had mistreated him 19 years earlier – they had stripped him of his coat of many colors and left him to languish in a horrible pit.

Why had they paid no attention at all to his mournful pleas and cries to them? How could they have been so heartless as to sell him away like an animal and deprive him of his freedom? How could they leave him to fend for himself in a foreign land, with no help? It all came back to him: The pain of being abandoned without mercy, the anguish of being forsaken by his own brothers, the loneliness and separation from his beloved father Jacob and from Benjamin his little brother. Joseph had every right to be angry with his brothers because they had brought so much misery to his life.

But he was not angry with them at all when he wept. His tears were tears of joy, the joy of seeing how well they had stood up for Benjamin. They were also tears of love for his brothers, a love that seeks to forgive them for the untold pain and misery they had caused him. It was this love that now prompted him to reveal himself to his brothers in a most tender, assuring and sensitive manner.

When he said to them, "I am Joseph," he immediately asks them, "Is my father still living?" This would help prevent them from thinking about their sin against him. Secondly, when Joseph saw how terrified they were of him, he urged them to come close to him (verse 4). He may have understood how scared they were that he might use his Egyptian authority to exact sweet revenge on them. Thirdly, in verse 5 Joseph tells them to stop being grieved or angry with themselves. How did he know that they felt like this? He could probably see it on their faces. Fourthly, in verses 6-8 Joseph leads them to consider how God had used their act of selling him into slavery to save them and their families from starving to death.

In verses 14 and 15, Joseph embraced his brothers, kisses them and weeps over them. All that he had said and done to them showed that he bore no resentment, no bitterness and no grudges at all against them. This clearly communicates that he had fully forgiven them. This forgiveness instantly removed the burden of guilt and fear which they had carried for 19 years. They therefore broke their silence.

Verse 15 says that "his brothers talked with him". They shared a time of blessed fellowship with Joseph. But all this became possible only when Joseph forgave them. What a difference the grace of forgiveness makes to one's relationships.

In today's lesson, Joseph tells his brothers who he is and acknowledges that God is responsible for him being in Egypt. Later after Israel (Jacob) dies, Joseph will reassure his brothers that God had ordered his steps, and God did it for the good of all (Genesis 50:15-21).

Philippians 4:11 tells us that in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, we must be content. We must accept that the situation will be resolved because God is there and worthy of our praise. He has a plan and a purpose in everything He allows us to go through. Whether we understand His plan or not, we must never forget that God is all we need. We must also realize that God is helping us and speaking even in the midst of the circumstances. It may appear as though the enemy is having his way, but we can be assured that God's plan is being fulfilled for His perfect purpose.

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.

Next week's lesson October 4 2020, "Love and Devotion to Others"

Background Scripture from 1 Samuel 19:1-7, 23:1-18 and 2 Samuel 9.

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, International Sunday School Lesson and Commentary, Lessons from Bible in Life, Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible, and The Present Word Adult Bible Lessons.