

Anger – Genesis 50

**Romans 8:28** says, “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” How many of you believe that verse is true? Are you sure? Okay.

**1 Peter 4:19** says, “*Those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*” That means that even when you suffer and it is God’s will that you suffer, you don’t get bitter, you get better. How many of you will go along with that verse? Are you sure? You believe all that?

In **Luke 6:27-28**, **Jesus** said, “*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*” I guess you are going to sit there and tell me you believe that one too, huh? Do you? Now, if you believe it, how many of you can say you have done all that? Don’t raise your hands.

I know, I know. You are sitting here in church. You can’t say those verses are not true but deep inside you are thinking that it’s pretty hard to believe and even harder to live them out, right? As you sit there and think of all the times that people have chosen to do you wrong, knowing full well that it was going to hurt you and you can’t comprehend how God is going to work it to your good. You can’t imagine how a good God could allow you to suffer and you sure can’t see yourself loving those people and doing those people good. Can you?

I get it. I’m with you. I understand those feelings. I really do. If we are being really honest, I feel the same way sometimes. I watched in amazement with half the country last week when Charlie Kirk’s widow, Erika, said she forgives the man who shot and killed her husband. How do you do that? Oh, sure the Bible tells us to always forgive but that’s easier said than done. I usually have to work through some pretty serious anger before I can work on that though. Am I the only one who struggles with anger sometimes?

We are going through a sermon series on what we struggle with and like I said last week about worry, this is not a message for those who get mad at every little thing. If you blow up at everybody and can’t control your anger and you are like a shotgun going off every day, you have problems outside the parameters of this message. In fact, I have a hard time believing that you are a true believer and have the Holy Spirit living inside of you if you are like that.

No, this message is for those who struggle with what to do when you have genuine reasons to be angry. When you have people in your life who have hurt you on purpose and without caring, or without feeling remorse. How do you handle those feelings of anger that are natural and actually God-given?

Let's talk about that. And let's look at a fascinating Bible character in the first book of the Bible named Joseph. If anybody had a right to be mad, it was Joseph. His story starts way back in **Genesis 37** and goes all the way through **Genesis 50**. And that in itself is amazing. God spends one chapter talking about the creation of the universe, two or three chapters with Adam and Eve, and thirteen chapters on Joseph. Plus, he is mentioned in the faith chapter of the Bible, **Hebrews 11**, as a man of great faith. That's a lot of reading.

But today I won't read all of that of course. I really just want to focus on a passage toward the end. As you turn in your Bibles to **Genesis chapter 50**, I'll hit the highlights of Joseph's life as a reminder of what he had to be angry about. As a boy, his father, Jacob, loved Joseph most of all his brothers and that kind of thing can never be hidden for long. It doesn't help when dear old dad makes you a fancy robe to wear and everybody else has to wear plain stuff. But then Joseph was a cocky fellow too and when God gave him a dream of how his brothers would one day kneel before him, Joseph actually told them about the dream and that made them pretty mad.

In fact, it made them so mad that they decided to sell him to some merchants who were on their way to Egypt and they thought that was that. But Joseph was sold into slavery, thrown into prison for something he didn't do, forgotten about by folks who promised to not forget and for years and years his life had to be nearly unbearable.

The thing about Joseph, though, was that in every aspect of his life, it says, *"but God was with him."* But God was with him in the pit. But God was with him in the palace. But God was with him in the prison. God was with him in everything he did. Does that ring a bell? We saw last week that we have that same promise that we can claim that God will be with us as well, giving us wisdom and power and the ability to do what He calls us to do. That's just what He did with Joseph.

Let's read in **Genesis 50, verses 15-21**. This is after Joseph reveals himself to his brothers some 40 years later after they had sold him and lied about him being dead to their father. I know most of you know this popular story so let's just get to it finally. **Genesis 50:15-21** says, *"When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?'"* <sup>16</sup> So they

sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: <sup>17</sup> ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

<sup>18</sup> His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. “We are your slaves,” they said.

<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. <sup>21</sup> So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.”

Let me read that one part over again. “*Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*”

If all that happened to you, that’s what you would say too, isn’t it? Right. As we focus on that statement of Joseph, let me ask you a question. Again, you don’t have to raise your hand. Have you ever said or at least thought the words, “*If I were God I would \_\_\_\_\_.*” Fill in the blank. We have probably all thought it before. And what we are saying is, “*If I had God’s power, I would fix this problem.*” The thing is, though, that if we were God and could see everything God sees and knew everything God knew...we wouldn’t change a thing.

Joseph is asking his brothers to think about that. He is saying that he can’t see what God sees and doesn’t have the wisdom God has. He doesn’t have God’s sovereignty or providence. He is not God. Now, by all earthly standards, Joseph has good reason to be angry. Who wouldn’t be? And I appreciate the way Joseph says it. He doesn’t say, “*Oh, it’s okay. It’s no big deal. I know you didn’t really mean anything by it.*” No! Because they did mean something by it. They meant to kill him or at least hurt him.

Maybe today you have something to be mad about as well. Maybe somebody you trusted took advantage of you or for whatever reason, they hurt you and they did it knowing it would hurt you. I’m not talking about the guy driving too slow in the left lane and then he flipped you off. If that really makes you mad, you need Jesus. Seriously. I have a hard time believing you are a true follower of Jesus if every little thing sets you off.

I’m talking about the spouse, the friend, the boss, the business partner who made a decision to do something they knew would hurt you and they did it anyway. When that

happens – and it will – we need to have the same perspective that Joseph had. We need to be able to see that we can't see the whole, big picture.

There was no way in the world anybody could have seen that Joseph would be sold into slavery but rise to be the second most powerful person in all of Egypt and be able to provide for his family forty years later and that would lead to that family being the start of the twelve tribes of Israel. That's crazy to think of. But that's what God wanted. And God was able to use the sin of those brothers to make it come about, like only He can.

So, how do we get that kind of perspective? How do we get to truly believe **Genesis 50:20** is what has happened in our lives? How do we truly get the perspective to be able to say that we truly believe **Romans 8:28**, **1 Peter 4:19** and even the words of Jesus in **Luke 6:27** where He tells us to love our enemies, bless them and pray for them?

Well, there are actually two ways to get that godly perspective that Joseph had. The first way and the easiest way is to just learn from people like Joseph. We see what God did in his life. We see how Joe reacted. And then we take that to heart and we imitate it. I hope you can do that. There is no reason why you can't but most people have a hard time voluntarily getting to that perspective.

The second way you can get Joseph's godly perspective is to go through the kinds of things Joseph went through. I hope you don't have to do that but some people go through hard times because they choose not to learn the lesson that God is sovereign and God is good but His goodness is directly related to His ability to see the beginning from the end. He sees the front and back of the tapestry.

I know you've probably heard that illustration before so I'll make it quick but it is so good and true. When you look at a beautiful tapestry hanging on a wall, it can be just amazing. All the stitching makes a beautiful picture. But if you turn that tapestry over, you see a jumbled mess of stitching that is ugly and makes no sense. That's the part of this life that we can see, that back side. We have to trust that God is weaving and stitching all the good with all the bad in our lives and that one day when we get to Heaven, God will reveal all that He did by showing you what the front side of the tapestry of your life looks like.

That's what Joseph knew and he was actually able to see at least part of God's sovereign plan. He could see that everything he had gone through had led him to this moment where he would be able to provide for his family. Even he couldn't see it would mean the whole

nation of Israel would prosper because of it but he could see enough he was able to control his anger and not let it control him.

It was like Joseph had read and understood **James 1** that tells us to consider it all pure joy when we go through trials of many kinds because in the end you will lack nothing. Isn't Joseph just the poster boy for lacking nothing right here? **James 1** is not saying we will have everything we want physically but Joseph didn't even lack anything physically. He had everything a man could want with his family provided for. He lacked nothing. He had gone through all kinds of trials and in the end, he lacked nothing. That sounds pretty good doesn't it?

But what do you do if you just aren't there yet? What do you do if you are in the process of considering the trials joy and you are in the process of learning from Joseph and you are in the process of being sanctified like we talked about a while back? In other words, what if you still have anger about what happened to you in the past? Well, most pretty-haired TV preachers will tell you to just give it to God and send them a check and God will take that anger right away from you.

The thing is, there is some truth to that. Not the check part but the give it to God part. **1 Peter 5:7** says, *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."* **Philippians 4** says to present your requests to God and He will give you peace. That's true. But getting through anger can be a process just like forgiving can be a process. Worry and anger are similar in a lot of ways. And sometimes God does a miracle in our lives and takes the anger or worry away from us and other times He allows us to work through those feelings.

And Joseph is showing us the first step in working through your anger and that is by admitting and realizing it happened. Joseph told his brothers, *"You intended to harm me."* He accepted it and some people have a hard time even admitting some trauma has happened to them. But God gives us that "anger – energy" and something has to be done with it.

I heard somebody say that anger is like a child. You don't want to let it drive the car but you certainly don't want to stuff it in the trunk either. What that means is that you can't let anger control your life but you can't just stuff it and deny it or let it fester. It has to be worked through. You have to get that energy out.

Now, in a perfect world, the best way to get it out is to confront the person who has made you mad and let them know how you feel, speaking the truth in love as **Ephesians 4** says.

Then that person says, *"Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize it. Please forgive me."* And the two of you skip off towards the rainbow hand in hand. Again, I hope that works for you. But many times confronting a person is not the best thing. You know they will react harshly or for whatever reason, it might even make things worse. Maybe the person is dead or gone. You still have to work through it.

**Abraham Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin Stanton**, was angered by an army officer who accused him of favoritism. Stanton complained to Lincoln, who suggested that Stanton write the officer a sharp letter. Stanton did and showed the strongly worded missive to the president. *"What are you going to do with it?"* Lincoln inquired. Surprised, Stanton replied, *"Send it."* Lincoln shook his head. *"You don't want to send that letter,"* he said. *"Put it in the stove. That's what I do when I have written a letter while I am angry. It's a good letter and you had a good time writing it and feel better. **Now burn it and write another.**"* (*Today in the Word*, February, 1991, p. 9.)

I want to encourage you to do something similar if not the exact same thing. I'll tell you what I did just this past week and it has helped me. And, no, this is not a joke. I didn't hire somebody to get angry for me. But I have been struggling with anger and so I took my dogs to Wise County Park and we went for a long walk. And on that walk, I had in my head the conversation I wish I could have had with those who made me mad. It wouldn't help anything at all to have this conversation with them in person so I told them what needed to be said in my mind as we walked. And I let it all out. I walked and walked and gave them a piece of my mind about every little thing. Even in my mind I didn't call them names or lose my temper but I got them straight. And I walked about two miles in what felt like two minutes. I worked up a sweat and burned off that anger energy and by the time I got back to the truck, I was done. And when I got in the truck, that's what I told God. I said, *"Lord, I'm done. I've done all I know to do. Please take the rest of it and give me your peace."* And He has. Thank you, Lord!

Being angry is not a sin. God gives us our feelings but our feelings can drive our lives if we let them. We have to give all those feelings an outlet. We can't just stuff them in the trunk and hope they go away. That's bad for your mental and physical health and can even affect you spiritually. And, yes, I recommend good Christian counseling when you have done everything you know to do and you still struggle with anger or forgiveness or worry or whatever it is. See me afterward and I can recommend some places for you. Nothing wrong with that at all and nothing to be embarrassed about.

Joseph was really pretty amazing, if you read his whole story. Yes, he was a little proud at the beginning but there is no record of any of his sins. I'm not saying he was sinless at all. It's just that there is no great record of it that we see in so many others. And he had as good of a reason to be mad as anybody in history. He had a horrible life for many years. But God never left him and His providence was obvious. He allowed Joseph to go through all that he went through so that he would later on be able to see and believe and even tell his family that God intended all of this for good. And so he wasn't mad.

### \*Music\*

If you have a real relationship with God, you don't have to see the end or the finish. You have faith that God does see it and in the end it turns out best for you because God loves you and He is in charge. Don't be worried. Don't be mad. Don't be anxious or scared. God sees it and He is with you, giving you power and strength to carry on and wisdom to make good choices. Thank you, Lord, for that!

How about you? Do you have that relationship with God through His Son Jesus? You can. All you have to do is believe that Jesus, who is God, came from Heaven, lived a sinless life and paid the price for your sins that you could only pay with an eternity in Hell. That's the price the Father said was due and Jesus willingly paid it just for you. Do you believe that? That belief will change your life and make you more like Jesus every day. Allow Him to come into your life and change you. Do it right now as the music plays.