

Lesson 20 - GOD PUTS US IN OUR PLACE *Genesis 50:15-21*

(Gen. 50:15) - Even though Joseph had already spoken kindly to his brothers who had treated him so wickedly, they imagined his kindness was only for their father's sake. Because of their own guilty consciences, they reasoned that when Jacob died, Joseph would exact revenge upon them. This is the nature of the natural, sinful, and legal consciences of all people by nature. In some areas of life, we know we have greatly sinned, and we know we deserve punishment. And this is what stirs us up in our natural consciences to seek legal repentance and try to make restitution for the wrongs we have done. There is nothing wrong with this attitude when we have hurt or wronged our fellow man, but when it comes to setting things right with God, our very efforts in legal repentance and trying to make restitution for our sins by our works are sinful and wicked. Such efforts deny the glory of God Whose glory shines forth in the salvation of sinners by His grace based on the finished work of Christ. Such efforts deny the finished work of Christ by Whose righteousness sinners are justified. Such efforts exalt sinners and give them room to boast in self-righteousness and self-sufficiency.

(Gen. 50:16-18) - There is no record of Jacob telling this to his sons, so this is probably a lie to help them cover themselves from Joseph's just wrath. This too is the way of man in seeking salvation his own way rather than God's way. Man's way is a lie and, therefore, a way of death (*Prov. 14:12; 16:25*). God's way is truth, and, therefore, the only way of life; for Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (*John 14:6*). When Joseph heard the message from his brothers, he wept with tears of joy over being reunited with his family. Again, as prophesied years before this in Joseph's dream, his brothers came to him and "*fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants*" (*cf. Gen. 37:5-8*).

(Gen. 50:19) - If there is any doubt that God has predestined and is in complete control of all the events that transpire on this earth, these verses should remove it. God is in control. He is not some cosmic chess player making counter moves against our moves or a janitor coming behind us cleaning up our sins and mistakes. He is not a crystal ball gazer who simply sees into a future He has not determined and cannot control. God is the one true and living God Who declares the end from the beginning and works all things after the counsel of His own will (*Isa. 46:9-11; Eph. 1:11*). God works all things (good and evil) for His glory and the eternal good of His people (*Rom. 8:28*). This is a mind-boggling truth that we cannot fully comprehend in our limited minds, but it is true. Here we learn that God even controls and overrules the sinful actions of sinful people to accomplish His will and purpose.

Joseph had suffered much from the hands of wicked people, but he was always under God's protection and headed toward the goal and the place that God had set for him. There was no luck, chance, or coincidence involved. And even though God is not the author of sin, nor does He tempt any person with evil, He sovereignly overrules and controls the sinful plans and actions of people for His glory. Joseph knew this, and he told them that he was where God had placed him, expressing his God-given faith in, and total dependence upon, God. He trusted God to guide, preserve, and bless him and his family and to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joseph had been in places he did not want to be, but he knew now that it was God's purpose to accomplish all that God had promised.

Just as God put Joseph and his brothers in Egypt "*to save much people alive,*" God has placed all persons where He wants them and has arranged all events to save His elect whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world to the praise of the glory of His grace. God the Father put God the Son in the place of preeminence as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. He sent His Son to this sin-cursed earth, "*made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law*" (*Gal. 4:4-5*). He placed His Son on

the cross to die for our sins and establish righteousness by which He has justified all His people (*Isa. 53:10; Rom. 8:32-34; 1 John 4:10*). He raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His right hand to make intercession for all for whom He died and arose again (*Rom. 8:34*).

This sovereign work of God also includes the actual application of salvation in the new birth to all of His chosen people. He sovereignly, providentially, and powerfully places each one of His elect in the place where He communicates the Gospel message to them in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 1:16-17; 6:17-18; 10:13-17*). For example, God put an Ethiopian treasurer in the desert and sent Philip to preach the Gospel to him (*Acts 8:26-40*). He put Paul in a Roman prison and sent a runaway slave, Onesimus, there to hear the Gospel from Paul (*Philemon*). God does this for all His people as He puts us in our place, the place where He reveals Himself in the glory of His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 4:6*). In this place, He gives us spiritual life, faith to believe in Christ, repentance to turn away from the idols of self and dead works, and He brings us to submit to Christ as the Lord our Righteousness.

(50:20) - After hearing this, could Joseph's brothers now joyfully proclaim, "Hey, we are off the hook. We were just simply doing the will of God." NO! Joseph told them, "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me.*" The absolute sovereignty of God gives us no justification for our sin. We must still answer to God. Unbelievers see this as unjust and unfair (*Rom. 9:19*). The answer God gives is like a wise Creator putting those whom He created in their proper place - "*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*" (*Rom. 9:20-21*). The reasons that we as creatures, especially as sinful creatures, cannot use God's predestinating sovereign power and will to excuse our sinfulness is two-fold: (1) Because of our limited power. We have no power to arrange and work things so as to overrule evil for good. Only God has that power. (2) Because of our limited wisdom and knowledge (*Deut. 29:29*). Only God is all-wise and all-knowing. We are commanded to trust Him alone and lean not to our own understanding (*Prov. 3:5*). We are commanded to stand in awe and bow to the majesty and greatness of God Who is high above us (*Isa. 55:6-11; Rom. 11:33-36*).

As stated, the whole purpose of God in all of this was "*to save much people alive.*" This refers to the preservation of the Hebrew children, in spite of their impending persecution and enslavement, bring them to the promised land, and keep them there as a nation until the Messiah would come. The ultimate, spiritual, and eternal fulfillment of this is found in the eternal salvation of God's elect (Jew and Gentile) by His free and sovereign grace based on the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way that God predetermined and controlled all the events in Joseph's life, He predetermined and controlled all the events in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (*Acts 2:22-24; 4:26-28; Gal. 4:4-6*). It was God's sovereign determination and purpose to send Christ into the world to suffer at the hands of wicked humanity and to establish by His death a perfect righteousness by which God has justified His people according to the good pleasure of His will (*Matt. 3:15-17; Eph. 1:5,9*).

(Gen. 50:21) - Because of God's purpose fulfilled in and by Joseph, Jacob's sons could be comforted and experience Joseph's kindness and power to preserve them in love. It is because of God's purpose fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ that all true believers can experience and know the kindness, grace, mercy, and power of God to save them from their sins, to provide all righteousness and life, and to bring them to eternal glory.