

HEROES OF THE FAITH

Sunday, July 23, 2017
Pastor Don Denyes

Introduction to Genesis 37

There was a man who blew up at his co-workers in a meeting once. Afterwards, he went around to each person and explained, “I’m not normally an impatient man, I don’t know what happened in there, I’m sorry.” What the man failed to realize is that he actually *is* an impatient person. Trials reveal the truth about us. The likely scenario is that the man often thought of himself as a patient person because his patience had never been tested. It can be easy for us to think of ourselves in a certain light until trouble comes and we are forced to reckon with our true character.

The same is true of faith. It is one thing to say you have faith in Jesus, but if it is never tested, how can you know it’s genuine? For Joseph, he may have claimed to have genuine faith simply by virtue of being born into a religious family. Yet it becomes clear as his story unfolds, that his faith was rooted in the sovereignty of God and in the promises of God (which He gave to Joseph in his dreams). So, through the story of Joseph, we gain insight into God’s desire to make a bad situation good—which should ultimately point us to the gospel of Jesus, who suffered and died at the hands of evil men so that salvation could be purchased for those who make a genuine faith-commitment to Him.

Context

Genesis 37 begins a story about the sons of Jacob, collectively. Joseph is featured prominently in this section alone in his situation, but the whole family is in view from Genesis 37-50. As this story begins, it is important that the looming question over all of Genesis sticks in our minds: who is the “seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15) whom God will send to rescue humanity from our sins? We know that the answer is ultimately Jesus, but we must ask ourselves: what role do Jacob’s sons, specifically Joseph, play in the unfolding drama of God’s saving work?

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

“The Formation of Joseph’s Faith”

Read Genesis 37:1-36

John Stott: “Faith is a reasoning trust—a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God.”

Joseph

- The Adversity of His Youth

- The Partiality of His Father

- The Animosity of His Brothers

- The Sovereignty of God

Discuss

- 1) There are many people who believe that faith is a blind adherence to someone or something, that faith is something doesn't involve knowledge or reason. Why do you think that is?

- 2) A lot of people point to the existence of evil as sufficient evidence to not believe in God. How does Joseph's story (including his religious, dysfunctional family) prove that God does exist and that He works even in the midst of evil situations?

- 3) Read James 1:2-4. We are often prone to make excuses about our lack of devotion to God because of the difficulty of our circumstances. How does this passage affect the way we think about the relationship between faith and suffering?

- 4) How does knowing the truth about the sovereignty of God bring comfort and strengthen faith in the midst of trials and suffering?

- 5) Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11. How does this passage shed light on the purposes of God in our suffering? And who do you know right now whose faith is wavering in the midst of suffering that you can comfort by sharing stories of God's sovereign grace in your life?