

their consciences haunted them. For 22 years, their father was grieved. After all those years, Joseph's dreams did come true and his cruel brothers all bowed before Joseph, the PM of Egypt.

✧ *The consequences of bitterness are cruel. Bitter people are miserable people. We can never hide our sins from God. Moses' warning to the people of Israel (Numbers 32:23) "... be sure your sin will find you out" was true for Joseph's brothers and is true still today.*

Conclusion: We cannot always control the circumstances of life, but with God's grace, we can control how we respond to them.

Joseph's brothers had many valid reasons for being upset with the favouritism shown to Joseph. However, by meditating on these irritations and gossiping to each other about them, they grew into hateful envy and bitterness.

When circumstances in life seem unfair or irritating or when people mistreat us, we must not gossip to others about them or seem to find others to side with our view. Instead, we must cast our burdens on the Lord. This is not easy, but it is needful to prevent bitterness and its consequences.

If someone has mistreated you and each time you think of that person you feel upset, you are bitter. Bitterness is a root that grows deeper and deeper with time. To pull out the root of bitterness, you must confess your ill feelings to the Lord and seek His cleansing. Then truly forgive the offender. If you are able, tell the offender that you forgive him. Then follow (Romans 12:21) "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*"

Song: Nothing Between - 321

Bitter Brothers

14 November 2021 PM – Genesis 37 – Gen2021 – Scott Childs

Introduction: Jacob's polygamy and subsequent favouring of Joseph, the son of his favourite wife, caused great turmoil in his family. Joseph's ten older half-brothers resented him because dad always favoured him. Jacob even went so far as to give Joseph a special coat of honour. None of his brothers ever had such a coat. Because of all this favouritism, the brothers became bitter and hateful, which led to sin.

Transition: This evening I want us to note the CAUSE of their bitterness, the RESULT of their bitterness, and the CONSEQUENCES of their bitterness.

1. The Cause of their Bitterness (v.1-11)

a. Their circumstances became disagreeable

- 1) It is easy to blame circumstances for bitterness. While circumstances may be the irritation behind bitterness, *circumstances never cause bitterness.*
- 2) Jacob wrongly loved Rachel above his other wives. Polygamy is never peaceful or right.
- 3) Jacob pampered Joseph who was his firstborn son to Rachel.
- 4) Joseph was a young man of godly character. Perhaps Jacob spent much more time cultivating spirituality in Joseph than he had in his other brothers.
- 5) Joseph reported the evil conduct of his brothers to his dad. Obviously, the brothers did not like this.
- 6) Jacob wrongly made a special coat of many colours for Joseph to honour him above his brothers. For this, his brothers hated him (v.4). Remember, Joseph now is a young man of 17 years old.
- 7) God gave Joseph special dreams about him becoming the honoured leader over his brothers. For these dreams, the brothers hated him more (v.5, 8) and envied him (v.11).
- 8) From a human perspective, we can understand why Joseph's brothers were upset. These circumstances were just not right.

✧ *When circumstances in our lives become disagreeable, we*

must ask God for grace to act instead of react.

b. The brothers chose to be bitter

- 1) Like a cow chewing her cud, they kept chewing on the things they did not like about Joseph. By doing so, Joseph's brothers chose to become bitter.
- 2) They also discussed these irritations with each other, which made the irritation worse.
- 3) They could no longer speak peaceably to Joseph (v.4).

✧ *Resentful thoughts and discussing irritations lead to bitterness. Disagreeable circumstances do not force us to become bitter. Bitterness is always a sinful choice.*

2. The Result of their Bitterness (v.12-28)

a. They plotted revenge

- 1) Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers. Travelling alone, he found them at Dothan, 100 km north of Mamre.
- 2) The brothers saw him coming and used this opportunity to take out their hatred on Joseph (v.18).
- 3) They devised a plot to throw Joseph into a pit and leave him there to die (v.19-20).
 - a) Interestingly, the word "Dothan" means two wells.
 - b) It may have been in one of these two wells or cisterns, then empty, that the brothers put Joseph.
- 4) His eldest brother Reuben did not like the idea of killing Joseph and planned to rescue him (v.21-22).
- 5) Jacob should never have favoured Joseph above his brothers. That was wrong, yet this did not justify their desire for revenge.

✧ *Revenge is never the right solution for irritating situations. The Lord tells us in (Romans 12:18-19) "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."*

b. They got revenge

- 1) Upon his arrival, they caught Joseph, tore off his coat of many colours, and cast him into the dry pit where he could not escape (v.23-24).
- 2) They then sat down to eat bread. Joseph had probably

brought food from home for his brothers. While they ate, Ishmaelite merchantmen came past on their way to Egypt. *This timing was in the hands of God!*

- 3) The brothers decided to sell Joseph rather than to kill him (v.27-28). They actually negotiated to sell their brother as a slave for 20 pieces of silver while he begged for mercy. Years later, they recalled Joseph's anguish. (Genesis 42:21) "*And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.*"

✧ *Beware, the sins of bitterness and hate often grow like the pressure under a volcano and eventually explode causing people to do things that they later regret.*

3. The Consequence of their Bitterness (v.29-36)

a. They hid their sin by deceiving their father

- 1) Reuben was upset when he learned that his brothers sold Joseph as a slave (v.29-30). Though upset, he was not a strong enough leader to stand up against them.
- 2) The brothers took Joseph's coat, killed a kid of their flock, and dipped the coat in its blood (v.31).
- 3) They then took the coat to Jacob and let him conclude what he would (v.32-33). He concluded that some wild beast had killed Joseph.
- 4) These deceivers pretended to mourn over Joseph to comfort their father (v.34-35). What a bunch of hypocrites! They did a good job of deceiving their father, but they did not deceive God nor their own consciences.

b. They lived with their guilt for 22 years

- 1) The Midianites took Joseph to Egypt and sold him as a slave to Pitiphar (v.36).
- 2) The evil brothers thought they had quashed Joseph's dreams, and yet God wove their evil into His sovereign plan. We will see that Romans 8:28 was true in Joseph's life. "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.*"
- 3) For 22 long years, they lived with their guilt. For 22 years,