

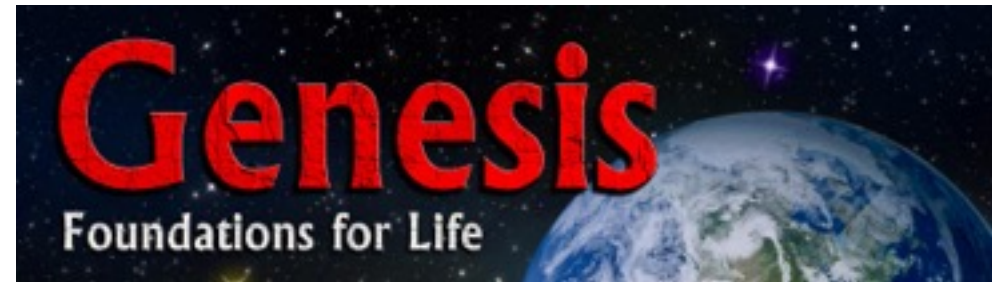
For GC Discussion

- How might favouritism creep in to our lives, and how can we combat this relationship-destroying characteristic?
- How can we promote contentedness in our lives, to the point where jealousy doesn't even have a foothold to flourish?
- What truths can we sow in our hearts that will both promote humility and guard us from arrogance?

Next Week: we move on to study the second part of Joseph's life as he serves in Potiphar's house.

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to '**Sovereign Over Us**' by Aaron Keyes. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



Week 18: Joseph Part 1

Suffering in the Sovereignty of God: Chapter 37

This Weeks Summary

This week we began to look at the life of Joseph as his father's favouritism, his brother's anger, and his own arrogance all combine to set his life on a difficult trajectory, but all the time we know that God is completely in control.

For Study:

The verses below are all to do with 3 main areas covered by this weeks chapter:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Favouritism/Impartiality | - Romans 2:1-11
- Deuteronomy 10:12-22
- Ephesians 6:1-9
- James 2:1-13 |
| Jealousy/Contentedness | - James 3:13-18
- Philippians 4:10-13
- 1 Timothy 6:3-12 |
| Arrogance/Humility | - Philippians 2:1-18
- Luke 18:9-14
- Romans 12:1-8 |

This week we moved on to begin our study on the life of Joseph. We saw a pretty messy situation where no-one really behaves as they should have done, as favouritism, jealousy and arrogance tear this family apart. We saw that even in the midst of all this sin, God was still in control and was working out His perfect plan. We'll now just look a little at the alternatives to this behaviour - how should Jacob, Joseph and his brothers have related to each other, and how can we learn not to make the mistakes they did:

1. From Favouritism to Impartial Love

We've already seen pretty clearly why Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved the rest of his sons. He was the son of the wife that Jacob actually wanted, rather than the one that was thrust upon him without him even noticing. Jacob loved Rachel dearly, but his relationship with Leah wasn't quite the same, and that is reflected in his attitude towards his sons. It's also pretty clear that what Jacob did in buying Joseph this special coat really wasn't wise, and that fact is shown out in Joseph's brothers response to him. That kind of favouritism is never going to go down well, and God tells us plainly that He doesn't get involved in that kind of thing. I guess it's possible as you read the Bible from cover to cover to wonder if God is partial to the Jewish people, and loves them more than the rest of the world, but then in Acts 10 as the door to the Gospel is thrown open to the Gentiles also, Peter says this:

"Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (verses 34-35)

God doesn't treat people differently based on their ethnic background, language, education, intelligence, talent, or any of the other things that we can all occasionally allow to affect the way we treat people. The Bible tells us that God is 'near to all who call on Him' (Psalm 145:18) regardless of who they are, and we should do all we can to imitate this way of treating people, whether it be in our families, workplaces, neighbourhoods, or churches. Christian's should be people who look out for those for whom no-one else is looking out for, not in preference to others, but as a demonstration of the impartial, unconditional love that God has for us, and for His world. However, what we shouldn't do is allow the teaching of God's impartiality to make us think that God treats everyone exactly the same, which makes our next point necessary:

2. From Jealousy to Contentedness

Joseph's brothers saw the way in which their father was treating him, and allowed jealousy to take over. He was given preference over them, and they allowed their anger at this to spill out in their mis-treatment of their brother. In one sense their response was justified because the favouritism shown by their father wasn't right, but they could have responded very differently. What they could have done is to look at the many blessings that were theirs despite the lack of justice in their family. I'm sure they were blessed materially in many ways, but more than that, they had the privilege of growing up in the chosen family of God, and were all blessed by Him in different ways. Instead they chose to focus on the way their Father's actions made them feel, and allowed that to control the way they treated their brother.

We too will encounter similar situations, and not just when people choose to treat us unfairly, and in ways that cause us that same kind of anger. The truth is that God also blesses us all in different ways - all flowing from the same impartial love, but we can often lose sight of what God has given us and think that someone else's gifts, talents, or role within the church are better than ours and that's when jealousy kicks in. We need to realise that we are a body, all different parts designed to work together perfectly for the glory of God. If we take our eyes off the natural and remember we are all blessed with 'every spiritual blessing' in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) then we'll realise that jealousy is wrong not just because it ruins relationships, but because it's a denial of the grace of God flowing to every single one of His children in ways that are perfect just for them.

3. From Arrogance to Humility

Lastly we remember Joseph's response to the dreams God gave him regarding his future. This isn't as explicit in the text, but it does seem that there's a certain arrogance that overtakes Joseph when he sees what's ahead of him. The interpretation of the dreams was correct, but Joseph would have done well to remember the truth we've already seen about God's love and grace to all His children. Joseph had a particular role in God's great plan of redemption, and for him it involved him being lifted up to a high place in society. What it didn't mean was that God loved him better than anyone else, and he would have done well to remember in his exaltation the way Jesus lived as described in Philippians 2:5-11. He shouldn't have let the prediction of his exalted place go to his head but rather in humility he should have counted 'others more significant' than himself. (Philippians 2:2)