

Purposeful Trials 2017-04-23

Gen 50:15-21

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died,

17 'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants."

19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. 21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Gen 50:20 summarized God's activity throughout Genesis.....God sovereignly directs everything in history to accomplish His purposes in the world & in our lives. Gen 50:20, 45:5, Ps 103:19

- Joseph understood: God's providence guaranteed no trial is meaningless.
 - Divine providence is the governance by which God, with wisdom & love, cares for & directs all things in universe.

God is ultimately sovereign over everything in the universe.

- Major, minute & mundane events/details of life.
 - Man directing to Dothan, caravan, car problems, garbage runs.

God is sovereign even over evil things people do.

- God is not the author of evil in the sense that evil proceeds from His being.
- God is sovereign over the purposes of the devil and can use even evil for greater good: His glory & our good. Act 2:23-24, Job 1:12, Rom 8:28
 - Martin Luther, "You have to remember that the devil is God's devil."
- Great comfort for Christians: God is in control, not devil, evil people, chance.

God's providence guarantees no trial is meaningless.

- Many at LEFC are facing difficult situations: loss of loved one, physical pain, financial issues.
- In times of personal struggles, we all ask "Why Lord?".
 - If man/his happiness is the ultimate goal= life is full of challenges/frustration.
 - doubt God's goodness, cripple relationship with God, fear/self-pity
 - If God/His glory is the ultimate goal = life has larger, eternal perspective.
 - Like Joseph, we can trust that God's actions and inaction are ultimately part of His divine plan for His glory & our good.

We do not see/understand God's providence because we only see a small part of the picture.

- God is always working all at once in a variety of situations with numerous people and with many divine, purposeful goals. Phil 1:12, 2 Cor 1:3-11

- He uses many means: blessing, trials, evil, personal pain, injustice.
- Many times there will be multiple results with a single action:
 - Same act meant by brothers for evil, God working for Joseph, brothers, dad good & multitude of people alive then and in the future.
- Joseph's life foreshadowed Jesus Christ's life: Through undeserved personal hardship, pain, struggle, injustice, God is blessing others.
 - Life is not just about "me". Apostle Paul in prison.
 - Use me when, where & how You will.

God is in the business of long-term investments with long-term dividends, so trust He is loving and good in EVERYTHING He does, both blessings & trials. Ps. 119:67-68; 75

- Evidence is in life, death & resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rom. 5:18, 8:31b-32, 38-39
 - Trust in the sovereign goodness of God and let the Gospel carry you thru trials with a joyful spirit, free from bitterness and complaining.
- You may never know "why?" but you can be sure that God's providence guarantees your trials are not meaningless but have an eternal purpose.

