

Still One More Main Guy

3.26.06

Stephen was saying that God was working in ways we just did not see. Even our fathers did acts of hatred toward Joseph and sold him into slavery in Egypt. But, Stephen reminded them, God was in control. He said: *"But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles."*

When God deals with us in what seems to be a harsh way, what is our response? How do you respond to a family who sells you? Who hates you so much that they wanted to kill you and settled for 30 pieces of silver instead. What are you worth? \$30? \$3,000? A piece of coinage?

Stephen's reason for taking the Jewish leaders down this historical road was not to impress them with his knowledge of Jewish history. It was not to keep talking so they would forget why they hated him. It was show the big picture of the Plans of God.

God's plan was huge! He had set it up a long time ago to send His people packing into Egypt as we looked at two weeks ago. It was HIS plan to have a leader to get them all there. It was HIS plan to have them there for 400 years.

1. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh.
2. A famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our fathers could not find food.
3. As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased.
4. Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt.
5. He dealt treacherously with our people
6. and oppressed our forefathers
 - i. by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

And all this was done because older brothers hated the younger brother!

What of the father? What sort of teaching did he provide for the young boy Joseph so that such a painful experience could be understood. Turn with me to the passages where Joseph's father was teaching him the great truths of the Faith; to the passages where Joseph would ask so many questions from his dear father and receive such a wealth of instruction.

Problem is; there are no passages like that! HOW did Joseph know or understand how to respond to God's ways in such a Godly manner?

I believe it was because of his brothers. I believe he could see the ways of man in the lives of self-seeking, self-absorbed brothers.

Here is a test for you. This test or gamble is not new with me. It comes from the life and teachings of Jesus. It comes from the Holy Bible as we understand Jesus' teaching of being a servant.

It all goes back to a passage that the Lord showed me when I first considered becoming a missionary. It is found in Mark 10:29~30.

Mark 10:29~30 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields --and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life."

I can't see much more than that with Joseph. He was a servant. He was forever to be a servant—yet he was lifted up to be the second most powerful person in Egypt. He was a servant. Stephen was one too, and it took one to know one. And Jesus is calling all of us to be as He was. And what was He?

A servant. A man who I knew back in Grad school once said: "*You want to really live? Then drape a serving towel over your arm.*" Turn to another passage that deals with Joseph in John 13. The story of the Foot washer who did not show up.

Retell the story.

Now, read with me from John 13:12~17

John 13:12 *"When He had finished washing their feet, He put on His clothes and returned to His place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked them. 13 "You call Me `Teacher' and `Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."*

What to be blessed? How do we do ... them? Get your hands dirty. Get involved with the needs around you. Learn what is out there to help

in. Years later, one of the men who had his feet washed by the savior said this. Philippians 2:3~8

Phil. 2:3 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!"

You may well ask; what does the Cross have to do with being a person like Stephen or like Joseph? It was because of the Cross that Jesus could teach us how to give our lives away. That is what Joseph did in Egypt. He gave his life away and served as Prime minister of Egypt for the sake of God's people. That is what is going to happen to Stephen. He will give his life away for the sake of the testimony of the Lord Jesus. Both gave themselves away. They did it in different ways but the Lord was lifted up in both cases.

Can you think of anything more worthy to do for the sake of the Cross and for the sake of Jesus who died for you?

The story of an Indian Christian who went into the mountains...The story of a short lady who went to the poor in India...The story of a doctor who helped with the sick in Haiti...The story of a teacher who went to live among the American Indians in Alaska...The story of two collage students who went to world's most AIDS-infected nation, Swaziland, which is dying. Almost 40% of the adult population has HIV or AIDS. And made a difference. In an effort to offer compassion and hope, Chronicle Project has partnered with Teen Challenge Swaziland to establish The Dear Francis Fund to provide care for AIDS affected and infected children of Swaziland. Swaziland AIDS facts:

- Of those between the ages of 15-23, 53% of are HIV positive.
- Of rural Swazis, 20% of the children are orphans from HIV/AIDS
- 88% of 15 year-old boys will be dead by 2015 because of AIDS.

But now that Stephen has their attention, does he have yours?
Where can you serve as a servant of the Lord?

9 Dere vet hvordan Josef ble solgt fordi brødrene var misunnelige på ham. 10 Men Gud var med Josef og sørget for at han ble godt likt hos Farao, kongen i Egypt. Josef fikk stor visdom fra Gud, og han ble utnevnt til guvernør over hele landet. Samtidig hadde han stort ansvar i kongens hus. 11 Nå ble det stor hungersnød i Egypt og Kanaan, og forfedrene våre led mye nød. 12 Da Jakob fikk høre at det fortsatt var korn å få tak i i Egypt, sendte han sønnene sine dit for å handle. 13 Andre gangen de kom dit, fortalte Josef hvem han var, og han presenterte brødrene sine for Farao. 14 Josef sendte bud etter faren og bad at han og hele familien måtte komme til Egypt. De var syttifem personer ialt. 15 Jakob kom til Egypt, og både han og sønnene døde der. 16 De ble ført til Sikem og gravlagt i den graven som Abraham hadde kjøpt av sønnene til Hemor, Sikems far. 17-18 Nå nærmet det seg tiden da Gud skulle innfri det løftet han hadde gitt til Abraham. Det jødiske folket var blitt stort, men Egypt fikk en ny konge som ikke hadde respekt for Josef og minnet etter ham. 19 Han mishandlet forfedrene våre og tvang dem til å sette spebarna ut på markene, slik at de skulle dø.

Acts 7:9 Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him 10 and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace. 11 Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our fathers could not find food. 12 When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers on their first visit. 13 On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. 14 After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. 15 Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died. 16 Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money. 17 As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. 18 Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt. 19 He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.