

Conclusion

1. Explanation of Message

Joseph had bad relationships with his family, he had dreams which led to some very bad circumstances and he had some seriously bad brothers. Not sure if you noticed the theme which is weaved throughout this whole introduction to the life of Joseph, but it is bad ... literally. This narrative is littered with evil, from favouritism to hatred to slander to jealousy to intent to murder to egregious treatment of Joseph by selling him into slavery to lying to etc., etc. etc. What can we then learn from this text? Well, for that we return to the subject we began with: the problem of evil. First, there was much evil in this narrative and God was able to prevent it (as He is omnipotent) but He did not. Second, there was much evil in this narrative and God was not willing to prevent the evil, yet because we know that God is good we must conclude that He had a good reason for allowing the evil to take place. Now before we carry on, be sure you understand that this in no way, shape, or form makes God responsible for the evil. The clear testimony of God's Word is that man is responsible for his own evil actions, for there are a plethora of verses and chapters and entire books which repeatedly speak of man's responsibility to repent, and to trust and obey God. That being said, what we learn then is that God does have a good reason for allowing men to commit evil, namely, that through man's evil acts God works out His good and sovereign plan. Now as I mentioned this is only an introduction to the life of Joseph, but what I believe God wants us to notice is that He was at work throughout this entire narrative working out His good plan for His people which as we will find out in sermons to come requires Joseph to be alive. From allowing Jacob to be a bad father to allowing his brothers to hate him to having the man in Shechem

there to direct Joseph to his brothers to having Reuben convince his brothers to not kill Joseph to having the Midianites just happen to be passing by to having the Midianites travelling to Egypt to having them sell Joseph to Potiphar to allowing the brothers to lie to their father. God is at work and He is at work even through the evil deeds of men.

2. Explanation of Message

But what is the take away for us today? We know that God works out His plan for His people, even through evil, but so what? What does that mean for us and what difference will it make in our lives? Well, I believe there are at least three things, the first being that we must not conclude that because God does not prevent evil that He is not all powerful. In fact, if He is God then he must be all powerful, and thus He must be obeyed. God is able to prevent evil, and in many cases He does, but He is not obligated to prevent evil, and thus when he does not we must not then conclude that He is unable. He is able and is all powerful and does as He pleases and thus is to be obeyed. The second thing we learn is that since God is all powerful He will, and must, accomplish what He plans, and thus we can conclude that He does not prevent all evil because it will contribute to the accomplishment of His plan and his plan is for the salvation of His people from sin and death. And that is a good plan because God is good, and that is a reason to worship, to praise and to exalt our God with every thought and word and deed, breath and song and sermon. This then is a call to worship. The final application, and in my estimation the primary and central one, is that because God allows evil and through it works out His sovereign plan, He is to be trusted. I have a problem with evil. I sometimes wonder why God allows certain things to happen in this world, like the existence of horrific disease, war, genocide, and a

whole host of other evil. I also often contemplate why God allows evil in my life, both my own when I disobey Him, and also why he allows evil things to happen to me as he did to Joseph. I also admit that I find it troubling to discover how much persecution of Christians is happening all over the world, even as we speak. And I imagine that you do likewise. It could lead us to a place of despair and depression if we simply look around the world and at our own lives and observe the abundance of evil which is present ... unless we know, as our text teaches today, that God allows this evil for a reason, namely, for the good of all those called by God who love Him (**Romans 8:28**). And that should give us comfort and lead us to a deeper faith in God. *To know that God is all powerful is to know that we must obey Him. To know that God is all good is to worship Him. To know that God allows evil so that His sovereign plan for His people's salvation will be accomplished is to trust Him.*

c. Invitation

That plan was accomplished and confirmed when someone like Joseph came along 1800 years later. This man was also betrayed and sold into the hands of men by one as close as a brother. This man's misfortune would also lead to fortune for those who belong to His family. The difference with this man who came along 1800 years later is that *He did not escape death, as Joseph did in this narrative, but instead tasted death in place of all those who would repent of their sins and trust in Him (**Heb 2:9**). His name is Jesus and He is risen from the dead, and there is neither hope nor life in any other name. Turn from your sins and trust in Him to today.*