

Three Great Men Who Forgave

Various Scriptures

Introduction

I've talked for a long time about having a lesson on forgiveness. This is not it. I was just struck by three somewhat parallel stories this week that together make a very good case for forgiveness and what qualities may help us do it.

Joseph

Have the class sum up what happened before this. Favorite son of Jacob, dreams, coat of many colors, brothers wanted to kill him, Judah saved his life, sold to slave traders, sold to Potiphar, successful, wife wanted him, ran from her, accused of rape, thrown into prison, successful, met baker and cupbearer, interpreted their dreams, cupbearer didn't tell Pharaoh about Joseph until he had a dream, Joseph interpreted it, Pharaoh promoted him to Prime Minister, Joseph was in charge of agriculture, famine, Joseph's family got hungry and went to Egypt to buy food.

Gen. 45:1-11 - ^{45:1}Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me." So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it. ³Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. ⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵"And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶"For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷"And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. ⁸"Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹"Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, "Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰"And you shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. ¹¹"There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, lest you and your household and all that you have be impoverished."

Then his father died and the brothers were very nervous.

Gen. 50:15-21 - ¹⁵When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!" ¹⁶So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged

before he died, saying, ¹⁷"Thus you shall say to Joseph, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. "And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? ²⁰"And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. ²¹"So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Try to put yourself in Joseph's shoes! They had considered killing him and then sold him to a life of slavery. Now he had the power to do anything to them that he wanted.

Why didn't Joseph kill them? _____

This could have been God's way to bring vengeance on these people!

Are there any keys to why Joseph was able to have such an unnatural perspective on his situation and on the bad things that had happened to him?

"You will never experience all the good that can come from the bad in your life, until you are first willing to acknowledge that God was with you in the bad, and refuse to play God when things are good."

"God, though you were silent, you were not absent." – Andy Stanley

David

1 Sam. 24:1-22 - ^{24:1}Now it came about when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, saying, "Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi." ²Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. ³And he came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave. ⁴And the men of David said to him, "Behold, this is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul's robe secretly. ⁵And it came about afterward that David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's robe. ⁶So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD'S anointed." ⁷And David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way. ⁸Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself.

⁹And David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, ‘Behold, David seeks to harm you?’ ¹⁰“Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but *my* eye had pity on you; and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’S anointed.’

¹¹“Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it. ¹²“May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. ¹³“As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness’; but my hand shall not be against you. ¹⁴“After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog, a single flea? ¹⁵“The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand.”

¹⁶Now it came about when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. ¹⁷And he said to David, “You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. ¹⁸“And you have declared today that you have done good to me, that the LORD delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me. ¹⁹“For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May the LORD therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day. ²⁰“And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. ²¹“So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father’s household.” ²²And David swore to Saul. And Saul went to his home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

David could have killed Saul. Why didn’t he? _____

Why might his companions have thought he should have killed him? _____

In fact, it could have even been the way to bring about what God had already promised! (See the trend here? There can nearly always be a spiritual sounding reason to do the wrong thing!)

Don’t forget that David had another chance to do the same thing to Saul in 1 Sam. 26.

And also don’t forget about Shimei in 2 Sam. 16 & 19.

Jesus

Rom. 5:8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

John 12:27 - “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

Matt. 26:51-54 - ⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus *said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. ⁵³“Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴“How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?”

Jesus could have spoken a word and slaughtered the soldiers. Why didn’t he?

Luke 23:34 - But Jesus was saying, “Father, **forgive them**; for they do not know what they are doing.”

Didn’t God have every reason to wipe you and me off the face of the earth?

What did we deserve? _____

Couldn’t Jesus have pointed to the Law and justifiably condemned us to death?

Why didn’t he? _____

Just like David and Joseph, Jesus knew that God was with Him. His death was the plan and the mechanism to save many.

Conclusion

“The most courageous thing you may ever do as an adult is to choose to forgive the people who have hurt you the most. Forgiveness is not for weak people. Weak people do not forgive. **Forgiveness is for the person who has gained a perspective that gives them the strength to live their lives as if God was with them.** And it takes extraordinary faith and strength to live in the valley in the shadow of death as if God is with you. And it takes extraordinary strength and character to face the good times and not allow them to take you away from living every day as if God is with you. But I think it’s most difficult when you’ve got the power and the opportunity to ~~[get from]~~ [give to] people who’ve hurt you what you know they deserve. To stand in that place and say, not only do I forgive you, not only do I not hold the past against you, I’m actually going to give you what you do not deserve. Because that’s what people do who are confident that God is with them. And that’s what people do who are recipients of the very thing they didn’t deserve, forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life.” - Andy Stanley