

December 10, 2017

## *Life Lessons from the Book*

*"I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask anything in my name, and I will do it."* John 14:13-14

*"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."* John 15:7

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* Romans 8:28

*"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.'" When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you...But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save you lives by a great deliverance."* Genesis 45:4-7

One of the greatest gifts we enjoy as believers is the gift of prayer. Our heavenly Father has granted us direct access to him at any time, and he has also promised to answer our prayers giving us whatever we ask of him. That's quite a promise.

Our problem, of course, is that we don't always understand the power of the prayers we offer to God nor do we understand how he works in our lives. When Jesus promises us that our prayers will always be answered he adds one caveat. He tells us that prayers offered *"...in my name..."* will always be answered. If we ask our heavenly Father for something that we cannot ask in the name of Jesus, that is inconsistent with that name, then we cannot expect that God will answer. If we are not in Jesus and he is not in us; if we have no relationship with him, again, God may not answer. Otherwise, God hears our prayers and he always answers them and he always gives us what we ask of him. God does not say 'no'. But, many of his answers take time and very often we overlook this truth.

In Genesis 12 God promises Abraham, *"I will make you into a great nation."* After many years that promise is still unfulfilled and at the end of the book of Genesis that *"...great nation..."* only numbers seventy people. The final story recorded in the book of Genesis is the record of Joseph, the 11<sup>th</sup> son of Israel.

Jacob has, a result of some pretty questionable practices, four wives. He had several children, sons, with three of the four, but for many years he and his favorite wife Rachel could not have children. Finally, Rachel delivers a son for Jacob who names him Joseph. It was no secret among Jacob's other sons that he loved Joseph best and of course, the boys, in turn, disliked Joseph intensely.

As a young man he made his relationship with his brothers worse by revealing dreams to them in which they were all bowing before him. Eventually their hatred for Joseph led them to sell him into slavery. He ended up as a slave in the house of Pharaoh's captain of the guard. He was falsely accused by the captain's wife and ended up in prison.

Some time later Pharaoh was troubled by dreams and Joseph translated those dreams. After all of Joseph's struggles and set backs he was raised to power in Egypt. After several years

he had an opportunity to exact sweet revenge when his brothers appeared before him begging for food.



Joseph recognized a great truth about how God works when he faced his brothers. He could have exacted a horrible revenge on them for what they had done to him. Joseph, however, had come to understand that everything that he had endured was part of God's great plan.

You and I need to grasp this truth as well. When we feel that God is not answering our prayers, when we feel that he has deserted us or is not listening to us because we are still struggling with trials, God is at work. God has promised to work through even our worst struggles *"...for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* Joseph was convinced that God is always at work and you and I need to grasp this same truth.