

Introduction: Suffering due to jealousy of others is part of life in this world. Sometimes we contribute to our own suffering; but, even people who are good by human standards suffer. Before Jesus came to earth, Yahweh called Job righteous, yet he suffered. And Jesus, the only perfect man, suffered. *** Some seven centuries before Jesus came to earth, Yahweh revealed to one of His prophets that His people are to wait for the fulfillment of His revelation, even if it takes a long time. (*Habakkuk 2:2-4*) ** He has spoken to His Church that He works good out of all things, including suffering, and will bring glory to His children (*Romans 8:18-30*); so, His people must cooperate with Him in whatever way He chooses to work in them (*Philippians 2:12-13*). *** The story of Joseph illustrates this. He received a revelation from Yahweh in a dream. But, as a teenager, he was immature in his communication of the dream to his brothers and father. And, because his brothers already jealously hated him, they sold him into slavery in Egypt. But God used this distressful circumstance to test and strengthen Joseph's commitment to faithfully do His will. In the end, Joseph and his brothers came to know that God intends good for His people, and can even overrule their evil intentions. *** Jesus pointed out that God's true children go beyond worldly sinners by loving their enemies and always doing good to them. In this way they reflect and witness to the wonderful Mercy of God to all people. *** This way of living is possible only to those who have full confidence that God is in control of everything, and will always fulfill His Word, in His time. *** Now, let's look deeper into Joseph's story and Jesus' commands.)

I. God brought good out of Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery by keeping them all alive in Egypt.

(*Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-21*)

A. Because of Joseph's immaturity and his brothers' hatred of him, they sold him as a slave, and lied to their father.

(*Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34*)

1. Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons and made him a special coat, so his brothers hated him and could not speak to him in peace. (*Verses 3-4*)

Special garment: The Hebrew word has to do with long sleeves, but the rabbis who translated Scripture into Greek used 'multi-colored'. In any event, Israel made the mistake of showing favoritism to Joseph.

Hatred: The hatred of the ten older brothers was so great they could not have a peaceful conversation.

2. When Joseph dreamed a dream that his older brothers' sheaves bowed down to his raised up sheaf, this added to their hatred. (*Verses 5-7*)

Immature: Because Joseph was a teenager, he did not share his revelation from God with diplomacy. The phrase 'adding' to their hatred uses a word-play on Joseph's name: 'He will add'.

Dream fulfilled: This was fulfilled on their second visit, with Joseph's younger brother Benjamin, when they bowed before him. (*Genesis 43:1-26*)

3. His brothers said, 'Will you truly reign over us and have dominion over us?' (*Verse 8*)

Understood: They understood the interpretation of the dream; and used the same word with which Yahweh challenged Cain when He told Cain he may have dominion over sin (*Genesis 4:6*).

4. As Joseph approaches his brothers at Dothan ('two wells'), they plot to kill 'this dreamer' to see what will become of his dreams. (*Verses 17b-20*)

Plot to kill: Anger is equivalent to murder (*Matthew 5:21-22*); and those who hate their brother are still in darkness (*1 John 2:8-11*). Yahweh did a great miracle for Elisha at Dothan (*2 Kings 6:8-23*).

5. Reuben delivered Joseph saying, 'Let us not slay him, do not pour out his blood; but throw him into a pit in the wilderness' – to take him out of their hands and return him to his father. (*Verses 21-22*)

Reuben tries to help: Reuben ('see, a son') had sexual relations with his father's concubine Bilhah ('troubled', *Genesis 35:22*) and forfeited his right to excel as firstborn (*Genesis 49:3-4*).

6. Judah ('praise') asked his brothers what unjust gain would they get for slaying their brother and covering over his blood, so when Midianite traders came by they sold him for a pittance of silver. (*Verses 26-28*)

Midian: Midian was a son of the concubine Keturah ('incense') that Abraham took after Sarah died. (*Genesis 25:1-4*)

7. Then Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not there, so he tore his garments, returned to his brothers and asked where am I going? (*Verses 29-30*)

Reuben ineffective: Even though Judah is fourth born, he is supplanting Reuben as the leader of the brothers. Reuben's sin had consequences. May we all fear the consequences of willful sin so we will not be disqualified from our birthright IN Christ.

8. They took Joseph's special coat, killed a goat and dipped the coat in the blood; then they took it to their father to observe, and he said, 'A wild beast has devoured him – Joseph is surely torn to pieces'. (*Verses 31-33*)

Deceive father: The deception of their father is as bad as selling their brother in the flesh to foreigners.

9. Then Jacob tore his clothes and mourned in sackcloth many days. (*Verse 34*)

Lament: Jacob's mourning his son is similar to The Father mourning His Son on The Cross. And Joseph is similar to Jesus in that his brothers rejected him and did not recognize him until their second encounter with him. (*Acts 7:9-14; Romans 11:25-32*)

B. Joseph's brothers fear him after their father dies, but he tells them that God turned their evil to good. (*Genesis 50:15-21*)

1. Then Joseph's brothers saw their father dead and said, 'What if Joseph will hate us and return all the evil we dealt him?'; so they sent him a message about what their father commanded. (*Verses 15-16*)

Fear of payback: Even with all the tears Joseph shed when he revealed himself to his brothers, and the generous provisions he gave them (*Genesis 45*), they still have guilty consciences (*Genesis 42:21-22*).

2. ‘Say to Joseph: please forgive, I pray, the transgression and sin of you brothers because of the evil they did to you’, then they begged forgiveness as God’s servants, and Joseph wept. (*Verse 17*)
Story: While they may have invented the words of their father, their plea to be forgiven was sincere.
3. Then they fell down before him and said, ‘Behold! We are your servants’. (*Verse 18*)
Humility: After observing all God did in their brother’s life, and realizing all Joseph had done for them, their hatred to him is a thing of the past. They are humbling themselves before him.
4. Joseph said, ‘Fear not, for I am not instead of God; and you thought evil upon me, but God thought good in order to do as today, to keep many people alive’. (*Verses 19-20*)
Am I God?: Joseph assures them he is not God, and therefore will not judge them.
God overrides evil: After all he has experienced of God’s presence in some forty years in Egypt, Joseph knows God’s plan to save people could not be thwarted by the evil act of his jealous brothers.
In his sovereignty, God can bring good from suffering. (*Romans 8:18-30*)
Life: God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn to Him for life. (*2 Peter 3:8-9*)

God’s plan overrides human conflict

5. Joseph concludes: ‘And now, I will sustain you and your little ones’; then he comforted them and spoke to their hearts. (*Verse 21*)
Comfort: Joseph realized that despite all the family conflict, God fulfilled the dream He had given Joseph. He has been given God’s heart to forgive the sin and trespass of his brothers and comfort them.
May we all know that even great sin can be forgiven by God IN Christ, and receive His forgiveness.

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II. Disciples of Jesus who love their enemies will have great reward and be children of the Highest. (Luke 6:32-36)

- A. There is no thanks for loving, doing good, or lending with the expectation of a return. (*Verses 32-34*)
 1. If you love those loving you, what thanks are to you, because sinners also love those loving them. (*Verse 32*)
Sinners love to be loved: Even sinners love people who are loving them.
 2. For if also you should do good to those doing good to you, what thanks are to you, sinners also are doing the same. (*Verse 33*)
Sinners are good for equal value: Sinners are experts at keeping a balance sheet of good deeds. They are willing to do some good to get good in return – the more the better.
 3. And if you should lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks are to you, because sinners also lend to receive the same. (*Verse 34*)
Sinners lend to get back: As long as sinners break even or better, they are willing to help.
In all three situations, Jesus says His disciples do not merit thanks for their actions.
- B. But those who love enemies and do good will be greatly rewarded children of the Highest because The Father is merciful to all. (*Verses 35-36*)
 1. Jesus commands his disciples: ‘Be loving your enemies’. (*Verse 35a*)
Love enemies: Jesus concluded The Sermon on The Mount saying what they hear about loving your neighbor and hating your enemies is wrong! He commanded them: ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven’. (*Matthew 5:43-48*)
 2. And, you must be doing good. (*Verse 35b*)
Always be good to all: This is unqualified, meaning always do good to all people. (*Galatians 6:7-10*)
 3. And, you must be lending, expecting nothing in return. (*Verse 35c*)
Lend expecting nothing: As they were about to enter The Promised Land, God commanded His people through Moses to lend to the poor enough to sufficiently meet their need (*Deuteronomy 15:7-11*). And Paul was always eager to give to the poor (*Galatians 2:10; Acts 24:17*).
 4. And your reward will be great. (*Verse 35d*)
Will have great reward: The reward for serving The Lord Jesus is an inheritance (*Colossians 3:22-24*). Jesus said when He returns He will reward everyone according to his work (*Revelation 22:12*).
 5. And you will be sons of The Highest. (*Verse 35e*)
As Jesus: They will be brothers and sisters of Jesus, The Son of The Highest God. (*Luke 8:26-28*)
 6. Because He is kind unto the unthankful and evil. (*Verse 35f*)
Like Father, like children: Those who are children of God IN The Lord Jesus Christ will love their enemies as God does.

God’s children love their enemies as He does

7. You all must be merciful just as your Father is also merciful. (*Verse 36*)

Bottom Line: Let us all receive God’s Mercy so we can join with God as He carries out His plan so all people may repent and not perish. He is patient with our conflicts, longing for us to receive His Mercy.

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Conclusion: God’s plan to reconcile people to Him, and redeem them into full and fruitful life, will be accomplished in spite of (and even through) jealousy, hatred and evil actions. IN Jesus, it is now possible for His adopted children to love their enemies SO all may experience God’s Mercy.

God’s plan overrides human conflict