

A Light Bulb Moment

Today In Your Reading...

Joseph, who was still in jail, had the opportunity of helping two of the king's servants. They both had disturbing dreams, and Joseph was able to interpret them, with the Lord's help. One of the dreams was favorable; the other was not. However, both of them did come true, just as Joseph predicted.

The king's cupbearer, who had the favorable dream, was restored to his position, and yet he said nothing to Pharaoh regarding Joseph's help. In fact, it was two years later when the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph, and that was only after Pharaoh was disturbed by a dream that no one could interpret.

Once the king's servant remembered Joseph and Joseph met Pharaoh, the rest was history. Before he knew it, Joseph found himself second-in-command in all of Egypt, now in a position not only to save his country but also to save his family.

It had to have been at that precise moment that Joseph had a "light bulb moment," when, suddenly, everything he had endured made sense. As soon as Pharaoh looked at him and said, "There is no one more discerning or wise as you are, so you shall be over my house," he surely was flooded with a stream of flashbacks. He could see the pit where his brothers left him for dead. He could hear the chains around his neck, as he was dragged away from the slave auction by Potiphar's men. He could feel the hurt and shame from when he was framed for adultery and thrown into prison. He could smell the foul stench of the Egyptian dungeon.

Now, he was the assistant to the most powerful man in the world. It all worked together! Everything fell into place, and he could see the hand of God touching every part. No doubt Joseph

shook his head at the wonder of it all. He smiled at God's impeccable timing, and he held back tears of joy and relief, as he recognized that his Heavenly Father knew best after all.

The "light bulb" came on. Life made sense again. **God had a purpose all along, even in his darkest days.**

Daily Reflection

Can you think of any "aha moments" in your life, when the "light bulb" came on and a trial made sense? What happened and how did God use that moment for your good and His glory?

Take time to thank God for His purposeful work in your life, to recognize that **He never wastes a moment, an experience, a struggle, or a setback.** All things work together to accomplish His will for your life.

"He causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him..." (*Romans 8:28*).

Coincidence or Providence?

January 16 — *Genesis 42:1-45:15*

Day 16 — 349 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Joseph was reunited with his brothers, after many years of separation, a day that had to have been very difficult for Joseph to bear. But, after he took measures to test his brothers, he revealed himself to them, finding them changed, repentant, and willing to sacrifice their own lives for the life of their younger brother, Benjamin.

This change moved Joseph to forgive his brothers for their evil against him. What struck me most about this wonderful reunion was Joseph's perspective of the whole thing. He could have recognized this turn of events as coincidence, as chance, or as good luck, but instead he recognized that God was sovereign over all these things, and that He had worked all of this for His good purposes.

He commented several times that "God sent me ahead of you to preserve your lives" (45:5), and "God has sent me here to keep you and your families alive" (45:7), and, "It was God who sent me here, not you" (45:8).

In essence, Joseph believed in providence, the truth that God sees time before it happens and provides in advance to bring about events exactly the way that He wants. Noah Webster defined providence as "active foresight," not only knowing what happens beforehand but bringing it about in such a way as to meet His purposes (*1828 Dictionary*).

The Lord is the Alpha and Omega. He is the Beginning and the End, and He knows, plans, and executes every detail in between (*Isaiah 46:9-11*). Since God is sovereign, ruling all things in His universe, then **no detail is outside of His view or control**; and, since that is true and we know He is intentional with all that He does, then there can be no such thing as accident, coincidence, chance, or happenstance.

Daily Reflection

Are you more prone to view life's events as coincidence or as providence? How would each of these perspectives affect how you live?

Nothing happens by accident; nothing happens by chance. All things are ordained by God for His good purposes. **Even evil has a good purpose in the hands of God.** He is in control and nothing occurs without His knowledge and permission. Why is that so easy to say and so hard to believe?

"Am I in God's place? 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. Even when the lot is cast in the lap, its every decision is from the Lord" (*Genesis 50:20; Proverbs 16:33*).

A Loathsome Blessing

January 17 — *Genesis 45:16-47:27*

Day 17 — 348 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We witnessed the reunion of Joseph and his family. It pleased Pharaoh to see this take place, so much, in fact, that he ordered Joseph to relocate his father and family to Egypt. Pharaoh offered them Goshen (near the north end of Egypt's Nile River delta, towards the Mediterranean Sea). It was the most fertile land in Egypt and perhaps the best land to be had in all the known world at the time. This scene is a great reminder that God takes care of His people.

However, I would like to focus our attention today on a side story. It is mentioned twice in the story of Joseph that shepherds were despised in Egypt" (43:32; 46:34). The *NASB* describes them as "loathsome." To be loathsome means to be disgusting or detestable. Shepherds were considered the lowest wrung of society; yet, when Jacob, or Israel, met Pharaoh for the first time, he blessed him (47:7, 10).

Here we have, on a smaller scale, the portrayal of a larger picture; God's people, the Jews, have historically been loathsome to the nations of the earth, and yet, as promised, they are history's biggest blessing, in that through them God provided the Savior of all men.

Furthermore, Christians, in general, are viewed as loathsome to the people of the earth; and yet, we carry with us the message of Christ's love and hope, which over time has proven to be a blessing to those who hear it.

Daily Reflection

Jesus told us that we, as His followers, would be despised by the world because of His name. It is still true. We are considered loathsome in many places.

Why do you think that is? Why does the world see Christians as loathsome? Why despise us?

When those around us get to know us and see the character and heart of Christ demonstrated in our lives, they should be blessed. Can you say that about your life? Are you a blessing to the unbelievers with whom you come in contact? If not, you should be.

What are some ways that you could go the extra mile to be a blessing to those around you, to those who don't know Christ as their Savior?

I would challenge you to bless others regularly on behalf of your Savior, to dispel the loathsome stigma that our world has about Christians.

"Let your light so shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (*Matthew 5:16*).

The Fairness Fetish

Today In Your Reading...

We completed the book of *Genesis*, and two of the great forefathers of God's people passed away — Jacob, or Israel, and Joseph. Both men were used by God in unique ways — Israel to start a nation through his twelve sons and their families, and Joseph to rescue his father and family from a severe drought, to preserve them while God multiplied them into a nation. Joseph's perspective on this incredible adventure is refreshing, as he forgave his brothers of their evil intentions and reaffirmed his faith and trust in the God of providence.

However, the predominant story today was that of Israel gathering his sons around him, at the end of his life, to prophecy of their futures. I'm sure that you noticed, as Israel described each of his sons and their destinies, how each of them was different. That's not surprising, of course, knowing that none of us is exactly the same. The Bible says that "Israel blessed them all with a blessing that was appropriate to them" (49:28).

God, in His boundless creativity, made each of us with unique characteristics, unique perspectives, unique physical attributes, and unique paths in life to follow. Thus, He blesses all of us in unique ways, appropriate to our needs. Though oftentimes God deals with men as nations, as societies, as communities, as churches, and even as families, He also deals with us as individuals. Each person is important to the Lord, and He knows best what each of us needs. Thus, His blessings, His provision, and His plan are perfectly appropriate for who we are and what we need. **God does not treat everyone with a cookie-cutter approach.** We should take comfort in knowing that He desires a personal relationship with each one of us.

Daily Reflection

We are not told how the brothers reacted to the blessings given to them or to their siblings, but I can imagine that some were disgruntled with either their own destinies or even jealous of a brother's blessing. Perhaps one of them even thought or uttered the words, "That's not fair."

While God deals with us as individuals, He does not give to people equitably; neither does He set us all on the same path. Everyone's lot in life is different. **Fairness is a fetish of ours.** It does not originate with God but from Lucifer. He was the first to claim unfairness in heaven, and he quickly got Adam and Eve to do the same in Eden. When we claim unfairness, we take our eyes off of the Lord and place them on others.

Have you ever fallen for Satan's fairness fetish and compared the lot of others to your own? What are some dangers that could come from paying too much attention to others' blessings?

Peter once compared his future to that of John. Jesus quickly responded by saying, "What is that to you? You follow Me" (*John 21:20-25*). Your lot in life will not be the same as others; some people will be "better off" than you, but that's okay. **Your focus is not to be on others but on the Lord.**

No matter your lot in life, *you are called to be faithful to God.* Are you grateful for what God has done in your life? Are you content with the blessings He's given and not given you?

Fair-Weather Fan?

January 19 — *Job 1:1-4:21*

Day 19 — 346 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

We began the account of Job. We are familiar with his story, or at least with the summary of his life, the fact that he lost everything and was allowed by God to suffer unthinkable horrors, only to be reinstated in full after a time.

It is a typical error of ours, when we are so familiar with a character or a book, to gloss over the deeper truths hidden beneath its words. I am challenged not to be guilty of that. I want to stay focused on what God can teach us about Himself.

One of the realities in this story, which is taken for granted right from the start, is that we have an enemy who does nothing but “roam about the earth and observe everything that’s going on” (*Job 1:7; 2:2*). Peter tells us in the New Testament that he “prowls about, seeking someone to devour” (*1 Peter 5:8*), as is the case with Job. It is so easy sometimes, since we cannot see Satan, to forget that he exists (which is what he would like for us to do) and to be ignorant of his destructive mission in our lives.

Another reality of this story is that we have Someone on our side, a loving God who holds us in His hand and protects us with His power (*1:10*). However, the question of the day came when Job responded to his wife’s admonition to “Curse God and die.” He asked, “Shall we accept good from God and not accept adversity?”

Here is a perspective on life that few people have, the attitude and ability to praise God come what may. **Most people are quick to abandon the Lord when life gets hard.** Job is a tremendous example of faithfulness.

Daily Reflection

What is your typical response to God when life gets difficult?

Have you ever heard of fair-weather fans, those people who only demonstrate support for their team when things are going well but who abandon their team once they start losing? Sadly, many people respond to the Lord in the same way. Are you a fair-weather fan or do you demonstrate the faithfulness of Job? Are you more prone to complain to God or praise Him?

“The Lord gives and the Lord takes away,” says Job. “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” We like it when the Lord gives, but what about when He takes away? Do you trust Him enough to bless His name then?

In the time that it takes to read *Job*, you will experience unpleasant situations. How will you respond?

“When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well with my soul.’” *Horatio Spafford, 1873*

Sympathy and Silence

Today In Your Reading...

One of Job's friends, Eliphaz, offered his thoughts on Job's suffering, blaming it on unconfessed sin in Job's life. "Evil does not spring from the soil," he said, "and trouble does not sprout from the earth. People are born for trouble as sparks fly up from a fire. My advice to you is to go to God and present your case to Him; then, you will live to a ripe old age. We have found from experience that all this is true. Listen to my counsel." (Job 5:6-8, 26, 27).

Job said his friend's words were of no help. His insensitivity made his situation worse, not better; besides, *trouble is not always a result of sin*, as we know from yesterday's reading. Sometimes, Satan causes trouble for mankind. Thus, Job remarked, "One should be kind to a fainting friend, but you have accused me without the slightest fear of the Almighty. My brother, you have proved as unreliable as a seasonal brook that overflows its banks..." (6:14, 15).

When it comes to ministering to those in suffering or bereavement, words can be comforting and encouraging, but **words can also be like daggers if not chosen carefully**. Most of the time, those who are suffering, for one reason or another, don't need words heaped on top of their misery. They would rather their friends remain silent than make things worse.

For the most part, suffering people just need a friend to sit and listen so that they can vent their frustration, their anger, or their sorrow. **Just having company is oftentimes the best medicine**. However, when one finds it necessary to speak to a suffering friend, *discretion is the best path to take*. It's always better to provide words of comfort and sympathy rather than advice or criticism. Take care what you say, *for a know-it-all friend is no friend at all*.

Daily Reflection

What has meant most to you during times of suffering, sorrow, or grief?

What would you tell others to avoid doing or saying when you are suffering?

Have you ever had a chance to comfort others in their need? What did you do?

"Pleasant words are like honey, sweet to the soul, healing to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24).

The Bridge

Today In Your Reading...

Job and two of his friends, Bildad and Zophar, described men as nothing impressive, and they described God in lofty but accurate terms. For example, Bildad said, "We were born but yesterday and know so little. Our days on earth are as transient as a shadow. Such is the fate of all who forget God. The hope of the godless comes to nothing" (8:9, 13, 14).

Zophar echoed Bildad's sentiments with the grandeur of God and the trouble men have with understanding Him. "Can you solve the mysteries of God? Can you discover everything there is to know about the Almighty? Such knowledge is higher than the heavens, but who are you?" (11:7, 8).

Job's response was appropriate, recognizing God's infinite qualities and man's inept ability to measure up to Him. "Yes, I know all this is true in principle, but how can a person be declared innocent in the eyes of God? If He sends death to snatch someone away, who can stop Him? Who dares ask Him, 'What are you doing?' If only there were a mediator who could bring us together, but there is none" (9:2, 12, 33).

Job's comments mirror some of the words of the Old Testament prophets, namely Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah said, "All of us have become like one who is unclean; all our righteous deeds have become like filthy garments. All of us wither like a leaf; and like the wind, our wickedness takes us away" (64:6). Jeremiah said, "The heart is more wicked than all else; it is desperately sick. Who understands it?" (17:9).

These verses, along with Job's search for a mediator to stand between God and men, foreshadow one of the purposes of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He is the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). He is "the Bridge"

who connects two paths — God's and man's — and brings them together. Christ was fully divine and fully human, therefore, He is able to sympathize with and reconcile us to one another.

Daily Reflection

So many blessings happened at the cross, but one in particular was that Christ mediated or made a way to God for you, despite your sin. Have you recognized this truth, and have you taken time to thank Him for it?

Why is Christ's mediation necessary? Why can you not represent yourself before your Maker? What would be the result?

On your own, you are unworthy to enter God's presence; but **with Jesus standing in the gap for you, you are made right with God.**

Jesus said to them, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6).

Praise God that you have a mediator who made a way to be reconciled to your heavenly Father.