

“In The Beginning...”

“Personal Vengeance”

Gen. 41-45

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RESISTING PERSONAL VENGEANCE

- I. **Treatment of Joseph by his brothers, and the trouble it brought him.**
 - A. Joseph's brothers resented and hated him because of Jacob's preferential treatment and due to his dreams that portrayed them bowing down to him.
 - B. Joseph's brothers sell him as a slave to Ishmaelite traders and fabricate evidence to lead their father to believe Joseph was killed by an animal. Jacob mourns greatly.
 - C. Joseph is bought by an Egyptian officer named (or titled) Potiphar. Joseph refuses the advances of Potiphar's wife, and she seeks revenge by claiming he attempted to assault her. As a result, Joseph is imprisoned.
 - D. While in prison, Joseph correctly interprets dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker, but remains there for some time.
 - E. After Pharaoh has two dreams from God, the butler recalls Joseph. Pharaoh sends for him, and Joseph ascends to power in Egypt.
- II. **What Joseph could have done.**
 - A. He could have taken advantage of his position in Egypt and treated his brothers cruelly or had them executed.
 - B. He could have taken them up on their offer to be his servants/slaves.
 - C. He could have allowed them to carry out their normal lives but could have refused to have anything to do with them or to take care of them.

III. Joseph refuses to take revenge. Genesis 50:15-21

- A.** Jacob dies and Joseph's brothers now worry he will exact revenge on them.
 - 1) They ask, "What if Joseph bears a grudge and pays us back?"
 - 2) They send a message to him reminding him of their father's admonition to forgive them and to ask for his forgiveness.
 - 3) Brothers to Joseph: "We are your servants."
- B.** Joseph's reaction.
 - 1) Don't be afraid. "Am I in God's place?"
 - 2) "You meant evil for me, but God used it for good."
 - 3) "I will provide for you and your families."

IV. God forbids us to exact our own revenge.

- A.** God instructed the Israelites not to take vengeance. Leviticus 19:18: "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."
- B.** Proverbs 24:28-29: "Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, for would you deceive with your lips? Do not say, "I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work."
- C.** Romans 12:17, 19. "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone." "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."
- D.** I Peter 3:9: "Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult."

V. Revenge or Vengeance Belongs to God

- A.** Joseph asked, "Am I in God's place?"
- B.** Psalms 94:1: "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs—O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!"
- C.** Romans 12:19: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."
- D.** Hebrews 10:30: "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people."

VI. Points to Remember

- A.** Not taking revenge does not mean we ignore the sins of others. We have a responsibility to correct those in error (Matthew 18:15-16). But it must be done with a proper, loving attitude (II Thessalonians 3:14-15).
- B.** Revenge can come in different types of forms.
 - 1)** Physical force. Fighting.
 - 2)** Pranks.
 - 3)** Use of the tongue. Gossip. Spreading lies (or hurtful truths).
 - 4)** Acting out in the same manner as was done to you.
- C.** Other examples of those who didn't take revenge but could have.
 - 1)** David. Refused to take revenge of Saul, even though Saul had repeatedly sought to kill him.
 - 2)** Jesus. Had the power of Deity. Could have called twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53).