

Joseph hated without a cause

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[0 : 00] We turn back in God's Word to Genesis 37. What I hope to look at this morning, and again this evening, is the relationship that Joseph has with his brothers, and the way that that relationship breaks down, and then later on is healed.

So Genesis 37, and we'll read again verses 3 and 4. Now Israel, that is shaken, loved Joseph, his son, more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made a richly ornamented robe for him.

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him, and could not speak a kind word to him.

Now you're familiar, I know, with the family of Jacob, with his twelve sons. Joseph is the brightest star among them.

Some of them at this stage certainly are very wicked sons, and a real disappointment to their father, Jacob. Now we see in verse 4 that these ten sons, the older sons and Joseph hated Joseph.

[1 : 45] They also show, especially at the end of the chapter, where they come and comfort Jacob, knowing very well what's happened to Joseph, they show a great contempt for Jacob, their father, as well.

It is in this family, in other words, to be a shortcoming in the relationships that exist between Jacob, the father, and the sons, and in the relationships that exist between the different sons, and especially between Joseph and his brothers.

Now I'm going to ask one simple question this morning, for us all to answer before God, and to help us to understand why our relationships break down.

That is, why do sin and alienation come into our life? Very simple question.

If we have sin in any way, why does it happen? If our relationships with our parents, our children, our brothers, our sisters, our friends have broken down, why?

[3 : 01] Why is this alienation? Why are things not as intimate and as close as they ought to be? Why? What happens to make sin part of our life?

What happens that we can be feeling great and going alongside them suddenly we behave in a way that is unreasonable, in a way that is hurtful, in a way that is not only displeasing to other people, but especially displeasing to God.

Why did Joseph's brothers hate him? Why if you look at this chapter did they hate Joseph? Joseph? There are three answers that we can immediately pick out of the scriptures here to that question.

The first answer in verse 2, at the end of verse 2, Joseph was tending the flocks with his brother and Joseph brought their father Jacob a bad report about them.

he came back to his father and he said, do you know what my brothers are doing? Do you know how they're behaving? Do you know what kind of sons you have?

[4 : 25] And they hated Joseph because he told the truth. because he told his father the way that the sons were sinning and misbehaving.

They hated him because he told the truth. The second reason in verse 3, Israel, Jacob, loved Joseph more than any of his other sons.

In verse 4, when his brother saw that their father loved him more, they hated him. They hated Joseph because they said we are loved less by our father than Joseph is.

Now of course any parent knows that it's very easy to have a favourite son and the favourite son is I would expect the one who behaves the best, the one who gets on the best, the one who pleases the parents most.

And that's what Joseph was. He was a favourite son because he was the most pleasing of all the sons. He was the one that behaved the best and he was the one that was most a fulfilment of his father's wishes and therefore he was loved more just because he was a better person.

[5 : 50] and yet because of that ten of his brothers hated him. They hated him because their father loved him more.

There's a third reason as well explained for us in verse 8 after Joseph has told him his dream, his brother said to him, do you intend to reign over him?

Will you actually rule him? And they hated him all the more because of his dream. They hated him thirdly because of what was going to happen. They hated him because this dream indicated that one day he was going to rule over them.

And they hated that. They hated that thought. They hated the possibility that their younger brother whom they hated anyway would become ruler over them.

And so they hated him all the more because of his dream. Because of something that was going to happen. There's nothing wrong with Joseph ruling over them. It was a fact it was going to happen.

[7 : 07] And yet because of it they hated him. Now why do I look at all these reasons? was simply for us to see that they hated him without a cause.

Because you see these three reasons that we've looked at they're not reasons at all are they? There is no reason for Joseph to be hated.

The three reasons why the brothers hated him are not really reasons. You see when we say something is a reason for something else happening then we mean that it is caused by that thing and that there is a kind of logical progression.

For example when we stopped outside the church today we pushed the brake pedal in the car and because we pushed the brake the car stopped. It's cause and effect.

It's a very simple thing. And if we say well the brothers hated Joseph because of these three reasons then we're making it look like it's something inevitable. Something that had to happen.

[8 : 18] That there was no other thing that could have happened. That they had to hate him. That they were caught in this situation and because Jacob loved Joseph more and because Joseph told Jacob the truth about them and because Joseph was going to rule over them somehow there was no other course for them but to hate him.

That it was a necessity. That it was an unavoidable and inexorable consequence. But the fact is as you can see these three things that the brothers might have given us reasons for hating Joseph are really, please be told, excuses for hating Joseph.

They're not reasons. They're excuses. excuses. It's not something that had to happen. It did happen and the brothers could use these three things as excuses.

They could say, well, we hate because we are loved less by our father than Joseph. We hate because he is going to rule over us. We hate because he went back and told our father what we were getting up to.

But these are excuses. they're not reasons. They're excuses. And it's really important for us before God today to understand the difference between a reason for sin and an excuse for sin.

[9 : 53] And if we were to really go into this in great detail, we would find that there is never, ever, at any time, in any place, under any circumstances, a reason for sin.

There are excuses, but there are never reasons. Sin is never a logical consequence of our circumstances.

Sin is never an inexorable result of our circumstances. It is not necessary for us to sin. We are under no obligation before God when he preaches in certain circumstances to sin.

And in our own society today, there is a great deal of effort made sin. To make it look like sin is something that is unavoidable, that is rational, that a reason can be given for it.

For example, we are told about homosexual behaviour, that it is a rational thing, that it is an inexorable thing, that it is a logical consequence of your genetic composition, of what you have inherited from your parents, that it is something that is logical, that it is something that cannot be avoided.

[11 : 21] And therefore, what comes from that is that it's okay because you can't avoid it. It's okay. It's okay to be an alcoholic because you were born that way.

That's what we're told. It's okay to have a short temper because that's just the way you are. It's okay to be prone to certain temptations because of the way you were brought up and because of the environment you live in and the circumstances you have to cope with.

It's okay because these things are a logical consequence. that's what people want to believe today. I suppose we've always wanted to believe it but now with advances especially in science the connection is somehow being made between the way you are genetically and the way you behave.

Now I know that the way that we are genetically makes some patterns of behaviour more likely but the way we are genetically doesn't make sinful patterns of behaviour unavoidable and we can never therefore come to God and say well I could not help it.

I couldn't help hating Joseph because that was in my genes. I couldn't help hating Joseph because the circumstances made it unavoidable. In fact what God is saying to us here this morning is very simply if we sin whatever that particular form of sin or pattern of sin may be it is not something that is rational it is a logical consequence of our environment and our upbringing and our genetic makeup it is something that is inexcusable and what we may say is a good solid logical reason why we sin is nothing more really than an excuse the fact is we're sinners the fact is that the reason that we sin is not because of the way we were born and it's not because of faults in our upbringing and it's not because of pressures we're under the reason that we sin is that we're sinners the Lord

[14 : 12] Jesus Christ has been under our pressures the Lord Jesus Christ has known what it is to be under pressure to sin but he didn't sin because sin is not something that is unavoidable and a logical consequence of where we're at sin is because we before God today are sinners that is our essential nature before God and it shows doesn't it it shows in me and it shows in you and it showed in Joseph's brothers it showed in Joseph himself it comes out later on in the chapter we read about the way that the brothers hated that thing that was in them came out first of all it came out at the end of verse 4 they couldn't speak a kind word to but it simmered away there and what was in their nature came out timely in their murderous intentions towards their brothers they ended up selling him for their own gain that what was in them came out it wasn't that what was outside of them pressed in upon them and made them so that they had to sell

Joseph to be afraid it wasn't that they couldn't help it it wasn't that it was excusable because they were all genetically weak and they didn't have a hope of doing anything else it's because they were sinners and our behaviour over the past week testifies to that perhaps in different areas of our lives and what we've been thinking and the things that we've been mulling over in our minds and the things that perhaps we've been brooding over and perhaps the way we've behaved in our different relationships we've maybe helped people we've maybe lost our temper or we've been bitter we've nursed or resent the spirit or maybe it's come out in much more open ways than that still but it does come out because we're sinners not because of the way we are genetically or environmentally or as a result of past circumstances but because we are born sinners and we are sinners and that is how we come to God this morning in our worship and in our prayer and the consequences of sin can be very terrible they were in Joseph's circumstance because what eventually happens although it results in good sin in that Joseph was able to become second in command in

Egypt and feed Egypt to the grain that he stored up it also results in Israel the nation spending 400 years in Egypt as slave so that it had a terrible consequence and you can all trace it back to this hatred in the hearts of his ten brothers and there's no knowing what consequences our own sin can have and what we call small and little and insignificant can blow up into something very very terrible and unpleasant and hurtful because it's in us it's just a plain unavoidable fact of our life that we are sinners and that is why we sin the fact is that this sin which we see in Joseph's brothers it keeps on repeating itself throughout history if you look at the gospels and you look at the way that

Christ was treated you find such amazing parallels between Joseph and his brothers and Christ and his fellow Jewish people Jesus himself said to his own people he said you have seen my miracles and yet he said you have hated both me and my father and yet this happened to fulfill what is written in your law he said they hated me without a cause that's what we sang in Psalm 35 they hated me without a cause the same thing again the brothers hated Joseph without a cause in Jesus day they hated him without a cause what possible reason can you give for hating Jesus Christ and they hated him without a cause there was no reason there were many excuses there were many false reasons given by the people for why they hated him why they treated him the way they did but in the end it was true they hated him without a cause and indeed they probably used the same three excuses that the brothers used because Jesus brought a bad report about the

Jewish people he told them the truth about the way they were before God Jesus was loved more by his father in heaven than his people the Jews as a whole and they resented that because they could see that God was with them and Jesus himself spoke about ruling over them didn't he and they hated that as well and they hated him because he claimed he was going to rule over them the same thing the same hatred without a cause repeated in the way that Jesus was treated but the fact is to bring it right up to where we are this morning this hatred can be in us as well because there is no logical reason why we should not end up hating

[21 : 00] Jesus Christ you can't say I could never do that because it's not like me I may have my faults but that's not going to be one of them I'm not going to hate Jesus because the fact is we're sinners just like Joseph's brothers just like the Pharisees and the chief priests just like them we are sinners and there's no reason why we ourselves will not in the end hate Jesus and why we ourselves should not in the end do with him in our own heart and in our own lives what his own people did to him when they crucified and unless we have in our own lives submitted to the Lordship of Christ and received his Holy

Spirit into our lives there is no reason why we too may not end up where the brothers were with Joseph where the Jews were against Jesus there is no reason because sin is not a reasonable thing that's what this whole thing is about sin is without a cause sin is not logical it's not something that happens because of a prior set of circumstances it's not something that happens because of some determinism in our lives it's something that happens because we're sinners and it can break out in all kinds of chaotic and unreasonable ways that we don't expect that we don't understand why did I do that why did I behave in that way we don't understand it it happens it's there it's a reality it's undeniable why did I do that we don't know and we may end up hating Jesus

Christ why did I do that and we'll not know that either that is why when we sin we must never justify it we must never say well I did that because I had to do that I did that because there are a number of reasons that made it unavoidable sin is not like that sin is not reasonable it's not rational and as long as we justify it and explain it away we will never ever truly come to that place of receiving salvation through Jesus Christ because as long as we make it look like something we couldn't avoid something we had to do something that's just us we will never see our need of Jesus

Christ you know when God comes to us and asks us about our sins do you know what he says to us I think it's really very significant when he came to Eve in the garden what did God say to Eve did he say why did you do that when he came to Cain when Cain had murdered his brother did he say to Cain why did you do that if you look back in Genesis 3 and 4 you find that God actually said what have you done he didn't ask for a reason he didn't ask Eve to start explaining and going into great detail about why she couldn't help it he didn't ask Cain to start running off his excuses for what he'd done and how he couldn't help it and he doesn't come to us today and say why have you done this why did you behave like that why did you say that why are you thinking in this wrong way he never asks us why do we sin because he knows that sin doesn't submit to that you can't say why you can't say well it's just a logical thing

God never asks why he asks what he asks what have you done because it's a fact to be confessed not a failing to make excuses for and before God this morning we're here we face God not as people who can excuse ourselves and who can explain away what we are we face God as people who simply get asked by God what what have you done and who are simply required by God to tell him no excuses no reasoning no attempt at an explanation no minimizing what we've done by pretending that we couldn't help it that it was unavoidable he simply asks us to say this is what I have done and if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness but if we excuse our sins he is faithful and just to condemn us for our sins because we are sinners and so the first step that

[27 : 25] Joseph's brothers don't take for more than 20 years they do take it eventually we'll see that this evening the first step is confessing sin not explaining or excusing or minimizing or dismissing but confessing sin because God will never come to us and say why did you do that we may say that to our children and we're just encouraging them to think of excuses I think we should say to them what have you done so that they may simply face what God wants us to face that there are no excuses that there is no unavoidable reason that it is simply a fact to be confessed not a failing to make excuses for God help us this morning to be honest and open and straight with him and confess our sins so that he may be faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from our unrighteousness by the blood of his son the Lord

Jesus Christ let's pray together Lord our God we must confess before you that the very hatred the very sin the very alienation that we see in the family of Jacob is something that we are completely familiar with in our own lives we know what it is for our relationships with others to break down we know what it is to sin forgive us Lord that we also know what it is to excuse our sin and to make it look like it doesn't matter we ask Lord that today as we have studied your word we may not have the failing of Joseph's brothers we not have the failing of those who crucified Christ may not pretend that our behavior is alright we pray

Lord that you would help us to be honest and to simply confess so that we may be forgiven and so that we may know reconciliation reconciliation with one another reconciliation also with you our God so that we may know your love and your healing working in our lives your Holy Spirit breaking through the walls and the barriers that we have put up and uniting us closer and closer to one another and more and more closely also to you our Father in heaven we pray that you would hear us now for Christ's sake Amen