

Grudge not

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Genesis 50:20

This answer from Joseph to his brothers reflects his attitude of faith towards God. It had been many years since they had schemed to kill him, and then instead sold him into slavery, in reaction to his sharing of his dreams of preeminence over them. That beginning of events resulting from their hatred of him would have left an indelible mark in Joseph's memory. The brothers' last memory of Joseph would have been that event. But he would also remember the ensuing events. In contrast to previously having been the favorite of his father, he was now further sold as a mere slave to Potiphar in Egypt. Then after rising in Potiphar's house to be chief servant, he was framed by Potiphar's unfaithful wife and thrown into the king's prison, although innocent. After that, having again risen to a responsible position in the prison, he had the opportunity to share his gift from God to interpret dreams for the jailed servants of Pharaoh. At least from the favorable interpretation for the chief butler, Joseph was expectant that the butler would remember him from his restored post and rescue him from prison. Yet the butler forgot him. This chain of events provided ample opportunities for Joseph to become bitter in his circumstances, and especially towards his brothers who had forged the first link.

However, when after two years Pharaoh had his own prophetic dreams, the butler was reminded of Joseph, and after interpreting Pharaoh's dreams Joseph was elevated to manage the food supply in Egypt. That possibly was a time when Joseph began to understand the purpose of God in the events of his life. But when he saw his brothers coming to buy food from him in Egypt and bowing to him just as his childhood dreams had indicated (Genesis 42:6-9), it is evident that much more unfolded before his eye of faith. While the Genesis account doesn't reveal all that Joseph considered as he dealt with his brothers without their recognition, it is clear that he understood more of God's purpose, not only for himself, but for his family, when he revealed his identity to them (Genesis 45:5-8). Yet, even after dwelling with him in Egypt for seventeen years, after the death of Jacob his brothers were still afraid of retaliation from Joseph and came reminding him of Jacob's intercession for them. His answer to them in our text clearly demonstrated that he bore no grudge against them. We do well to recognize that a key element of his response to all that came to him had to be faith in God's purpose for him, even when it was not necessarily clear at times throughout the process.

We can learn much from Joseph's example. Most of us would not compare the events of our own lives to the circumstances that came to him. And yet, should some even approach that extreme, we must remember his response. He bore no grudge. Instead, he typified the ultimate example of our Lord Jesus, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). With such examples, let us commit ourselves to bear no grudge, but to leave all in the hands of the Lord (James 5:9).