

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“... In Exchange For Your Soul?”

Genesis 47:1-31

2003

Introduction

On Thursday, May 1st, 2003 five days after Aron Ralston was trapped by a boulder in Utah's Bluejohn Canyon, he made a life and death decision. He had run out of food and water with virtually no chance of rescue. But rather than die a slow and agonizing death alone in the Canyon, he amputated his own right arm with a multi-tool, put a tourniquet on his arm, rappelled 70 feet down a cliff and hiked three hours until he was picked up by a helicopter.

It's a remarkable story of sacrifice – and has turned Ralston into a cult hero!

<https://www.aronralstonspeaker.com/>

The word sacrifice is defined as:

“The act of giving up, destroying, permitting injury to, or forgoing something valued for the sake of something having a more pressing claim.”

Simply stated, it is “the act of giving up one thing in order to obtain something of greater value.”

Aron Ralston made the decision that his life was worth more than the loss of his arm or the pain he would have to endure to remove it. That decision saved his life!

But as dramatic as Aron's actions were, in the end, sacrifice has its limits:

Or as Jesus put it in Matt 16:27, “What can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Ps 49:8 “... the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough ...”

I The Brothers Met Pharaoh

A. Joseph **presented** his brothers to Pharaoh [Verse 1-2]

Joseph had previously coached his brothers in what to say to Pharaoh. In fact, Joseph was so accurate in his predictions of Pharaoh's questions and subsequent actions that it would appear that he read Pharaoh's mind.

The reality, is that Joseph wasn't a mind-reader. He simply spent a great deal of time in Pharaoh's presence over the last 10-12 years. And when you spend that much time with someone, you begin to know how they think.

Application:

Just as Joseph, by experience, knew Pharaoh's heart and thoughts, as believers we need to know the heart of God if we are to serve Him well.

Hos 6:3 “So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.”

Phil 3:8 “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ...”

1. He selected five of his brothers to meet the king

- B. Joseph's brothers **introduced** themselves [Verse 3]
1. They were shepherds
They were told to stress the fact that they were shepherds and that this was their sole occupation, as it had been for generations.
 2. They had come to Egypt for a **while** [Verse 4a]
 - a. Because of the famine in Canaan
 - b. Because they had no pastureland
Gen 15:13 "Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own ..."
 3. They requested to live in Goshen [Verse 4b]
Why Goshen?
 1. It was the best pastureland in all of Egypt
 2. It was near to Joseph who also lived in Goshen
 3. It would protect the Israelites from physical and spiritual assimilation
- C. Joseph was instructed by Pharaoh to:
1. Settle his family in Goshen [Verse 5a]
 2. Employ any **skilled** brothers [Verse 5b-6]
Like any good leader, Pharaoh was always on the lookout for skilled men and women who could use their talents to advance his goals.

Application:

- Are you an accountant, a waiter, a business owner, a housewife?
Col 3:23-24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.
Prov 22:29 "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men."

II The Father Met Pharaoh

- A. Joseph presented Jacob to Pharaoh
1. Jacob **blessed** Pharaoh [Verse 7]
"Blessed" could mean:
 1. Pronouncing a common Middle Eastern greeting (Peace or Aloha)
 2. Conferring a spiritual benefit to another person
The Abrahamic Covenant contained the promise that Abraham and his offspring would be a blessing to all those who blessed them:
Gen 12:3 "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
And Pharaoh was blessed! His kingdom was literally saved and made wealthy through the covenant blessings associated with Jacob.
Of course, as Paul states in Gal 3:8, the greatest blessing we can confer on another person, is the blessing of the Good News of the gospel!

2. Jacob summarized his life: [Verse 8-9]

a. As a pilgrimage

He had lived in Canaan, Haran, Shechem, Bethel and now Egypt, but he had come to realize that his true citizenship was not in Egypt, but in the promised land of Canaan.

Heb 11:9-10 “By faith [Abraham] made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

Application:

Where is your citizenship?

Phil 3:20 “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ ...”

1 Pt 1:17 “Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, **live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.**”

b. As 130 years in length

This is certainly an incredibly long life, until you realize that:

- Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, lived 175 years
- Jacob's father Isaac lived 180 years

c. As brief and difficult

Difficult = Ra' = “Evil or wretched”

A summary of Jacob's life:

1. He struggled with his brother in the womb (25:21-26).
2. He was raised by parents who were dysfunctional (25:28).
3. He stole his father's blessing by means of deception and was forced to leave his family because of the hatred of Esau (Gen 27).
4. He spent years in exile, serving his uncle Laban who repeatedly cheated him.
5. He planned to marry one wife and ended up with four (29:18), and the outcome of this was continual competition and strife (29:30ff).
6. He finally fled from his uncle and eventually had to make a non-aggression pact with him lest further conflict arise (chapter 31).
7. His only daughter, Dinah, was violated at Shechem.
8. He lived in fear of reprisal from Shechem's neighbors when his sons killed the men of Shechem (chapter 34).
9. He lost his favorite wife, Rachel, at an early age (35:16-19).
10. His oldest son, Rueben, lay with one of his concubines (35:22).
11. His favorite son, Joseph, was tragically lost and presumed dead.
12. And now he was on the verge of losing everything due to a seven-year, world-wide famine. It had been a hard life!

Application:

Ps 90:10 “The length of our days is seventy years -- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.”

Ps 34:19 “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.”

3. Jacob blessed Pharaoh [Verse 10]

Pharaoh, who himself was considered to be a god, acknowledged Jacob is a man of the one true God by accepting his blessing.

B. Joseph acted on Pharaoh's directives

1. He settled his family in Rameses [Verse 11]

Rameses = Compound word: Ra = “God” Meses = “the blessing of”

It would be the place where Pharaoh would later build store cities (Ex 1:11).

It would also be the place from which the Israelites would leave after 430 of Egyptian slavery (Num 33:3-4).

2. He provided his family with food [Verse 12]

In keeping with his promise:

Gen 45:11 “I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come.”

Application:

Matt 6:31-34 “So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

III The Famine Persisted

A. A summary of the famine

1. Egypt and Canaan wasted away [Verse 13]

2. Egypt's money was exhausted [Verse 14]

3. Egypt's people were still hungry [Verse 15]

The scripture gives no indication that Joseph took advantage of the situation.

The money he received provided the people with a year's supply of food.

Unfortunately, with two more years of famine ahead, and the balance of their financial reserves exhausted, they were once again facing hunger.

Application:

Hurricane Iniki: Unscrupulous contractors

Lev 25:17 “Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God.”

B. The people bartered their livestock [Verse 16-17]

1. Joseph sold them food for livestock

This is really an act of kindness on the part of Joseph. If he had not purchased their animals in exchange for food, the animals would have died of starvation. Joseph could have taken advantage of the people, but he didn't.

The sale of their livestock enabled the Egyptians to live through another year. As the following year approached, they found themselves once again appealing to Joseph for life-sustaining grain. Only this time they had neither money or animals. But they still possessed two valuable commodities: **their land and their labor**.

C. The people bartered their land and **lives** [Verse 18-19]

The land at this point was a wasteland and virtually worthless. Yet, once again, Joseph treats the people with fairness and equity. There is not one word of complaint from the Egyptians regarding Joseph's dealings with them.

1. Joseph gave them seed for land

a. So that they would not die

b. So that the land wouldn't become desolate

Prov 11:26 "People curse the man who hoards grain, but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell."

2. Joseph bought all the land for Pharaoh [Verse 20]

a. The land became Pharaoh's

b. The people were reduced to **servitude** [Verse 21]

Such temporary "slavery" was permitted in the Bible to pay off debt:

Lev 25:39-43 "If one of your countrymen becomes poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave. He is to be treated as a hired worker or a temporary resident among you ... Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God."

3. Joseph exempted the priest's land [Verse 22]

a. They were allotted food

Like Joseph's family, the priests of Egypt were provided with food and, as a result, were protected from the forfeiture of their land.

Why did Joseph give preference to the cultic priests of Egypt?

1. His wife was the daughter of one of Egypt's priests - Gen 41:44-45

2. There were certain tax benefits and exemptions (as there are today in the US) for licensed and ordained ministers.

Ezra 7:24 "You are also to know that you have no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God."

4. Joseph introduced a 20% grain tax [Verse 23-24, 26]

Again, Joseph acted with equity and mercy toward the people of Egypt:

1. He put the people back on their own land.
2. He provided the seed for the land
3. He let the people keep 80% of what they earned.

In essence, this 20% grain tax was a continuation of the emergency measures Joseph initially took to store up grain during the seven years of famine (Gen 41:33-34).

With an average tax rate of approximately 35% in the US, a tax rate of only 20% sounds pretty good!

a. The people consented and were **grateful** [Verse 25]

1. You have saved our lives

Here we have more evidence of Joseph's character and mercy.

At a time when others would have seen a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get ahead by taking advantage of others, Joseph won the unanimous gratitude of the Egyptian people because of his exemplary leadership during a time of national crisis.

Ps 41:1-2 "Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble. The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land ..."

2. May we find favor in your eyes
3. We will be in bondage to Pharaoh

Finally, with no other options available, the Egyptians offered their own bodies in exchange for the opportunity to live.

In other words, the Egyptians valued their physical deliverance so much that they gladly gave Joseph their money, livestock, land and even their very lives in exchange for the opportunity to live.

Job 2:4 "A man will give all he has for his own life." [Satan]

Application:

Interestingly, these are the very conditions that God has laid down for a person to have eternal life: unconditional surrender.

Luke 14:33 "... any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

Rom 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship."

Like the Egyptians, without intervention, our condition is terminal! Our only hope of deliverance demands that we present ourselves to Jesus Christ without reserve – nothing held back.

We must surrender every element of self-sufficiency, everything of value, and rely solely upon Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our salvation.

IV The Summary Of Israel

A. Jacob's family settled in Egypt [Verse 27]

1. They lived in Goshen
2. They acquired property there

As you will recall, Joseph's family was relatively unaffected by the famine because of their relationship with Joseph. So while the Egyptians were suffering under the famine, the Israelites were flourishing. In a very real sense, Egypt's loss was Israel's gain.

Eccl 2:26 "To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God."

3. They were **fruitful** and increased greatly

This is a fulfillment of God's covenant promises:

1. To Abraham - Gen 12:2; 13:16; 22:17
2. To Isaac - Gen 26:4
3. To Jacob - Gen 28:14-15

B. Jacob anticipated his death

Heb 9:27 "... man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment ..."

Ps 89:48 "What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?"

1. He lived 17 years in Egypt [Verse 28]

I find it interesting to note that Jacob enjoyed the blessings of God for 17 years—the same number of years he enjoyed Joseph until Joseph was sold into slavery to Egypt by his older brothers (Gen 37:2).

2. He established a living will [Verse 29-31a]

a. "Don't **bury** me in Egypt"

b. "Carry me back to my fathers in Canaan"

It wasn't because he had already invested in a family plot.

Knowing that the day of his departure drew near, Jacob made his death a testimony to his faith and a stimulus to the faith and obedience of his descendants. Jacob urged Joseph, his most trusted son, to swear a solemn oath promising that he would not bury his father in Egypt, but in Canaan in the cave of Machpelah with his forefathers (Gen 49:29-32; 50:24-25).. This would serve as a reminder to his descendants that Egypt was not home, but only a place to sojourn until God brought them back "home" to Canaan, the land of promise.

Heb 11:22 "By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones."

3. He worshipped as he leaned on his staff [Verse 31b]

Staff = Mittah = “A bed or sofa”

For the first time, Jacob stopped striving and simply worshipped God.

Application:

Worship is the highest calling of a believer and one of God’s primary purposes for saving man. He wants to fill heaven with worshippers! May God give us the grace and wisdom to be men and women, who in our old age are still worshipping God.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by inspire you consider making the following sacrifices that will pay eternal dividends:

1. Don’t die of starvation!

The Egyptians were physically starving due to a lack of food. Please don’t spiritually starve yourself when we have such an abundance of resources available.

Amos 8:11-12 “The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land -- not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.”

2. Get to know God better!

Phil 3:10-11 “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

3. Become skilled in your work!

Col 3:23-24 “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

4. Live your life as a pilgrim!

1 Pt 1:17 “Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.”

5. Set your ultimate hope on the promise of God!

1 Peter 1:13 “... set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

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