

More Pioneers of the Heavenly Way

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores Joseph's life as a foreshadowing of Christ and the divine purpose behind the adversities faced by pioneers of the heavenly way.

Scripture: Genesis 45:5, Genesis 45:7, Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 2:16, John 1:11, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 3:10, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 3:21

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Pioneering Faith"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes Joseph as a pioneer of the heavenly way, illustrating how his life foreshadows Jesus Christ and God's ultimate purpose of preserving life. He discusses the dual nature of Joseph's story, highlighting both the human struggles and the divine sovereignty at play, particularly in how Joseph's experiences reflect the suffering and rejection faced by Christ. Sparks points out that Joseph's journey was marked by adversity, jealousy, and a deeper spiritual battle, which parallels the challenges faced by those called to fulfill God's purposes. Ultimately, he underscores that God's intentions prevail despite human actions and satanic opposition, affirming that the trials of a pioneer lead to the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.

Transcript

Genesis 45:5,7

"God did send me before you to preserve life"

"God sent me before you to preserve... a remnant"

It is clear from this double statement - "God sent me before..." - that Joseph was one of God's pioneers of the heavenly way. His history holds some very helpful things in relation to the goings of God. Let us repeat what we have said before in such connections: that we are not engaged with a biography of the people referred to, but only with what they represent in spiritual truths as to God's pursuit of His ultimate end. We must remind ourselves that God's full and final end is comprehended in His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore the Bible is the book of Jesus Christ throughout. Every part of it has, in some way, to do with that end and object. There are few cases in the Old Testament that more deeply and clearly foreshadow Jesus Christ as God's end than does Joseph.

This is inclusively indicated in the two fragments mentioned above which gather up the whole purpose of his history. We can only understand the life and history of Joseph as we recognize the purpose governing all. When this has been pinpointed we can see without difficulty how he points to Christ. His double statement is that the sovereignty of God in his history had the one inclusive end and object to "preserve life".

The life of an elect people was the all-governing object. That undoubtedly was the mission of God's Son, and it is the fundamental factor in the whole Bible.

Having said that, we can note the course by which that end was pioneered: only pausing to interject that ALL ministries in the choice and appointment of God are related to the one end of Christ.

The story of Joseph is both a very human story and a very Divine story, but with one key to both. That we shall come on presently.

On the human side, if read ONLY from the natural standpoint, there are features which may be regarded as quite regrettable. For instance, a father's favouritism for one member of a large family is really an unwise thing. Whatever argument there may be for it, it only engenders jealousies and complications. Joseph was clearly a favourite with his father, and was perhaps - or evidently - singled out for special partiality. Then Joseph had dreams which put him in a special position of superiority over his brothers. It is quite all right to have dreams, but it is of doubtful discretion to tell your family of them if they are of this sort. Quite naturally they could give the impression of arrogance and self-importance. It would therefore be very natural for the family to develop a dislike for such a brother.

You know, Jesus was a special object of His Father's love. He DID know the destiny bound up with His life. Further, NOT IN HIS CASE indiscreetly, He told quite frankly to the family of Jacob (the Jews) both those things - His Father's love for Him, and what His destiny would be as OVER THEM. This was undoubtedly the ostensible and natural reason for their hatred of Him and for what they did to Him.

There are intimations that He was the lone and suspected member of His own family, for it is definitely stated that "His brethren did not believe in him". He was therefore a lonely man, discredited in His family and in the world. "Despised and rejected of men." This in His case, as in Joseph's, led on to deep and dark soul-sufferings, malignings, intrigues, mysterious ways of Providence, and apparent forsakenness of God. "The iron entered into his soul", or "His soul entered into the iron". A long period of patient waiting unto God's time for the completion of His God-appointed mission was involved.

The other details of Joseph's history need not be followed out here. We have to retrace our steps to lay hold of the Divine side of it all. The sovereignty of God is unmistakable. "God sent me before." The sovereign foreknowledge in that word "before" is, at last, clear to Joseph when, in the full light of God's deep and hidden ways - "Mysterious Providence" - he declares to his brethren: "Ye meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." What a "But" - "But God!"

"Thy way, O Lord, is in the deep."

Having mentioned the human side and the Divine, we have not told the whole story. There is an element that is neither of these: it is the satanic. This extra factor is one with which all pioneers of the HEAVENLY way have to reckon. The jealousy and hatred of Joseph's brethren AFTER THE FLESH, and that in the case of Jesus, were not just natural. There was something sinister in it. It is not easy for us to understand

how Satan knows, but it is clear from Scripture that he has an uncanny intuitive knowledge of God's intentions, and, more strangely those intentions being bound up with the life of elect vessels of ministry related to those intentions. This is QUITE evident - and fully so in the case of the Lord Jesus. From Herod's satanically-inspired murder of the babes with the sole object of destroying One, right on to the Cross this sinister and devilish motivation is evident because he - Satan - knew who that One was, and what His destiny was to be. It was all so unnatural, and can only be explained on the ground between the human and the Divine.

So with Joseph. Say what you will as to the human, there was something deeper in his history than men's attitudes and actions. He was marked out in the Divine councils as a pioneer of life, and Satan knew it. Joseph's life from the beginning was dogged by something that was an element of adversity, although beloved of his father.

The ways of any pioneer of heavenly purpose will always have this involvement in difficulties and adversities which are not the lot of ordinary people. As vocation is the principle of election, so the vocation is the cause of all the trouble. A pioneer in the way of God's eternal purpose will know much of "the fellowship of his sufferings"; but the throne and the crown and the glory are in view, for "God meant (and means) it" so.

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