

“You Meant Evil against Me; God Meant It for Good”

Genesis 37:12-36

Halifax: 9 October 2016, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Last week in our Genesis Sermon Series, we came to Genesis 37 where the Joseph story begins.

- This continues until chapter 50—from Genesis 37 to Genesis 50.
- It is actually the toledoth (or history) of Jacob who was Joseph’s father, showing what became of Jacob’s family,
 - but it is referred to as the story of Joseph because Joseph is the principal character who become the deliverer of Jacob’s entire family.
 - I should remind you as well that Jacob’s family represents the whole church—in fact, they are the whole church in seed form...
 - the family through which God’s kingdom will arise and from which Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, will come.
- We also saw that Joseph is a type of Christ...one who foreshadows Him...
 - In case you do not already know the story of Joseph,
 - In short, he is rejected by his brothers and sold to be slave in Egypt...
 - And then through a series of marvellous events, he ends up being raised up to be second in authority only to the Pharaoh himself...
 - And through God’s blessing he is used to save not only Egypt, but his entire family (representing the whole church) from starvation in a terrible famine that lasted for seven years.
 - You can see how this foreshadows Jesus Christ...
 - Who also was rejected and delivered up to be crucified by the church in His day...
 - But only that He might be raised up by God to sit at the right hand of God and be their Saviour and the Saviour of all nations!

Last week, in looking at Genesis 37:1-12, we considered the problem that the church has always had in all ages (that is seen in Jacob’s family) of envying their own Saviour.

- God raised up many deliverers for His people through the ages who are Christ, the one only Saviour...
- And all through history, the very people that God has set apart to be His own people have been envious of the ones that God raised up to deliver them.
- It is a very foolish thing to envy the one God sent to deliver you,
 - but we all do it, and apart from God’s grace, our envy would keep us from ever even truly coming to Jesus for salvation.
- We saw that the church has envied her deliverers and especially Christ because...
 - He exposes our sin by His righteousness...He makes us look bad...
 - But we need this because otherwise we won’t see our need to trust Him for our salvation...

- And, a second reason we envy Him, is because He alone has God’s favour...
 - We are rejects because we are wicked at heart, but the Father is very pleased with Him (just as Joseph’s father Jacob was pleased with Joseph but not with Joseph’s brothers).
 - It ought to make us glad that we have a deliverer who has God’s favour, because, having lost His favour ourselves, the only way we can get it back is through Jesus’ representation!
 - We are both accepted and forgiven on His account, so if He had not obtained God’s favour, we would all be condemned without remedy.
 - But now we can trust in Jesus who represented the whole church, first by living a righteous life and then by dying to atone for our sins.
 - But instead we envy Him.
- And then we saw a third reason we envy Jesus that is reflected in the Joseph story, because it is prophesied that Jesus will reign over us.
 - Joseph had dreams of prophecy from God that he would reign over his brothers, and this caused them to hate him more than ever.
 - They envied him in the same way the Jewish leaders in Jesus’ day envied Him because they wanted to reign instead of Him...
 - They should have recognised that He was the only one who was really worthy to reign—and rejoiced at the prophecies that they could be under the care and authority of someone like Him...
 - but instead they hated Him.

With the first 12 verses of chapter 37 then, we saw the rise of this envy in Joseph’s brothers,

- but today, we are going to look at what this envy brings forth—
 - It is not pretty to look at the actions it produces in those who harbour it in their hearts...for it causes them to be very cruel and hardened...
 - But it is very wonderful to see how God uses their wicked deeds to accomplish His gracious purposes...for their very wicked efforts are used in God’s plan to make Joseph their saviour!
- Actually, what we are looking at today is what Joseph summarizes so beautifully at the end of the Joseph story when Jacob, the father of this family, dies...
 - Joseph’s brothers are terrified that with their father gone, Joseph will repay them for what they had done to him...
 - But instead, in Genesis 50:19-21, we read how Joseph responded to them:
 - **Genesis 50:19-21: Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? ²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. ²¹ Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.**
 - What Joseph says in verse 20 is a summary of what we are looking at today...
 - *You meant evil against me; God meant it for good.*

Now let us turn to our text for our scripture reading which is found in Genesis 37:12-36:

- Please give careful attention as I read this to you from God's holy Word.

Genesis 37:12-36: Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding *the flock* in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am." ¹⁴ Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. ¹⁵ Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?" ¹⁶ So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding *their flocks*." ¹⁷ And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan. ¹⁸ Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. ¹⁹ Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! ²⁰ Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!" ²¹ But Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him." ²² And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit which *is* in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father. ²³ So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph *of* his tunic, the tunic of *many* colors that *was* on him. ²⁴ Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit *was* empty; *there was*

no water in it. ²⁵ And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry *them* down to Egypt. ²⁶ So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit *is there* if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh." And his brothers listened. ²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by; so *the brothers* pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt. ²⁹ Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. ³⁰ And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad *is* no *more*; and I, where shall I go?" ³¹ So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. ³² Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether *it is* your son's tunic or not?" ³³ And he recognized it and said, "*It is* my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces." ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him. ³⁶ Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh *and* captain of the guard.

May the Lord bless to us the reading of His holy and infallible Word.

Remember again Joseph's words later on...

- *You meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good.*
- No one could see how God would use the evil of Joseph's brothers, just as we cannot see how He will use evil today, but He will use it and we will see it together.
 - And we can learn to trust Him by looking at how He used evil deeds of men with Joseph and with Jesus Christ.

Let's begin then by looking at:

I. The evil that those who envy Joseph (and Christ) hope to do.

- We will look at two things...

A. First, they labour and scheme to hurt and destroy the one they envy.

1. Joseph's brothers show the extreme cruelty to which envy can drive us...

a. Even though Joseph is coming to them in faithfulness and kindness...

- in faithfulness to his father who sent him and in kindness to his brothers to see how they are doing...
- We see how after not finding them in Shechem, he does not turn back, but keeps going to fulfill his good purpose in visiting them...
 - It is very touching in verse 16 to see how he speaks of them to the stranger he meets when he says, "I am seeking my brothers."
 - He calls them his brothers and he is seeking them—just like our Lord Jesus calls us brothers and comes to seek us!
 - And then rather than turning back, he goes on to seek them at Dothan.
- Yet, his kindness and faithfulness does not prevent his brothers from devising evil against him...

b. We see in verse 18 that as soon as they saw him, they conspired against him to kill him!

- Even though he was their own brother whom they ought to have protected, envy is so powerful a force that they want to kill him.
- In the ancient world, the tie of brotherhood was deeply honoured and it was considered a very great evil to kill your own brother...
 - but here you have nine brothers conspiring together to kill their brother.
 - Such a thing was unheard of—it is unconscionable.

c. This is all the more offensive because it is in cold blood that they wish to kill him...

- It is a terrible thing for a quarrel to arise and to kill someone in the heat of passion,
 - but envy is such an evil that it causes people to kill in cold calculation.
 - It is like the heat of anger stays in them all that time and then breaks out when it has a chance.

d. And it is all the worse that they agree to a very cruel death (21-24)...

- At first they plan to kill him and cast him into some pit—which is bad enough,
 - but then at Reuben's suggestion (though Reuben intended good by it) the other nine brothers agree to cast him into the pit and let him die a slow and agonising death of starvation and exposure...
 - And they do this under the suggestion that by this method, they will not be shedding his blood—when in fact it would be worse...
- When you are acting in envy, you will come up with silly ways to ease your conscience...
 - You will slander and call it prayer request...

- And if some well-meaning friend offers a way to ease your guilt, you will latch onto it, even if it doesn't make any sense.
 - For example, if someone says, "well he deserves it after what he had done to you. I have heard that he had done this to a lot of people too."
- And we are told how they savagely handle him, stripping off his coat in violence and casting him into the pit.
- e. And though we are not told about in here, in pangs of conscience, the brothers later speak of how they ignored the pleas of Joseph at this time...
 - In Gen 42:21 when the brothers later had trouble, it says: **Then they said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear;"**
 - Envy is cruel—the hatred is so great that it finds pleasure in watching the one it hates suffer.
- f. In verse 25, we see how hardened envy has made their consciences...
 - Even after just having thrown Joseph in the pit, the brothers sit down to have a meal together.
 - Did they even eat the meat of the goat they used to bloody Joseph's coat or perhaps things that Joseph had brought from home?
 - In any case, they coolly go about their ordinary business after having just left their brother to die in a pit.
- g. And further the vileness of envy is seen in that the brothers have no regard for their father who loves Joseph...
 - They knew their father had a special love for him—that is part of what fuelled their hatred and envy...
 - So in their hardness, they think nothing of concealing their vile deed by sending Joseph's coat to their father with goat's blood all over it and saying,
 - "Is this your son's coat?"
 - They are utterly heartless!
- 2. But need I point out that it is the same with those who envy Christ?
 - His enemies were fixed on one thing—to get rid of Him...
 - a. It had no effect on them that He had come in kindness to them,
 - He had left the comforts of home and was labouring to preach to them and to heal among them...and He was sent by the Father to minister to them.
 - b. It had no effect on them that He was a fellow Israelite—their brother according to the flesh—they hated Him more than any Gentile.
 - c. Like Joseph's brothers, they also devised all of this against Him in cold blood—they plotted how they would take Him—it was all cruelly calculated.
 - d. They had no hesitation about the extreme violence of the death to which they delivered Him over—even to be crucified by the Romans...to bear the awful scourge and the torturous death of the cross.
 - e. As they saw him suffer, they did not pity Him, but rather rejoiced and derided Him with mocking and taunts.

- f. And in their callousness, they not only go to eat a meal, but they go to eat the Passover before the LORD.
 - We are told how avoided defiling themselves at His trial so they could eat the Passover.
 - Avoiding defiling themselves when they were shedding innocent blood?
 - It is amazing how people will go on with their regular religious practices even when they have not repented of the vilest deeds of envy.
 - g. And, as with Joseph's brothers, they had no concern for their heavenly Father who had loved Him before the foundation of the world and had shown His love for Him...
 - declaring it from heaven at His baptism and by giving Him miracles to perform among them.
 - And by the testimony of the prophets from the past.
3. You see what a terrible thing envy is!
- This is where it will lead us—even against Christ...and against those who represent Him well...
 - And there is not a one of us that is totally free of it—
 - By nature we are such proud creatures that we would sooner blame God for being too strict than admit that we are hell deserving sinners.
 - We are filled with self-pity instead of repentance!
 - We are broken, but we are not humbled before God until God does a gracious work by His Spirit in our hearts.
 - And if we meet the true Jesus, who alone is accepted in God's sight and whose very life and work testifies to us that we are not,
 - we will naturally hate Him and we will want to destroy Him, even though He came to save us.
 - And we will want to put to silence anyone who preaches Him to us in truth.
 - We are such proud creatures. We cannot bear to see anyone excel among us.

TRANS> So envy will lead us to cruel acts of hatred against the one we envy—but now I want to show you how...

B. Envy will even make us hope that we will be able to overthrow the plan of God—His decree!

- 1. This is one of the main things that Joseph's brothers wanted to do...
 - They express it in verse 19-20...**Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! 20 Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"**
 - Their brother was a prophet and they knew this...
 - And now they say, "We will see what will become of his dreams!"
 - They were so full of pride that they thought they could overthrow God's decree that Joseph would rule over them.

- Of course they do not acknowledge that his dreams were truly from God, but their hearts are blinded to this for one reason—envy...
 - They do not want to believe the truth.
- 2. This is the same thing that the Jews said about Jesus...as illustrated in the parable of the vinedressers...
 - **Mark 12:7: “But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’”**
 - As with Joseph’s brothers,
 - they did not really acknowledge that Jesus was the heir and that when He proclaimed that He was the Son of David who was to rule over them forever, it was true prophecy...
 - But they did not believe because they did not want to believe.
- 3. Do you see how this relates to those who persecute believers today?
 - Think about it...
 - When people persecute those who are faithful, what are they trying to do?
 - Well, they are unleashing their hatred, as we saw a moment ago...
 - But they are also trying to show that your faith is worthless...that it does you no good!
 - You claim to have God’s favour through Christ, and they strike out at you and they are saying in their hearts...
 - “Now see what your service to Christ has done for you!”
 - “You spoke of a glorious kingdom, but instead you are going to be burned at this stake.”
 - “What do you have to say about your Saviour now?”
 - Such men suppose that they can change what God has decreed about the salvation of all those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - They arrogantly suppose that they can make what God has proclaimed in His Word to be false.
 - The same spirit will also cause them to try to obtain happiness and fulfillment from the world and not from Christ.
 - They are trying to prove that God’s word is not true and that they can make it without Christ.
 - And the same spirit will cause them to try to prove that they can be righteous by their own works, or rituals, or goodness.
 - I am sure you have seen this spirit in relatives who do not know the Lord and say things like, “Well we are religious too—we help the poor or we go to mass,” or whatever.

TRANS> So those are the things that envy will drive you to do against the one God raised up to deliver you...to summarise again...

- To get rid of Him and hurt Him...
- And to overthrow God’s decree about Him.

- Yet, now we come to the encouraging thing...that

II. God is at work through every wicked action of these wicked men.

A. His hand is clear in every detail.

1. Understand that God is always at work in every detail.
 - The Bible tells us plainly that He works all things according to His plan—according to the counsel of His own will.
 - It says that in Ephesians 1:11.
 - In Matt 10:29-30, Jesus tells us that no sparrow falls apart from His heavenly Father's will, and that even the very hairs of our head are numbered...
 - Imagine that—at any given time, God has determined how many hairs you have on your head.
 - He is the God of the big outcomes, but He is also the God of every detail.
2. And what we read about Joseph shows that...
 - In the plan of God, all sorts of things came together in order to bring Joseph to Egypt where he could save his family.
 - It is remarkable to see all the things that God brings together in His plan.
 - a. First, that Joseph's father (perhaps a little naïvely, not realising the strength of his other sons' hatred for Joseph) sent Joseph to them...
 - and that Joseph was willing to go—being a dutiful son who seems to have loved his brothers even though they hated him—and to be a little naïve about their hatred as well...
 - But God was in the details that Jacob sent Joseph and that he went!
 - b. Second, that the brothers had relocated to Dothan...
 - Dothan happened to be right along a trade route where Ishmaelite and Midianite traders went by with their caravans...
 - This was integral to God's plan that Joseph would be sold to them and taken by them to Egypt.
 - c. Third, that there was no water at this time in the pits which were actually cisterns for holding water...
 - It was a time of drought, so the pit was available to throw Joseph in which would not ordinarily have been available.
 - d. And fourth, that Reuben, for some reason, intervened to prevent his brothers from actually killing Joseph...
 - It may have been the Reuben wanted to win back his father's favour that he had lost when he slept with his concubine...
 - or it may be that God was starting to work repentance in Reuben.
 - But in any case, God had him there with the other nine brothers at just the right time...to prevent them from killing Joseph...
 - e. And fifth, that the Midianites came by just at the right time...
 - and that they happened to be going to Egypt rather than in the other direction so that Joseph ended up in Egypt rather than in Syria.

- f. And sixth, that Judah came up with the plan to sell him and proposed this to his brothers as a way to make some money...
 - and to avoid the guilt of actually killing Joseph...as wicked as it was for them to do this...and that the brothers consented...
- g. And seventh, that Reuben, for whatever reason, was absent when the Midianites came by...
 - If Reuben had been there, he might have prevented them from selling Joseph to them.
- h. And that afterward, Reuben's desire to save his brother did not go far enough as to cause him to pursue the traders and buy Joseph back...
 - or to report it afterward to his father so that his father would be able to go in search of Joseph in Egypt.
 - If that had happened, it would have upset the whole plan.
- i. And then finally, at the end of the chapter, that Joseph was sold into the house of Potiphar instead of to someone else...
 - which is integral to many future events that will fall together in God's plan in order that Joseph might end up at Pharaoh's right hand in Egypt.

TRANS> The Lord was in all of these details to accomplish His purposes...

B. Understand that God is even at work in the deeds of wicked men.

1. So in this story (as summarised in Joseph's statement later on), we are told that while Joseph's brothers meant these events for evil against Joseph,
 - God meant their evil deeds for good—to save many people.
 - God used their wicked deeds for an entirely different purpose.
2. That God is at work in the deeds of wicked men is beautifully brought out with Christ...in words that cannot be misunderstood...
 - In the church's prayer in Acts 4:27-28, it says: **For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.**
 - You see here that even the wicked deed of crucifying Christ was all in exact conformity to what God had planned...
 - Not what He commanded or inspired, for God does not command or inspire wickedness;
 - but still, the deeds were exactly what He had purposed in His plan.

C. Do not despair when you see the wicked at work.

1. No matter what they desire to accomplish when they oppose Christ and His people; it will only bring about what God has purposed!
 - All His counsel will stand!
 - He alone declares what will come to pass, and it always does come to pass!
2. The wicked imagine a vain thing when they gather together to overthrow the Lord and His anointed.

- Do you see them devising ways to destroy the church today? or ways to make the true church irrelevant? or ways to overthrow righteousness?
 - Don't join in the spirit of believers on Facebook who are all full of fear and despair.
- God will use every single thing the wicked do to bring about His purposes.
 - When you see them hard at work, ready to kill Joseph, selling him into Egypt, and the rest,
 - know for certain that every single act that they perform is also God's act.
 - They have their purposes which they hope to fulfill and God has His.
 - And do I need to tell you again that it is not theirs, but God's that will stand.
 - They will be totally frustrated to find that they had an integral part in carrying out His good plans!
 - They meant it for evil, but God means it for good.

TRANS> So the Lord will bring about good...but

III. What is the good that the Lord is seeking to do though the deeds of wicked men?

- Let's look at three things...
 - That He is preparing the wicked themselves for their destiny,
 - That He is shaping (sanctifying) those are already His people,
 - That He situates things for the advancement of His kingdom.
- So let's begin with the first one...
 - A. He is preparing the wicked for their destiny.
 1. Joseph's brothers were very wicked (more wicked than even the pagans around them), yet God was preparing them to receive His grace!
 - a. Their wicked deeds would be used to humble them and break them...
 - not merely to worldly sorrow or self-pity, but to true life-giving repentance.
 - Clearly, God's grace is not based upon works of righteousness which we have done, but it is all of His mercy!
 - b. This same grace is beautifully seen with those who crucified Christ.
 - When Peter preached to them in Acts 2, they were cut to the heart and cried out and said, "what shall we do?" when they realised that they had crucified the Lord of glory...
 - And Peter gave them the warm invitation of the gospel—**Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**
 - c. There are many lost people who came to Christ when they saw the wickedness of which they were capable.
 - God used their wicked deeds to bring them to see their need of Christ.
 - We ought to be able to see our need without such deeds—but in God's merciful purpose, He has often used such deeds to humble the proud.
 - And those who are forgiven much, love much.

2. But I began by saying that He prepares the wicked for their destiny...
 - For Joseph's brothers, it was their destiny to be saved,
 - But for the reprobate, it is that they will be brought to judgment to display the glorious wrath and vindictive justice of God.
 - They are what Rom 9:22 calls, vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.
 - They will get what we all fully deserve, and their wicked deeds will make it clear that God has not been unjust.
- So one way or another, when wicked deeds are done, God is preparing the wicked for their destiny—either for grace or for judgment.
3. If you have not done so, I urge you to repent and come to Jesus for salvation.
 - a. Do you see your sin?
 - Do you see that it is very great?
 - Do you see that it is inexcusable?
 - Then you are right where you need to be to come to Christ for mercy.
 - He promises to receive all who come.
 - b. Do you see persecutors, mockers, wicked abusers?
 - Do not despair for any of them—for God can change them...
 - If He can change Joseph's brothers, He can change them too.
 - If He can change you, He can change them too.
 - Reach out to them and pray for them as long as they have breath in their lungs.

TRANS> And now for the second thing God does through the deeds of wicked men:

- B. He shapes (or sanctifies) those who are already His people—those who are already true Christians, born of the Holy Spirit.
 1. When we belong to the LORD, as Joseph did, then God gives us His Holy Spirit to work in us—
 - so that we put off the old man and put on the new man so that we renewed day by day—transformed into Christ's likeness day by day.
 - But let me warn you, God very often works this glorious change in us through suffering.
 - Paul expresses this in 2 Cor 4:17 where he says, **For our light affliction** [he looks at as light affliction in comparison to what it accomplishes], **which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory...**
 2. Think of Joseph and how he must have been sanctified through this trial!
 - As he had his coat torn off and heard his brothers' plans to kill him—first by direct assault, and then by leaving him to die in the pit...
 - how he too must have wondered how his prophetic dreams would be fulfilled...
 - And as he was then whisked away to Egypt for all those years, how it must have tried him to hold on to his faith!

- How he must have learned to pray and how he must have learned to lean upon the Lord, and how he must have come to know Him better!
 - How his character was developed through the affliction to sanctify him and to prepare him for future service as the second ruler of Egypt.
3. And think of Jacob...
- Here was the man who had been through many trials and afflictions throughout his life, many the result of his own folly...
 - And in our text, we have him giving himself over to excessive mourning over Joseph for days and days...
 - In verse 35, we have him refusing to be comforted...
 - and even saying: **For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.**
 - What a foolish thing to say when God, who can turn our mourning to dancing, is in the picture!
 - What lessons there were for him to learn here when the plans of God were accomplished!
 - As it says in 1 Peter 1, we need to rejoice in our salvation, even when we are grieved by various trials, knowing that we will receive all that God has promised to us.
 - What rich and fruitful lessons were in all this for Jacob.
4. Yes, we are even told that Christ Himself learned obedience through the things that He suffered.
- If God used suffering even to teach His Son when He came in human flesh, will He not use it in your life also?
 - Never despair...God will use the wicked deeds that are done against you to expose sin in your life, to teach of the Lord, to strengthen you faith, and to teach you patience.

TRANS> And now for the third thing He does through wicked deeds of men...

C. He situates things for the advancement of His kingdom.

1. Joseph was put in the place he needed to be to save the church.
 - We have already seen that the wicked deeds of his brothers were an integral part in bringing it about that Joseph came to Egypt.
 - It was not that Joseph ended up there and then God figured out what to do, now that he was there...
 - No, the Lord had planned to put Joseph there to save people all along.
 - He set the whole situation up on purpose, using Joseph's wicked brothers to accomplish His purpose.
2. Likewise, Jesus was put in the place he needed to be (on the cross) deliberately to accomplish God's purpose...
 - God had ordained before the foundation of the world that Christ would be slain to save His people from their sins.

- The poor disciples thought everything had gone wrong on Friday, but on Sunday they were rejoicing at what God had done!
 - God had used wicked men to offer His Son up on the cross as a sacrifice for His peoples' sins.
 - Nothing had gone wrong at all—everything had happened exactly as God had decreed.
- 3. Never despair: God arranges things marvellously to bring about His kingdom.
 - a. Never mind if you are slave in Egypt, if you are falsely accused and thrown in prison...
 - Never mind if the economy collapses or an evil dictator comes to rule over us...
 - Never mind if wicked men seem to be getting their way.
 - b. God is in every bit of it, and in the end His kingdom will come and His people will be fully blessed in that kingdom and Christ will be glorified forever.
 - All you have to do is keep on serving him with hope and faith through all the trials.
 - You know that it is His plan to establish His kingdom, and He also will do it.
 - Your faith is to hold on to His promise and serve Him boldly—like Joseph did.