

## Getting Through the Hard Times, Part 3

### Having an Excellent Spirit

**Everyone wants to be around a person who smiles a lot.** Do you know a person like that? They make you laugh, they seem to have a well of joy within them, and somehow they are able to be happy even when the world looks pretty dark—at least to other people.

I've known a few people like that. What fun to be around them! The Bible says that a person who has a merry heart has a continual feast, Proverbs 15:15. It also says that a merry heart does good like medicine, Proverbs 17:22. Moreover, because they have a merry heart, they also have a cheerful face, Proverbs 15:13. These are the people who go around saying good things, kind things and encouraging things that make people around them happy, Proverbs 12:25.

Don't you wish that you had that joy—a merry heart that does good like medicine? Don't you wish you could have a cheerful face—and bring many encouraging words to others? Wouldn't having a happy heart be like a continual feast to everyone around you, and especially you?

It seems like some people are born with a happy disposition, there is a whole body of research on happiness that indicates that as well. One theory, the "set-point of happiness" theory postulates that we are all born with a certain pre-determined set point of happiness that we tend to return to, regardless of the circumstances in our lives. These psychologists refer to Abraham Lincoln, who noticed something like this when he observed a group of boys who had lost limbs, and yet were still laughing and joking. Lincoln is quoted as saying, "Folks are usually about as happy as they make their minds up to be." Set-point theorists say that to some extent, a person's happiness is predetermined, but we also have some ability to make ourselves happier, at least to some extent.

Here is the amazing thing: We as Christians have the capacity to be happy! Every one of us has an excellent Spirit within us. We can have a continual feast!

Consider what Scripture says about joy,

Nehemiah 8:10 *"...the joy of the Lord is your strength."*

Isaiah 12:2-3 *"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid. For YAH, the Lord is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation." Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*

Psalms 27:5-6 *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion. In the secret place of His tabernacle, He shall hide me. He shall set me high upon a rock. And now*

*my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me. Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle, I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.*

There are many more. Yet here, even with only these three Scriptures, we can see:

1. The joy of the Lord is our strength, Nehemiah 8:10.
2. Our source of strength is the Lord, and with joy we can draw that all we need from Him, Isaiah 12:2-3.
3. We can offer up sacrifices of joy. That is, we can choose to be joyful in even the most adverse circumstances—and rejoice in Him, Psalm 27:5-6.

**We can choose to be joyful. We have an unlimited supply of joy. In His joy, we are strong.**

The New Testament makes our ability to choose to be joyful even clearer, for we are told that with the Holy Spirit, we have the joy of the Lord, for His joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit,

*Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*  
[NAS]

If we are in the Lord, and His Holy Spirit is in us, then all of His fruit in us. Therefore, we can choose to operate in the fruit of the Spirit no matter what our circumstances.

We have joy, we have love, we have peace. We need to choose to operate in it, and allow His good fruit to flow through us!

How do we do this? The next verse in Galatians is part of the “how to,”

*Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Here is the key: be willing to die to self and go on with Christ. Part of that willingness will be to repent and ask the Lord to cleanse us. Second, ask Him to fill us with His Holy Spirit—and do this daily,

*Ephesians 5:18 ...but be filled with the Spirit.*

The Greek word, “be filled” in this passage is in the present continuous form. It could be translated, “be being (continually) filled with the Spirit.” Then draw on the Holy Spirit’s fruit within you, including joy.

Where are examples for this in Scripture? Look at Acts 16, where Paul and Silas had just been flogged “with many stripes” and flung into prison,

Acts 16:25 *But at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*

Surely Paul and Silas could have been unhappy. Instead, they drew water from the wells of salvation—and praised God, and sang songs to Him. And then there was an earthquake that opened all the doors and broke everybody's chains off of them. God delivered them, and then also their jailor and all his household, Acts 16:31. We serve an amazing God.

There is no doubt that there has to be some discipline in our lives if we are going to draw from the well of salvation. Paul and Silas chose to pray and praise God anyway, so can we.

Also, we need to discipline our thoughts. Here is the “mental health” verse of the Bible,

Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

Finally, along with using the fruit of the Spirit and disciplining your thoughts, why not allow God to lead you?

Psalms 32:8 [God speaking] *“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with My eye.”*

Here is a directive for joy,

### **How to Have Joy**

1. Repent and be cleansed of anything that is not pleasing to God.
2. Be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, even asking for a refilling from day to day.
3. Use the fruit of the Spirit which is within you—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness (faith), self-control.
4. Control your thoughts. If you can control your thoughts, you can control your emotions.
5. Allow God to guide you and lead you in His joy

## Influencing the Atmosphere Around You

I am convinced that a Christian can influence the atmosphere around them, either for good or evil. Most of the time I believe we do this with our tongue. Look at what Scripture says,

*Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

*Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*

Some years ago, as a young mother with several children, I had the tendency to be negative. I would speak whatever came into my head, and often I was expressing my own frustration and tiredness. One Saturday morning as I was scrubbing the kitchen after a party the night before, I reached out to the Lord, and He suddenly spoke to me. "Diana," He said, "I want you to label everything you say today as either positive or negative." I wondered at this, but decided to obey. So for a while I listened to myself and labeled every statement. To my dismay, everything I said that morning was negative. I would open my mouth, and out would come still another negative observation, another acerbic little saying, or another complaint. My husband was sitting nearby as I cleaned out the oven, and I noticed that every time I said something, his shoulders would hunch down a little bit more. He was being affected by my negativity. I reached out to the Lord, crying out to Him to help me understand what I was doing. Suddenly, my Father enabled me to see in the spirit realm. There above me, at the ceiling level, I saw dark clouds of negativity, and demons darting in and out between the clouds. My negative speech was forming a dark atmosphere in my kitchen, darker than any of the rain clouds outside, and demons were living in those clouds, and being fed by my negative words. I repented. I cried out to the Lord to help me change. He asked me to continue the exercise, but now to purposely look for good things to say, and hold back the bad. For six months I continued this exercise. It changed me. Then after six months, I went back to the Lord and asked Him what He wanted me to do next. As a second step, He challenged me to label my thoughts before I spoke. This was much more difficult! To this day, I am still working on controlling my thoughts! But here is what I learned by all this: you can control what you say, and what you say affects the atmosphere around you.

This lesson on the negative atmosphere speech can produce continued. I still remember coming early to a Christian event, and finding two pastors talking with each other. Before I even got close, I saw dark clouds of negativity above them, and demons in the clouds. After what the Lord had shown me in my kitchen, I knew they were speaking evil of someone, and feeding the demons above them. This was confirmed some months later when one of these two leaders told me about the conversation he had had with the other pastor that day. A similar experience happened again when I went to the intercessory prayer room. As I entered, there were dark clouds in the room. I didn't even want to enter. I learned later that the head intercessor had been criticizing other people, and that dark atmosphere pressed down on the whole room, even though

the group started praising God a short time later. The intercessors could praise the Lord all they wanted—nothing dissipated those clouds.

Be careful how you speak about others! Your negative words will create a dark atmosphere, and it will be inhabited by demons. Nor is praise and worship ever accepted by God after you have been castigating your brother or sister. Look at what James says to the church in Jerusalem,

*James 3:6, 8, 9-12 5 ...See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity...it defiles the body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell....8 It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, by brethren, bear olives or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.*

Just as a spring cannot have both salt water and fresh water, you can't praise God after attacking your brother, and think that God will be pleased by it. He won't.

I've seen people try. One Wednesday night at church, people were praising and worshipping God when I suddenly saw beautiful, glorious crystal clear water over the congregation in the spirit realm. The Lord was showing me the beauty of praise! But then I looked on the stage at front, and one of the praise leaders was spewing dirty bilge water out of her mouth! Instead of going up into the atmosphere and filling our church with glory, as other worship did, this leader's praises looked like filthy mud that she vomited onto the ground with every phrase! I was upset, and sought the Lord. He told me that she had been attacking the senior pastor, and asked me to pray for her. I did, but I have never forgotten this principle: Don't ever think that your praises to God are acceptable after you have been attacking your brother or sister. They were made in the image of God, just as you were. They are covered with the blood of Jesus Christ. If you are attacking them, you are attacking God Himself.

I have seen a positive influence in the atmosphere by words as well. Praise and worship has such an affect. In the vision of worship in the church, for example, I saw the clear, beautiful water of praise and worship as the saints in my church blessed the Lord. How glorious in the spirit it was—it went all the way up to the rafters, and filled the whole sanctuary with beauty and light!

I asked the Lord to explain praise and worship to me once, and He gave me a vision I will never forget. "Three things happen," He told me. First, just know that when anybody is saved, one of the first things God does is He puts His glory on them. In the spirit, God's glory looks like a force-field of light all around them. Psalms expresses this,

*Psalm 3:3 But you, O Lord, are a shield around me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head.*

The first thing that happens when we praise God, is this shield of glory around us become denser and wider. It looks like light-filled clouds, but the clouds become denser. The more we praise, the denser the clouds become.

Second, as we continue to worship, God lifts us into the heavenlies. Yes, I know that our feet are very much on the earth, but in the Spirit, we are in the heavenlies, as part of the Church of the Firstborn described in Hebrews 12,

*Hebrews 12:22-24 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

We are part of the “Church of the Firstborn” whether we are in heaven or on earth!

The third thing that happens as you continue in praise and worship is that God Himself addresses the demons that are still trying to hang around you. In the vision, I saw myself covered with a glorious shield of light that forced demons away from me. Demons can’t penetrate God’s glory! Then as I continued to praise, I saw God’s huge hand start flicking the demons off—just flicking them away like so many annoying flies. It was glorious!

Scripture shows us that times of continued praise and worship are times when God will move on our behalf and fight for us. The most notable time is this one, when Judah faced three enemies. God told them to not be afraid. So when they went into battle, they had the singers who praised the Lord go first, before the army. Here is the result,

*2 Chronicles 20:22 Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.*

IN conclusion, a Christian has tremendous power to change the atmosphere around them just by what they say. The tongue can be used to bless or curse. It can build an atmosphere of good or evil. It can help or hinder. Be careful how you use your tongue!

*Proverbs 12:14 A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of this mouth, and the recompense of a man’s hands will be rendered to him.*

*Proverbs 12:18 There is one who speaks lie the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.*

*Proverbs 10:11 The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.*

*Proverbs 11:11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.*

**Daniel, an example we can learn from.** There are times when following God does not come without cost. We can have joy, we can operate in love, we can pray and praise, as Paul and Silas did, in hardship and adversity. But there is a cost at times—and that is, the willingness to follow God, no matter what. A good study of having an excellent spirit comes from the book of Daniel.

**Daniel had an excellent spirit.** In Daniel 5, we read that King Belshazzar, the king of Babylon had a feast, and drank out of vessels which had been looted from the Temple in Jerusalem. They drank from these consecrated vessels and praised their gods of “gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone,” Daniel 5:4. Suddenly, the fingers of a man’s hand appeared, and the king saw the hand write words on the wall. The king became troubled, and wanted to know what the words that the hand had written meant. So he called all his wise men—“the astrologers, the Chaldeans, the soothsayers,” v. 5:7, and offered rich rewards and promotion to third ruler of his kingdom to the person who could read the writing and interpret the words. But no one could. Then the queen came to the king and said,

Daniel 5:11-12 *“There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him....<sup>12</sup> Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel....now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.”*

The queen recognized that Daniel had an excellent spirit, for he had interpreted omens and dreams for the king’s father before him. She even seemed to realize that what was in Daniel was “the Spirit of the Holy God.”

Today, we believe that the same Spirit of the Holy God dwells in every born-again follower of Jesus Christ, Romans 8:9. We also believe that with the presence of the Holy Spirit within us comes the opportunity to have an excellent spirit, just as Daniel did.

**But this excellent Spirit was not without cost to Daniel. Nor, do I believe, He is without cost to us today.** Daniel had an excellent spirit because the Spirit of the Living God dwelt within him. He also had an excellent spirit because he purposed in his heart that he would consistently honor God, no matter what the circumstances.

God took Daniel through dark and terrible days. Daniel was taken captive when he was just a teenager in Jerusalem. He was torn away from his homeland and taken to Babylon. There he was selected by the master of the king’s eunuchs (Dan. 1:3) to receive instruction in the language and literature of the Chaldeans, and serve in the king’s palace. In all likelihood, Daniel and his friends were made eunuchs, as their master was the chief of eunuchs. They were emasculated to serve an enemy king, far from home, far from their families, and far from the Temple of the Lord they loved. In addition, with the emasculation, Daniel and his friends were disqualified from ever going into the more holy parts of the Temple (Leviticus 21).

Daniel could have despaired. He could have given up. Instead, he chose to serve God as best he could in the terrible circumstances he found himself in. Again and again throughout the book of Daniel, we find Daniel choosing to honor God in every way he had a choice.

During the three years Daniel trained to serve the king of Babylon, he could have had many wonderful foods as part of the king's court. *"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank,"* Daniel 1:8. Daniel observed the Lord's directives, even though he was far from the Temple. In return, God honored Daniel, just as Daniel had honored Him, for God gave Daniel and his friends *"knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams,"* Daniel 1:17. When King Nebuchadnezzar tested Daniel and his three friends, *"he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm,"* Daniel 1:20. Then we are told, *"Thus Daniel continued...."* Daniel 1:21.

Daniel continued. He continued to honor the Lord, regardless of the circumstances. When the king had a dream no one else could interpret, Daniel is able to interpret it. But look at his attitude, at how humble Daniel was,

Daniel 2:27-28 [Daniel speaking to the King] *"The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets..."*

Daniel gave all the glory to God. And when Daniel got promoted, he took his friends with him, Daniel 2:48-49. Daniel was humble, and loyal to his friends.

There is more to this story. Daniel was away when his friends refused to worship a statue of the king, and consequently they were thrown into a fiery furnace. An amazing thing happened, for although the men who threw these three into the furnace burned up, Daniel 3:22, the fire never touched any part of these young men, 3:27—except the ropes that bound them. The fire, rather than burning them up, freed them. Even more amazing, a fourth person appeared with these young men in the fiery furnace, and the king exclaimed,

*"Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?...Look! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of Go,"* Daniel 3:24-25. The only things that got burned in the fire were the ropes that bound Daniel's friends—and even the king saw Jesus in those fiery flames! And when the young men were called out of the flames, they came out unharmed—and didn't even smell like smoke.

Think about what this means for us today. **Could it be, that if we are willing to continue in Christ, and to honor our Father in heaven even through terrible times, that the only thing that will be burned in the fire of our trials are the ropes that bind us? Could it be also that our God will make Himself known—even to our adversaries—in the midst of our trials?**

This I know to be true, God has a way of being more present in the lives of those who are going through adversity, and yet have chosen to cling to their Savior. As with Daniel's friends, God makes Himself known in the lives of those who honor Him, especially in times of trial.

The story continues. Daniel was faithful to pray to God every day, three times a day, Daniel 6:10-11. Consequently, Daniel was accused of worshiping something other than a statue of the kind, and thrown into a lion's den. He was rescued, Daniel 6:18-23, because "*he believed in his God.*" We know also that even if God had not rescued Daniel, still Daniel would have honored God.

We greatly admire Daniel. But remember that the excellent spirit within him did not come without cost! Didn't Daniel face execution because he believed God? And what did it cost him personally to continue to serve God in a foreign country?

#### Here are lessons we can learn from Daniel:

1. **Believe God. Honor God. Stay faithful to Him.** Regardless of what you go through, and regardless of the cost, believe God. Stay faithful to Him. Honor God with a lifestyle of prayer and worship.
2. **Be humble.** Know that the God of the Universe will lift you up from the humblest of positions, and honor you with His Spirit. Even in adversity, God will honor you. He will never leave you or forsake you, Hebrews 13:5, and God will make Himself known to you and the people around you, Daniel 3:25.
3. **Be faithful to your friends who also honor God.** Daniel's friends shared the same values, and faced the same adversity. In the end, they were promoted along with Daniel. Good friends strengthen each other.

#### Another example is Joseph. But did Joseph have an excellent spirit? Not at first.

Rather, Joseph seems to be very prideful when we first read about him. He was the favorite son of twelve brothers, and he was one of the youngest—11<sup>th</sup> of 12,

Genesis 37:3 (a) *Now Israel [Jacob, v. 37:1] loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age....*

Jacob especially loved Joseph because he was the oldest child of Rachel, his first love, Genesis 30:22-24. And Papa Jacob made his favoritism very apparent,

Genesis 37:3 (b) *.... Also, he [Jacob] made him a tunic of many colors.*

With predictable results,

Genesis 37:4 *But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.*

To make matters worse, even God favored Joseph—and Joseph was not quiet about it,

Genesis 37:5 *Now Joseph had a dream, and he told his brothers, and they hated him even more.*

Joseph's brothers hated him for his dreams, because as he recounted it, it seemed that his dreams were telling Joseph that he would rule over his brothers, Gen. 37:7-8. Even worse, it seemed that according to Joseph's dreams, not only his brothers, but also Joseph's mother and father would worship him, Genesis 37:9-10.

What happens when God's hand seems to be on a person? There are two common reactions,

Genesis 37:11 *And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

Two reactions which Jesus experienced were the same—either He was envied—or He was watched to see what would happen.

Envy is a demon spirit. We see it first in the account of Cain and Abel,

Genesis 4:6-7 *So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."*

Sin lies at the door. What door? The door of Cain's heart. Cain could have resisted this ungodly spirit, God told him to, "rule over it." Instead, Cain opened the door and killed his brother Abel.

The same spirit of envy used the chief priests and elders to nail Jesus to a cross several hundred years later,

Matthew 27:18 *For [Pilate, v. 13] knew that they [the chief priests and elders, v. 12] had handed [Jesus, v. 11] over because of envy.*

Envy is a demon spirit, and in the story of Joseph, it used his brothers to throw him into a pit, Genesis 37:24. Later Joseph's brothers sold Joseph to some Midianite traders, and lied to their father, giving Jacob Joseph's bloody robe, and letting Jacob think that Joseph had been devoured by an animal, Genesis 37:31-34. Jacob suffered terribly, and would not be comforted, 37:35. Where was Jacob's God then? Jacob would not see Joseph again for more than fifteen years, and in all that time, he believed that Joseph was dead.

What about Joseph's dreams? Have you ever had a word from the Lord that indicated that God had a certain plan for your life—and then it didn't seem to come to pass? Here is the amazing thing about Joseph's dreams: he was tested by the very word God had given him,

Psalms 105:17-19 *[God] sent a man before them—Joseph—who was sold as a slave. They hurt his feet with fetters, he was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.*

Joseph ended up working as a slave for a man in Egypt who recognized the favor on Joseph's life—for God was with Joseph, and Joseph never let go of God. Joseph was

tempted to sleep with his master's wife, but refused her, acting with integrity instead. He ended up in prison, but still he served God, and interpreted dreams for others. He seemed to be forgotten, yet still he served God. And then one day he had a chance to prove to Pharaoh that there was a God in heaven. He was gracious, and served Pharaoh, whose land had imprisoned Joseph and robbed him of years of his life. Even then, Joseph gave glory to God. It seemed his pride was finally gone. And later, when his brothers came seeking Joseph's forgiveness, Joseph was humble. He forgave them—and then made one of the most amazing statements in the Bible, because Joseph knew in all this time that he had been used by God to work out God's plan for good, not just for himself, but also for many others.

Have you ever felt that you were being tested? Joseph was tested, he teaches us,

### How to pass the tests:

1. **Receive God's word to you with faith. Cherish it. Believe that it will come to pass** Joseph received God's promise with faith, Genesis 37:5-10, and never lost faith that somehow God would bring that word to pass. . [Yes, every prophetic word should be tested. It should be consistent with God's word and with God's character. It should bear witness to you, and come with peace, James 3:17-18. Also, the spirits can be tested, 1 John 4:1-3, 1 Corinthians 12:3. But if that word to you passes all these tests, then NEVER let go of it!]
2. **Always, no matter what, hang onto God. Honor Him, and He will honor you** Genesis 38:2 tells us, "*The Lord was with Joseph.*" God honored him, Gen. 39:3.
3. **Always, always, always act with integrity**, Genesis 39:7-11. Because of Joseph's integrity, he refused to sleep with his master's wife. As a result, he went to prison, yet he maintained his integrity. [A side note—never allow yourself to be alone in a private place with an unrelated person of the opposite sex, Gen. 39:11-12. **Avoid even "the appearance of evil,"** 1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV ]
4. **Be humble.** Joseph did not seem humble as a 17-year-old, but later we see that his character changed. Is it possible that this is one test God is asking you to pass as well? Look at how Joseph changed: he gave God all the glory, Genesis 41:16.
5. **Forget the bitter experiences of the past, and be fruitful where you are.** Joseph had two sons. He called one Manasseh, which means, "Making forgetful," and the other Ephraim, which means "fruitfulness." Joseph said, "*For God had made me forget all my toil and my father's house,*" and "*For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.*" Genesis 41:51-52. Some Christians express this thought this way, "**Bloom where you're planted.**"
6. **Realize that it is not about you, but about God and His larger plan. Stay humble. Forgive the people who hurt you, and be gracious to them.** When Joseph's brothers fell down before him, Joseph could have lorded it over them. But he stayed humble. He forgave. And then he made this most amazing statement, Genesis 50:19-20 *Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 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."*