

FORGIVENESS AFFIRMED BY JOSEPH

INTRO: These are words that Joseph speaks to his brothers after father Jacob had died. Seventeen years Jacob lived with his family in Egypt. Now the brothers are afraid (vs. 15) and send a messenger to their brother Joseph. What will he say and do?

I. THE QUESTION OF THE BROTHERS.

- A. The brothers fear.
 1. Their father has died and they believed that it was their father that kept Joseph from seeking revenge.
 2. We all have a sinful desire to get even, or even inflict greater pain when we have been hurt by others.
 3. Joseph as governor in Egypt surely was in a position to do so.
 4. The brothers send a messenger to Joseph.
- B. The brother's request.
 1. The brothers claim that it was a command of Jacob that Joseph forgive them.
 2. They do not dare to ask forgiveness for their own sakes. They do not deserve it!
 3. The brothers are dealing with the guilt of what they have done to their brother.
 4. There is an irrational fear: 17 years Joseph had cared for them and shown them forgiveness.
- C. The brother's confession.
 1. The brothers confess their evil, using two different words for sin.
 2. Twice they plead, "Forgive us." They want their forgiveness affirmed.
 3. They speak as believers: "the trespasses of the servants of the God they father."
- D. Our need to have the forgiveness of our sins affirmed.
 1. We know the love, kindness, and care of Jesus Christ.
 2. Yet guilt causes us sometimes to wonder if we are forgiven.
 3. We need that affirmation which our elder brother gives to us. How does it do it?
 4. What about others that might have hurt us. Do we affirm them also that they are forgiven?

II. THE ANSWER OF JOSEPH

- A. Behold the compassion of Joseph.
 1. Joseph sees that his brothers are still hurting because of the pain that they have caused him.
 2. Beautiful tears: Joseph weeps.
 3. When the brothers hear this, they come and Joseph weeps again.
 4. Why these tears?
- B. "Fear not." Spoken twice (vs. 19, 21)
 1. Joseph is telling them not to be afraid of him.
 2. He has forgiven them completely!
 3. He will not avenge himself but will continue to nourish them and their little ones.
 4. In vs. 21, we read he spoke kindly to them, comforting and abounding in words of love.
- C. Jesus Christ also reaffirms our forgiveness.
 1. One thinks of the kind words to the woman caught in adultery: "Neither do I condemn thee."
 2. Jesus speaks to Peter alone and later with the disciples showing forgiveness and restoration.
 3. How kindly Jesus speaks to us in the preaching, words of comfort, forgiveness, nourishment and care.

III. THE REASONS THAT JOSEPH GIVES.

- A. "Am I God?"
 1. No, Joseph is NOT, and therefore no vengeance. (Rom. 12:19, I Thess. 5:15)
 2. Joseph leaves their deeds to God. He will not be bitter.
 3. We also may not avenge ourselves. We need to fight that sinful nature that wants to fight back.
 4. But Jesus is God. He could avenge but instead forgives his elect brethren.
 5. This is the glorious gospel we preach!
- B. Joseph sees God's sovereignty in the past evil events.
 1. "Ye thought evil against me."
 2. Joseph does not minimize their evil. It was a grievous evil.
 3. Two fold nature of Joseph's pain:
 4. "But God meant it for good."
 5. We must note the parallelism in this verse: "Ye planned, intended for evil, God planned, intended for good."
 6. Is this not true of all the evil in the world, done in sin, that God not only 'permits', but plans and uses.
 7. The brothers' actions were evil, but God through their evil brings about good.
- C. What is this good?
 1. "to save much people alive."
 2. Refers not only to God's providence, saving from starvation: giving food to Israelites and Egyptians.
 3. God through Joseph will preserve his covenant people in Egypt and cause them to grow into a great multitude.
 4. But especially God works this in his providence so there will be the type of bondage and redemption.