

Forgiving His Brothers

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We turn in God's word tonight to Genesis 45. Genesis 45, we're going to read the entire chapter. The text tonight will be the first 8 verses. I will not be re-reading those verses so I ask that you pay special attention to those verses as we read the chapter.

I've been preaching in my own congregation a series on the life of Joseph and this is the last sermon that I preached in that series and the historical context here is that Joseph's brothers had just come down to Egypt for the second time and in the time before that, in the first and second coming, Joseph had been testing his brothers and he had been testing them to see if they had changed and when they came the second time, it was evident that they had changed. God had changed them. They were brought to a true repentance for their sins and now in Genesis 45, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and in doing so we are going to see in the text that he forgives his brothers. So that's the context. Let's read Genesis 45 now.

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. 2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. 3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. 4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. 5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. 6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. 9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds,

and all that thou hast: 11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. 12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. 13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. 14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

16 And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. 17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; 18 And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. 19 Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20 Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. 21 And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. 22 To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. 23 And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. 24 So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

25 And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, 26 And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. 27 And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: 28 And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

Thus far we read God's word.

One thing that's important for us to understand tonight as we look at this part of the life of Joseph is that the life of Joseph is not about Joseph. There are commentators and preachers who would say, "No, the life of Joseph is about Joseph. It's about how it is that a man went from being a sold slave to a rich ruler. It's about how good things can happen after bad things happen in one's life," and they would say, "No, it's all about Joseph." Well, the word of God tells us that this history is not about Joseph. If you go back to Genesis 37, we read there in verse 2, "These are the generations of Jacob," and then it goes on, "Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren," and

so on and then begins the account of the life of Joseph but the life of Joseph we read there is not about Joseph, it's about Jacob. Why is it about Jacob? Because this history is about the line of Christ and Joseph is not in the line of Christ. The next link in the chain after Jacob is Judah. Judah, who is the father of the father of the father of King David, who is the father of the father of the father and so on of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So we see that the life of Joseph is not about Joseph but instead Joseph is used by God to keep alive the line of Jesus Christ so that our Savior would come and die for our sins. That's the big picture that we have to see and understand always when we look at the life of Joseph and Joseph himself has some understanding of this. He understands that his life is not about himself and we're going to see that in the text tonight. It's about keeping alive his father and his brothers and the purpose of God in that is the coming of Jesus Christ and the salvation of his people.

Now we look at that history in the light of that. The history is this: Joseph here in this text forgives his brothers. He does that after they have changed and really when you go back to the previous chapter, it's an amazing thing. Joseph's brothers have been changed by God. We see in this history an amazing work of God especially when you understand how wicked these brothers were. These brothers, you could say, were the Hebrew mafia of that day. If you go back to Genesis 38, you find that. In Genesis 38 is the record of some of the things that Joseph's brothers did. It was not only that Joseph's brothers wanted to kill their brother but instead they sold him as a slave unto Egypt but we have to understand this was not out of character for these guys. In Genesis 38 we read about the fact that these men when they were younger were murderers, thieves and liars. In Genesis 38 we read about a man named Shechem who wanted to marry their sister, Dinah, and there is a lot that was in that history but they said that for that man Shechem to marry their sister, all the men of the city of Shechem had to be circumcised. So all the men of the city of Shechem circumcised themselves. Three days later when they are still sore, Levi and Simeon come into that city of Shechem and they kill all of the men of that city. In addition to that, the other brothers follow behind and they plunder the city. They take the women and the children captives and they steal everything that those people had. Jacob does admonish his sons for that but understand, that's the kind of characters these men were.

But now they have changed. God changed them. In chapter 44 we find, first of all, that Judah on behalf of the brothers confesses their sin against God and secondly Judah gives a long speech, the longest in the book of Genesis to this ruler in Egypt. He doesn't realize it's his brother Joseph. He gives this long speech in which he pledges that he will give his life in the place of Benjamin. Remember, the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They all went back. Joseph said, "Nope, I'm just keeping this one. All of you can just return home." And Judah says, "No, I will stay in his place," and that showed that the brothers had changed. They would not do again what they had done to Joseph. Amazing. An amazing, powerful, sovereign work of God.

In the text that we look at tonight, we see something that's just as amazing if not more amazing: Joseph forgives his brothers. The brothers who hated him. Who sold him as a

slave into Egypt and that resulted in 22 years of being separated from his father and his family and from the covenant community, the church itself, yet Joseph forgives his brothers and as he forgives his brothers, we see that he is reconciled to them. There is reconciliation that takes place here. That's why this passage is so important for us as we prepare ourselves to partake of the Lord's Supper next Sunday. Are we reconciled to one another? Are we reconciled to family members? Are we reconciled in our marriages? There are 2 parts to reconciliation: there is the confession of sin, there is repentance, that includes turning from sin; but the second part is that there is forgiveness. When there is reconciliation that takes place, the one who has sinned asks for forgiveness and the one who has been sinned against says, "I forgive you." That's what's taking place here in this chapter, that second part where Joseph says to his brothers essentially, "I forgive you."

Are we doing that with one another? That's something important for us as we examine ourselves. That's important because of what Jesus tells us in the New Testament in Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount. There he says in verses 23 and 24, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." So even if before worship we are to be reconciled to one another, certainly before partaking of the Lord's Supper, if there's anything between us we ought to be reconciled to one another.

That's what happens here as Joseph forgives his brothers. That's our theme tonight: forgiving his brothers. We look first at the beautiful forgiveness. Secondly, the theological basis. And then finally, the big picture. We see very clearly in the text that Joseph consciously decides that he will not live in bitterness, resentment, hatred and anger against his brothers. Instead, Joseph consciously decides that he forgives them. What that means is that Joseph will not see them in the light of the sins that they have committed against him. What that means is that Joseph is not going to hold those sins against his brothers. He is not going to seek to retaliate against his brothers for the things that they had done to him.

We see Joseph doing that after Judah's lengthy speech in the previous chapter in which Joseph sees that his brothers had changed. After he sees that his brothers had changed, what he does is he sends out all of the Egyptians who had been in that room in his house and he reveals himself to his brothers. Through tears and weeping, he says to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live?" We see Joseph weeping here. Weeping is a part of this history. He weeps earlier when he first sees his brothers come into Egypt and it's not because he sees them, he weeps because he understands they have not changed. They hadn't been turned by God. He weeps for their souls. He weeps in this history too when he first sees Benjamin when they come the second time because he sees his brother Benjamin but in addition to that he weeps here. Why does he weep here? He is weeping here with joy because now he sees his brothers have changed. He weeps tears of joy for that.

Joseph then clears the room. He clears the room because this is a family matter and then he asks about his father. He's not asking here simply if his father is alive but he wants to

really know how his father is doing with all of the grief that he's gone through in the past 22 years of thinking that his son is dead. He wants to know how his father is doing, how he's dealing with all of that grief. His brothers can't answer him because they are in shock. They could hardly believe what they are hearing. How could this be Joseph, their brother? They thought maybe he's dead but even if he's not dead, he's certainly just a slave in Egypt and this man's alive and in addition he's a ruler. But then it begins to sink in.

Now he is speaking to them in their own language. Before this, every time he spoke to them he spoke through an interpreter. He spoke the Egyptian language and then the Egyptian interpreter spoke to them and they had to speak to this man through the interpreter. Now he is speaking their language. It sinks in, "This is our brother. This is Joseph who we sold as a slave into Egypt," and the implication of the text is, you could almost see the brothers moving away from Joseph because Joseph says to them, "Come near." The implication is they were moving back. "What is he going to do now? He is this mighty ruler. How is he going to retaliate against us for what we have done?"

But Joseph will not retaliate. He will do nothing to them because he forgives them. He forgives them. In the text we see the evidence that Joseph forgives his brothers and that's what we want to look at. We're going to see the evidence that Joseph does not look at his brothers in the light of the sins that they had committed against him. We want to see that he's not holding those sins against them. How do we see it? We see it first of all in this: he sends out all of the Egyptians that were in his house; he sends them out of the room. He wants this to be done in privacy. As I've said earlier, it's because it was a family matter. Well, there's more to it than that. Just imagine what would happen if the news leaked that his brothers had sold him as a slave into Egypt and that became the headlines of the Egyptian newspapers, as it were? Joseph was loved in Egypt. He was being used to keep them alive in a time of great famine. He was a celebrity in Egypt. People bowed before him when he walked down the street. That's how popular he was in Egypt. If the news leaked about what these brothers had done, they would have been all over them. Joseph's concern is to protect them and not hurt them. We see here in the life of Joseph that love covers a multitude of sins. Here we see forgiveness, forgiveness does not want to make public the sins of others but wants to protect the reputation of those who have repented. That's what Joseph wanted for his brothers. He wanted to protect their reputation there in Egypt. That shows forgiveness.

Secondly, we see forgiveness in this: Joseph reveals himself to them and then asked them to come near to him. He doesn't push them away. He's not going to retaliate. He's not coming at them with an iron fist and with all his soldiers. No, he says to his brothers, "Come near." Verse 4, "Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." Forgiveness does that. Forgiveness doesn't push away but instead forgiveness seeks fellowship. Forgiveness says, "I'm not going to allow this sin to keep us from fellowship with each other."

Then in verse 5, he reminds them that they sold him but he doesn't do that to make them feel guilty but he does that to tell them he has forgiven them. He is not going to be

grieved by this and they ought not to continue to feel guilty for what they have done but Joseph is saying to them, "I have forgiven you. I promise not to see you in the light of what you have done to me. I promise not to retaliate in any way." That's the amazing forgiveness we see here in the life of Joseph.

When we see the forgiveness that God worked in Joseph's heart, we see the forgiveness that we must have in our hearts and practice in our lives. You see, forgiveness is not about how I'm feeling at a particular moment. If we have been sinned against, very often we won't feel like forgiving someone, especially someone who has sinned against us grievously and hurtfully, but forgiveness is a decision. It's a promise not to keep a record of wrongs. That is what forgiveness is. It's a promise not to keep a record of wrongs and not to see someone in the light of what they've done against me. That's what forgiveness is because that's God's forgiveness for us. It is. God promises us that he will not see us in the light of our sins. Isaiah 38:17, he promises to throw them behind his back. When something is behind our back, we're not focused on it. It's out of sight, out of mind. That's what God says when he forgives us. He doesn't see us in those sins, he sees us in the righteousness of Christ. He promises not to punish us for our sins. He instead promises to forget them.

That's what forgiveness is. Forgiveness is really making these four promises, you've got to remember these, forgiveness is making these four promises of. First of all it's this: I will not think about the sin you have committed against me. I will not think about the wrong you have done to me. Secondly, I will not bring up the wrong that you have done against me and use it against you. Now, that doesn't mean we may never bring up the past. There are times to do that and to talk about the sins of the past and where they have hurt us but the promise here is, "I am not going to bring it up and use it against you." That's what we're saying when we forgive someone and we know how that goes. We can say it and then what happens a little while later, maybe days later or months later, we get into this conflict, we get into this fight and in the heat of the moment we bring up that past and throw it in their face and say, "Here you go again." Forgiveness promises not to do that, not to use it against that other person. Third, it's a promise not to talk about this wrong to others. That's what Joseph was saying, "I'm not going to spread the news about what you did to me 22 years ago," and that's part of forgiveness as well. Fourth, the promise is: I will not allow this sin to stand between us or to hinder fellowship between us. That's also what Joseph is saying here, "I won't let this stand in the way of our fellowshiping with each other." He fellowshiped with them here we read in Genesis 45. That's part of the promise of forgiveness.

So when it happens that you confess sin to someone and you ask them to forgive you which is something you ought to do and they say, "I forgive you," this is the promise you make: you promise not to think on this; you promise not to use it against the person; you promise not to talk about it with others; and you promise not to let this sins stand in the way of your having fellowship. This is the promise we make to those who confess their sins to us. Sometimes the question comes up, "What about those who don't confess their sin?" It may be that someone sinned against you and they are dead now or maybe someone has sinned against you and they won't repent of that sin. Well, you don't give

them that promise. You don't tell them this promise. This is something told when they repent of their sin and confess their sin but still, that attitude must be there. "I'm not going to continue to think about that person in the light of their sins. I'm not going to think about how it has hurt me. I'm not going to use it against them. I want their repentance but I'm not going to use it against them. I'm not going to spread rumors or stories about them and the things that they've done." But it will stand in the way of some fellowship if they continue without repentance.

Now, beloved, the question for us tonight is, right now and as we examine ourselves during this week is: are we holding onto unforgiveness? It's very likely that there are those here tonight who are holding on to unforgiveness and the word of God warns us tonight if you hold onto that it destroys you. It destroys you. I heard it put this way: it's like drinking poison and hoping someone else dies. That's what unforgiveness is like because you're so angry with that person you want them to pay for what they've done but in our unforgiveness we're the ones drinking the poison. If we're not forgiving, what we're saying by that is that we really don't know the forgiveness of God. We're acting like God has never forgiven us for our sins and we're saying that our standard for forgiveness is greater than God's. Christ's blood was shed to pay for sins, even the sins of those who have sinned against us and when we don't forgive someone who asks for that forgiveness and who confesses that sin, we're saying, "The blood of Jesus Christ isn't good enough for me. It's not good enough for me. My standard is higher than God's standard. I need you to hurt. I want you to be groveling. That's what I need. Only when you hurt like I hurt, only then maybe will I forgive you." If that's our attitude, then we are saying we really don't know the forgiveness of God. You see, the opposite of forgiving is living in bitterness which develops into resentment, which develops into anger, which develops into hatred and that destroys a person. It destroys them spiritually so that when they are so filled with rage and anger toward a person, it's not just that person, they become angry with the living God himself. That's the question: are we living in that unforgiveness in our homes or here in the church or even with others outside of the church?

We see here the beauty of forgiveness but the question follows then: why did Joseph forgive these dastardly deeds of his brothers? How could Joseph forgive them with all that they had done? Joseph's brothers abused Joseph. They verbally abused him in the past. They physically abused him. They wanted to kill him. That was their original plan. They didn't quite have the guts to go through with it so instead they sold him to some Ishmaelite traders and he was sold then as a slave into Egypt but in their minds he was as good as dead and for 22 years he was separated from his father, from his family, from the church. He was in prison and out of prison there in the land of Egypt. But we shouldn't think that the most dangerous place for Joseph was in the prison. No, the most dangerous place for Joseph in his life was when he went from the prison to having power and riches in Egypt and along with that an Egyptian wife. That was a place of great spiritual danger for Joseph.

But with all of those things his brothers had done and the consequences of what they had done, how could Joseph forgive them? Joseph forgives not simply because he could forget what they had done. It wasn't just a matter of time. We often say that, "Time

heals." When it comes to these things, anybody who has gone through it knows it doesn't. Time doesn't heal this. It wasn't time. But Joseph, by the grace of God, views what had happened to him through the lens of the truth of God's word. He viewed his situation through the lens of the truth of who God is. Understand that Joseph's forgiveness was not driven by pride. Joseph does not say to his brothers, "Hey brothers, I can forget what you did to me because look at me now. Look at me now. Look around yourself at this house. Look how beautiful it is. It's all mine. You saw me in the marketplace selling grain, I'm the second in command in Egypt now. Look at my beautiful Egyptian wife. Look at all the money that I have. I can let it go because of what I've got now." That's not what Joseph says. He doesn't point them either to the fact that they bowed down to him. He doesn't say to them, "Hey brothers, you remember those dreams that I had? You hated those dreams. You called me the dreamer. Now what do you think about those dreams? Well, let's see, why don't we count the number of times that you bowed down to me and you said you would never do it. Let's count the times. 1, 2, 3." He doesn't do that either. It's not about his position. You see, that's not forgiveness, that's revenge. It would be Joseph saying, "Yeah, but in the end I came out okay and look at you guys now. You're coming to me for food." No, that's not where Joseph is at. It's not pride that drives him.

That's not his attitude, but he forgives because he knows God and the surprising thing about the text, as least it was surprising to me, is that the truth that drives Joseph in having a right understanding of what happened to him is not the mercy of God, first of all, it's the Providence of God. Whoever would have thought that Providence is related to forgiveness but right here in the text the Providence of God is the first theological basis for why Joseph forgives his brothers. Notice the focus in what Joseph says, notice the focus on God. We see that Joseph refers to God 3 times in these verses. First of all, in verse 5, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Then verse 7, "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." Then verse 8, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

Joseph understands that although his brothers had done wrongly and they had sinned against him, God was sovereign. God was in control of all of this. He determined all of this and God had a purpose for it. That's what Joseph confesses here, that God had a sovereign purpose for this. He says, "It was for your salvation." When he says that, when he refers to that here in the text, he's not simply talking about the fact that now they had grain and they could be alive. No, what Joseph is talking about is the salvation of their souls. You see, for a long time they remained unconverted. These brothers were much older than Joseph. They're probably in their 40s, 50s, maybe 60s by now. They are older men and for the majority of their lives, they had lived without being converted. They were living on godliness and sin but now God had used Joseph and his life to bring his brothers to salvation, to conversion. That's the amazing thing that he sees and Joseph has that perspective. God had a purpose with all of this and it was the salvation of his brothers.

Really that's amazing because when you and I have been wronged, when we have been sinned against whether it's a small little matter between a husband and wife or between

brother and sister, when those things happen what we are usually focused on is ourselves, what they have done to me. How I am hurt and they don't seem to care. Very self-centered, self focused. Joseph is not thinking about himself and all the hurt that he has gone through. He is thinking about God and the way God ruled over his life. What we learn from the text is that believing the truth of God's sovereign providence is related to forgiveness. Embracing by faith the truth of God's Providence frees us to forgive those who have sinned against us. The truth of God's Providence comforts us in the many afflictions and difficulties of this life.

We know God is in control, but the same thing is true when people sin against us. God is in control. God has put us in that situation. How often do we think about that? "God has put me here. God sent this. God is sovereign over the sin that was committed against me." Often not and that's why we respond wrongly. If we would think about God in those moments, then we would be thinking about how God wants us to respond in those moments. You see, God has a purpose for all of our suffering. All of it, including the times when we are abused, when we are wronged by people and there are people who have been severely abused: verbally abused, physically abused, even sexually abused and that pain from that is so awful. But this is a life-changing perspective that we need in our lives because if we don't have this, we are going to constantly hold on to hurt and we're going to constantly view others in the light of the things that they have done against us and how often don't we do that. How often don't we do that in our marriages. How often don't we do that with our children. How often don't we do that in family relationships. How often don't we do that in church relationships as well. We hold onto it. We've got the list, the list of the wrongs that have been committed against us going back years and years and years and we see other people in the light of those things. But we must forgive. When we understand God's sovereign over those things, that he has a purpose for those things and that it's not about me feeling better about myself, then we are freed to forgive those who have sinned against us. We have to learn to see these situations with the proper lens, not the lens of "me." Then "me" becomes bigger than anything else. "I have been hurt. They have hurt me. This is an ongoing struggle for me." No, it's not about me, it's about God and what he is working and we can see that he has a purpose then for these things that he is doing and then we forgive.

So Joseph forgives, first of all, because he sees what happens in the light of God's Providence. Secondly, the theological basis is this: Joseph forgives his brothers because he knows the grace and the mercy of God himself. Those who know the grace and mercy of God are willing and ready to forgive those who sin against them. We see that here in Joseph in what he says. In verse 8 he says there in the second part of that verse talking about God and what he has done, "and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Joseph it is not using this to say, "I can forgive you guys because I have this power." No, it's not about that. What he's showing is that God has been good to him. God has been merciful and gracious to him in all of his time in Egypt. Joseph understands that he is a sinner saved by grace. He understands he is a sinner and he has been forgiven by God. Joseph himself clings to the mercy of God and because he knows that God has shown him mercy although he has

sinned and responded wrongly in many ways, therefore he will show mercy to those who have sinned against him.

The text shows us that Joseph himself personally embraces the mercy and the grace of God. That's a question for us: if we're holding onto unforgiveness, do we really know the mercy and the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ? Do we really understand how amazing God's grace is? We know his grace is amazing, don't we? It's amazing because he saves sinners. He loves sinners. We sang in that verse of Psalm 103 of the mercy of God that changes not, that is always faithful. It abides from eternity to eternity. That's amazing, isn't it? What that means is in between the mercy of God never changes, he is always merciful to us. He doesn't see us in the light of our sins. He sees us in the light of the righteousness of Jesus Christ and he forgives us. God is not a God who punishes us for our sins because he has punished those sins already on the cross of Jesus Christ where he died in our place.

Those who know that, who know that in the depth of their souls, are willing and ready to forgive others who sin against them. Are we willing and ready? Look at yourself in this week, is there anybody that you have growing bitterness and resentment towards in your home or in the church? Is it someone that is already dead? Is it someone that's living very close to you? We must look at ourselves and examine ourselves and remind ourselves that we ought to be filled with love and compassion and forgiveness and a desire for reconciliation because our God, our great God, has done the same in relationship to us.

A beautiful theological basis. What Joseph does is rooted in the truth of who God is but now we can't forget tonight the big picture. This forgiveness and reconciliation took place for the sake of the coming of Jesus Christ. Joseph forgiving his brothers leads to an emotional time of reconciliation with his brothers. We read of that in verses 14 and 15, "And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him." They hadn't seen each other for 22 years. The reason was they hated their brother but now they are reconciled and they enjoy fellowship with each other. They took some time to catch up with one another and talk about the things that had been going on in their lives in the past year. What a joyful time that must have been for Joseph to be speaking to his brothers about the goodness and faithfulness of God and for his brothers to be talking about the amazing work that God had done in their lives as well. There is joy here in this reunion and the reconciliation that took place.

But there is a purpose for all of this. The purpose as we have to see was so that the line of Christ could be preserved. You can see Satan working in all of this. The goal of Satan throughout the whole of the Old Testament was to keep Christ from coming. We read of that in Revelation 12. That was his goal and now as you look at the big picture of this history, you can see how Satan was trying to do that. Satan removed, of course, God is sovereign over all things, but from the perspective of Satan, he removed Joseph, the one godly brother in the midst of those brothers, he removed him. He got rid of him. Now these brothers continue on in their wicked lives. It would seem that there is no chance that they are going to be changed, that they are going to be converted in their lives. Satan

thought he had it all figured out and now he's going to break that chain for the coming of Christ. But of course, God is sovereign and God was working through this. God uses the famine, sovereignly ordains that famine so that the brothers go down to Egypt and there Joseph sees them and all the rest is history, as we say. God was working to bring the salvation of these brothers of Joseph for the sake of Judah. Judah, who is that next link in the chain so that Jesus Christ could come and pay for our sins.

That's the big picture. That's the purpose of God in all of this, but there is application for us tonight too. We have to see the big picture tonight when others sin against us. When we go through that hardship and suffering in our lives, God's sovereign purpose is that he does this for the salvation of his church. Not in the same way for the coming of Christ as in the Old Testament, but we have to think about it in the line of generations. In the line of generations. If we're going to live our lives in bitterness, resentment, anger that develops into hatred and we live our lives that way in our relationships, our children will see it and they will learn to do the same. Now, they can be delivered out of that by the grace of God and God is a gracious and good God but we have to understand there is something at stake here. It's not just about me. You see, that's the perspective it becomes, "It's about me." It's about how I have been wronged and hurt and we forget about God, we forget about our children, we forget about the generations, we forget about the church. But what happens if we're all living that way? The church is a mess and the church in the generations will be a mess and our families will be a mess. We must not live in that way. God calls us tonight to be reconciled to one another, to confess our sins to one another, to turn from our sins, to ask for forgiveness and to forgive as we have been forgiven.

That's an invaluable lesson for our children. If we as parents ever think that our children think we are perfect, we're deceived. They see our sins. They know them. We can only hide so much from them. The important thing that we do, that we must do as parents, is confess our sins and ask for forgiveness and forgive our children as we have been forgiven and pass that on in the line of generations and God uses that for the salvation of his church in the line of generations in the church as well. That's part of the big picture for us. So may we forgive as we have been forgiven. May we forgive as Joseph forgave. May God give us that grace. Amen.

Let us pray.