

## Forgiving His Brothers (10)

*The Life of Joseph*

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**Bible Text:** Genesis 45:1-8  
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We turn in God's word this morning to Genesis 45. Genesis 45. The text this morning will be the first eight verses of the chapter. We're going to read the entire chapter, but I will not be rereading those verses of the text. It's in those verses that we find that Joseph forgives his brothers, and that's what we're going to focus on this morning. Genesis 45. "Then Joseph," and that's after, remember, Judah speaks and not only is there a confession of sin that we saw on the part of Joseph's brothers, but Judah pledges his life as well for his brother Benjamin, showing that there was a change in in his heart and in his brothers' hearts as well. Now this is in response to that.

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.

Let's now pray and ask God's blessing on the preaching.

*Our Father which art in heaven, we pray thy blessing upon this word. We need that blessing. This morning, we hear of something that is just as amazing as what we saw in the last chapter when we saw the change that took place in Joseph's brothers, we see Joseph forgiving his brothers. We pray our Lord, that thou will use this word to work forgiveness in us, not only the assurance of forgiveness before thee, our God, but the strength as well to forgive those who have sinned against us. And dear Father, if we are not living in that forgiveness, show us that today, use the word to show us the greatness of that sin, and we pray that we would be a forgiving people because we know that we've been forgiven much. We ask, Father, that thou will give strength to thy servant that he may proclaim this word in truth also for the glory of thy name. And may we see and understand, Father, that this man is simply used as a tool by the Lord Jesus Christ and it's him that we hear this morning. In Jesus' name do we pray. Amen.*

As we continue looking at the life of Joseph, it's important for us to understand and to remember that this history is not simply about Joseph. It's not. When we go back to Genesis 37:2, we read there, "These are the generations of Jacob." This history, you could say, is more about Jacob or Israel. It's not about Joseph. Some might say that, some might preach it even that way, it's about Joseph, it's how when bad things happen to someone then God brings good things after that. They might say that this history is about Joseph going from being a sold slave to being a rich ruler, but that's not what this history is about. This history is about the generations, the generations of Jacob as he is in that line of Christ, and therefore the focus of this history isn't Joseph, instead, the focus is the next link in the chain that leads to Jesus Christ and that next link in the chain, as we saw last week, is Judah. Jacob to Judah, which is leading us to King David, and then in the Old Testament in the end, of course, leads us to Jesus Christ, our Savior. And so we have to keep that big picture in view this morning again, that the history of the life of Joseph is about saving Jacob and Judah for the coming of Jesus Christ, and in that way this history is pointing us ahead to Jesus Christ. You see God's sovereign purpose is bigger than the salvation of Joseph and it's bigger than simply a salvation of Jacob and his sons, it's for the salvation of all of God's people, those people whom he has chosen from before the foundation of the world and redeemed in Jesus Christ. And so we have to see this history in that light.

Now with that big picture in mind, we focus in again on this history. Joseph's brothers have repented. We saw that last week. They confessed their sin. They confessed that they have sinned against God. They confessed with godly sorrow what they had done against God, much different than what they had said on their first visit when Joseph was listening in on them and they didn't realize that Joseph could understand them, but in the second time they went down, they spoke of the sin that they had committed against God and they turned. We saw that in what Judah did. What an amazing thing that took place in Judah's own heart and in his soul and in his life. God changed him so that he pledged himself to stay there in Egypt and give up everything back home so that Benjamin, so that Benjamin could go back home and be with his father. That shows that Judah loved his father, Judah loved his brothers, but more importantly, it shows that Judah loved God, and he represented his brothers there in what he said and what he did.

Now, after Joseph's brothers repent, we find in this chapter that Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. He says to them, "I am Joseph. I'm your brother." But in doing so, what Joseph says to them is, "I forgive you." Joseph forgives. As we look at that change that took place in Joseph's brothers, all we can do is shake our heads and say, "Amazing." That's the power of God, and we see the amazing grace of God in that. As wonderful and amazing as that change is in the lives of Joseph's brothers, just as amazing, if not more amazing, is the fact that Joseph forgives them for all that they had done to him, and that's what we see here, too. We don't lose God in this. It's not all about Joseph. It's what God worked in Joseph so that he forgave his brothers even though he was wronged badly by them. I think that I have said it before from the pulpit, but I've said it before and that is that forgiveness is harder than confession of sin because forgiveness is ongoing, and that's what makes this such an amazing thing, that Joseph forgives his brothers. We want

to see that amazing work of God this morning and that's our theme, "Forgiving His Brothers." We notice, first, that beautiful forgiveness; secondly, the theological basis, this forgiveness that Joseph gives to his brothers is based on the truth of God; and then thirdly, we want to go back to that big picture so that we see this history in the light of that big picture we saw just a moment ago.

We see in this passage very clearly that Joseph forgives his brothers. That means that Joseph consciously decides that he will not live in bitterness, resentment, anger or hatred against his brothers, instead, he consciously decides that he forgives them, that he will not see them in the light of the atrocious sins that they had committed against him. That's what we see in this history in Genesis 45. Let's look at what happened here a moment. After Judah's lengthy speech in which Joseph sees the change that God had worked in his brothers, Joseph then cleared the room of all the Egyptians and he made himself known to his brothers. Through tears and with weeping, Joseph says to his brother, "I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live?" Remember why he's weeping, it's not just the reunion, he's weeping because his brothers changed. God had changed them. He wept earlier because they weren't changed. Now he weeps with tears of joy because God has changed them, and seeing that change, he knows it's time for him to tell them who he is.

So he clears the room because this is a family matter, and so he cleared the room of all the other Egyptians and then he asks about his father. He's not asking simply is his father alive, but he wants to know really how his father is doing. He knows the grief that his father must have been in for the last 20 plus years. "How is my father really doing," that's what he wants to know. But his brothers can't answer. They're in shock. They're shook, as well, to their very foundation because they can hardly believe what they are hearing. They can't believe this. "This is our brother?" Now we don't read this in the passage, but you can speculate a bit what must be going to their mind in that state of shock. "We thought our brother Joseph was maybe dead, but if not dead, a slave in Egypt. And this man is alive and the ruler. It doesn't make sense. How could this be Joseph, our brother?" But then it begins to sink in. "He just spoke to us in our language." Remember before this, he had been pretending that he didn't know what they were saying and he spoke to them always through an interpreter, now he's speaking to them in their language, and that begins to sink in. "This is our brother. This is Joseph, the one who we sold into slavery in Egypt and now he is a ruler." But as it begins to sink in, then fear grabs hold of them as well. "What's he going to do to us? He is a ruler. He's over us. He's got us right here." It could be even, you find that from the text when Joseph calls them to come near, it could be that they're backing away or it's evident in their faces and in their body language that they're afraid of Joseph now. But we see in the text that Joseph, in response to this, shows that he forgives his brothers, and that's what we're going to look at as we look at the text and look at this history, we see in it the evidence that Joseph forgives his brothers. Remember what that forgiveness is, even as we looked at it last week, that forgiveness is this: he will not see his brothers in the light of this sin, he will not hold their sins that they committed against him, he won't hold those sins against them and seek revenge for those sins.

So how do we see that forgiveness here in the text? We'll see it, first of all in this: he empties the room. I said just a moment ago that was in part because this is a family matter, but that was only part of it. The other reason he empties the room is he does not want to publicly humiliate his brothers. Just imagine what would happen if it became public in Egypt that Joseph's brothers had sold him as a slave into Egypt. Just imagine if that hit the newspapers, as it were, and that news was spreading throughout the land of Egypt. Joseph was a favorite in Egypt. He was loved in Egypt. They were living and they were prospering because of Joseph, at least that's the way they had it in their own minds. And now Joseph, at this moment, wants to protect the reputation of his brothers and not hurt them. You see here in Joseph that love covers a multitude of sins. Forgiveness does not want to make sin public but where there's forgiveness, there's a desire to protect one's reputation because they have repented. That's what Joseph does here, he wants to protect the reputation of his brother. That shows he's not filled with bitterness or resentment, or hatred, or anger towards his brothers but he loves them and he wants what is best for them.

Secondly, we see it in this: Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and then asks them to come near. That shows also that he forgives them. That's what we find in verse 4 when Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, I pray you." No doubt they're backing away. He can see that they're afraid of him. He says, "No, no, you don't have to be afraid. I'm not going to seek revenge. I'm not going to get even." He's not going to get them in trouble or say, "Aha, now the tables are turned, aren't they?" No, he's not going to do that. When they're stunned and they're afraid, he asked them to come close to him. He loves them. He wants to enjoy fellowship with them. That's what forgiveness does. It doesn't push away. It doesn't give the stiff-arm, but forgiveness draws close.

And then in verse 5 we see that Joseph reminds them that they had sold him. He says, though, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither." He doesn't bring this up to make them feel guilty, but he's telling them in that, that he forgives them. "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me." He's saying, "Don't continue to feel guilty for doing this, not only has God forgiven you, but I have forgiven you and I promise not to see you in the light of what you've done. I promise not to retaliate." That is amazing. That's the work of God in Joseph right here after all that they have done, and all the suffering that you've gone through as a result of what they have done to him, their hatred of him and their envy, and he says, "I forgive you."

When we see the forgiveness that God worked in Joseph's heart, we see the forgiveness that we must have in our own hearts, and that we must practice in our lives. Forgiveness, we see, as a decision not to keep a record of wrongs or to treat someone in the light of those wrongs that they have committed against us. That's what forgiveness is because that's God's forgiveness of us. That's his promise. Remember we saw that last Sunday night, forgiveness is God's promise to us, "I won't see you in the light of those sins. I won't punish you for those sins." He releases us from the penalty of our sins because he gave the penalty to his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He promises, then, not to hold our sins against us. He promises to cast our sins behind his back. That's the beauty of

forgiveness and now we're reminded in this passage as God worked this forgiveness in Joseph, that this is the forgiveness that we are to practice as well.

Forgiveness is a conscious decision to do that very thing. It's a conscious decision to make promises. Promises, and that's what we ought to remember this morning. Forgiveness is this: it's the promise that I will not think about the wrong you've done to me. I won't think about it. Secondly, I will not bring up the wrong that you've done against me to you and use it against you. So the promise is, first of all, I'm not going to think about the wrong, secondly, I'm not going to bring it up to you and use it against you. You know how sometimes that can go? You say you forgave someone, but then later on you're arguing about something and there it comes, hops out of the mouth. We bring it up again. "You remember when?" We're very good at keeping a record of wrongs, but forgiveness says I'm not going to think about it, I'm not going to use it against you. I'm not going to talk to others about it. Love covers a multitude of sins. I'm not going to speak to others about it and spread to others the things that you have done to hurt your reputation. And then, I will not allow what you've done to stand between us or to hinder fellowship between us. I'm not going to push you away, I'm going to draw you close. That's all part of forgiveness. You realize that, that when there's confrontation and in that confrontation at the end maybe one of you confesses sin and says I was wrong, and then he asks, will you forgive me, and then when you say I forgive you, that's what you're saying, I'm not going to think about it. I won't use it against you. I'm not going to speak to others about it. I'm not going to let this thing you did to me stand in the way of our having fellowship together.

Well, these are the promises that one makes when there is confession of sin that is made. We ought to see and understand that, too. Now you don't find that in the text that the brothers specifically said to Joseph, "We're so sorry for what we've done," but it is evident to Joseph that they had changed, and because of that he does, then, forgive them. It doesn't get into that full issue, but we have to understand and know, too, that we make these promises to the person when we say I forgive you after they've confessed their sin to us. But even there are certain sins that don't get resolved in that way. But we ought never to think that even if someone doesn't confess their sin to me, that I can hold onto it and I can just want to retaliate against them, and I have the right to and I have the right to live in anger because the scriptures forbid us to do that. The scriptures forbid us to live in bitterness and resent, and we're still called to love. And so we have to have this attitude of forgiveness that I'm still not going to focus on this sin and dwell on this sin in my relationship with this person. If they won't repent, I'm not going to keep on bringing up this incident. I'm certainly not going to talk to others about that. I must not do that. But that sin can affect fellowship, of course, between two, but this is talking about one who confesses their sin.

Beloved, as we look at this this morning, the question is: are we holding onto unforgiveness? There may be those here this morning who are failing to forgive, and if we are, this word hits us right between the eyes because as bad as it is, and as bad as you've been hurt by other people, where does it even stand compared to what Joseph's brothers did to him? The reality is if we're not living in forgiveness, it will destroy us. It

will destroy us. If you are failing to forgive someone you ought to forgive, and you're failing to love, and you're living in that bitterness and resentment and anger which leads to hatred, the reality is it's going to destroy you. And if you're living in that way, you're acting like God has never had to forgive you. I heard it put this way in this past week, it's like drinking poison and hoping someone else died. That's what happens when we don't forgive. It's like drinking poison hoping someone else dies. The one we hope dies is the one that we hate and we're living in anger against, but the reality is that it's going to destroy us. Not forgiving is drinking that poison, and when we fail to forgive, that's allowing them, someone else to control our lives. It takes a lot of effort to do that. It does. It takes a lot of effort to continue to hold a grudge against someone for years on end, and maybe it's even someone whose body is in the grave. It takes a lot of effort. We must not put our effort into that. We must put our effort into forgiving.

If we fail to forgive, we are saying that we have a greater standard than God does for showing forgiveness, to see Christ's blood was shed to pay for the sin of God's people, and God forgives on the basis of that, but when there are those who we continue to hold grudges against and we fail to forgive even though they have confessed their sin, we're saying that our standard for that sin is higher than God's. The blood of Jesus Christ isn't enough for me. You see, that's the idolatry of failing to forgive. And it can go on in marriages. It can go on between people who were once friends. It can go on between parents and children, children towards parents. It can go on between members of the church, members against the elders of the church or the pastor of the church or someone else in the church. And these things destroy. It will destroy you spiritually to continue living in that way. In the end, not only are you angry with that person but you'll live in anger towards God himself.

Joseph, by the grace of God, made the decision that he would forgive his brothers because he himself knew them forgiveness of God. Now, when we look at that amazing work of God in Joseph and the forgiveness that he gave to his brothers, we want to see and understand the basis of it. There's a theological basis to keep. We might ask, how could Joseph forgive these dastardly deeds of his brothers? How could he forgive them for what they had done? Just go back in the series as we looked at what his brothers had done to him and the awful suffering and abuse that they had carried out on him, remember, they wanted him dead. They didn't quite have the guts to go through with it, but they wanted him dead. They sold him as a slave into Egypt. In their own minds, Joseph was as good as dead, and before that they treated him as if he was. They despised him. They abused him verbally, maybe even physically. They hated him so much and Joseph forgives all of that.

How could he forgive them? Well, it's not that he simply forgot what had happened to him. It's not simply time heals. We know time all by itself doesn't heal, especially when it comes to this. In fact, what happens over time is it grows. It doesn't stay the same even. It grows. But it didn't grow for Joseph. Why? Well, it's not he forgot the past. He didn't forget what his brothers had done here. No, it's right there, it's right on the surface. Just seeing them brings it all to the surface for Joseph. How could he do it? Well, he could do it because he's looking at what had happened through the lens of the truth of God. And

the first lens he's looking through is surprising. It's the providence of God. You might think, "Well, yeah, Joseph forgives because he knows the grace and mercy of God." Well, that's Point B, but first of all, we see in the text he forgives his brothers because he's looking at what happened to him through the lens of the providence of God. Forgiveness for Joseph was driven by that and not by pride. Just think of it. You can see how it would be a temptation for Joseph to say to his brothers, "Brothers, I forgive you for what you've done. Just look around a moment. Look at the house I'm living in. Look at my beautiful Egyptian wife. Look at the clothes I'm wearing. Look at the power I have. Look at the rule that I have. It's all okay. It all turned out all right in the end, after all." No, Joseph doesn't find satisfaction in his life in Egypt. He doesn't look at the end and say, "Well, it's all okay, brothers." In addition to that, he doesn't point them to the fact that they bow down to him. Think of that. He could have said it that way. "Brothers, you remember those dreams that I had over 20 years ago? You remember how much you hated those dreams? Remember how you called me the dreamer? Well, what do you think about those dreams now? Let's do some counting. How many times have you bowed down to me now, 1, 2?" No, he doesn't go in that direction and then say, "Well, it's all right, brothers, because you bowed down to me, you've groveled enough, now we can all be done."

No, that's not his attitude. It's not an attitude of pride at all. In fact, that wouldn't be forgiveness if he went from that perspective, that would be revenge. "You paid enough for what you've done. I put you through some misery here as well. Now we're even." That's not Joseph's attitude. He points them to God. How many times does it speak the name of God in the text? Three times, verse 5, verse 7, verse 8. It's all about God. "Now therefore," he says in verse 5, "be not grieved or angry with yourselves that you sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." 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." And then verse 8, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." Those are amazing words. "It wasn't you who did it, it was God. God determined this. God wanted me here for 22 years apart from you all. God did it. God was sovereign over all of this."

That's what Joseph points to, to the control of God, but it's even more than that. It's not just God is in control, but God had a sovereign purpose for this. "God brought me here for your salvation," he says. And I believe that Joseph was not just talking about grain, that they would have food to eat. God had put them there for the salvation of their souls. God had used Joseph and his hard life for the salvation of his brothers, that they would come to know God's grace, that they would come to know forgiveness in the coming Messiah. And so you see here, Joseph's not focused on himself and how bad he has it, but on the great things that God has done.

Joseph is living out of this truth, the truth of God's providence, that it comforted him, and that's true, providence comforts us, but who would have thought that providence is the basis for forgiveness? It is. That's what Joseph is saying here, and this is the truth of God's word. That's what we learn from the text, 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 sin against us because we're reminded that even when people sin against us, God's sovereign over that and there's a purpose for that in our own lives. That means that all the things that happen to us, especially the bad things when there are people who sin against us, parents, children, spouse, friend in the church, others in the church, when they sin against us, and we want to hold onto our anger, we want to be bear against them, we want to be filled with resentment, we in the end want them to have something bad happen to them, here's what we have to think about: God put me in this position. That's what Joseph's saying, "God put me here." We like to only think about things on the horizontal plane, the text this morning reminds us to think about where we're at always in relationship to God. He's in control. Only then can we be free from bitterness, resentment, hatred and revenge.

God has a purpose for suffering. He had a purpose for Joseph's. We don't just look at Joseph and say, "Well, you know, that was before the coming of Christ, that's his life. This ain't true for our lives." There's a purpose. There's a purpose for that suffering when we're sinned against by others no matter how horrendous and awful those sins are. That's the idea that you find in Isaiah 45:7. Isaiah 45:7 where is God speaking there and says, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." That "evil" there is not sin. No, it's the hardships and difficulties of this life that include the times when we're sinned against by others. That comes from God and God is the Lord who does all of these things and he has a purpose in what he does in those things.

That is a life-changing perspective when we understand this and lay ahold on that in our own hearts and in our minds. We like to hold onto things. We like to make that list, that list of the record of wrongs. Some people write them down. If you've written them down, go home and get rid of it. If you keep a record of wrongs in that way, it is not only an indictment of the sinful things that someone has done against you, it's an indictment of what you've done in response to it. But many of us don't make those lists, writing them down, we have them in our heads and they're right there. It takes work to forgive but what helps us and what gives us strength is seeing God rightly. Sometimes in our anger we want them to feel our pain, we want to expose it to others, the things that they've done. We think that will make us feel better, and it may even for a moment, but the reality is if we do that, we're keeping that list, we want to expose it to others, we're pushing them away, the reality is we're not living by the truth of who God is, we're not seeing the sovereign providence of God. We're not looking through the proper lens. We're living in that way wanting to expose and holding onto that sin and wanting revenge, we're looking through the ends of self. "All about me and how I've been hurt and someone has to pay for them." It's not all about me. It's God and his truth. We must forgive those who sin against us because God has a sovereign purpose for these evils and this hardship in life, and we see the positive, then we see the blessing, we see what God's doing that takes away my selfishness, my focus on my hurt.

The second theological basis for this forgiveness is that Joseph himself knows the grace and the mercy of God. You see, those who know the grace and mercy of God, those who know God's forgiving grace will forgive others as they have been forgiven, and that's why

Joseph here, too, is ready and willing to forgive his brothers who have sinned against him. Joseph knows the mercy of God. That's why Joseph says what he says at the end of verse 8. He says, "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." You see, Joseph's not promoting himself here, he's not pointing to his position and saying, "Hey guys, look, it all turned out all right in the end." No, he's pointing to God, "God did this." And his point is that God had taken care of him. He's pointing out the grace of God towards Joseph. He knows that mercy and grace of God that goes back even to the names that he gives he. Gave his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, that pointed to God and the mercy of God that he knew.

Joseph certainly understands that he is a sinner and that he's forgiven by God. He learned through his time in Egypt to cling to the mercy of God and the goodness of God, and therefore he will show mercy to these brothers who have so hurt him. In fact, what that shows is that Joseph personally embraces the mercy of God. That means he believes the mercy of God toward him. That's the question for us, especially if we're living in unforgiveness and we're holding onto something, we've been holding onto it for a long, long time. Do we believe the greatness of God's love and mercy in Jesus Christ? Do we truly understand the amazing grace of God toward us, a grace that is full and free and completely undeserved? Do we understand that that's why God forgives our sins because he is a gracious and merciful God who gave his Son to pay for our sins, and that's why he doesn't punish us for our sins, he punished his Son in our place. Those who know that in the depths of their hearts are willing and ready always to forgive those who sin against them. Are we? Are we always willing and ready to forgive those who have sinned against us? Let us all face the question today: is there anyone to whom we are filled with bitterness and envy? Is it someone in your life now? Is it someone from the past that's not even in your life now? Is it someone who has died and you're still angry with them, even though they're in the grave? The warning is, it will consume you, but see and understand what else it says, you're not living your life consistent with the truth of who God is and what he has done in Jesus Christ. Because God is a God who's mindful of our human frailty, who's full of mercy and compassion toward us, we ought to be a people who are loving, compassionate, and forgiving because we're desiring reconciliation with those who have sinned against us.

Joseph forgives. He makes those promises. He does that in the light of the truth of God, the truth of God's providence, the truth of God's grace and mercy. But now there's the big picture. The forgiveness and reconciliation that took place here took place for the sake of the coming of Jesus Christ. This forgiveness led to emotional reconciliation, we'll focus more on that next time, where Joseph is reunited with his family with his father and with his brothers, and we read of that in chapter 45 as well, 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." What an amazing reunion that was because they were sorry and Joseph forgave. By the way, there was love that was shown. They fellowshiped. They were hugging. They were weeping. They loved each other. What an amazing reunion that was.

And they took some time to catch up on the things that had happened in the last 22 years of their life.

Then Joseph sent them back to their family to their father, Jacob, with supplies so that they could come to Egypt and be together again as a family. What a joyful time this was in the family of Jacob. Just an aside there, though, it had to be hard for those brothers. They had the good news that Joseph was alive, but they had to tell dad why, they had to come clean with their father. We don't read anything about that. I think all of us would like to know what that was like. We don't read about that. But that was part of it. They had to go back and explain to dad without Joseph even being there, this is what happened.

What a joyful time it was as they were reunited but remember why this all took place, it took place that the line of Christ could be saved and preserved in Egypt. Joseph was sent to Egypt to preserve life and all of this was happening in Egypt for the coming of Jesus Christ. What we have to be amazed at is what God was doing for the coming of Jesus Christ. You see, Satan's always working. Satan's always working through the Old Testament. He was to keep the Christ from coming. We read of that in the book of Revelation 12. That's what Satan was doing. He wanted to keep Christ from coming through that seed of the woman. He wanted to devour that seed and destroy that seed, and you see Satan working to do that here so that the one godly son in the house of Jacob was taken out, these wicked sons were given over to their wickedness, Judah included, the next link in the chain. But God didn't keep it that way. He saved these men. He used Joseph to do that, used his being a slave in Egypt to do that, and now God's going to preserve that seed alive in Egypt for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Now that's the same big picture we have to see in our lives. There's a big picture here. God's sovereign purpose today is what he is doing for the salvation of the church in Jesus Christ. You see, the hardships and struggles and difficulties we go through, you and I become so self-focused that all we see is ourselves, and then even when we see God's work when he's delivering us out of that, we just see it from an individual perspective. We're products sometimes of our own culture, it's all about me. It's not all about me. You see, there's a bigger picture here and that bigger picture is the church. If we're a bunch of people living in bitterness and resentment and anger and failing to forgive in the church, do you know what that's going to do to the church? Destroys the church. Destroys families. If parents are living in bitterness, resentment and anger towards each other and they don't let it go through the whole of their marriage, what influence will that have on their children? That's what they're going to learn. Now by the grace of God that doesn't always carry through from generation to generation, but it can. That's where this destroys the big picture, "It's not about me." We can easily think and that's why I say, "It's only about me, it only affects me." No, wrong, wrong, it affects others, the people around us, families in the church, and we have to be warned of that this morning as well. Let us go home. Let us confess our sins of living in this wrong way. Let us forgive as we have been forgiven and see and understand that when we deal with that hardship in that way, God blesses in the line of generations and within the church so there's a church that loves God and is a faithful witness to his truth in the midst of this world, and as a faithful witness to the children that come in the line of generations.

There's a big picture. We have to see it, and what a beautiful thing God is doing. That big picture is Jesus Christ is saving his church in the way of confessing sin, forgiving sin, being reconciled with one another. Let's do that in our marriages and our homes and within the church, in thankfulness for knowing God, his providence, and his grace and mercy to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Genesis 45:1-8**

July 6, 2014

Introduction

- I. The history of Joseph's life is not about Joseph, but about Jacob and Judah. Gen. 37:2
- II. After Joseph's brothers repent, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and forgives them.

### **The Life of Joseph (10) Forgiving His Brothers**

#### **I. The Beautiful Forgiveness**

- A. We see clearly from the passage that Joseph consciously decides that he will not live in bitterness, resentment, anger, or hatred toward his brothers. Instead, he forgives them.

- B. When we see the forgiveness God worked in Joseph's heart, we see the forgiveness we must have in our own hearts and practice in our lives.

#### **II. The Theological Basis**

- A. Joseph forgives, because he saw what they did through the lens of God's providence.

- B. Joseph forgives his brothers because he knows the grace and mercy of God.

#### **III. The Big Picture**

- A. This forgiveness and reconciliation took place for the sake of the coming of Jesus Christ

- B. We see this same goodness of God in the big picture of our lives.