

Joseph's Example of Godly Forgiveness

The Book of Genesis

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Genesis 45 beginning at verse one.

Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence.

And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.'" And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my mouth that speaks to you. So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here."

Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, "Joseph's brothers have come." So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well.

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. Now you are commanded—do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come. Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments. And he sent to his father these things: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey.

So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way."

Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. And they told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt."

And Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them. But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

Then Israel said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."¹

Let us pray.

Lord, many of us have grown to love this section of your Scriptures and as we come before you to consider this portion of your Word, we ask that you would come, that you would make your presence known, that you would do that which no man can do, that by your Spirit, oh God, you would take of your Word, that you would bring it to life to each of us, that you would cause us to have keen minds that are intent to discern what

¹ Genesis 45:1-28

theology, what teaching there is concerning you, oh God, that is contained in the text. We are keen, Lord, to come to the chapter before us and learn something of righteous and holy emotions. We are keen to come before your Word and find out how we ought to live, how we ought to respond to those who are mean to us. And, Lord, we are confident that your Word is rich and brimming over with application and implication for us. We pray that you would be pleased to give us help. Bless us now we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Whitelaw comments on the section before us, "The test planned and carried through by Joseph has gone far enough and has proved entirely successful. The deepest feelings of the hearts of these men have been laid bare. They were heartily sorry for what they had done to Joseph."

They were heartily sorry for what they had done 22 years ago in selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites and having him sent down to Egypt. They had been tested. They have stood around in the presence of Joseph when they did not know that Joseph could understand their Hebrew tongue and they had spoken of how their hearts were stricken over this and Reuben upbraids them in saying, "Don't you know that that boy's blood is being required of us."

Joseph, has had that diviner's cup put into Benjamin's sack. He would have them tested. Are they of the same sort of mindset that this favorite now of their father, if he is sold into slavery will they simply walk away and say, "We don't care."

They had refused to take advantage of Benjamin when a very way of escape from evil had offered itself for them by abandoning him. They felt that divine justice was slowly but surely catching up with them for their betrayal of Joseph.

One of them in particular, Judah, had given proof of heroic self sacrifice to spare the Father. There was no need of probing further. God had so effectually blessed Joseph's course with these brethren of his that manifestly now the crowning touch could not be given to it all by Joseph's revelation of his own identity.

Now, as we work our way through the portion this morning I want to acknowledge, again, help that has been derived from my very able and helpful friend Thomas Whitelaw. I never met him, but I have grown accustomed to him in these recent works in working through the life of Joseph and each week it seems that he has made a significant contribution to our structure as we work through these sections.

Notice with me Roman numeral number one, the announcement, verses one through eight. And here we consider, first of all, A, the manner of the announcement. It came in intentional privacy.

Verse one. "Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Make everyone go out from [before] me!'

Kyle, as he comments on the passage, “After this appeal in which Judah, speaking for his brethren, had shown the tenderest affection for the old man who had been bowed down by their sin and the most devoted fraternal love and fidelity to the only remaining son of his beloved Rachel and Judah had given a sufficient proof of the change of mind that through conversion that had taken place in the brothers. Joseph could not restrain himself any longer in relation to all those who stood round him. He was obliged to relinquish the part which he had to this point acted for the purpose of testing his brother’s hearts and, now, to give full vent to his feelings.”

I wanted to read last week and again this week from some that have commented on this change that is found in the brother’s hearts. It is not just the surmising of one particular commentator, but of several.

Calvin writes, “We see, therefore, that witnesses were removed for no other reason than that he might more freely comfort his brothers. For he not only sacred them by not exposing their crime, but when shut up alone with them he abstained from all bitterness of language and gladly administered to them friendly consolation.”

The Genevan is saying have everybody go out because I need to talk to these my brothers who sold me into slavery and I am going to use that language and I am going to spare them of hearing that, for that being said in front of strangers. But I am also going to let my emotions go. I have had this stream of my tears and my emotions dammed up way too long and I am going to let it go. It came in intentional privacy.

But the manner of the announcement, it came with abundant tears.

Verse two. “And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it.”²

Whitelaw writes, “The pity filled eloquence of Judah, that is the earnest tearful pleading combined with the sublime and affecting heroism of the man who offered himself to be a slave for ever that his young brother might escape and that his father’s heart might be broken, was too much for the Egyptian Prime Minister and he sobbed aloud.”

It came with abundant tears. But this announcement also came with great clarity.

Look with me at verse three. “Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph.’”³ “You may know me as Zaphnath-Paaneah, the sustainer of life. You may know me by my Egyptian name, but you need to know me as Joseph your brother.” “Does my father still live?”⁴

Verse four. “And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Please come near to me.’ So they came near. Then he said: ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.’”⁵ “Don’t just

² Genesis 45:2.

³ Genesis 45:3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Genesis 45:4.

stand there like bumps on the log. I have told you I am Joseph. But now I am telling you I am Joseph, the one that you sold into slavery. Does that ring a bell with any of you?"

He is abundantly plain with them. There is great clarity in his speech.

But, fourthly, the manner of this announcement, it came with free forgiveness.

The matter of their great sin is raised. "I am the one that you sold into Egypt, that you sold into slavery." But their great sin is graciously passed over.

Verse five. "But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here."⁶ "You kidnapped me. You talked about killing me. But instead of killing me you sold me into slavery to get rid of me."

This takes us back to Genesis 42 and verse 21 when they stood before Joseph. It was after their three days of imprisonment.

Then they said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress [of 22 years ago] has come upon us."

And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us."⁷

He has heard these expressions earlier. He has mentioned their sin. But their great sin has already been tested. And we need to keep reminding ourselves of the context of Genesis 45. If you simply come to Genesis 45 and you hear Joseph say, "I am Joseph your brother that you sold into slavery. Don't be grieved and don't be troubled over this," we might think, simply by reading Genesis 45 that Joseph was easy on them, that he didn't really press the issue of their sin. But we must recall that there has been the earlier dealings that Joseph has had with them.

"You are spies!"⁸

"Now I don't care that you are 10 sons of one man named Jacob. You are still spies in my judgment. Spend three days in prison. Let one of you go home and bring this little brother that you talk about, Benjamin. Oh, ok. I'll soften. Simeon will be left in prison. You bring Benjamin."

And he tests whether or not they desert Benjamin as a slave in Egypt.

⁶ Genesis 45:5.

⁷ Genesis 42:21-22.

⁸ Genesis 42:9; 14; 16.

And Judah comes with that final pleading in chapter 44 and there it is in verse 33. “Now therefore, please let your servant [Judah, me] remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.”⁹

Joseph is like John the Baptist.

“Bring forth fruit worthy of your repentance. If you are truly sorry for what you have done, there is going to be a change of heart and there is going to be a change of attitude and a change of action.” And he has been looking for that.

But their great sin is put in the larger context of God’s plan.

Hear, once again, the Genevan emphasizes this softening on the part of Joseph where he is able to minimize the sin because of God’s overruling purpose. He writes for us, “Thus we see that Joseph was a skillful interpreter of the providence of God when he borrowed from God’s providence an argument for his granting forgiveness to his brothers. The magnitude of the crime committed against him might so have incensed him as to cause him to burn with the desire of revenge, but when he reflects that their wickedness had been overruled by the wonderful goodness of God, forgetting the injury he received, he kindly embraces the men whose dishonor God had covered with his grace. And truly love is ingenious in hiding the faults of brothers and therefore love freely applies this use to anything which may tend to appease anger and set enmities at rest. “

Some of us would have been focusing on the hurt that you caused me, the hurt that you caused me and I didn’t forget it then and I didn’t forget it yesterday and I am not forgetting it today and I am not going to forget it tomorrow. You have caused me pain and I am going to cause you greater pain.

But look at Joseph.

“God is on his throne, guys. And he is overruling this for good and I don’t need to be vengeful. I don’t need to be mean to you, because God is working good out of it.”

So we see that this announcement, “I am Joseph, your brother,”¹⁰ came with intentional privacy, with abundant tears, with great clarity, but it came with free forgiveness. It is not like somebody is standing there with a gun at Joseph’ back and saying, “No, go ahead. Tell your brothers that you forgive them.” It is free flowing forgiveness.

And, fifthly, that announcement came with rich theology.

Verse five. “But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.”¹¹ “God superintended even

⁹ Genesis 44:33.

¹⁰ Genesis 45:4.

¹¹ Genesis 45:5.

your sin. What you did in kidnapping me was wrong. But God is so large and so capable, he can take your sin and overrule it and bring good out of it.”

Verse six and seven. “God intends to save our Jewish nation,” Joseph says.

For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.¹²

One wrote, “Joseph’s brothers sent him to Egypt to be a slave. God sent Joseph to Egypt to be a savior.”

And often times things are going on at two levels. This is the meanness of the human heart. I am intending this. And then there is the God in heaven who is superintending and overruling and he intended something all together different.

But notice with me in verse eight, the first part, the rich theology seen here in verse eight. “So now it was not you who sent me here, but God.”¹³

And how can he say this?

“There comes the dreamer. What are we going to do with the dreamer?” And they have already got it worked out at the end of Genesis 37 that they are going to dip his tunic in blood before they have ever dealt with him. And they talk about murdering him. Then they decide to sell him. They sell him for the 20 pieces and off he goes.

“You didn’t send me here, but God did.”

What does he mean by that?

There is sin that is committed against him and he is not minimizing that. But he is saying, “Here, this is what you are doing with your tiny and puny and mean hearts and then this is what God is doing with the largeness of his purposes. And I am telling you. If I have to look and choose, I am going to say that God is ultimate and not you puny, murderous brothers. God is ultimate. You did this. God is doing this.”

But he comes out in verse eight to say, “So now it was not you who sent me here, but God.”¹⁴

Then notice the rich theology in the latter part of verse eight. “God has wonderfully given me this position.” Do you see it there in verse eight? “And He [God, he, אלהים]

¹² Genesis 45:6-7.

¹³ Genesis 45:8.

¹⁴ Ibid.

(el-o-heem')]) has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”¹⁵

“Brothers, don't you know what has happened? You sent me down here, but I pulled myself up by the straps of my boots and I was able to go on and I was able to serve in Potiphar's house and I was able to withstand Potiphar's wife. And even though they threw me into the prison, this is what I did and I interpreted the dream and then I was lifted up because of my ability and now I am in this ruling position because of my steadfast determination all along the way.”

I don't quite read that in verse eight, do you?

“And He [אלהים (el-o-heem')] has made me a father to Pharaoh.”¹⁶

This is not pride. In saying that he is a father to Pharaoh he is not carried away with empty boasting as vain men would be, nor does he make an ostentatious display of his wealth, but he proves from an event so great and incredible that he had not obtained the post he occupied by accident, nor by human means, but rather by the wonderful counsel of God a lofty throne had been raised for him from which he might encourage his father and his whole family. This announcement came with rich theology.

“You did this bad stuff to me, but I know you are sorry for it. Don't be grieved. And it is not really you, ultimately, who did this, but the God who has an eternal plan who is working out his will in time.”

Secondly, B, notice with me not only the manner, but he reception to the announcement, the reception to or the reception of the announcement. It was received with surprise.

Verse three. “But his brothers could not answer him.”¹⁷

The account is striking, isn't it? A little bit later it tells us that old Jacob's heart went cold, chilled. When something gets frozen it stops. And here these brothers hear a word and their mouths don't work. They are surprised.

“I am Joseph; does my father still live?”¹⁸ has fallen on them like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

It was as well received with terror.

Verse three. “But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed.”¹⁹ And the word here for “dismayed” is be disturbed, alarmed, terrified. They feared vengeance. I

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Genesis 45:3.

¹⁸ Genesis 45:4.

¹⁹ Genesis 45:3.

mean, you have got these cruel guys, Simeon and Levi. And they think in terms of: If somebody did this to me this is about what I would do to them. What are we going to do? His blood is being required of us.

Now Jacob is going to come down and live in the land of Egypt for 17 years. And then old Jacob dies and the brothers get nervous, ok. Now he is going to knock us off.

So listen. As you turn to Genesis 50 and verse 15 to what the brother are still thinking 17 years later and it ought no to be a stretch to think that they can't speak. They are surprised. And, indeed, they are terrified.

Seventeen years later, Genesis 50 and verse 15.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."

So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you."' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father."

And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."

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. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.²⁰

The reception came with terror, a kind of terror that even 17 years later dad dies and they say, "Well, he didn't want to kill us with dad still alive. So now he is going to do it."

They feared vengeance.

But this announcement was also received with emotional pain. And this is why Joseph says to them in verse five, "Do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here."

²⁰ Genesis 50:15-21.

Grief and anger toward themselves, the reflection that they had back there in Genesis 42, “We are truly guilty concerning our brother.”²¹ And Reuben’s words, “His blood is being required of us now.”

Well, so much, then, for the announcement, verses one through eight.

Let’s come, secondly, Roman number two to the commission, verses nine through 13.

And it is striking to me, even as we look back over these early verses here, verse one through eight, that Joseph this young, large hearted administrator has already got things mapped out. He had this plan, going to put the silver diviner’s cup here into Benjamin’s sack and then we are going to see how they deal with this.

But even as he is talking to his brothers and as he is revealing himself to them in verse five and he is saying, “Don’t be angry with yourselves,” he is already working in there, “You know, there has only been two years of the famine and there is five more years of the famine and this is what we are going to do.”

His eye is off in the future. Hardly is he able to stop there to deal with the present. “Here is your sin, you are the one... I am the one that you sold into slavery. But we are looking to the future. This is what we are going to do.”

And now we find it even more plainly in verses nine through 13 in the commission that he gives to the brothers.

“All right. we have got this sin issue addressed here, now this is what I want you to do for me,” verses nine through 13.

First of all, A, to carry an invitation, verse nine. “Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph: “God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry.’”” The urgency of the invitation.

He has only revealed himself to them. They are only beginning to deal here with the sin against him. And there is an urgency. “No, you guys, you have got to get back up there and get dad.”

Notice the sender of the invitation. He is not ashamed to put himself forward and to give a realistic assessment of who he is, lord of all Egypt.

“God has made me lord of all Egypt.”²²

The essence of the invitation. “You need to come down to me. Do not tarry.”

So there is the first part of the commission, A.

²¹ Genesis 42:21.

²² Genesis 45:9.

Secondly, B, the commission is seen in its part of to deliver a promise, verse 10 through 11a. “You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children’s children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have.”²³

And I would suggest that, once again, this long sighted Joseph looks out to the future and he is looking forward to a day when he and his brothers and his extended family and his nephews and his nieces that they can all be there together in harmony. But he knows that can never come about until their murderous sin is addressed. That kind of peace cannot come about if they are going to be mean towards Benjamin, that they are still going harbor ill will towards him, Joseph.

Now he wants them all to sit down. You can almost see that here in verse 10. “You are going to dwell here in Goshen. You are going to be close to me; you, your children, your children’s children.” He has been thinking about this.

“Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could actually have a family reunion and somebody not get killed and somebody not get sold into slavery?”

So he speaks of the good land of Goshen. He speaks to the family nearness, “You will be close to me, you and all that you have.”

And he personal provision, the first part there of verse 11. “There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty.”²⁴

“You’ve still got all those sheep and all those camels up there in the Promised Land. How are you going to feed them with five more years of famine? Come on, guys, go get them, bring them down here and I am going to take care of you.”

Sometimes we reason with ourselves and say, “Well, at least I didn’t chop his head off. He came at me with a sword and I stopped short of doing that and that is good enough.”

It ain’t good enough for Joseph, is it? He will test their hearts. He will forgive them and then he says, “I am going to take care of you. I am going provide for you. We are going to have this extended family reunion.”

But then, thirdly, C, they are to, in their commission, to explain a reason.

Verse 11. Why? “I will provide for you [there in Goshen] lest you and your household and all that you have come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.”²⁵

“Did I mention that to you before? Only two years of famine have come and there is still five... we have got to look out to the future, fellows.”

²³ Genesis 45:10.

²⁴ Genesis 45:11.

²⁵ Ibid.

He is in charge.

Fourthly, D, to provide authentication. “I want you to go talk to dad. I want you to go talk to our dad Jacob and explain that I am still alive. It has been breaking my heart that I couldn’t tell him yet because I have been testing your hearts.”

Verse 12. “And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my mouth that speaks to you.”²⁶

Their eyes authenticate.

“It is Joseph. It really does look like him. Imagine him with a little bit of a Hebrew beard and a little Hebrew hair on him. Yeah, it is Joseph. He was about this height. And, man, when you put Benjamin right up next to him and you look at the facial features between the two of them...”

Their eyes authenticate it is Joseph. Their ears authenticate that it is Joseph.

“How many Egyptians do you know that speak Hebrew? How many Egyptians do you know that speak Hebrew as fluently as I do and know everything about you guys? Your ears authenticate that, indeed, I am Joseph.”

Candlish writes, “And accordingly, Joseph is at great pains to encourage them. Again and again he resumes this task of encouraging them. He would have had them to turn their eyes away from themselves to him, from their own sin and shame to his glorious saving power. ‘You see me,’ he cries. ‘Your eyes see. It is no delusion. I am not a spirit or a ghost. I am your brother raised up by God to this height of princely dignity on this very purpose to be your deliverer. Your eyes see and the eyes of my brother Benjamin. He believes me, why should you not? True, you may feel that you have wronged me and sinned against me as Benjamin never did. You have that to answer for with which his conscience is not burdened. But what of it? I make no distinction now between him and you.’”

And you will see what Candlish is doing. Joseph is there as the savior to them and he is comparing Joseph to Jesus who reveals himself to his own. I am no delusion. I am real. Trust me. And these are required in their mission to go back to their father Jacob and authenticate: It really it is Joseph.

And then fifthly, E, in their commission to supply encouragement.

Verse 13. “So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here.”²⁷

²⁶ Genesis 45:12.

²⁷ Genesis 45:13.

It is not spoken in pride. We have already seen this. “God has given me this position,” he says. But it is spoken in radical contrast to what Jacob must be thinking.

“Joseph is dead. Truly if he was alive he would be coming back. I saw his blood stained tunic. Surely he is dead.”

“Now, you got to go and convince dad who hasn’t seen me in 22 years, that I am alive and more than that I am alive, God is making me to prosper and I am doing very well. You got to change that story of being torn by a wild animal to I am the ruler of Egypt.”

Their commission is to encourage their father to believe.

And then, finally, F, in their commission, it is their commission to return with Jacob his, that is Joseph’s father.

Verse 13. “So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here.”²⁸

And there are several times in the chapter where... “How is my father? Go get my father and bring him down. Joseph your son is alive. Joseph, my son, is alive.”

There is something here of a special relationship that was there many years ago, Jacob towards his son Joseph. And there is something of that relationship that is still there that it has not diminished anything of their mutual love and affection.

Roman number three as we come to close with verses 14 and 15, the reconciliation, the reconciliation.

First of all, A. Joseph and Benjamin weeping on one another. Look closely at the text.

Verse 14. “Then he [Joseph] fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck.”²⁹

Now which way did tears flow? Down. And so it appears that Joseph is on his neck and then Benjamin, “This guy is my brother. This guy seemed kind of stern. If the only thing I knew about this guy is what I learned when he hid his silver cup into my bag and then charged me with... I wouldn’t like him. But what I have heard from dad makes my heart go out. This is my brother.”

And he is free to respond and say, “Oh, you weep on me awhile. I am going to weep on you awhile.”

They move and plainly spill their tears on one another.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Genesis 45:14.

There is a graphic picture here of their mutuality. And remember, Benjamin is free from the guilt. He is only a couple of years old when the brothers did what they did.

And that leads into verse 15. This is B. Joseph kissing and weeping on his brothers.

Verse 15. Notice there is not the same sort of mutuality as Benjamin had in responding. Verse 15. “Moreover he [Joseph] kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.”³⁰

Joseph plainly takes the lead and I wouldn’t be surprised, but what Simeon and Judah and Reuben, these older brothers are... they are keeping something of the alpha dog there in the dominant position. We are underneath. Let his tears come to us. Or, is it that they are still so terrified that they are not tearing up.

I can imagine old Simeon. If he had the lead in things he is thinking in terms of what he would do. So watch out for this guy. He has probably got a knife in there inside that robe and about the time I loosen up and get him embraced, he is going to come deal with me.

So they are... “Well, what is happening here? The prime minister of Egypt is kissing me. The prime minister of Egypt is shedding his tears on my neck. I feel the warmth. I feel the wetness.”

And this is pointed out in one of the commentaries. Go to the Hebrew text and there it is. Benjamin weeps on him. Joseph weeps on Benjamin. But when it comes to verse 15 Joseph is doing all the weeping on. He is doing all the kissing. He is the one who is the victim in this whole situation and he is the one with the loving heart. Free forgiveness.

But then verse 15 closes and, oh, here we could wish that God would have given us a little more. Verse 15 is too short in my judgment, but I speak that very softly.

“Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.”³¹

What did they say? What did they talk about? Who took the lead and said, “Joseph, we are truly sorry. It really was Simeon’s fault.”

Is that what they said?

We all have a share in it.

Candlish. “To talk with him. Yes, for that is what he, Joseph and Jesus, want. He wants what alone can prove that all is at last right between him and you, that there is no more

³⁰ Genesis 45:15.

³¹ Ibid.

dislike or jealousy or suspicion or servile dread that you do, indeed, know him and trust him and love him as a brother. He would not merely talk affectionately with you. He would have you to talk confidingly and confidentially with him. That is what alone could satisfy Joseph. It is what alone will satisfy your Joseph, your Jesus. Receive, then, Jesus' kindly advances. Believe his gracious words. Let him show himself to you and embrace you and sympathize with you. And after that, as his brethren talk with him frankly, unreservedly in the confidence of brotherly familiarity, talk with Jesus of his Father and your Father and of the mansions to which you are going. Talk with him."

Finally, this morning, practical lessons, Roman numeral four. When we look at the first of three, A, forgiveness is conditional. Forgiveness is conditional. Our Lord taught is in Luke 17 and verse there:

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him.³²

Before we can truly forgive someone and have the relationship restored, there must be repentance. We, of course, must be ready to forgive. We can't be harboring bitterness in our own heart, but rebuke and repentance and forgiveness is a two way street. It is not a one way street that you can control. There is mutuality that is involved. And here is why I said earlier that we cannot read Genesis 45 in isolation.

Here we find Joseph forgiving. But in the earlier chapters we find him probing.

"What is your heart attitude? Have you changed? What is your disposition? Will you just cut your ties with Benjamin and run home and tell dad that tough luck Benjamin is gone?"

Joseph earlier was loading their consciences with the guilt of their sin and they needed to feel that and they needed to respond to that. Matthew Henry comments, "Sinners must grieve and must be angry with themselves for their sins. Yea, though God by his power brings good out of the sin, for no thanks they are due to the sinner for this, but true repentance should be greatly affected when they see God even overruling their sins for good."

Forgiveness is conditional. There must be the rebuke. There must be the repentance and then the forgiveness.

Listen to the Genevan. "When, however, Joseph sees his brothers overcome with fear, he utters no reproach, but only labors to calm their perturbed spirits. Nay, he continued gently to sooth them until he has rendered them composed and cheerful. By this example we are taught to take heed lest sadness should overwhelm those who are clearly and seriously humbled under a sense of shame. So long as an offender is deaf to reproofs or

³² Luke 17:3-4.

securely flatters themselves or wickedly and obstinately repels admonitions or excuses himself by hypocrisy, greater severity is to be used towards him. But rigor should have its bounds and as soon as the offender lies prostrate and trembles under the sense of his sin, let that moderation immediately follow which may raise him who is cast down by the hope of pardon. Therefore, in order that our severity may be rightly and duly attempered we must cultivate this inward affection of Joseph which will show itself at its proper time.”

Do you see what he is saying? He was stern. He was austere out of principle, but that which was bubbling up in his heart was that of tenderness and that of love. But even the loving Joseph does not forgive. And just imagine that everything will be well unless he sees the brothers coming back down the street with their repentance. Then he forgives.

And, brethren, this is very important to us because God deals with us in the same way. God does not just forgive on his end and that is all there is to it. But aren't there an awful lot of people out there in the world unconverted that are counting on God coming down the one way street. Oh, he is a kind and loving God. He is going to forgive everybody. Forgiveness is conditional. Forgiveness involves a two way street. And God is not going to come down the road and forgive you of all of your sins unless you go on the road and repent and say, “God, I am sorry.”

What are the gospel terms?

Repent and believe. Yeah, God is going to come and he is going to reprove you and he is going to point out your sin. But then you have got to get back on that road and go to God and say, “Lord, I am sorry. I repent. I turn away from sin. I believe in you.” And then God responds by saying, “Since you have repented and believed I forgive you all of your sins.”

Forgiveness is conditional. It doesn't mean that you can't get it. God is the one who grants the repentance. But we need to be clear thinking on this, that God comes and reproves us. We respond on repentance and God comes and extends forgiveness. We have got to be clear on this.

But then, secondly, B, by way of practical lessons note with me that God's sovereignty is intensely practical. Oh, theology. God has got a plan. God knows what his plan is from before time. Oh, don't bother me with that philosophy. Don't trouble me with that deep theology. I can't think through those things.

Is it merely a philosophy? Is it merely a shelf theology that has no practical value to it in every day life? We find in Joseph a most amazing person and we ask ourself: How did Joseph keep his sanity here? How did Joseph go on from that well to being a slave in Potiphar's house, to being the slave in the prison? How did he go on? How did he persevere?

If there is some practical truth that helped young Joseph hold us life together, then you

and I ought to want to know what that truth is. How I survived and thrived in Egypt, by Joseph.

And what is going to be one of the main themes of his book? The sovereignty of God.

“You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. You didn’t send me here, but God did.”

This is a remarkable passage in which we are taught that the right course of events is never so disturbed by the depravity and the wickedness of men, but that God can direct them to a good end. Sinful man, running along sinning and sinning and sinning and sinning. But it is not going to twist, it is not going to turn away from God’s overall plan.

God is not the author of sin, but God overrules sin for his own good purposes. God overrules the sin of men for good, but he still holds men accountable for their sin. Joseph doesn’t say that he is indifferent to their having left him as a slave. That is the whole point of the diviner’s cup.

“And what are you going to do for Benjamin and what is your attitude now?”

Turn with me to Acts chapter two if you would. And what we find in the sin of these brothers we also find in the sin and treachery of Judas.

Acts two and verse 22. God used Judas’ treachery, but held Judas responsible. Acts 2:22:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.³³

Acts chapter four verse 27:

For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.³⁴

The way Jesus was delivered up. Judas coming and planting the kiss on him. “Rabbi,” and betraying the Lord Jesus, it was determined beforehand by God.

³³ Acts 2:22-24.

³⁴ Acts 4:27-28.

But that doesn't mean that Judas is not responsible for his sin.

Mark 14 and verse 21. "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born."³⁵

God is not indifferent to our sin even though he superintends and rules over our sin. Judas doesn't get some free pass simply because God overruled his sin for the greatest good, Jesus dying in our behalf.

You see, often times an event can be viewed from two levels. This is what Judas meant. This is what God meant.

50:20 of Genesis. "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."³⁶

My hearer, do you need a bigger view of God? Do you believe in the absolute sovereignty of God? And here I am not asking so much what you and I have as our shelf theology, but I am asking more what you and I have in our practical theology. How do you do in a crisis? How do you do when things don't go your way? Are you like Joseph in a calm demeanor because you know that God is on his throne? Are you Joseph like in believing that God is in charge and that God is going to bring good out of it?

Or do we sit around in our smallness and say, "This is wrong. This is wrong. This never should have happened to me. And this thing that happened to me can never be straightened out."

You see how theology is intensely practical. And even doctrines that are hard to get our minds around, when we come up and we embrace them by faith and we say, "Oh, our doctrine to understand, you are my friend."

Because when I am in the prison I am going to know that my God is sitting on his throne accomplishing all his purposes.

"You didn't send me to Egypt, but God did."

Amazing.

Thirdly, and finally by way of practical lessons, notice with me, C, free flowing kindness is beautiful.

"A new commandment I give to you, [Jesus said] that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."³⁷

³⁵ Mark 14:21.

³⁶ Genesis 50:20.

³⁷ John 13:34.

The newspaper headline would be, “Brother sold into slavery kisses and embraces his kidnappers.”

Do you think it would make the evening news? I think so.

Genesis 45 and verse 14:

Then he [Joseph] fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.³⁸

Even Simeon, even Levi, they got kissed, they got wept on. The brothers are likely [?] by the love that they see in this brother’s heart.

“We did this and he is able to be kind to us? What is this? No wonder dad loved him. No wonder there was this close relationship.”

Perhaps they would look on that and now they would understand more of the pain that came to dad in the rupture with that relationship in the same way that the believing sinner looks at God the father loving God the Son and feels pain over the rupture of that relationship.

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”³⁹

Moses declares that Joseph had done violence to his feelings as long as he presented to his brothers an austere and harsh countenance. At length the strong fraternal brotherly affection which he had suppressed during the time that he was breathing severe threatenings poured itself forth with more abundant force whence it appears that nothing severe or cruel had been before harbored in his mind. And whereas it thus burst forth in tears this softness or tenderness is more deserving of praise than if he had maintained an even temper. Therefore the Stoics speak foolishly when they say that it is an heroic virtue not to be touched with compassion.

Had Joseph stood inflexible who would not have pronounced him to be a stupid, iron hearted man? But now by the vehemence of his feelings he manifest that noble large heart as well as a divine moderation because he was so superior both to anger and to hatred that he ardently loved those who wickedly had conspired to affect his ruin though they had received no injury from him.

Are you a Stoic? Are you cold and indifferent to those who are doing you good? Do you sit off in your corner and find fault with that one who is coming to do you...

“Do you see the way that his hair is combed there? I don’t like it.”

³⁸ Genesis 45:14-15.

³⁹ Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

He is coming to do you good and you will be cold and you will be indifferent to that one who is manifesting love. There is something wrong.

But there is something very right with Joseph. His brothers did the wrong. He didn't wrong them, but he is the one with the large heart. He is kissing and weeping on those who sold him into slavery. He is kissing and weeping on those who meant it for evil. And here Joseph is like the lord Jesus Christ.

Our final quote.

“Ah, truly, Joseph is the model of what a brother ought to be, a brother born for adversity. He is the sort of brother you need in your deep grief, your sin sick, sin laden, sorrow laden children, the fitting type of the brother that you have in the well beloved Son of the Father. He is never weary of speaking peace to you, assuring you that he remembers not any wrong of yours against him, that the blood which your sin shed cleansed that sin away, that he whom you crucified is at God's right hand, mighty to save. How is he ever striving by his Word and his Spirit to reveal himself to you and to get you to see him? How does he, Jesus, raise you from the dust and set you on a rock that you may sound his praise? How does he plead with you and argue and reason with you that you may lay aside all your doubts and hesitancy and believe him when he talks with you and bids you to go on your way to the Father rejoicing.

How does Jesus kiss you and weep with you loading you with the tenderest of caresses, refusing to be content until you, his brethren, take heart and summon and courage to talk with him?”

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we fall very short of the human example in holy Joseph, the willing disposition to forgive, the strongest encouragements of that forgiveness coming to the brothers. It is almost abandoned in his kisses, in his weeping on these brothers' necks. We pray, our God, that you would soften our hearts, from this holy man. Give us something of the balance of his rich theology that will make us strong and give to us, as well, something of his tenderness, something of his compassion, something of his depth of affection that will make us feel for others and make us weep for others and encourage others. And we pray, Lord Jesus, that as some sit here this morning, strangers to your grace and mercy we pray that they may see in you, Lord Jesus, one who is far greater than Joseph, one who willingly came to live and die in our behalf, one who in light of that death, yes, reproves us for our sin and awaits to hear from us our owning of that sin, our acknowledging of that sin. And you come and you entreat us and you plead with us. We ask, our God, that you would show your mercy and your kindness that some sinner sitting here this morning would be reconciled to you, the God of heaven and sensing you, Lord Jesus, coming, entreating and speaking peace. We pray this in Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.

Hymn number 141.