

Joseph reveals himself (45, 50:15-21)

Saturday, May 10, 2014
12:29 PM

To read:

Acts 22

Acts 4:23-31, Psalm 133

I. Introduction

A. This morning we are continuing our study of the exaltation of Joseph

1. As you'll recall, we've split the last section of Genesis into three sections: humiliation, exaltation and blessing
2. We have already covered the first section and saw Joseph and Judah humbled
 - i. Joseph was humbled at the hands of his brothers
 - ii. Judah was humbled in his sin
 - iii. And Joseph continued in humiliation until God raised Him up
3. And we've also spent three weeks looking at the section on exaltation:
 - i. First, we saw Joseph's initial exaltation before Pharaoh
 - ii. Second, we saw Joseph exalted before his brothers as the brothers come to Egypt and bow down
 - iii. Last week, at the center, we also saw Judah also before his father and his brothers in leadership
 - iv. Now, this week, we are returning to Joseph's exaltation and picking up where we left of last week
 - v. In chapter 45 we are going to see Joseph reveal himself to the brothers and consider how Joseph continues in his exaltation as the brothers now know and exalt Joseph for who he is

B. And, like each week, I want to remember why we are studying Joseph's humiliation, exaltation and blessing

1. Joseph and Judah are two characters in the promised line that carry the promise and point forward to Christ
2. So, Joseph and Judah are humbled because Christ would willingly humble Himself
3. Joseph and Judah are exalted because after His humiliation, Christ would be exalted above all
4. And Joseph and Judah are blessed because Christ would receive the blessings of the covenant
5. We see the pattern of Joseph and Judah's lives fulfilled in Christ in Philippians 2:5-11 - *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

C. Read Genesis 45, 50:15-21

D. Proposition: In His exaltation, Joseph demonstrates how He cares for His family pointing to Christ who perfectly cares for His family and calls us to rest in Christ's revelation and provision.

E. Once again we'll have the same simple outline for our passage this morning

1. First, we will consider Joseph: a type of exaltation and make simple observations about Joseph's life
2. Then we will consider Christ: the fulfillment of exaltation and apply our observations of Joseph's life to Christ
3. Finally, we will consider Us: sharers in exaltation and make some applications of our study

II. Joseph: a type of exaltation (I'm going to make four observations about Joseph from our passage this morning)

A. In his exaltation, Joseph is full of compassion

1. As we reach the climax of Joseph's story this morning and see him revealed to his brothers, the text emphasizes twice that Joseph's revelation is done out of a heart moved by compassion
 - a. Genesis 45:1-2 - *Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.*
 - b. Genesis 45:14-15 - *Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.*
 - c. Joseph's revelation to his brothers is not done in a spirit of anger, compassion that moves him to weep
2. Throughout Joseph's exaltation we've seen this compassion emphasized
 - a. During the brother's first visit, Joseph is moved with the same heart of compassion in Genesis 42:22-24 - *And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood." They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them. Then he turned away from them and wept. And he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.*
 - b. At the beginning of the second visit, Jacob prays that the brothers would find mercy (or compassion) in Genesis 43:14 - *May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."*
 - c. And God answers the prayer as Joseph starts to show compassion in Genesis 43:29-30 - *And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there.*
 - d. Now, in Genesis 45 at Joseph's revelation, the compassion that has been building through Joseph's exaltation is fully revealed to all of the brothers
3. And this compassion continues through the rest of Joseph's story
 - a. In fact, as we get to Genesis 50, the brothers worry that at Jacob's death Joseph's compassion would fail
 - b. But we see again in Genesis 50:15-17 - *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, 'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him.*
4. So, my first observation this morning is that Joseph's exaltation is marked by compassion for his brothers

B. In his exaltation, Joseph reveals himself and God's plan

1. After Joseph has demonstrated compassion, he reveals both who he is and what God has done through him
 - a. Genesis 45:4-8 - *And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.*
 - b. Three times in the passage Joseph reveals who he is to his brothers, twice saying, "I am Joseph!"
 - c. But, he tells his brothers not to worry - they should see that he is full of compassion, not anger, but he explains why he is full of compassion and not anger - because all of this was according to God's plan
 - d. It was God's plan for him to be humbled, because that would take him to Egypt where He would be exalted and where He could provide salvation for the world
2. And, again, at the end of Joseph's story, we see Joseph continuing to emphasize God's plan
 - a. Genesis 50:19-20 - *But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*
 - b. His brothers may have meant evil, but Joseph reveals God's better plan to bring good through evil, the good of salvation for the world and the good of the exaltation of Joseph

3. These verses at the climax of Joseph's story and the end of Genesis go back to one of the core topics of Genesis - a year ago when I introduced Genesis I introduced it as the book of God's sovereignty
 - a. And we've seen God sovereign to make and fulfill His promise to Abraham, we've seen God sovereign to choose His people in Jacob and now we see God sovereign even over sinful events in Joseph
 - b. God can never be convicted of sin, but He is not powerless over sin, He uses it according to His will to bring about His salvation and the honor of His servant, that is, to reveal His glory
 - c. God's dedication to His glory and the glory of His servant is demonstrated as He not only uses but ordains the events of Genesis 37-40 in order to display His salvation and His servants exaltation
4. In fact, Genesis 45 emphasizes that Joseph's revelation was a revealing of God's plan, but also of Joseph's honor - the exaltation of Joseph and the revelation of salvation are necessarily tied together under God's sovereignty - Genesis 45:12 - *You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.*"
5. So Joseph's exaltation is dedicated to revealing himself in his exaltation and revealing God's plan of salvation

C. In his exaltation, Joseph brings his family to where he is

1. We see Joseph give this command in Genesis 45:9-10 - *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 me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have.*
2. Much of the rest of the chapter is devoted to working out Joseph's command for them to come to Egypt
 - a. In verses 16-20, Joseph works out an arrangement with Pharaoh to have them live in the best of the land - *When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go back to the land of Canaan, and take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.' And you, Joseph, are commanded to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"*
 - b. And in verse 25-28, we see the brothers travel back to Canaan to fulfill Joseph's command - *So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. And they told him, "Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them. But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."*
3. Joseph's exaltation is not standoffish, he wants to share his exaltation with his family by bringing them to him

D. In his exaltation, Joseph provides for and gives elaborate gifts to his family

1. Joseph promises provision for his family in Genesis 45:10-11 - *You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.'*
2. But Joseph not only promises provision in the land of Egypt, he provides for his family to make the journey to Egypt in Genesis 45:21 - *The sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey.*
3. But, Joseph doesn't stop at provision, he gives his brothers elaborate gifts as well to make the journey a joy in Genesis 45:22-23 - *To each and all of them he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five changes of clothes. To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey.*
4. And, when we come to the end of Genesis, Joseph promises that the provision will continue as long as he is in control in Genesis 50:21 - *So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*
5. Joseph provides everything that the brothers need, both once they reach where he is and as they journey there

III. Christ: the fulfillment of exaltation (I'm going to take our four observations and apply them to Christ)

A. In His exaltation, Christ is full of compassion

1. Joseph is, again, an excellent type of Christ as he points forward to the attitude Christ has toward His brothers
2. We see this attitude of compassion worked out throughout Christ's earthly ministry
 - a. Matthew 9:36 - *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*
 - b. Matthew 14:14 - *When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.*
3. But, this morning we are considering that in His exaltation Christ is full of compassion - His compassion does not end at His humiliation, in fact the display of His compassion grows throughout His exaltation
 - a. So, we see Christ's sympathy and His mercy extolled in Hebrews 4:15-16 - *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*
 - b. And we see Christ's compassion, that is His mercy and His patience, shown toward Paul as an example to all in I Timothy 1:12-16 - *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.*
4. Christ, like Joseph, has every reason to be our enemy, it is against Him we have sinned - but, as He is exalted, He doesn't execute wrath but mercy, He has compassion on His brothers!

B. In His exaltation, Christ reveals Himself and God's plan

1. In his exaltation, Joseph revealed his honor and God's sovereignty in salvation and is, again, an excellent type pointing forward to Christ who would display His glory and God's sovereignty in salvation to the world
2. Like Joseph, Christ reveals Himself and His glory
 - a. I'm struck by the similarity of Joseph's statement to His brothers, "I am Joseph, whom you sold to Egypt," and Christ's statement to Paul in Acts 9:5 - *And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*
 - b. Like Joseph, Christ reveals Himself to Paul and to all the world as the exalted one whom they are rebelling against, and, like Joseph, Christ reveals Himself in order to reveal His glory
 - c. So Paul, the one who heard, "I am Jesus," understands that the continued revelation of Christ is the revelation of His glory in II Corinthians 4:5-6 - *For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*
3. Like Joseph, Christ reveals God's ultimate sovereignty over sin
 - a. Here the echo of Joseph's voice in Acts 4:27-28 - *for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*
 - b. His sovereignty even over sinful events is perfectly demonstrated as God again not only uses but ordains and predestines the crucifixion of Christ - a great sin, the greatest, that provided salvation for the world
 - c. God is not powerless in the face of sin, He purposes it for His glory, the glory of His servant and the working out of His salvation

C. In His exaltation, Christ brings His family to where He is

1. Joseph brings his family to Egypt to point forward to Christ who would, in a much greater way, bring us to where He is
2. Christ promises that He will bring us to Himself in John 14:1-6 - *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going."* Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
3. And Christ prays for our journey in John 17:24 - *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*
4. So, our hope is centered in the consummation where we will be with Christ as John says in I John 3:2 - *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*
5. And, in the mystery of the now and not yet of salvation, we not only look forward to being with Christ, but we are with Christ now as Paul says in Ephesians 2:4-6 - *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,*
6. Christ has brought us to where He is and He will bring us to where He is, His exaltation is completed in our sharing in the enjoyment of His exaltation and seeing the glory of it

D. In His exaltation, Christ provides for and gives elaborate gifts to His family

1. Joseph provided for His brothers in the land of Egypt, but He also provided for His brother's journey to Egypt and gave them lavish gifts for the journey
 - a. And, this morning, I want to focus on the provision and gifts for the journey
 - b. Assuredly Christ has provided for us at our final destination - this is closely related to our last point
 - c. But Christ is also providing for us now and grants us great gifts now for the journey until we are finally brought to where He is
2. So Peter tells us that we have everything we need in Christ, Christ has provided everything
 - a. II Peter 1:3-4 -*His [Christ's] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*
 - b. Christ has granted to us everything necessary for life and godliness and escape from sin - He has provided what we need for the journey to glory
3. And, like Joseph, He has not only provided but has given us gifts to use during the journey
 - a. Ephesians 4:7-11 - *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,*
 - b. I Peter 4:10-11 - *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies---in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
 - c. Christ has given gifts to His church to make the journey a joy as we use them to serve one another and to glorify Himself as the giver of all good things

IV. Us: Redeemed Imitators

A. If Christ is full of compassion, we must be compassionate toward others

1. When Christ compassion is upheld in the New Testament, the command to us is always the same
 - a. E4:32 - *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*
 - b. Colossians 3:12-13 - *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*
 - c. IP3:8 - *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.*
2. If Christ has compassion on His brothers, we must imitate and reflect that compassion to His brothers
 - a. I love the synonyms that are given in these verses - tenderhearted, an attitude that fears to give offense or to cause hurt to a brother; kindness, intentionally working for another's good; humility, refusing to think of yourself as better than your brother in any way; meekness, a desire to act carefully and gently toward others; sympathy, trying to put yourself in your brother's position; patience, in all things giving others time to have God work in their lives; forbearance, willing to bear hurt for a brother's good, brotherly love - a desire for a brother's ultimate good
 - b. These are the attitudes that Christ has shown us and these are the attitudes that must always mark our relationship with Christ's people and therefore we must get rid of everything that is in opposition to these attitudes, hardheartedness, pride, brashness, or as in Ephesians 4:31 - *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*
 - c. So think about your relationships with other believers, would they be able to affirm that you carefully and continually demonstrate compassion in your interactions with them? Or have others often been hurt by your actions or words that lacked compassion, humility and patience? Are your thoughts toward your fellow believers marked by compassion or by pride? How can you, in love for what Christ has done for you, grow in compassion and purpose to show compassion even this week to a brother or sister in Christ?
3. When we read of Joseph's compassion toward his brothers we should imitate Joseph as we imitate Christ

B. If Christ reveals Himself and God's plan, we must rest in Christ and rejoice in God's sovereignty

1. In this application I want to consider how the brothers did and how they should have responded to Joseph
 - a. When Joseph first reveals himself it says in Genesis 45:3 that the brothers were dismayed
 - b. But, in verse 4, Joseph calls them near and reveals himself again saying, *"I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God."*
 - c. The text is clear that Joseph's revelation of himself and of God's sovereign plan is meant to make the brothers rest in Joseph's provision and not be trapped in worry over sin
 - d. In Genesis 50, this is emphasized again as Joseph says to them, *"Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones."*
2. And so, as a greater Joseph comes and reveals Himself and God's sovereign plan to us, we should rest and not fear the effects of sin anymore because Christ has demonstrated that God is sovereign even over sin
 - a. So we no longer have to fear our own sin, because in Christ there is now no condemnation, Romans 8:1 - *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*, and Christ is not holding our trespasses against us, II Corinthians 5:19 - *that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them*, so instead of fretting over our past sin, we can run uninhibited toward righteousness as Paul encourages us in Philippians 3:13-14 - *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*
 - b. Nor do we need to fear others' sin in this world because God has demonstrated His perfect sovereignty over all sin in Christ - in Christ He has demonstrated that He not only reacts to sin by He ordains it according to His good purposes which He is sure to fulfill so that even in the face of sin we can rest in Romans 8:28- *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose*, that promise of God's sovereignty extends even over the sin of this world - all of it is being used by God for the ultimate good of His chosen people

C. If Christ brings His family to where He is, we must seek the things where He is (and forsake worldly goods)

1. For our third application, I want to consider the implication of Christ's call to join Him and then hear the words that Pharaoh speaks to the brothers as they prepare for their final journey to bring the family to Egypt
2. If Christ has and will bring us to where He is, then we must seek the things that are where Christ is
 - a. This is the emphatic teaching of Colossians 3:1-4 - *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*
 - b. Christ has gone to His Father and if we hope to join Him then our hope must be demonstrated in our desires - our desires shouldn't be focused on earthly things, things in the here and now - instead our desires should be focused on the things of Christ's kingdom, the things that anticipate the future consummation, the things that testify that *"our citizenship is in heaven and from there we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself"*
3. So Pharaoh's words to the brothers are, I think, significant. He says in Genesis 45:19-20 - *And you, Joseph, are commanded to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'*
 - a. If we are certain we have an imperishable treasure waiting for us in Christ then we will not worry about treasure here, we won't seek treasure here - we won't focus on the goods that we have now
 - b. Christ affirms this in Luke 12:32-34, telling His disciples, *"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*
4. Pharaoh's words to the brothers are appropriate and point us to Christ - don't seek treasure here seek it there!

D. If Christ gives gifts to His family, we must use His gifts to build up the church (and not quarrel along the way)

1. In my last application I want to listen to Joseph's last words to his brothers before they depart
 - a. At first I read through Genesis 45 I glossed over this command, but as I've studied and meditated on Joseph's last words to his brothers they have become more and more significant to me - Genesis 45:24 - *Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way."*
 - b. Joseph told his brothers not to quarrel right after he gave them gifts and provision for the journey to bring the family to Egypt, and, in the same way, I think, as Christ gives gifts to His church for the journey, He calls out, "Do not quarrel along the way." - So, let's meditate on our response to Christ's gifts
2. First, the positive response to Christ's gifts must be using them to build up the church
 - a. This is the purpose for which Christ gave gifts, we read Ephesians 4:7-11 earlier, now let's finish the passage and read Ephesians 4:11-13 - *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*
 - b. If Christ has given gifts to the church to build up the church in Christ during the journey, then we must use our gifts to build up the church, so Paul tells us after his discussion of the centrality of love how to use our gifts in I Corinthians 14:12 - *So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.*
3. But often, instead of using our gifts to build up the church, we can produce factions and quarrels in the church
 - a. Paul deals with this in I Corinthians 1:10-13 - *I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*
4. So Scripture commands us repeatedly not to quarrel, not to give ourselves to argument within the church
 - a. Romans 14:1, 4 - *As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions... Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

- b. II Timothy 2:12 - *Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.*
 - c. II Timothy 2:23-25 - *Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.*
 - d. Titus 3:9 - *But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*
5. I think, meditating on this church and where we are in this world, that this is a very important application for us
 - a. This church has gathered because we love the truth of Christ and want the church to uphold those truths well and faithfully - and that is a good thing! Jude calls us to contend for the faith and Paul tells us that we must always be working to keep the gospel is clear that those who come after will hear it rightly
 - b. But, because we have joined together to try to keep the truths of the gospel clear in our church there is a temptation for us to become quarrelsome, to forsake building up of the church and start fragmenting it
 6. We discussed this very briefly on Wednesday night for those who were able to join us - how do we balance these two commands, the command to contend for the faith and the command not to be quarrelsome
 - a. And I will humbly admit to you I'm not entirely sure how we balance those and I'm not sure that I consistently respond rightly in situations that require a balance of these commands - it's not an easy thing
 - b. But I have meditated on a prayed about and studied these commands this week and I'll share them with you on how we can guard ourselves from falling into quarrelsomeness or failing to guard the gospel
 7. I have three guards that we can apply to keep ourselves from falling to one side or the other
 - a. We should keep both commands always before us, not trying to completely resolve the tension
 - i. What I mean by this is we can't approach any situation by completely discarding one of these commands - in every situation we approach we should feel the tension between these commands
 - ii. Then, if we decide that we must contend for the gospel, we will feel the tension that we must not be quarrelsome and that will guard us from contending in the wrong ways
 - iii. Or, if we decide that we can not quarrel then we must feel the tension that we must guard the gospel and that will guard us from forfeiting on important gospel truths
 - iv. If you can approach a situation without feeling the burden of both commands, especially if you can do this often, you are probably erring on one side or the other, being quarrelsome or forfeiting
 - v. So keep both of these commands in your heart at all times and desire to uphold them both well
 - b. We should remember that contending is not primarily an individual but a congregational command
 - i. I think Paul's teaching here to the Galatians is useful - I'm not going to read it all (you can at home if you want to) but, in the face of gospel confusion, Paul calls on the congregation to contend
 - ii. I think this is a useful thought for us because it guards us individually from feeling as though we must personally contend for every doctrine - it is the congregation, the church that must contend
 - iii. This 'group consciousness' can keep us from acting too quickly or too harshly against anything but still be a robust guard that can protect the gospel
 - iv. If you find that you often are personally 'contending' for the gospel when the church is not, it is likely that you are being quarrelsome and not contend, while on the other hand if you refuse to quarrel when your church says that you must contend then you are likely forfeiting the gospel
 - v. So, if you are worried about something, don't feel the need to contend on your own, bring it humbly to the church so that the congregation can determine if it must contend or can refuse to quarrel
 - c. We should do nothing without much time in humble prayer
 - i. This is almost obvious, but I think easily skipped - if we see a problem, we need to pray not act
 - ii. And our prayer should be infused with humility, honestly asking God to reveal our faults, not others' faults first - only after much time in this type of prayer should we act
 - iii. Without prayer, our actions are probably quarrelling or forfeiting, and if our prayer is not truly humble before God, looking to our own faults, then it is still likely quarrelling or forfeiting
 8. As I wrap up this morning, I want to show that we have come full circle this morning
 - a. A dedication to not quarrelling is a practical outworking of our first application - compassion for the brotherhood is an attitude that is worked out in building up the church without quarreling
 - b. And in Genesis 45 Joseph's command to for the brothers to not quarrel flows out of his compassion
 - c. So our effort to not quarrel flows out of our imitation of Joseph's (i.e. ultimately Christ's) compassion
 - d. Quarrelling is the opposite of compassion, excelling in compassion you will guard you from quarrelling