

I Am Joseph

Joseph is reconciled with his brothers

Text: Genesis 45:1-28

Introduction:

1. In this chapter we reach the climax of the drama that has been unfolding between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph finally reveals his identity in a flood of tears and reconciliation takes place in a most wonderful way. Without a doubt, this passage is one of the most moving in all of Scripture. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "It is scarcely possible to comment on this passage without robbing it of its charm and power."
2. Joseph is powerful example of a man who chose forgiveness over bitterness and reconciliation over revenge.
3. We will study this heart stirring chapter using **5 words** for an outline.

I. REVELATION (VS. 1-4)

Joseph finally reveals himself to his estranged brothers:

A. The Encouragement of the Revelation (Vs. 1a)

1. Note the first word 'then'. When was then? It was after Judah's moving appeal (44:16-34) that Joseph revealed who he was. Judah's speech clearly revealed the change of heart Joseph was looking for.
2. Joseph was not able to "refrain himself" any longer. Joseph had demonstrated real discipline up till this point in concealing his identity. Joseph was clearly conscious that the timing needed to be right and his actions demonstrate that he was looking for clear evidence of a change of heart in his brothers before doing so.

B. The Exclusiveness of the Revelation (Vs. 1b)

1. Joseph commands his Egyptian servants to leave the room. What was about to transpire was for him and his brothers **alone**. It would be a very personal revelation of himself to his brothers. In like manner, when Christ reveals Himself to the repentant soul, it is a very personal and powerful thing.
2. Imagine how confused and fearful the brothers must have been. They probably were expecting that some sort of punishment was about to meted out to them.

C. The Emotion of the Revelation (Vs. 2)

1. Joseph wept passionately. Think of all the background to those tears. It had been 22 long years. Think of all the thoughts Joseph must have had of his family over that time period. The secret struggles with the memories of the hurt inflicted upon him by his

Begin with God - Genesis Series

brothers when they stripped him of his coat of many colours, threw him into a pit, discussed murdering him and then sold him as a slave. Think of the secret struggles he must have had with bitterness and the desires for revenge that naturally arise out of experiences of injustice. Think of how he had missed his beloved father and his little brother Benjamin. Think of all he had been through since coming to Egypt working as a slave, being falsely accused and eventually exalted as Governor over the whole nation.

2. Joseph wept loudly. The Bible says he “wept aloud”. Joseph was not weeping silently. He was so overcome with emotion he cried aloud with audible sobs. Joseph was sobbing and crying so loudly that those whom he had dismissed from the room could not help but overhear, and they in turn soon carried the news to Pharaoh’s house (Vs. 2, 16).
3. **Joseph pictures Jesus:** Just as Joseph wept over his wayward brothers, so the Lord Jesus wept over wayward Israel when he wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-42) and when he wept for the world of lost sinners in the Garden of Gethsemane as he was faced with being made sin for us who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21) Hebrews 5:7 “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;” It was for me he died, for me he cried, for me he shed his blood upon the tree.

D. The Expression of the Revelation (Vs. 3-4)

1. The Declaration of Joseph’s Person – “I am Joseph”. Joseph’s words went through them like a lightening bolt. They were speechless and troubled. The word ‘troubled’ means “to tremble inwardly”.
2. The Invitation into Joseph’s Presence – “Come near to me, I pray you”. Noting their shock and hesitation, Joseph lovingly invites them to draw near.
3. In like manner, if you come to Christ in repentance and faith, He will draw you into His embrace, forgive you and reconcile you. In the New Testament, Saul of Tarsus was on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians when he was confronted by a light from heaven. When Saul asked “Who art thou, Lord?” he heard the answer, “I am Jesus” (Acts 9:5). Joseph’s brothers had to come to terms with the reality of who he was and in like manner, each person must come face to face with the reality of who Jesus Christ is. As sovereign over Egypt, Joseph has the power to pardon or punish his brothers. Their repentance meant they received pardon. As Absolute Sovereign of the universe, Jesus Christ likewise has the power and authority to pardon or punish sinners. Come to Christ

Begin with God - Genesis Series

in repentance and you will receive an abundant pardon. Reject him and you will be punished eternally.

II. RECONCILIATION (VS. 5-8, 14-15)

The wayward brothers are now reconciled to Joseph. Take note of:

A. The Forgiveness in the Reconciliation (Vs. 5)

1. The grace of Joseph's forgiveness – Joseph's brothers were totally underserving of Joseph's forgiveness. Think of all they had done to him! And yet, God gave Joseph the grace to forgive. Grace is giving us what we don't deserve. Do we deserve God's forgiveness? Our sins nailed Christ to the cross! And yet, God is willing to forgive us for Christ's sake. What grace!
2. The greatness of Joseph's forgiveness – Joseph's heart was full to overflowing with forgiveness. It was abundant. The depth of Joseph's forgiveness is highlighted in the fact he was concerned to alleviate the tremendous weight of guilt his brothers were feeling. "The comfort which he addresses to their penitence would have been dangerous, if spoken to men blind to the enormity of their past. But it will not make a truly repentant conscience less sensitive, though it may alleviate the aching of the wound, to think that God has used even its sin for His own purposes. It will not take away the sense of the wickedness of the motive to know that a wonderful providence has rectified the consequences. It will rather deepen the sense of evil, and give new cause of adoration of the love that pardons the wrong, and the providence that neutralises the harm." (Maclaren)
3. In like manner, God's forgiveness flows like a mighty river into the heart of the sinner when he comes in humble repentance and faith to Christ for salvation. In the words of the beautiful hymn, "Here is love vast as the ocean, loving kindness like the flood, When the Prince of Life, our Ransom Shed for us His precious blood...On the mount of crucifixion, Fountains opened deep and wide, through the floodgates of God's mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide. Grace and love, like mighty rivers poured incessant from above, and Heaven's peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love...Of thy fullness thou art pouring, thy great love and power on me, without measure, full and boundless, drawing out my heart to Thee."
4. Note: We need to remember that this forgiveness was given because of their repentance. Jesus said, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." (Lk. 17:3) While we should always maintain a spirit of forgiveness towards

Begin with God - Genesis Series

those who have wronged us,¹ true reconciliation can only take place when the sin has been dealt with.

5. Note: Joseph's grace filled response to his brothers would not produce a light view of sin. As Griffith Thomas wisely observes, "It is often the case that the consciousness of sin becomes more acute after the revelation of God's mercy in Christ than it ever did before. The consciousness of God's longsuffering love breaks down the soul, deepens our penitence, and enables the heart to see things as it could not see them before conversion."

B. The Faith of the Reconciliation (Vs. 5b-8)

Joseph's words further reveal the depth of his faith in God and his relationship with God. He bears testimony to God as he had done so frequently before. Joseph is mentioned in the great hall of faith in Hebrews 11 (Vs. 22). The grace of God had given Joseph at least two things in his trial:

1. Preservation in his trial – God's grace had miraculously preserved Joseph from bitterness. There is not a hint of bitterness in Joseph's life. Hebrews 12:15 "Looking diligently lest any man **fail of the grace of God**; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;" If failing of the grace of God is the cause of bitterness, availing oneself of the grace of God is the preventative and the cure for bitterness.
2. Perspective on his trial – God's grace had enabled Joseph to see his trial with the eyes of faith. Over time and through faith he was able to see the hand of God and the grand purpose of God in it all. "Joseph saw God as the First Cause in his trial." (Butler) Look at Joseph's repeated emphasis on this point:
 - a. Vs. 5 "...for **God did send** me before you **to** preserve life."
 - b. Vs. 7 "And **God sent me** before you **to** preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."
 - c. Vs. 8 "So now it was **not you** that sent me hither, **but God**..."
 - d. God's purposes went way beyond Joseph as an individual. God was working to preserve his chosen people. We need to be reminded in this me-centred generation that its isn't all about us! God works in our lives because he does love us as individuals but He is also working to a greater purpose, namely, His own glory and the good of others.
 - e. God's Divine purposes had overruled man's evil purposes. Over 17 years later, Joseph would say to his brothers "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Gen.

¹ Luke 23:24 ("Father forgive them; for they know not what they do"); Matthew 5:44 ("Love your enemies").

Begin with God - Genesis Series

50:20). This verse is the Romans 8:28 verse of the Old Testament.

C. The Fervency of the Reconciliation (Vs. 14-15)

The tears continue to flow in these verses as Joseph personally embraces each of his brothers and weeps over them.

1. Joseph embraces Benjamin and weeps (Vs. 14). Words can hardly describe the emotion of this moment for Joseph and Benjamin. How long they cried on each other's shoulder we don't know but their tears tell us more about what was going on in their hearts at that moment than any words could describe. Sometimes tears say more than words.²
2. Joseph embraces each of his other ten half brothers (Vs. 15). They are all drawn into his gracious, forgiving embrace. Can you see the picture? Reuben³, Simeon⁴, Levi, Judah⁵, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher were all embraced in love, grace and forgiveness by Joseph. What a wonderful experience this must have been to be drawn into this embrace of forgiveness by Joseph and feel the guilt and shame melt away.
3. There is nothing more wonderful in all the world than to experience Christ's embrace of forgiveness. Will you come to Christ today with your sin, guilt and shame and receive His forgiveness?
4. Note: What a day it will be when Israel finally realizes that Jesus Christ is their Messiah. What tears will flow on that day! Zec 12:10 "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn."

III. COMMISSION (VS. 9-13)

A. The Mission they were to Perform (Vs. 9)

1. Reconciliation led quickly to responsibilities. They were to return to their father in Canaan, proclaim the good news to him that Joseph was alive and then bring him back to Egypt without delay.
2. In like manner, we have been saved to a life of obedience. We have been bought with a price and are to "therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:20)

B. The Message they were to Proclaim (Vs. 9b-13)

² Personal illustration of getting right with God as a 16-year-old (NBF meetings).

³ The eldest of the brothers and the one who had helped spare Joseph from murder (Gen. 37:22).

⁴ Simeon, the cruel and callous brother who along with Levi had slain the Shechemites (Gen. 34). It was probably Simeon who had suggested Joseph be murdered.

⁵ Judah, the one who had suggested Joseph be sold into slavery but who had just pleaded passionately on Benjamin's behalf, revealing his change of heart.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

1. Joseph is alive! (Vs. 9b, 26)
 - a. The urgency of the message – “Haste ye, and go up to my father”. Joseph knew that his father may not have long to live and he wanted to see him before he died.
 - b. The authority of the message – “Thus saith thy son Joseph”. They were to tell Jacob that Joseph was exalted over all the land of Egypt! They were to tell him of “all his glory” (Vs. 13).
 - c. Application: Now that we are saved, we have been commissioned to tell the world that Christ is alive, the highly exalted Ruler over all (Phil. 2:5-11), and altogether glorious.
2. Joseph will provide! (Vs. 10-13)

Note some touching promises Joseph gave his family.

 - a. The promise of his presence – “and thou shalt be near unto me” (Vs. 10). Having been reconciled to Joseph, they would now know nearness to Joseph. Joseph would settle the family in Goshen, a fertile region of about 900 square miles (1450 square km) in northeastern Egypt (Morris).
 - b. The promise of his provision – “And there will I nourish thee” (Vs. 11). Joseph would sustain them throughout the remainder of the drought. He had more than enough resources at his disposal to meet their every need.

IV. PROVISION (VS. 16-24)

To bring back Jacob and the whole family clan would be no small feat at a time of drought/famine.

A. The Order for the Provisions (Vs. 16-20)

1. The report to Pharaoh (Vs. 16). The news of Joseph’s family began to spread like wildfire. Remember, Joseph was much loved and respected throughout Egypt so this news of his family’s arrival in Egypt would have been met with much interest.
2. The response of Pharaoh (Vs. 17-20). Joseph had already invited his family to come to Egypt and had promised to sustain them but now Pharaoh, the highest ruler in the land, adds his own royal command to make provision for this to happen.
 - a. Pharaoh promises them they will be given the good of the land and the fat of the land (Vs. 18, 20)
 - b. Pharaoh also provides a state of the art, Egyptian mode of travel – wooden wagons! (Vs. 19) “The wagons were essentially carts, usually on two wooden wheels, drawn by oxen or horses. This is the first mention of wagons in the Bible and suggests that they were essentially unique to Egypt at that time.” (Morris)

Begin with God - Genesis Series

3. God's hand is again evident. He is working in the heart of this heathen king to cooperate with His Divine will for the children of Israel.

B. The Organization of the Provisions (Vs. 21-24)

1. Joseph's provisions for his family (Vs. 21)
 - a. Joseph gave them the wagons in accordance with Pharaoh's command. It appears this was a very special thing in those days as it is mentioned three times (Vs. 19, 21 & 27).
 - b. Joseph gave them 'provisions' for the journey. God was providing the resources necessary to fulfill this part of his will for his chosen people. We are reminded that God is not limited by seemingly impossible circumstances. The same God who Provided for His people in the midst of a 7-year famine is still able to provide the needs of His people as they seek to serve Him.
2. Joseph's gifts to his family (Vs. 22-23)
 - a. He gave changes of raiment to his ten brothers (Vs. 22a).
 - b. He gave 300 pieces of silver and 5 changes of raiment to his full blood brother Benjamin.
 - c. He sent ten asses with good things from Egypt for his father and ten female asses with food supplies to help sustain his father for the trip to Egypt.
 - d. All of these actions further demonstrate the magnitude of Joseph's forgiveness and grace in the situation.
3. Joseph's counsel to his family (Vs. 24)
 - a. Joseph sends them on their journey but adds an insightful piece of instruction before they leave – "See that ye fall not out by the way".
 - b. We see the wisdom in this counsel. Given all that had taken place, it would be easy for the brothers to descend into disunity and accusation with each other. Joseph urges them to avoid this.

V. REACTION (VS. 25-28)

The brothers arrive back home in Canaan and share the heart stopping news with their elderly father that Joseph was not only alive but Governor of all of Egypt! How did Jacob react?

A. Denial (Vs. 25-26)

1. Jacob's heart fainted at the news and he didn't believe them at first. He was in shock! As far as he knew, his son had been torn apart by wild beasts and that was the story that had been maintained all those years by his deceitful sons. Now they were telling him that his

Begin with God - Genesis Series

son Joseph was not only still alive but the Governor of the most powerful nation on earth!

2. Jacob was again in the position where he would need to exercise faith in God and step out in trustful obedience.

B. Revival (Vs. 27-28)

1. Jacob's sons relay all the words that Joseph had given them to pass on.
2. It was particularly the sight of the wagons that sealed it for Jacob. His spirit revived and he is again filled with hope and faith, believing he will see Joseph before he dies.
3. Why did the wagons have such an impression on Jacob? "It is more than probably that in the quiet ordinary pastoral life of Jacob wagons were unknown, and it may also be that they formed part of the royal equipage of Pharaoh, and thus their very strangeness impressed the patriarch with the assurance that something out of the ordinary must have happened to bring these wagons to his home." (Thomas)
4. Note that Jacob is again called Israel in verse 28 in connection with his spirit of faith. He is called Jacob when in unbelief (Vs. 26) but Israel when he is exercising faith (Vs. 28).
5. We see the goodness and kindness of God to Israel (Jacob). He was 130 years of age when he went to Egypt (57:9) and died at 147 so he had seventeen years in which to enjoy his family, especially Joseph.

Conclusion:

1. Will you turn from your sin and come to Christ today and experience his forgiving love?
2. How are you responding to your trial? Are you allowing God's grace to make you better or are you allowing your heart to grow bitter?