

GENESIS: Where Grace Begins

The Mercy of Joseph – Genesis 45:1-15

“By the time we arrive at Genesis 45:28, Joseph will have revealed himself to his brothers, and Jacob will know that his long-lost son is alive. And in all the details of this saga, we see the hand of God weaving the truth of Romans 8:28 throughout every step.” (Alistair Begg, *The Hand of God*)

45 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. ²And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?”

But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

⁴ So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For 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. ⁷And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So 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. ⁹Hurry 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. ¹⁰You 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. ¹¹There 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.’ ¹²And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.”

¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

Genesis 45:1-15

The Compassion of Joseph: (v. 1-3)

Joseph has reached an emotional breaking point. Imagine the scene ...

Realizing that his brothers have fundamentally changed, there are no more tests for him to give.

The brothers seem to be deeply humbled and overwhelmed with guilt. _____ seems to be an accurate description. But repentance without hope of _____ leads only to _____.

But amazingly, Joseph is merciful and wants _____ with his brothers and his father.

Amazingly, Joseph’s heart is filled with _____, not vengeance.

For their part, the brothers are “dismayed”. A good definition for their condition is that they were both _____ and _____.

How do you explain the incredible mercy of Joseph?

The Practical Doctrine of Providence: (v. 4-8)

Adapted from John Piper's *Providence*:

- Before there was any hint of famine coming on the land of Canaan, strife was brewing among Jacob's twelve sons ...
- The sequence of events by which God was saved this family from the coming famine was set in motion through a tangle of sins, including fatherly favoritism and brotherly jealousy and hatred. This hatred came to the brink of murder.
- Reuben intervened by persuading them to throw Joseph into a pit rather than shed his blood, hoping to later rescue him.
- While Reuben was away, the plan for murder was replaced by the power of greed, since there was no financial gain in murder. Joseph was sold.
- The brothers covered their tracks by dousing Joseph's coat with animal blood and convincing their father that he had been killed by a fierce animal.
- With this constellation of sins against Joseph and his father, the brothers set in motion an astonishing sequence of events that would lead to their own deliverance from famine.
- For 13 years, Joseph was first a slave and then a prisoner.
- When he turned 30 in prison, Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream of the coming famine and Pharaoh set him over all the land of Egypt. Joseph was responsible for gathering enough food during the seven prosperous years so that it would last during the seven lean years of famine.
- After seven years of prosperity and food storage, the famine began.
- Two years into it, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for help as they are running out of food.
- Joseph is now 39 years old, and they do not recognize him.

One of the strongest statements of God's **sovereignty** in all of Genesis: "**God sent me ...**"

¹⁶When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, ¹⁷he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. (Psalm 105:16-17)

Their intentions were _____.

Joseph's statement to them, "do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" doesn't mean they were guiltless:

- 1) The entire storyline depicts the brothers as jealous, hateful, murderous and greedy.
- 2) Godly regret and repentance should lead to life and hope and freedom, not to lasting distress and bitterness and self-hate.
- 3) What they did was clearly called _____ in Genesis 50:20. ("You meant it for evil")

God's intention was _____.

They meant _____ against Joseph. God meant it for _____.

"What we are called to affirm is that human sinful willing is not simply used or managed by God after it has happened; rather, this very sinful willing is meant or intended by God for righteous, saving purposes. Nevertheless, God means, or intends, or wills this sinful human willing in such a way that he does not sin but, in perfect wisdom and righteousness and goodness, aims at and achieves a good end, and is himself doing good at every point." (Piper, Providence, pp. 427)

Two things are simultaneously true:

- 1) The brothers were _____ and needed _____ for what they had done.
- 2) God planned and willed that these events would take place, but is uncompromised in his _____.

As John Calvin states, "God from heaven overruled their counsels and attempts, and did by their hands what He himself had decreed".

Consider though the _____ of _____ on the brothers:

"... every sin, every failure, every self-deceiving enterprise that appears to work in one way, although evil, carries its own cost because it is sin. The brothers' life was not what it might have been, had they not sinned ... Had they but obeyed and followed God's plan, they would have enjoyed his blessings to the full and spared themselves and their family the pain" (Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing*)

But for Joseph ...

It was his personal theology of God's sovereignty that ultimately enabled him to _____.

Joseph was convinced that _____, not the will of human beings, was the controlling reality in the events of his life.

If we truly and honestly affirm the sovereignty of God in our lives, we will be far better equipped to forgive what others have done to us. To know that there is no part of our lives outside of God's control is a powerful _____ and a great source of _____. Without this conviction, we will find genuine forgiveness for very hard things incredibly difficult to do.

Joseph also trusted that God was working out a vast and nearly unfathomable _____.

"Unless we see the big picture of what God is doing through the difficulties of life, the suffering, the pain, the inequities, the injustices, we will miss the profound and foundational truth that God is using it all for our ultimate good and His glory". (John MacArthur, "Joseph: Because God Meant It for Good")

Joseph's Deep Forgiveness: (v. 9-15)

For every evil, merciless act of his brothers, Joseph responded with kindness and mercy.

The ultimate aim in forgiveness is _____.

This will require another painful, yet necessary step for the brothers: A final _____ of sin to their father, Jacob.

Now that godly _____ has led to _____; and repentance to _____; the family is _____ and their future in Egypt is about to begin ...

Next week: Genesis 45&46 – The Provision of God