

Forgiveness by Faith • Genesis 45:1-8

INTRO • Read vs.

Set Scene

1. We've recounted the story of Joseph for a few weeks now because it's spread over 12 chs.
2. Ch45 is the grand climax, the point to which the whole tale has been moving.
3. Let me give a quick sketch of what's happened. It's an amazing, true, riches to rags back to riches story.
 - a. Joseph, favorite son of his father Jacob,
 - b. Was sold into slavery by his brothers 20 yrs before.
 - c. He served a man name **Potiphar**, head of the Egyptian Secret Service, eventually rising to be chief steward over his entire estate.
 - d. When Joseph declined Ms. Potiphar seductions, she accused him of attempted rape.
 - e. So he was sent to prison, where he once again rose to become a the head inmate supervisor.
 - f. While there he met Pharaoh's cup-bearer who was being investigated regarding a plot to poison Pharaoh.
 - g. One night he had a prophetic dream Joseph correctly interpreted for him.
 - h. The cupbearer was restored to his post but forgot to mention Joseph to Pharaoh until 2 yrs later when Pharaoh had a couple of deeply troubling dreams none of the wise men could interpret.
 - i. So Joseph was brought out of prison, cleaned up & set before Pharaoh.
 - j. Joseph told Pharaoh his dream was prophetic of 7 yrs bumper crops followed by another 7 yrs of a famine so severe it would wipe out the surplus of the yrs of bounty.
 - k. Joseph followed up the dream's interpretation with a brilliant plan on how to prepare for the famine.
 - l. Pharaoh was impressed and appointed Joseph as the guy to run the new government department.
 - m. He proved so skilled at it, Pharaoh made Joseph Prime Minister of all Egypt, 2nd only to Pharaoh himself.
 - n. Now, it was embarrassing to the Egyptians to have a foreigner rule over them so Pharaoh had Joseph adopt Egyptian dress & customs.
 - o. He gave him an Egyptian name & wife. Joe went native.
 - p. And that explains why, when his brothers appeared before him to buy food during the famine, they didn't recognize him.
4. We don't have time to go into the details now of the brother's arrival in Egypt & their appearance before Joseph.
 - a. We'll look at that Wednesday. It's a great story!
 - b. As I said, they don't recognize him, but he recognizes them.
 - c. He puts them to a test to see how they feel 2 decades after selling him out – literally!
 - d. As we come to ch45, Joseph sees that they feel terrible about what they'd done to him.
 - e. And he can't keep his secret any longer.

Vs. 1-3

¹ 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.

1. As the PM of Egypt, Joseph had a raft of assistants he now tells to leave.

² And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard *it*.

2. Joseph & Pharaoh have grown close. Pharaoh knows Joe's story & what an emotional moment this was for him.

³ 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.

3. Well I guess so! Imagine how stunned they had to be.
4. Joseph's alive?!?! And he's **THAT GUY!** PM of the world's mightiest realm.
5. Oh-Oh! What's he going to do now that the tables have turned?
 - a. If Hollywood was in charge of this script, Joe would be wearing a black T-Shirt with a skull on it,
 - b. A bandoleer of shotgun shells across his chest.
 - c. A thick belt holding a wicked, ft. long hunting knife & grenades.
 - d. With a riot shotgun in one hand & a Glock in the other. The Punisher!

e. And it's time for him to **get even** with his brothers who **LITERALLY** sold him out.
6. But: That's NOT the route Joseph takes.

Vs. 4-8

⁴ And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near.

1. Reluctantly, hesitantly.

2. Suddenly they were all very polite to each other; "You first." // "No, you. I insist."

Then he said: "I *am* Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."

3. He's already told them it was he.

4. But the look on their faces means they're incredulous, so Joe repeats. "It's really me, guys."

5. "Let me prove it by mentioning something only the real Joseph would know."

6. "You guys sold me into slavery."

7. But, he doesn't want them to think he holds that against them, so he quickly adds . . .

⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. ⁸ 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.

8. There is so much here. And Pastor Jeff's book on the life of Joseph dives marvelously deep into this passage.

9. What I want to focus on today is something Joseph says that can bring us into the amazing forgiveness he demonstrates.

Joseph's Perspective

1. Joseph **acknowledged** his brothers sinned in what they did to him 20 yrs before.

a. In v5 he said, "You sold me here."

b. **AND!** THAT was just the start of yrs of abuse & mistreatment.

c. He became a slave, then a convict—though he committed no crime.

c. For 13 yrs he suffered terrible injustice.

d. But those yrs of abuse did **NOT** embitter him.

e. As we've seen the last couple Sundays, Joseph trusted God was doing something, though he couldn't see what.

2. **Now**, as PM, who's prepared Egypt for a brutal famine, he **SAW** what it was.

3. And he shares that perspective with his brothers when he said, "God **sent** me before you to preserve life."

a. What they did was wrong; a grievous sin.

b. They **SOLD** Joe to Egypt. But God **SENT** him on a mission there.

c. They made a **slave** of their brother, while **God** made him a **ruler**.

c. They sinned, but God is **bigger** than sin. He's **not limited** by it.

d. He's able to take our foolishness & bring good out of it.

e. We even have a verse for that: Rom 8:28

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

5. Many people know that v. It's a favorite.

6. What many don't realize is that the **next** v is **part** of it.

7. And it gets to the **heart** of what Joseph says here.

8. So let me read vs 28 **& 29**

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called According to His purpose.

9. What **that purpose** is, is in what we find next. Here's "**the good**" all things work toward . . .

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

10. Joseph didn't **excuse** his brothers' sin.

a. He didn't wave it away or say it didn't matter.

- b. He instead, **put it into God's hands** & let Him **edit** it; **altering its results**.
- 11. Joseph decided that rather than being the **victim** in his **brothers'** story, he'd be the **victor** in God's.
- 12. Instead of forever **looking BACK** at what they did and all the trouble it caused; all he missed out on as the favored son in his father's house –
- 13. Joseph **looked forward in faith**, trusting God was doing something important.
- 14. It was those 2 dreams he had when he was 17 that planted that in his heart & centered him in his confidence in God.
 - a. In ch37, Joseph had 2 dreams he knew were prophetic.
 - b. In both, he saw his family **bowing** to him.
 - c. That he had **2 different dreams** with the same meaning meant God **affirmed** it would come to pass.
 - d. Just as Pharaoh 2 dreams affirmed there'd be 7 yrs of bounty followed by 7 more of famine.
- 15. **Christian, Hear this:** You also have a glorious destiny!
 - a. You don't need a dream of it for you already have something better by far = God's Word / His promise.
 - b. This (Bible) beats a dream any day.
 - c. Here's God's promise to you!
 - 1) He is working ALL things together for good for you.
 - 2) The good it's all working toward is that you are being conformed to the image of Christ.
 - 3) And what God begins, He always completes.
 - 4) So in Phil 1:6 we find
We are confident in this: He who's begun a good work in us will keep at it until it's complete in the Day of Christ.
 - 5) In 1 Cor. 2:9 we have this promise . . .
"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
 - 6) And as for Joe's dreams of greatness when his brothers would bow to him, listen to **this** promise God made in Rev. 20:6 During the Millennium, we shall **reign** with Christ.
 - 7) Like Joseph, we're destined for a throne.
 - 8) We don't need a **dream** of it. We have God's **promise** of it.

Forgiveness

- 1. I've done a bit of pastoral care with people one on one over the years.
- 2. People want to talk about all sorts of things that are troubling them.
- 3. They want advice, guidance.
- 4. We take them God's Word, looking to see how it's wisdom can assist them.
- 5. One of the things we notice is how often the problem of unforgiveness comes up.
- 6. Something has happened & instead of letting it go, people hold on to their anger & desire to get even.
- 7. They've been hurt and want the one who hurt them to hurt back.
- 8. Now, most of these people are Christians who know they **ought** to forgive; God **commands** them to.
- 9. But they've spent so many months & years feeling **justified** in holding a grudge, they're **stuck**.
- 10. I know that in a room this size, there are some **stuck** folk here.
 - a. Something happened to you, maybe far in your past, that wounded you deeply.
 - b. Instead of forgiving those who sinned against you, you've built your identity around that wound.
- 11. Is what happened to you worse than what happened to Joseph?
 - a. We're you sold into slavery, and used and abused as a slave would be?
 - b. We're you falsely accused of a serious crime so that you ended up in prison for a half dozen yrs?
- 12. Be honest, few have suffered what Joseph did.
- 13. But he forgave! He was able to because he trusted God was doing something.
- 14. He refused to let the sin of others hijack his vision.
- 15. He kept his eyes on & hope in God.
- 16. The practical outworking of that trust in God was that instead of sitting around moaning about what a raw deal he had, he went to work serving where ever he could.
 - a. AND THAT! His faithful service **IS** WHAT GOD WAS DOING in the 13 yrs before he ascended

Egypt's throne.

- b. God didn't **just** put Joe **where** he needed to be to **make the connections** that would raise him to be PM.
- c. There was a LOT more going on than that.
- d. Joseph was also learning the **skills** he'd need **AS** PM.
- e. His training started all the way back home when his father started grooming him to inherit the estate.
- f. In Potiphar's house, Joseph learned the Egyptian language, culture & economic system.
- g. The prison he was kept in was a **political** prison, so he learned the in's & out's of the various factions at court.
- h. His home in Canaan was elementary school.
- i. High school as Potiphar's house.
- j. Prison was college.
- k. Graduation came when he stood before Pharaoh for his Final.
- l. Joseph's years in the School of Hard Knocks was all for a good & divine purpose.

17. Joseph's story is ours.

- a. Just as he was destined for the throne of Egypt, you & I are destined in Christ for an even great throne; to rule & reign with Him for a thousand years.
- b. This life is our school.
- c. Like Joseph, we ought to be concerned with 1 thing
- d. Being faithful to learn the Lessons, not wiggled out by the circumstances.

18. God isn't just interested in **getting you into heaven** in the sweet by & by.

- a. He wants to get **heaven into you** in the here & now.
- b. The great goal of your existence isn't just to go to heaven.
- c. It's to **become someone** worthy of heaven thru the on-going work of God's Spirit as He molds & shapes you by His Grace & Truth.

19. Joseph forage his brothers, not just because he worked himself up to be magnanimous.

- a. His forgiveness was the overflow and fruit of his trust in God.
- b. How could he be **unforgiving** while at the same time say God doing something?

20. Let's be honest: Unforgiveness is a lack of trust in God.

- a. It's saying His promise to work all things to glorious good doesn't apply in our case.

21. If you're stuck today; if bitterness & unforgiveness grips your heart and mind, leave off trying to forgive simply by willing it to be so.

- a. Instead, do what Joseph did, trust that God is able to not only forgive sin, but able to edit it's results so that they work good.
- b. Don't look back, reliving & replaying the offense.
- c. Look forward to what God WILL do as you put yourself into His hands.