

## Peace & Freedom • Genesis 50:15-21

### Read vs. • Intro

1. Our last week in Genesis.
  - a. Wednesday we'll look at last 2 chs.
  - b. Ch 49 records Jacob's last words as he speaks **prophetically** to each of his 12 sons.
  - c. Then ch50 concludes the tale and sets us up for Exodus, which we'll study next.
2. 2 weeks ago, we marveled at Joseph's amazing forgiveness of his brothers.
  - a. We saw he was able to forgive them because of his rock-steady trust in God.
  - b. Then we took a look at the importance that we forgive.
  - c. Forgiving others is an essential part of following Jesus.
  - d. He even taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
3. Today, we're taking a look at the **other side** of that.
  - a. We not only need to forgive,
  - b. **God wants us to know**, in Christ, we're forgiven.
  - c. An episode in Joseph's life here in ch50 well illustrates that.

### Set Scene

1. At God's direction, Jacob's family of 70 people has moved out of Canaan during a severe famine & settled in Egypt because that's where the food is.
2. Jacob, the great patriarch of the family has died at the ripe old age of 147.
3. His adult sons worry their brother Joseph, who they'd sold into slavery years before, but who'd risen to be PM of Egypt, now that their father is gone, will move to get even with them.
4. They assume the only reason he hasn't till now is because it would bum their dad out.
5. But now there's nothing to stop Joseph from taking his well-deserved revenge.

### Vs. 15-17

<sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, <sup>17</sup> '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.

1. The brothers hoped to preempt Joseph's revenge.
2. They did so by sending a message they claimed was from their father.
3. They knew Joseph dearly loved his dad & wouldn't violate his last wishes.
4. So they put words in his mouth & sent it along to Joseph.
5. When Joseph received it, he broke down. He knew they'd made it up.
  - a. Earlier chs tell us Joseph had private meetings with his father. [47-8]
  - b. If there was something Jacob wanted to say to his favorite son, we would've made it clear then.
  - c. But Jacob KNEW Joseph forgave his brothers because of his gracious perspective on the whole deal.
  - d. If there'd been **any** doubt on Jacob's part that Joseph was plotting revenge, he would have said something then.
  - e. No last minute, death-bed wish was necessary.
6. What **crushed** Joseph when he received this **made-up message** from his brothers, was that **they** failed to see what their father **had**; that Joseph's forgiveness was real. It was complete!
7. **17 yrs** have passed since Joseph told them all was forgiven.
8. And now Joe realizes all that time, they've been waiting for the shoe to drop & him to wail on 'em.
9. They still bore the **guilt** for what they'd done.
  - a. That guilt had grown into **fear**.
  - b. And fear morphed into **deceit** that made up lies they shoved into their dead father's words.
10. Joseph was bummed when he got their message because it put the last 17 yrs in question.
  - a. They'd doubted his intentions **all along**.
  - b. The smiles & laughter at the reunion was all a sham on their part.
  - c. Every time he'd seen them and they'd acted all happy to see him again was put on.
  - d. They were terrified of him.

11. And it broke his heart!
  - a. Because, Joseph **truly HAD** forgiven them.
  - b. What he **longed** for was a **relationship** with his brothers.
  - c. But their fear blocked them from it.

Vs. 18-21

1. **Messengers** brought the first report of Jacob's death along with the brothers' made-up message.
2. Now **they** come **personally**.

<sup>18</sup> Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we *are* your servants." <sup>19</sup>

Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

3. As PM of Egypt, the brothers knew they couldn't run away from him. So they cast themselves on his mercy.
4. Joseph tells them **even before** they'd first come to get food 17 yrs before, he'd forgiven them!
5. Yes—what they'd done in selling him was a terrible wrong. But Joseph didn't hold it against them.
  - a. As we saw 2 wks ago; Joseph put their sin in God's hands, trusting Him to turn it to good.
  - b. That didn't make what they did any less wrong.
  - c. But Joseph's refusal to identify as a victim opened the door to God to step in & edit his story,
  - d. Lifting him out of slavery to be the ruler of Egypt.
6. Joseph had not an ounce of interest in getting even with his brothers for what they'd **DONE** to him because it couldn't thwart what God was **DOING** in him.

Being Forgiven

1. That's the lesson we looked at 2 weeks ago.
2. Today, we look at all this from the perspective, not of **Joseph** and his **forgiving**, but of the **brothers** and their need to be **forgiven**.
3. What distressed Joseph was what his brother's message revealed about their guilt & fear.
  - a. For nearly 2 decades he'd done nothing but shower them with acceptance & blessing.
  - b. But they couldn't really **enjoy** it because they suspected his wrath would fall at any moment.
  - c. Tell me: How good does a filet mignon taste when you're stressed out?  
How tasty is a Krispy Kreme donut when you're terrified?  
How delicious is an al pastor taco at Money Pancho's when a drive-by is going down out front?
  - d. Stress, tension, conflict, guilt, fear; all these strip the goodness out of life.
4. Joseph's brothers couldn't relax & enjoy the abundant blessings he sent them because they were **eclipsed** by the sense of their own failure & wrong.
  - a. They lived in a self-constructed prison of guilt.
  - b. In truth, they hadn't sold Joseph into slavery; they'd sold themselves as slaves to fear.
5. For centuries, students of the Bible have noted the many similarities between Joseph & Jesus.
  - a. Pastor Jeff does a masterful job of listing them. It's clear we're to see Joseph as a **type** of Christ.
  - b. Like Jesus, Joseph **forgave** his brothers in his longing to be reconciled with them.
6. But how like those brothers **we** all so often are.
  - a. Though God's forgiven us in Christ,
  - b. We carry guilt long after we ought to have laid it down.
7. For many here today, your fellowship with God is blocked because you don't **trust** Him.
  - a. A nagging thought says, "God **really** wants to whoop you! He's just waiting for the right moment."
  - b. He's waiting for you to drop your guard & trust Him, then He's going to pull a big "Gotcha!"
  - c. Some of us here today are just like "Joe's brohs" who for 17 yrs saw his forgiveness,
  - d. But couldn't shake the feeling it was a set-up.
  - e. And that once he gained their trust, **then** he'd get 'em.
8. Their error was in giving more attention to their sin than what Joseph said & did about it.
  - a. What they did was a heinous piece of treachery. They were **right** to be convicted about it.
  - b. But they were **wrong** to not accepted his forgiveness.
  - c. There was nothing more Joseph could do to prove he'd forgiven them.
  - d. They simply needed to **accept** it. They ought to have trusted him.

9. Look at what they say in v18 when they appear before him  
 “Behold, we *are* your servants.”
  - a. They offer to **work** off their debt to him.
  - b. This is ever the **route-to-relief** guilt produces in us.
  - c. If we fail to accept forgiveness **by faith**, trusting God’s promise
  - d. Then we make up our own path to deliverance from guilt.
10. Let’s be honest: **Most** of man-made religion aims at unloading guilt.
  - a. People go to some religious authority who’s supposed to be a professional guilt-remover.
  - b. They’re told to Climb some holy mountain.
  - c. Meditate till they’re enlightened.
  - d. Pray a rote prayer 50 times.
  - e. And of course, 1 of the favorite prescriptions: Give so much.
11. The idea is that we can undo wrong by doing right.
  - a. But no right can erase a wrong.
  - b. Because any right we do we’re already required to.
  - c. To NOT do what we know is right is just another wrong.
  - d. Good works don’t remove guilt.
  - e. Only forgiveness can remove it.
  - f. And forgiveness **isn’t earned**; it’s **given** by the Forgiver.
12. Much of modern psychotherapy aims at coping with guilt.
  - a. Psychotherapy is secularism’s **alternative** to religion.
  - b. It’s **remedy** for guilt isn’t good works. It aims instead to remove guilt by **redefining** sin.
    - 1) “You haven’t done anything wrong.
    - 2) What’s wrong are the standards of traditional morality are too high.
    - 3) Don’t resist your urges; **indulge** them! Be authentic by being true to your desires.
    - 4) Ignore guilt. Tell yourself **all** choices are valid; **all** are good.
13. In a poll conducted a some years ago, the top 4 causes people gave for feelings of guilt were
  - 4) Not spending more time with family at 12%
  - 3) Also at 12% was - Not taking better care of their health.
  - 2) 15% sais - Spending too much money.
  - 1) 34% Said they felt most guilty about, “**Nothing in particular.**”
14. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes novels, played a joke on a dozen of his friends.
  - a. He sent each a telegram that read, “Flee at once! All is discovered.”
  - b. Within 24 hours, all 12 had left the country.
15. Let’s be clear: People **FEEL** guilty, because they **ARE** guilty!
  - a. Apart from Christ we’re ALL sinners who’ve broken God’s Law.
  - b. Guilt is our conscience telling us something’s wrong and needs to be fixed.
16. [Torch] - If I put my hand in that, it’ll hurt; I’ll experience pain.
  - a. God designed us to feel pain. It allows us to survive in a dangerous world.
  - b. It tells us when our body is in peril.
  - c. We don’t like pain, but need it because it protects us from something worse.
  - e. How foolish would it be to take a pain pill So I could **keep** my hand in the fire?
17. But that’s what some people do with guilt.
  - a. Because it’s **emotionally** painful, they try to numb it with religion or denial.
  - b. The only **real** remedy for guilt is forgiveness.
18. You’ve seen pictures of people with leprosy.
  - a. In advanced cases, fingers, toes, ears, & noses are missing.
  - b. Leprosy deadens the nerves so people can’t feel pain.
  - c. Over time their appendages are repeatedly injured & eventually are lost.
19. That’s why in the Bible leprosy is a symbol for sin.
20. Again: People FEEL guilty, because they are.
  - a. And the guilt sin produces can’t be removed by anything but forgiveness.
  - b. That’s what the Gospel is all about!

- c. It's the good news that God forgives us, not because of our good works,
  - d. But because of **THE Good Work** Jesus did for us on the Cross.
  - e. Our sin earns a debt that must be paid. Justice must be satisfied.
  - f. Jesus paid the debt for all sin. The requirements of divine justice are forever satisfied in His work.
21. God's forgiveness of our sin isn't because he waves it away and says it doesn't matter.
- a. Just as Joseph's brother's sin mattered – ours matters.
  - b. It mattered enough Jesus had to come to pay the price.
  - c. **BUT HE DID!** And that means forgiveness is real.
  - f. **IF WE'LL BELIEVE THAT**, then forgiveness is ours!
22. And here's what this story teaches us: **God WANTS us to know we're forgiven in Christ.**
- a. He wants us to be **free** of guilt, our hearts **at rest** in the confidence we'll never face His wrath.
  - b. Joseph forgave his brothers and wanted to be reconciled to them.
  - c. But when he got that message, he knew they didn't really trust him.
  - d. They'd lived in mistrust & fear for years, unable to enjoy the bounty he gave them because they feared it was all really a setup.
23. There are probably some here today who regard God as Joseph's brothers regarded him.
- a. You've heard The Gospel, that God forgives,
  - b. But you're convinced **YOUR** sin is in a special class that's marked you as someone God wants to slam.
  - c. You imagine the sins God forgives are in this category over here.
  - d. But you're in this group over here that God's going to make sure the universe gets even with.
24. If that's you – please hear this: There's no groups.
- a. We're **ALL** Sinners apart from Christ.
  - b. And all us sinners are saved the same way,
  - c. By trusting that the work of Christ pays our debt & brings God's forgiveness.
25. In 1 John 1:9 we find this
- If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.
- a. "ALL" – not some.
  - b. There's a **Condition** = "**IF** we confess our sins" The Result is, "[God] is faithful & just to forgive."
  - c. The 18<sup>th</sup> C Prussian king Frederick II visited a prison in Berlin.
    - 1) As king he had the power to pardon, so the inmates all pleaded their innocence. **All except one.**
    - 2) He sat quietly while the rest called to the king.
    - 3) Frederick saw him & asked what he was there for. He replied, "Armed robbery, Your Honor."
    - 4) The king asked, "Were you guilty?" He said, "Yes, Sir. I entirely deserve my punishment."
    - 5) Frederick gave the order: "Release this guilty man. We don't want him corrupting all these good, innocent people."
26. That illustrates 1 John 1:9 when it says,
- If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive
- a. To *confess* means to *agree with*.
  - b. When we confess our sins, we **agree with what God** says about them.
  - c. But we agree with **ALL** God says about them.
  - d. And what He says is that they are wrong and must be punished.
  - e. But we agree that Jesus **took our place** in that punishment.
  - f. That's why John says God is **faithful & just** to forgive us – because Jesus already paid for them.
  - g. Therefore, God would be UNJUST to make us pay as well.
  - h. It would demean the work of Christ to add more punishment to our sentence.
  - i. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. My sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.
  - j. So when we confess our sin, we not only admit it was wrong, we acknowledge Christ paid for it & now we're forgiven!
  - k. To Jesus' final statement on the cross "It is finished!" All we say is AMEN!