

THE SCROLLS

Making Lemonade: Finding Faith When Life Turns Sour | Genesis 49:29-50:26

Life Lesson

We can entrust our deepest hurts, uncertainties, and fears to God because His sovereign providence is complete, His grace surpasses human sin, and His promises endure beyond death. Just as Joseph recognized that God deliberately incorporated the dark threads of betrayal and hardship into a tapestry of life-saving redemption, we are reminded that no season of suffering in a believer's life is wasted, nor is any enemy powerful enough to prevent God's good plans for us. God truly works all things for His glory and our good.

Examine Scripture

Read Genesis 47:13-31

As you read Scripture, slow down and ask these three questions to move from information to transformation:

1. *What does this passage reveal about who God is?*
2. *How is God calling you to grow or change?*
3. *What is God leading you to do or who is He calling you to be in your everyday life?*

-From the Sermon Series Bookmark and Sermon Notes

Lemons to Lemonade

In Genesis 49:29-50:26, we witness the deathbeds of both Jacob and Joseph. Humanly, everything appears to be falling apart. God's chosen family is far from the Promised Land and surrounded by Egypt's pagan splendor. Darkness and the threat of future bondage hang in the air. But as the patriarchal age comes to a close, Genesis does not leave us in despair. Beneath the surface of grief and exile, an invisible, almighty hand is at work. In Jacob's death, we see a patriarch who refuses an Egyptian tomb, anchoring his final breath to the covenant promise of Canaan. In Joseph's brothers' anxiety, we see the lingering pain of unresolved guilt and the lavish, Christ-like grace that forgives it.

In the famous summit of Genesis 50:20, we uncover the profound doctrine of divine harmony: that while men plan evil, a sovereign God actively weaves those very threads into a tapestry of salvation. In the silent testimony of Joseph's bones, we are reminded that God's promises do not end at the grave. Here, in the dying words of patriarchs and the providence of an unshakeable God, we discover a truth that echoes all the way to the cross of Jesus Christ: **God does not merely react to bad situations; He sovereignly rules over them, turning mankind's greatest evils into the ultimate display of His glory.**

49:29-33

Jacob is dying in Egypt, surrounded by royal comfort and power. Yet his final request is not for an Egyptian monument but for an obscure cave in Canaan. Why? Because Machpelah was the down payment on God's covenant promise. To be buried there was a declaration of faith: Egypt is not our home; God's promised land is. Even in Egypt, Jacob never lost sight of God's promise. As Charles Spurgeon wrote, "Faith looks beyond the present scene of things. Jacob died in Egypt, but he lived in the promise of Canaan."

Observe the calm, deliberate dignity of Jacob's death. He is unafraid. He quietly draws up his feet and rests in the faithful God who has led him "all his life long to this day" (Gen 48:15). Jacob takes one last moment to give a charge to all his sons, then "he drew his feet into the

Personal Notes

bed, took his last breath, and was gathered to his people” (49:33). It was a peaceful death because Jacob has complete confidence in God's promises. In fact, the small phrase “was gathered to his people” is covenantal language. Jacob understood that, although his journey was over, his people would continue and see the fulfillment of all that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and himself.

50:1-14

When Jacob died, Joseph leaned over and kissed him. As he did, Joseph wept deeply. Sorrow and faith are not enemies. True piety does not suppress tears; it pours them out before a sovereign Father.

To understand why Jacob and Joseph were so concerned about their remains, we need to examine Egyptian and Hebrew burial customs. In ancient Egyptian culture, embalming was closely linked to their polytheistic religion and the journey to the afterlife. Joseph had his father embalmed (Gen 50:2) by physicians (*rope'im*), not Egyptian pagan priests. He removed the idolatrous magic from the process while taking advantage of its practical benefit: preserving the body for the 300-mile trip back to Canaan. In Hebrew culture, to be “gathered to his people” (49:33) was not just a polite way of saying someone died. It reflected a strong belief in physical family ties and covenantal promises. Buying land in Canaan (Machpelah, meaning “double cave”) was Abraham's only legal property purchase in the Promised Land. By choosing to be buried in Machpelah rather than in an Egyptian pyramid or tomb, Jacob and Joseph demonstrated that God's promise to Abraham was more important than all the riches of Egypt.

Notice in (50:3) it says, “the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.” It was not just his family who mourned; it was all of Egypt. It could have been because of Joseph's influence and salvation during the famine, or because Jacob was known for his incredible faith in God, which was unique in Egypt. Either way, it showed how God elevated Jacob's household in the eyes of the pagans, and the Egyptians joined the family in mourning for 70 days. It is interesting that the 70-day mourning period was just two days short of the royal mourning period reserved for a Pharaoh (72 days). God even used Egyptian customs to honor the patriarch of His covenant people.

To fulfill his promise to Jacob, Joseph had to return to Canaan with his family. This may have looked suspicious to Pharaoh, so Joseph asked for permission and explained why. Joseph remains a faithful, obedient subject to Pharaoh, but his ultimate allegiance belongs to God's covenant. He fulfills his oath to his father, leading a massive procession back to the Promised Land. The procession included the Israelites and Egyptians.

Once in Canaan, at Machpelah, they buried Jacob as he requested. The procession was grand, with crowds of people, horses, and

Personal Notes

chariots drawing attention. However, it was the intense mourning that caught the eye of the Canaanites: “When the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, ‘This is a solemn mourning on the part of the Egyptians.’ Therefore, the place is named Abel-mizraim. It is across the Jordan” (50:11). Abel-mizraim literally means “the mourning of Egypt.” So, the Canaanites did not understand that this was not an Egyptian funeral or foreigners traveling to this place; it was the rightful, covenantal owners of the land returning to bury their patriarch.

50:15-21

After the burial of their father, Joseph’s brothers were again afraid that Joseph might take revenge on them for what they had done. They wondered, ‘What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the evil we did to him?’ So they sent this message to Joseph... ‘Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and the sin they committed...’ His brothers also came to him, bowed down before him, and said, ‘We are your slaves!’” (50:16-18). Here, we see the ongoing torment of guilt. Decades later, the brothers still fear retribution because they judge Joseph’s character by their own sinful hearts.

Look at Joseph’s response in (50:17): “Joseph wept when their message came to him.” Joseph weeps not out of anger, but out of grief that his brothers still do not trust his love and forgiveness. Then look at what Joseph says in (50:19): “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God?” Joseph models true humility. Vengeance belongs strictly to the Lord (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19). Joseph refuses to play God over those who hurt him. Instead, he chooses to offer grace rather than justice.

Then Joseph offers the clearest understanding of God’s sovereignty and providence: “You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people” (50:20). The word חָשַׁב (chashav) is used twice in Genesis 50:20 to create a sharp contrast: “You planned (chashav) evil against me; God planned (chashav) it for good” (50:20). It means to weave, fabricate, plot, or calculate. It is like a weaver creating a pattern, or an artist skillfully using every stroke of the brush to determine the painting’s outcome. The brothers crafted (chashav) a plot of malice, jealousy, and evil. God took the same raw threads of their wickedness and wove (chashav) a masterpiece of redemption, not just for Joseph, but for them as well! Think about it. God used their own evil actions to bring about their salvation! It foreshadows the cross.

This is the theological summit of the book of Genesis: man’s sin will not and cannot override the sovereignty and providence of God. Joseph does not minimize their sin nor does he make God a passive bystander: “You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to

Personal Reflection

1. Is there a painful situation or past betrayal in your life that you still find hard to process?
2. Are you currently harboring bitterness or holding a grudge against someone? What would it look like for you to surrender the role of judge and leave them to God?
3. Do you ever catch yourself acting out of guilt or worried that God has not fully forgiven your past sins? What Scripture can you hold onto to find peace in Christ's complete forgiveness?
4. In what ways might you be becoming too comfortable in the "Egypt" of this world, and how can you realign your priorities toward God's eternal kingdom?
5. What kind of spiritual legacy and trust in God's promises are you passing down to the next generation in your family or community?

Commentaries

*Expositor's Bible Commentary
(Abridged Edition): New Testament*
Edited by Kenneth Barker

New Bible Commentary Edited by D.
A. Carson

NIV Application Commentary:
Genesis by John H. Walton

Mt. Zion's Mission

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bring about the present result—the survival of many people” (50:20). God did not merely react to their evil; He actively overruled and intended it for an ultimate good. R.C. Sproul wrote: “God is so powerful that He can draw good out of evil . . . He does not cause sin, but in His unsearchable wisdom and absolute sovereignty, He directs even the sinful acts of men to bring about His holy purposes.” John Piper echoes this thought: “God does not just turn bad situations into good ones after the fact. God stands at the beginning, orchestrating every thread of light and dark to weave a tapestry that displays the riches of His grace.”

50:22-26

God grants Joseph a full life, witnessing the fulfillment of the covenant's fruitfulness as he cradles his great-grandchildren: “Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die, but God will certainly come to your aid and bring you up from this land to the land he swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ So Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath: ‘When God comes to your aid, you are to carry my bones up from here’” (50:24-25). Notice Joseph's dying words: “God will certainly come to your aid.” He knew the Israelites were staying in Egypt, and he knew hardship lay ahead. Yet his faith rested on the unshakable covenant promises of God. In (Hebrews 11:22), we see his faith highlighted: “By faith Joseph, as he was nearing the end of his life, mentioned the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions concerning his bones.” Thomas Manton wrote, “Joseph's coffin in Egypt was a standing sermon to the Israelites. Every time they looked at it, it said: ‘This is not your resting place; you are going home to Canaan.’” Four hundred years later, Moses would carry those exact bones out of Egypt during the Exodus (Exodus 13:19), and Joshua would bury them in the Promised Land (Joshua 24:32).

The book of Genesis ends not with a question mark, but with an anchor. Although Jacob and Joseph both died far from home, they did not die without hope. They closed their eyes in Egypt, knowing that no human malice can thwart God's decree, no dark pit can derail His providence, and no grave can hold His promises hostage. The coffin standing in Egypt was not a symbol of defeat; it was a monument of patient faith, pointing forward to the day God would visit His people and bring them home.

For the believer today, the lesson of Genesis 50 is clear: you can trust the God who weaves everything together for good. When others scheme against you, when circumstances seem hopeless, or when guilt tries to convince you that God's grace has run out, look to the Cross, the ultimate proof that God turns human evil into eternal salvation. Put your life, your heart, and your future into the hands of the sovereign Lord. He began a good work in you, and like Joseph, you can rest fully assured that God will certainly keep His word.