

The Prince Is Your Brother

Genesis 45

You've never seen a scene like the one I'm about to describe to you. A basketball player stands at the free-throw line. His team is down by one point. There are only a few seconds left on the clock. Players stand on the free throw lane, crouched, ready to grab the rebound. The crowd is quiet. The cheerleaders gulp. It all comes down to this. You have never seen a scene like this. I haven't. You haven't. The free throw shooter hasn't. You haven't because the shooter is blind. The other players are sighted. The other team is sighted, but Matt Stephens, a senior at Upper Darby High School in Pennsylvania, is blind. Can't see a thing. His brother stands under the rim tapping a cane on the basket. Matt takes the ball, positions it in his hands. With only a few seconds on the clock and his team down by one, he prepares to shoot, and you wonder, "What is a blind player doing on a basketball team?"

The short answer is his brother wants him on the team. The long story began 17 years earlier when Matt was born with two permanently detached retina. He lost vision in both eyes before he is a year old. He can't see, but his older brother has enough vision for both. He has spent his youth helping him do the impossible. Matt learned to ride a bike. Ice skate. And when brother Joe made the basketball team, he brought Matt along. Matt never plays in games. He doesn't even practice with team, but every day after practice, Joe taps on the basket with the cane so Matt knows where to shoot, and Matt practices free throws.

For this non-conference game only, Joe has convinced his players, the opposing players, and the referees that Matt is the designated free throw shooter. But no one in their wildest dreams could imagine this. So far in the game, Matt is 0-6. Joe taps the basket with the cane. Up in the stands, mom tries to steady the video camera. Matt dribbles. He pauses. He takes the first shot—swish. The game is tied! The crowd goes crazy and then settles down. Matt needs to hear the tap-tap-tap on the basket. He takes his second shot—swish. The opposing team inbound and their desperation shot fails. The fans run on the floor and celebrate around Matt who stands at the free throw line grinning because he had a brother who believed in him.

Big brothers get us through things. They help us defeat the bullies. Keep us from getting lost. They teach us.

Do you need a big brother? Maybe you're not trying to make a basket, but you'd like to make a living. Make a friend. Make ends meet. Make sense of your challenges.

Every story has a climax. Every book written and every movie made has a climax. There is one moment in that story when everything comes into focus, and the story begins to make sense.

Even Biblical stories have a climax. In Genesis 45 we find one of the most dramatic moments in the Bible. We have been building to this scene for weeks. Joseph reveals his true identity to his astonished brothers.

Joseph was plucked from being a prisoner in Alcatraz to being made Prime Minister of labor and agriculture. By the end of the day, he was wearing a ring and robe. Joseph is prime minister in the second year of famine when his brothers showed up.

- God Is Still On His Throne.

"The matter had been decided by God." Genesis 41:32

You have both good days and bad days ahead, God is in both, the 7 years of blessing and 7 years of burden, but God is in both.

Life comes at us in seasons. Some of you are in a season of harvest and good. Some feel like you are in the 7 years of hardship.

In the good days, be thankful. In the tough days, be mindful that God is still on the throne.

Joseph doesn't say much, but his life speaks volumes and inspires us. His theology is so powerful. Joseph says the words we have been waiting to hear. The great climatic moment is when Joseph cried, "*I am Joseph! Is my father still living?*" Genesis 45:3

Then comes one of the biggest understatements in the Bible. "*But his brothers were not able to answer a word because they were terrified at his presence.*" Genesis 45:3

In the moment when Joseph reveals his true identity to his brothers, there is a parallel with how Jesus reveals Himself to those He saves by His grace.

The real climax of any life is the moment when Jesus Christ reveals Himself to a lost sinner and saves that sinner's soul.

"For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified, all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers." Hebrews 2:11

The word translated "*brothers*" is the word used for blood relatives, but it also refers to Christians. The generic term *brother* in Scripture usually also includes sisters. In this passage, the writer of Hebrews is explaining how the perfect God-Man, Jesus, could call imperfect humans His brothers and sisters.

"Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." Romans 8:29

"And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.'" Mark 3:34-35

Jesus is our brother who comes to us in our need like Joseph came to his brothers in their need.

1. Joseph Knew His Brothers A Long Time Before They Ever Knew Him.

When they first arrived in Egypt, Joseph knew who they were. He recognized them, but they did not know him. "*And Joseph knew his brethren, but they did not know him.*" Genesis 42:8

Joseph knew Benjamin as soon as he saw him, Genesis 43:16. He knew Judah, Reuben, Simeon, Levi and all the others. He knew them, but they had no idea who he was. To them, Joseph was just a mysterious Egyptian ruler. They would not know who he was until he revealed himself to them. Their eyes were finally opened, and they saw him for who he was.

In our lost condition, we do not know God. We cannot recognize Him, even though He is our Creator.

Jesus robed Himself in humanity and was born in Bethlehem, but the people around Him did not recognize Him. John says it this way, "*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.*" John 1:10-11

We could not see Him even though He is all around us. He is visible in every blade of grass, in every star in the heavens, in drop of rain, in every sunrise and sunset, and in every aspect of nature.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Psalm 19:1-4

“O LORD, you have searched me, and known me. You know when I sit and when I rise up, you understand my thoughts from afar off. You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, you, O LORD, you know it altogether.” Psalm 139:1-4,

It stirred up 20 years of hurt and heartache. He’s on an emotional roller coaster. He at first put them in jail, then gives them free food. Sends them home, then has them arrested.

Judah confesses they have done wrong, and it melts the heart of Joseph.

“When Joseph could no longer control himself before his attendants he cried out, ‘Have everyone leave my presence.’” Genesis 45:1

2. Joseph Loved His Brothers Even Though They Betrayed Him.

“He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him.” Genesis 45:2

The word “wept” means he sobbed. He was deeply emotionally moved.

“Then Joseph called for his brothers, ‘Come close to me.’” Genesis 45:4

“He called for them to come to him” is not spacial term. It’s not about proximity. It’s a term of intimacy, like a parent saying, “Come here, son.”

“When they came close he said to them, ‘I am Joseph your brother, the one you sold into Egypt. Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves for seeking me here because it was God who sent me here to save lives.’” Genesis 45:5

He was forgiving them. He was saying, “Don’t beat yourself up for beating me up.”

Joseph looks beyond the sins of the past. He sees them through the eyes of perfect love and forgiveness.

“Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.” Genesis 45:14-15

“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Jeremiah 33:3

He knows what we deserve better than we understand it ourselves, but He does not deal with us on the basis of what we deserve; He deals with on the basis of what we do not deserve. He deals with us on the basis of mercy and grace.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9.

His brothers had already confessed their sin to each other, Genesis 42:21-22, but they did not know that Joseph knew it too, Genesis 42:23. Joseph knew what was in their hearts, and he was in the process of bringing it all to light.

God worked in their hearts and on their consciences, and they came to a place where they regretted their past actions. He kept working on them until they reached the place where they actually repented of their sin against Joseph.

We may think we have buried some sin or the other from sight. We may believe that it is our secret. Like Joseph, Jesus knows the sinner long before the sinner ever knows Him!

Joseph's love for his brothers was great, but our Savior's love for His children is boundless. His love caused Him to die for them on the cross, John 10:11, Romans 5:8. Thank God for His boundless, matchless, eternal, saving love!

Joseph loved his brothers even when it seemed that he was acting in hate toward them. He spoke to them harshly when they first arrived in Egypt, Genesis 42:7. He accused the brothers of being spies and imprisoned them all, Genesis 42:17. Then, Joseph placed a heavy demand on them. He imprisoned Simeon and told the rest to go home and bring back their youngest brother Benjamin as proof that they were telling the truth, Genesis 42:18-34. Then, he had his own silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack to break the last of their self-confidence, Genesis 44:1-13.

From our perspective, and from that of his brothers, his actions were anything but loving. Yet, as harsh as his actions seem, Joseph did all of these things out of love.

3. Joseph Cared For His Brothers Even Though They Didn't Deserve It.

"Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'" Genesis 45:9-11

Joseph promised them the finest life. He kissed them all and loved them. He talked with them. Not to them. Or at them. Not over them. He talked with them.

The sons of Jacob are reconciling their differences.

In a moment, they went from barren to blessed because they discovered the Prince of Egypt was their brother.

Like Joseph's brothers, you have some things you regret. You have hurt someone you loved. We all come to the Prince of Heaven seeking forgiveness. We come seeking help. We come seeking mercy. We come seeking grace, and we find forgiveness. He is your brother who watches over you.

You will get through what you're going through, not because you're strong, but because of Jesus.

His brothers had driven him away; he calls them to come near, Genesis 45:4

His brothers had left him without comfort or home. He encourages his brothers and comforts them, Genesis 45:5

His brothers had been willing to allow him to die of starvation and thirst in a pit. He gave them provisions for their trip home to Canaan, Genesis 45:21

His brothers sent him away on the back of a camel. He sends them home on fine Egyptian carts, Genesis 45:21

His brothers had ripped the coat of many colors off his back. He gives them the most expensive garments of Egypt, Genesis 45:22

His brothers sold him for silver. Joseph gives them silver for their trip, Genesis 45:22

That is grace and that is the essence of forgiveness.

“Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.” “You are also directed to tell them, ‘Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.’” So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes.” Genesis 45:17-22

“They told Jacob, “Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.” Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, “I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.” Genesis 45:26-28

Have you ever been hurt by someone else? Have you ever been offended? Have there been times when people have done you wrong? What do you do when that happens in your life?

We have the example of Joseph. He forgave his brothers. We also have example of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He was hanging on the cross, about to die for sin, as the religious leaders and the crowds passed by mocking Him, He prayed for their forgiveness, Luke 23:34.

How could Joseph forgive his brothers like he did?

Joseph could forgive because he could see the hand of God in everything that happened to him, v. 5, 7, 9.

Joseph had been hurt deeply by his brothers, but he knew that God was behind every disruption in his life. His brothers were guilty of mistreating him, but Joseph knew that even their sins were part of God’s plan for Joseph’s life.

If you and I are going to get past the hurts we experience, we must adopt the same attitude. If something takes place in your life or mine, it does so only because God gave it permission to occur. He is behind every single event that takes place, even the hurts we experience.

“I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven” Matthew 5:44-45

Are you living in fear and doubt over the situations in your life?

Our Lord is enough for your situation. Bring it to Him, leave it with Him and look to Him for the peace and help you need.