

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church

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DHW

LESSON 35

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Chapter 45

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this chapter is several-fold – reconciliation, forgiveness, God’s sovereignty and the fulfilment of His will. Joseph presents a good example of how to forgive and be reconciled with his brothers. Reconciliation and forgiveness are only possible when we recognise the providential hand of God in our lives. Joseph explained that he could forgive and love his brothers in spite of the evil that they had done to him and the years of suffering and separation from his father because he could see the hand of God planning the wonderful picture of salvation for the whole family.

Troubles and tribulations are not uncommon in life. Sometimes we undergo trials because of what

others had done. A natural tendency is to retaliate and take revenge. But a much better thing to do is to be able to discern and recognise God’s sovereignty and the working of His will in these circumstances in our lives. It will be easier for us to forgive those who have hurt and harmed us. In the process, we will be freed from the bondage of being bitter instead of indulging in self-pity or self-righteousness.

The following is an outline of the chapter:

- 1) Joseph revealed his real identity to his brothers (vv. 1-8);
- 2) Joseph instructed his brothers to bring their father to Egypt because of the drought (vv. 9-15);
- 3) Pharaoh and his servants were pleased and welcomed Joseph and his father’s family (vv. 16-20);
- 4) Joseph sent his brothers back to Canaan to fetch their father back to Egypt (vv. 21.24);
- 5) Jacob was told that Joseph was alive and now governor of Egypt (vv. 25-28).

STUDY THE WORD

Joseph Reveals His True Identity to His Brothers

Judah had just finished his impassioned plea for his brother Benjamin and for his aged father Jacob. Joseph could no longer control his emotion. He cried unashamedly and loudly. He wisely dismissed all his Egyptian servants before disclosing his true identity to his brothers. He was discreet in that he did not want the Egyptians to know what his brothers had done to him. This is a family matter that should not be for public consumption and gossip. In that Joseph was wise. A lesson we can learn and apply. In matters that involve our own family and the church which is our extended family, we should keep private such “dirty linen” from the public eye. How many times people are guilty of such behaviour, especially disagreements in the church

His revelation to his brothers was directly short and simple - *I am Joseph*. He then immediately asked about their father. Surely, he loved and missed his father who had been good to him. His brothers reacted

with fear and shock. They were understandably speechless. Imagine what could have crossed their minds at that moment – this Egyptian ruler, who had been harsh and tough with them, was their brother Joseph whom they had sold off to slave merchants many years ago! Undoubtedly, they were uncertain of what to expect, probably the worst from Joseph.

Joseph’s inquiry regarding their father immediately following his stunning revelation softens the shock. They were tender words. He invited them to step nearer so that they could study his features. He told them, *I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt* (v.4b). That should convince his brothers because that incident was only known to his brothers.

Joseph allayed their fears. He explained that it was God, who sent him to Egypt so as to preserve life (v.5). They thought that they had completely disposed of him whom they had hated and sold to the slave merchants. But God had made him *a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt* (v.8). Three times he mentioned that it was God’s plan

and purpose that he was sent to Egypt. It was God who exalted him and made him a benefactor to Pharaoh and his country. It was God who had brought him before Pharaoh, and God who had exalted him to his present position of being the most powerful man in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself! He harboured no grudges against them. He was not deliberately cruel for he touched on his earlier experiences only in passing as he assured his brothers that he was their long lost brother! Joseph used the name, *elohim* (meaning “God”) appropriately. It is the name of the Creator God, who rules and controls the heavens and the earth, and all that are therein. Those who trust God and walk uprightly before Him can discern the providential workings of God in their lives in times which are good as well as bad.

Joseph Instructs His Brothers to Bring Jacob Their Father to Egypt

Joseph continued to talk. He did not let his brothers respond. He went on to tell them about his plan for the future. He wanted them to quickly return to their father Jacob,

and tell him the good news that he, Joseph, was now lord of all Egypt. Joseph was not boasting. He did not say it in a self-glorifying manner. His words were intended to convey that he had the power to do all that he had said and promised. There were five more years of severe famine. They should move to Egypt so that they could be well provided for. He continued to reassure them that it was *my mouth that speaketh unto you* (v.12). Joseph himself spoke to them without an interpreter. He spoke directly to them in their native Hebrew tongue. That convinced them, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he was Joseph. Then he fell on Benjamin’s neck and kissed him to show his affection for him, and customarily kissed the rest of his brothers. This is the ultimate gesture to show that he bore no more grudges or ill feelings against them. After that *his brethren talked with him* (v.15). They must have talked about many things. Joseph would have shared with them what happened to him since he last saw them in Dothan. They, in turn, must have shared about their families and their father. It was probable that they also expressed their regret of

wickedness towards him. The reconciliation and forgiveness were complete.

Pharaoh Is Pleased to Welcome Joseph's Family

Pharaoh came to know that Joseph's family would come to Egypt. In the knowledge of how great an asset Joseph was to him and Egypt, and in gratitude for what Joseph had done, Pharaoh commanded Joseph to move all his family members, including their livestock, to Egypt. He wanted them to enjoy the goodness and fatness of the land. Pharaoh's command coincided with Joseph's plan! This is Divine providence! We are reminded of another instance of God's Divine providence – Paul's life when he was threatened by his enemies. They had plotted to kill him. Providentially Paul's nephew learnt of this wicked plot. He informed the Roman authorities in Jerusalem. Subsequently, Paul was heavily protected and escorted to Caesarea, away from danger. God had promised him that he would *bear witness at Rome* (Acts 23:11-24). God freely controls and even makes use of the resources of

unbelievers to protect and support His people!

Joseph Sends His Brothers Back to Canaan

The time for them to depart had come. Joseph generously provided them with clothes. He gave Benjamin much money and five changes of clothing. Joseph did not forget his father. He prepared ten asses of *good things* and ten more to be laden with corn and bread for his father. Joseph indeed honoured his father and his brothers. He was generous and kind. His parting words to them were that they *fall not out by the way* (v.24). The word *fall* means “to be agitated” or “to quarrel.” In other words Joseph cautioned them not to argue or quarrel among themselves. He did not want them to accuse one another over what they had done to him in the past, and he did not want his special kindness to Benjamin to be a divisive element. They were to remember that they would have many things yet to do back in Canaan and that they should do it without dispute and delay.

Jacob Is Told that Joseph Is Alive and Now Governor of Egypt

When they reached their home in Canaan, they told Jacob, *Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt* (v. 26). Jacob was shocked for all these years he had been grieving and mourning for the loss of his favourite son, Joseph. The sudden news that he was alive was too good to be true. He had seen his multiple coloured coat covered with blood! When Jacob saw the *wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him*, he was convinced and his spirit revived. The Egyptian wagons were not the same as the chariots used by the neighbouring countries. Jacob said, *It is enough* (v. 28). What was important to him was that Joseph was still alive and that he could see him again. He was prepared to go to Egypt. It was a triple joy for him – Benjamin was safe, Simeon was also home, and Joseph, his favourite son, was alive and very well. Praise the LORD God! It was not specifically reported that the brothers confessed their evil deed to Jacob. God clearly shows that a person who sins against another needs to confess his sins and

repent (James 5:16)¹. It is highly probable that they did confess their sin.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Reconciliation and forgiveness are made easier when we can see God's providence at work for the good of both His children and others. In order to discern this, we must know about the ways and thoughts of God. He has revealed these in His Word. That behoves us to diligently study His revelation in His inspired and infallible Scriptures. There is much to gain from spending quality time reading, meditating, and learning the many precious truths recorded in the Book of Life.

It is utterly necessary to confess and repent of their specific wrongs or sins to those whom they have hurt. This is God's way (see footnote below). How wonderful it is to see the whole family being reunited and happy!

Generosity is one more characteristic which we ought to

¹ **James 5:16** *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

learn. Joseph had access to a vast quantity of provisions, possessions and wealth. For his family, he was willing to provide for their needs. He gave freely to them. In this he is an example for us. Many will help their own immediate family when their siblings and parents are in need, but often not their extended family. As members of the same body in the church through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, (in this case Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church), we should also be willing to help and care for them.

The testimony of Joseph's brothers that he *is yet alive*, and Jacob's own exclamation (v.28): *It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die*, reminds us of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. We serve a living Saviour who is now seated at the right hand of God awaiting His glorious return to earth. Every knee shall bow to Him and acknowledge Him as Lord to the glory of God (Philippians 2:10, 11). When He comes, we shall see Him face to face.
AMEN