

Series: Beginnings, Betrayal, Blessings
Title: PROVIDENCE: UNDERSTANDING GRIEF, GUILT, AND GRACE
Text: Genesis 42-50

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?”

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. –Genesis 50: 19-20

Introduction

The overarch of the Story of Joseph

- From Pampered to the Pits
- From Pits to Property
- From Property to Prison
- From Prison to Prince

Each sequence reveals faithfulness on his part to lean on God, be faithful in his work, and have patience through the years.

The passages we are looking at today tell of the fulfillment of dream Joseph had as a youth.

- He dreamed they would bow before him
- He dreamed that his father, mother, and brothers would bow before him
- His brothers hated him and though they were going to kill him, Reuben had talked them out of it. Judah and the others sold him into slavery.
- They lied to their father, saying he was dead.
- Now 20 years later... We will see the fulfillment of the dreams and how Joseph handled facing his brothers.

The Story

Genesis 42-45 Grain in Egypt

The seven years of plenty ended and the seven years of “dearth” (scarcity) began, which also affected “all countries,” including Canaan, where Joseph’s family was living. Joseph “opened all the storehouses” of food, saving the Egyptians and others from famine (Genesis 41:53-57).

Chapter 42 The Brothers go to Egypt

Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to purchase grain, about 250 miles away.

Joseph’s inspired dreams—as related in Genesis 37:5-11—come true in verse 6.

- Joseph and Benjamin are the only sons of Jacob’s first wife, Rachel. This helps us understand verses 4, 20, 36, 38.
- The brothers go to Egypt and bow to Joseph.
- After more than twenty years, the brothers are still feeling guilty for their treatment of Joseph (verse 21).
- Joseph calls them spies yet sends grain back and places money in as well.

- They had to leave Simeon and bring back Benjamin.
- They return, tell Jacob that they must bring Benjamin and Jacob says “No!” until Reuben swears his own sons’ lives on the matter.
- Jacob lets them go but declares his sorrow if Benjamin does not return.
- Joseph hears them repent of their actions and his heart opened to them.

Genesis 42:24

²⁴ *Then he turned away from them and wept. And he returned to them and spoke to them.*

- In our own lives—even after many years have passed—we can turn to the Lord (and to others) and find forgiveness for our unrepented sins.

Chapter 43 – The Brothers are Tested

verses 1-23, 26-34:

- Verses 8-9 can be considered a foreshadowing of Judah’s descendants, who clamored for the death of Jesus Christ, saying to Pilate,
 - “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:24-25).
- Judah reminds Jacob that there's no use in returning to Egypt unless they bring Benjamin, as they were told. If anything happens to Benjamin, he offers to bear the blame himself.
- Finally, Jacob relents, but he makes them take a gift of Canaan's best produce and also return the money they found in their bags
 - See the rekindled grief that Jacob has and the terror of a repeat scenario.

Genesis 43:14

¹⁴ *May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”*

- Again, in verse 26 we see fulfillment of Joseph’s dreams. The brothers bowing.
- They have a feast and Joseph sees Benjamin
- Despite all that had happened, Joseph still feels love toward his brothers, showing great kindness toward them in Genesis 42:24-25 and 43:16, 23, 29, 34 (see also 45:14-15).

Genesis 43:30-31

³⁰ *Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there.* ³¹ *Then he washed his face and came out.*

Chapter 44 The Brothers are Broken

verses 1-34:

- They send the brothers back with grain.
 - Joseph has gold placed in the brother’s bags
 - Joseph has a **silver cup** placed in Benjamin’s bag.
 - They are called back and it is discovered that the cup was in Benjamin's bag
- **When the cup is found in Benjamin's sack, the brothers tear their clothes in grief and return to Joseph's house.**

- Judah pleads on Benjamin's behalf, explaining that Jacob will die if Benjamin does not return.
 - He offers to remain behind in Benjamin's place.
 - Joseph's silver cup may have been an instrument of "seership." (Verses 2, 5, 15)
- In verse 14—for a third time they bow and as a third witness—there is fulfillment of Joseph's dreams.
 - In verses 18-34, Judah's powerful plea to Joseph can be considered a foreshadowing of his Descendant, Jesus Christ, who later offers Himself as a proxy sacrifice for our guilt.

Genesis 44:26-29

²⁶ If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down. For we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' ²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. ²⁸ One left me, and I said, "Surely he has been torn to pieces," and I have never seen him since. ²⁹ If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.'

- It is a confession
- It is a pleading
- They are done and they know it
- They are at the mercy of the one they had harmed
- They are guilty

Chapter 45 – The Brothers Restored

Verses 1-28:

Genesis 45:1-2

¹ Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

- Joseph said twice to his brothers, "I am Joseph" (verses 3-4). He then stated, ⁵ *And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ... ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.* (verses 5, 7).
- He then followed with his offer to "nourish" the rest of the house of Israel (verse 11; see also 47:12).

¹⁴ Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them.

- Could you be so extremely forgiving (as in verses 4-8) toward others who have utterly wronged you?
- Pharaoh blesses the family
 - ²⁰ *Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"*
- He tells them to bring his father to him

²⁴ Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way."

- Pharaoh hears of it and tells Joseph that he will bless his family
- Joseph sends his brothers to bring Jacob, their father to Egypt

After telling their father: *And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them.*

Genesis 46-47 Jacob in Egypt

Chapter 46 The Family Reunited

- Jacob goes to the Lord as is his practice and the Lord affirms that he should go.
- At Joseph's invitation and the Lord's confirmation (by vision), Jacob/Israel and his extended family migrated to Goshen, in the land of Egypt (Genesis 45:9-11, 27-28; 46:1-7).
- In 46:4, the Lord promised Jacob, *"I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, ..."*
 - this appears to be a prophecy of the children of Israel departing Egypt under the leadership of Moses, some 400 years later, and "returning" to the land of Canaan (see also Genesis 48:21; 50:24).
- Joseph is reunited with his father.

Genesis 46:29-30

²⁹ Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. ³⁰ Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."

- Picture this reunion in your mind.

Chapter 47 Jacob and Pharaoh

- Genesis 47:1-7, and note the kindness shared between Pharaoh and Jacob.
- Jacob tells Pharaoh the story of his life

Genesis 47:9-10

⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning." ¹⁰ And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh.

- The Story is recapped – a summary
 - In 47:13-28 we see the years of famine and how Joseph saves the people and brings wealth to Pharaoh as the people must purchase grain.
- In 47:29-31, Joseph agrees to his father's request for burial
 - (Jacob now being 147-year-old) to be buried in Machpelah, in the land of Canaan, where Jacob's grandparents Abraham and Sarah, his parents Isaac and Rebekah, and his wife Leah were buried (see also Genesis 49:29-33; Jacob's wife Rachel was buried near Bethlehem; see Genesis 35:16-20; 48:7).
- Joseph's promise to his father is carried out in Genesis 50:1-13.

Genesis 48-50 Blessings On the House of Israel

Chapter 48 Jacob blesses his grandsons

As Jacob/Israel is about to die, note the significant blessings reiterated upon him, as well as the blessings he pronounced upon his posterity:

- Jacob’s inheritance of the Abrahamic covenant and its blessings (Genesis 48:1-4).
- The designation of Joseph’s sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, as birthright sons to Jacob (Genesis 48:5-6).
- Jacob’s blessings upon Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 48:8-20)
 - For the fourth consecutive generation, the birthright blessing is given to one who was not the firstborn—
 - Isaac instead of Ishmael,
 - Jacob instead of Esau,
 - Joseph instead of Reuben,
 - And now Ephraim instead of Manasseh).

Chapter 49 Jacob blesses his sons

(Blessings or pronouncements) upon his other sons, including things that would “befall” their posterity “in the last days” (verse 1):

- Reuben (verses 3-4; see also Genesis 35:22).
- Simeon and Levi (verses 5-7; see also Genesis 34:25-30).
- Judah (verses 8-12). The question is asked in verse 9, “as an old lion; who shall rouse him [Judah’s descendants] up?” Remembering that these pronouncements pertain to the last days (verse 1), the answer to this question may be, “Ephraim shall!”
- The coming of “Shiloh” (verse 10) is a prophecy of Jesus Christ, who descended from Judah (JST Genesis 50:24 identifies “Shiloh” as “Messiah”).
- Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and Benjamin (verses 13-21, 27).
- Joseph (verses 22-26). Verse 22 is generally interpreted to refer to the migration of Lehi (who was a descendant of Joseph’s son, Manasseh; see Alma 10:3) and others to the Americas, as recounted in the Book of Mormon; see, for example, 2 Nephi 3:2-5; see also JST Genesis 50:24-25).

Genesis 50:1-14 Blessings on Jacob and his family

- Then Joseph fell on his father’s face and wept over him and kissed him
- Pharaoh allows for the burial to take place in Canaan
- The funeral procession

Genesis 50:15-21 Joseph’s Grace

Christ-like Character

Fear of Ramifications

Genesis 50:17-18

¹⁷ *“Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.” And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.”*

- They were terrified that he would take revenge now that their father was dead
 - They fell down and bowed again before him

Face of Reconciliation

Genesis 50:19-21

“... Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

- What did they say to him? How did Joseph respond?
 - Do we pretend to forgive?
 - Do we wait for the right time to bring up the others sins against us?
- In these verses, how do you see Joseph—again—as a type of Jesus Christ?

Genesis 50:22-26 Joseph Passes

- He lived 110 years
- Promise to be buried in Canaan
 - ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”

PROVIDENCE: UNDERSTANDING GRIEF, GUILT, AND GRACE

DEALING WITH GRIEF

(The Father)

- Jacob grieved for years.
- He declared that he could handle no more.
- He lived a life of trying to protect himself from any further harm.

We see tears from Jacob, from Joseph, and from the brothers....

- There is a lot of sorrow involved

They are hiding and weeping

Openly weeping

Loudly weeping

Holding each other’s necks and weeping

Jacob says of his life, “Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life”

- This man has cried in grief
- He lives with PTSD that his other son might die as his first had.

Can I say something that might shock you?

God brought the famine to mend Jacob’s grief

- Let your grief be felt
- Let your grief be known
- Know that grief has a purpose
- Give your grief to the Lord

The brothers’ grief came in another form

- They lived twenty years with a horrific secret of their crime against their brother and against their father.

Their grief only came forth when they were confronted by their sin.

How was God getting their attention?

He placed them in need, so they had to go to Egypt.

How was he reactivating their seared consciences?

They also revealed their grief... but it came as a response to guilt.

DEALING WITH GUILT

(The brothers)

God will bring our sins before us in many diverse ways, so that we see our need of HIM.

God's Road to Reconciliation

- First, by putting them through some trouble and hardship.
- Second, by giving them visual reminders of their past sins.
- Third, by an act of grace.

Once our conscience has been reawakened and reactivated, then we must do something about our guilt.

Our Response to God

- Acknowledgment of our sin
- Owning our sin
- Grieving over our sin
- Repentance from that sin
- Restoration from the guilt of our sin

We want to judge people because their grief only comes after their sin is found out.

This story gives no room for that position.

Joseph was the one who had the right to judge this. HE DID NOT.

- We learn from this part of the story about guilt and finding our way toward forgiveness and reconciliation.
- A lesson I hope we will take to heart is the need to do something appropriate about our guilt.

Judah's account of all that had happened and the harm that it had caused their father is telling. SORROW

Please forgive!

Look at this again

Genesis 50:17

'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you." And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.'

This is what must happen.

- Hardship that brings godly conviction

- Guilt over the sin
- Grief over the sin
- Confession over the sin
- Asking for forgiveness for the sin

DEALING IN GRACE

(Joseph)

KEY PHRASE: Am I in the place of God?

- Atheism is on the decline
 - The idea that there is no God
 - The fool has said in his heart there is no God
 - Rom. 1 ¹⁹ *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*
- God has been supplanted and replaced
 - The age of self-god
 - The era of humanism
 - The season of relative moralism
- Are you in the place of God?
 - Your choice
 - Your way
 - Your rights
 - Your pain
 - Your feelings
 - Your vengeance
- There is but one Judge of all creation. We are not Him.

What do we do?

First,

WE MUST RESOLVE NOT TO PLAY GOD

Hebrews 10:30

For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."

- You say... God may judge them and make the account ledger even in eternity,
- You want them to pay in the here and now.
- If you must experience the pain, then they must be reminded of the sin they have done against you.

What is gained by your sitting in the perpetual seat of judgement?

- A retribution for the pain you retain
- A justification for the pain you retain
- A satisfaction that "justice" is served for your pain
- And with it a continuation of the pain you retain

Is this what we see with Joseph?

- 45:5 - *And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.*
 - Do not be distressed
 - Do not be angry at yourself for what you did to me
- **I won't even be angry with you –**
 - Reject hate and revenge, which have no place in a life submitted to the Lord
- 50:19 - *“Do not fear!”*
 - I am not going to do you harm
 - I will not be judging you
 - I will not be holding this against you
 - God has His purpose.... I will rest in HIS Wisdom

Is this what we see with Christ?

- Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.

NO! That is not what we see in Joseph or Christ

- Nor is it found anywhere in Scripture

Second,

WE MUST RELAY FORGIVENESS

- Relay is to pass it on
 - As God has forgiven, we are to forgive
 - Without forgiveness we are not forgiven

1 Cor. 13 on Love – It keeps no record of wrongs

1 Peter 3:9

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Colossians 3:13

... bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Luke 6:37

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ...”

How do we offer such forgiveness and find freedom from our own pain?

- We say we have forgiven but it is not forgotten
- The Bible says if it is not forgotten, it is not forgiven
 - God has forgotten our sins against HIM
 - Love holds no RECORD of Wrong

Third,

WE MUST RELEASE IT ALL TO THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

You say you can't.

He says, "You can!"

If you can and you don't, then you are still playing God.

You must give the Pain to God.

You must release the Payment to God.

You must rely on the Providence of God.

You must believe in the Purposes of God.

KEY PHRASE: What you meant for evil, God meant for good.

- Sin against you is evil
 - At times it is intentional.
 - At times it is in the moment.
 - At times it is in the quarrel.
 - It always hurts.
- God is doing something with this evil.
 - Bringing an opportunity to let go of the things that bind you.
 - Bringing hardship on you to draw you to HIM rather than to your own emotions or devices.
 - Providence means that He sees all and in all has a purpose.
 - Trust in God's ability to turn evil into good for HIS saving purpose.

The word for "meant" in both instances in this verse comes from a Hebrew word that **assumes a planning process, a calculation with a purpose behind it.**

- There was evil intent on the part of Joseph's brothers when they sold him into slavery.
- However, at the same time God orchestrated the chain of events so that Joseph would be at just the right place to save many lives, including those in his own family.
- God's sovereignty has exciting implications for our lives now and for our roles in Jesus' kingdom after He comes for us!
- You see, what Joseph realized so long ago is this:
 - Evil never thwarts God's divine purposes for us, never.
 - He's sovereign over the affairs of humanity even when evil people seemingly act contrary to His will.

PROVIDENCE

God's providence is God's caring provision for his people as he guides them in their journey of faith through life, accomplishing his purpose in them.

God's mission is to save people and shape them to be more like Jesus.

- The good God means to bring is
 - For your growth on the journey
 - To build up your faith on your journey
 - To bring maturity to you on your journey
 - To make you more like Jesus

Fourth,

WE MUST REASSURE THEM WITH COMFORT AND KINDNESS

Look at verse 21 in chapter 50

Genesis 50:21

“So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus, he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

- No more fear... you don't have to fear any retribution from me.
 - Walking on pins and needles
 - Fear that anything
- I will provide for you
 - Provide love and safety
 - Provide an environment of peace and restoration
- I will comfort you
 - Comfort the one who did you wrong
 - Jesus, come unto me
 - The Holy Spirit comforts
- I will speak kindly to you
 - Kindly to you
 - Kindly about you
 - The story must be one of healing and restoration.
 - It is not the story of pain.

In Fact the entire story of Joseph is not of the pain. It is about the providence of God and the model of forgiveness because of Joseph's trust in God's Sovereignty.

His Providence to bring you through your Grief

His Providence to bring you to repentance through Guilt.

His Providence to bring you to reconciliation through Grace.

There is nothing in this world so damaged

That it cannot be repaired by the hand of almighty God

I encourage you to know this; for without this certainty,

We should all of us...be mad

Agatha Christie – *“Appointment with Death”*

THE CHALLENGE

Give your grief to God
Bring your guilt to the Lord
Receive the Grace of God
Show Grace to others