

A Family Reunion Like None Other Genesis 45:1-28

When I was around 5 or 6 we traveled to New York to visit my Mom's family and attend a family reunion of Waters, Munroes and Backuses. We made the long trip to New York in our little red Mercury Comet. On the day of the reunion our family of five, my great-grandma, grandma, uncle and three aunts piled into that Comet and drove to the reunion. We looked like the circus clowns had just pulled into town as we spilled out of the car. There were hugs, handshakes, some cheek pinching and head rubbing as well as lots of laughter and noisy discussion as family members who hadn't seen each other in a long time chatted.

In my aging memory of that event I don't recall any surprises or shocks. No one walked into that gathering and introduced themselves as so and so who hadn't been seen in 20 years. But that's not the case with our passage today. **Genesis 45** is about a reunion, a surprising and unexpected one. Take your Bibles and turn there with me.

Last week we ended with a bit of a cliff hanger. Many of us grew up watching TV programs that made you watch again for the conclusion. The old Batman series did that all the time. A friend of mine listening to the message last week, told me I stopped at the best part. In fact, he hollered at the TV "Come on Howie you stopped at the Best Part!" At which time his wife came in and asked if everything was okay. So, Gordie, I hope you are tuned in today for the best part.

We like happy endings. We like a resolution. Ten brothers came to Egypt to buy food. Unbeknownst to them the governor of the land, the one responsible for distribution of food, was their estranged brother Joseph, the one they had sold into slavery over 20 years earlier. They didn't recognize him, but he knew them. I think his mind flooded with the memory of the last time he had seen them, the day he pleaded with them not to sell him off. A lot happened in those 20 years. His slavery, imprisonment, and promotion were all part of God's plan to grow Joseph's faith but to change the hearts

of these 10 men and prepare them to move to Egypt and become the foundation of the nation of Israel.

If the Psalms had been written when Joseph was alive **Psalm 25:2** would have been taped to the corner of his mirror to encourage him each day. **"O my God, in You I trust, do not let me be ashamed, do not let my enemies exalt over me."**

Over time the sting of their actions gave way to the overwhelming presence of God guiding him and guarding him, moving him to accomplish His will.

Chuck Swindoll writes in his book Perfect Trust, "It's impossible to pass through life without experiencing times when you cannot see your way through a deep valley. Times when the package delivered at the back door comes delivered in the ugly wrapping of death or affliction or illness or divorce... John Seldon, the old British jurist and scholar, put it even more bluntly. 'Pleasure is nothing else but the intermission of pain.'" Swindoll continues, "You may be going through some of the hardest days of your life. You may be wondering *Why? Why me? Why this trial?* When you persevere through a trial, God gives you a special measure of insight. You become the recipient of the favor of God as He gives you something that would not be learned otherwise."

Joseph had been there and now that's where his brothers found themselves. Joseph had given them test after test to determine their heart, to see if there had been any change from who they were. As they stood before him guilty as charged for stealing his silver cup, Judah spoke for them all and revealed a heart of repentance. They weren't going to let Benjamin be thrown under the bus and remain in Egypt while the rest went free. Judah was willing to be a substitute so that Benjamin could return to their father. Judah wanted to spare his father the misery and perhaps even death itself should Benjamin remain in captivity. Scholars consider his words to be one of the best intercessions in Scripture. The air was thick with anticipation and uncertainty. Judah had just finished his impromptu speech pleading for the life of Benjamin. They were waiting for the lord of the land to respond. It was now his move? He

spoke. His words were not words of retribution, but words of revelation. That's what we see in **vs. 1-15**.

I. JOSEPH'S REVELATION – vs. 1-15

Reveal parties are all the craze. A couple finds out they are expecting and gathers their family and closest friends. Often, it's some elaborate way of revealing the gender. It's a happy and festive time leading up to the big reveal. But these 11 brothers aren't in a festive mood. They can't help but be anxious. Their very lives hang in the balance. They are wondering, waiting and wanting to know the decision this ruler will decide about them.

In **verses 1-3** Joseph revealed his person.

A. He Revealed His Person – vs. 1-3

Overcome with emotion, Joseph spoke and gave a command. It was followed by a flurry of activity.

1. His command is abrupt – vs. 1-2

Everyone who was in that chamber was dismissed and made their way to the nearest exit. Some were confused why he would order them to leave and remain alone with these despised Hebrews. Left unprotected, others were probably concerned for his safety if they should rise up and attack him.

The 11 brothers probably wondered what in the world was going on, not understanding what was said but watching everyone get up and leave. We can only imagine what must have been swirling around their heads in that particular moment as they now stood alone with the ruler. It must have been agonizing torture to stand there now without an interpreter not knowing what would happen next.

But something unexpected happened that must have been even more troubling to them. This strong and commanding ruler burst out in uncontrollable sobs. It was so loud the Egyptians heard it and word reached Pharaoh himself. The guards may have wanted to bust into the room and make sure he was okay. Maybe they opened the doors and he ordered them to stand down and remain outside. The brothers must have looked at each other even more perplexed, astonished and fearful. Nothing could

prepare them for what was about to happen. It was his confession.

2. His confession is astonishing – v. 3

The ruler spoke, but this time not in Egyptian but in their own native language. What he said was a real bombshell.

“I am Joseph. Is my father still living?”

Stunned is an understatement to what they must have thought.

How did he know their language?

How did he know their brother's name?

Why was he claiming to be someone he was not?

Worse, did he understand everything else they said?

If he really was Joseph, why had he treated them so harshly and what would he do with them now?

Who is this guy?

Talk about a jaw dropper!

Shocked doesn't adequately convey what they must have felt and thought in that moment. Our passage says they couldn't even answer him and that they were terrified. That word means to be greatly frightened and alarmed. To put it another way, they were scared speechless. The color drained from their faces, words failed them, it was difficult to catch a breath, and the room started spinning.

If this was truly who he said he was, they were now doubly afraid what he would do to them what they had done to him.

If he had spent five years as a slave, he could make them slaves for 10 years.

If he had spent 10 years in prison, he could make them prisoners for 20 years.

He had the power to do whatever he wanted to them and they were terrified because of him.

Joseph revealed his person, but then he revealed his purpose in **verses 4-15**.

B. He Revealed His Purpose – vs. 4-15

Note first his pardon in **verses 4-5**.

1. His pardon – vs. 4-5

Mark four words in some way.

“Come close to me.”

They are not words of condemnation but affirmation. It was an invitation to draw closer. They are not words of someone who is angry but the words of someone who is forgiving.

Joseph must have regained his composure and spoke calmly to them reaffirming what he just said about his identity. He continued by telling them not to be distressed. In essence, don't be sorry for selling me as a slave. Don't be angry with yourselves or with each other.

Now I want you to circle two phrases.

The first is **“you sold.”**

The second is **“God sent.”**

“You sold me, but God sent.”

And then in your margin write **Romans 8:28.**

“All things work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” God has a plan.

Joseph had learned to forgive them because he understood God's greater purpose in it. He chose to see God's sovereignty. So folks, never wonder why something happens except to know that God has a purpose for it. Though not inscribed on the pages of Scripture yet, he knew the reality of **Jeremiah 29:11** **“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

Yes, Joseph's 10 brothers meant it for harm, they had evil intent, but God allowed their evil as part of His overall good to save their people. But through it all He had to work in their hearts so that they could be the people God needed to save His people. God's purpose was to take all things and bring about good. Joseph could forgive because He saw God's sovereignty and also knew God's forgiveness.

Peter once asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone. Is seven times enough? The religious leaders taught that two times was enough. Peter tripled it and threw in one more for good measure. Lord, is that sufficient? Jesus said that as many times as you have been sinned against, that's how many times you must forgive.

Ephesians 4:32 **“And be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.”**

Colossians 3:13 **“Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, forgive as the Lord forgave you.”**

Kent Hughes writes **“Believers who see and embrace who God is and what He is doing in life forgive. Hatred and unwillingness to forgive comprise the province of hearts that are ignorant of God and His Word.”** He continues by saying that **“without forgiveness, there would have never been reconciliation no matter how much repentance of the brothers.”** Joseph willingly forgave.

You can add forgiveness to the growing list of godly traits that Joseph exhibited in this life. A godly person is willing to forgive. We see his pardon.

Next, we see his provision.

2. His provision – vs. 6-11

Once again we see the evidence of God's sovereignty in **verse 8** orchestrating all the events in order to **“save your lives by a great deliverance” (verse 7)**. Joseph explained how he would be able to deliver them. First, it was by God's sovereignty that sent him to Egypt and second, because of the position he held in Pharaoh's court as grand overseer of all the land. His position would allow him to provide for all of them and provide well for all of them. That's not only forgiveness, that's grace.

Recount all the steps, good and bad that happened to Joseph to bring him to the place where he could provide and remember that Joseph says it's all God. He had nothing to do with it.

Joseph had two dreams he shared with his family and they didn't take to kindly to them or him. He gave a bad report about his brothers to Jacob. Jealous and hateful, they sold him into slavery. He was bought by the captain of the guard and in time was put in charge of everything.

Potiphar's wife also took notice of him and lusted after him, but Joseph refused so she accused him of trying to rape her.

He was thrown in prison where in time he was put in charge of everyone and everything in the prison. After a while two high-profile prisoners came to be under his charge. They each had a dream that Joseph correctly interpreted. The butler promptly forgot about Joseph until Pharaoh had two dreams. Joseph was summoned and correctly interpreted the dreams for Pharaoh when all the other counselors couldn't. He was instantly promoted from prisoner to the palace in charge of all Egypt. The famine extended to the countries around Egypt forcing Joseph's brothers to travel there for food.

Let me put it in a different way, some of which happens because of sins committed against Joseph. If his brothers don't sell him into slavery, he never gets to Potiphar's house.

If he doesn't get to Potiphar's house, he can't be falsely accused by Potiphar's wife.

If he doesn't get falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, he doesn't go to prison.

If he doesn't go to prison, he can't interpret the butler's dream.

If he doesn't interpret the butler's dream, he never comes to the attention of Pharaoh.

If he doesn't come to the attention of Pharaoh, he never becomes the second most powerful ruler in Egypt.

If he never becomes the second most powerful ruler in Egypt, many Egyptians and perhaps even his family will die.

If you think that's all circumstantial, think again. It's God's sovereign hand making it all happen, just as He planned, even though He allowed sinful acts to be used in order to save a remnant to fulfill his promise to Abraham. Through Joseph, God would provide and bring about good and bless nations. Isn't that what took place in the life of Jesus? God allowed sinful acts to be done against Christ that would take Him to the cross where He would die for our sins, so that good could be done for us, giving us eternal life through our faith. Jesus's position gives him the ability to provide eternal life for us.

Joseph's ability to provide for his family is because of his position. That's what we see about him in **verses 12-13**.

3. His position – vs. 12-13

It wasn't possible if he was still a slave.

It wasn't possible if he was still in prison.

It was only possible because of his position.

They were to head back to Canaan and tell their father that Joseph was alive. They weren't to tell him about his enslavement or imprisonment, only about the honor he held in Egypt, about his position. They were to hurry as quickly as they could and return with their father.

If he wasn't willing to forgive, he wouldn't want to provide for them. He's willing to forgive because He saw God's hand in everything that happened to him.

If he wasn't willing to forgive we wouldn't see what happened next. We see his passion.

4. His passion – vs. 13-14

Emotions just poured out as they wept together, first with his brother Benjamin and then with each of the other 10 brothers. This is a private moment between siblings, and I think we are purposely kept out of ear shot of what they said. His attendants and other officials weren't allowed to listen in, and neither are we, but here's what I think happened. He went up to Reuben. They embraced each other and he whispered in his ear, "I forgive you."

Then he went to Simeon, embraced him and whispered in his ear "I forgive you."

Then Levi and Judah and all 10 brothers telling them the same thing – "I forgive you."

How powerful.

How moving.

How freeing.

No wonder they wept. I think they were tears of joy and tears of repentance. But I think there was more joy and freedom in the hearts of these brothers hearing those words than in actually seeing Joseph alive. They had lived with the guilt of their sin for 20 years and now the bonds of that chain were broken by those three yet impactful words.

Lest me ask a question. **How many of us continue to walk around bound by the chains of guilt from some past sin, waiting to hear those words, but forgetting that the words “I forgive you” have already been uttered by the Lord?**

I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Romans 8:1 “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Psalm 103:12 “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Let me add one more question. **Is there anyone who is waiting to hear those words from us?**

It could be a business partner who took advantage of you, your spouse or even a former spouse, a parent, a sibling, a neighbor, a co-worker, an employee. **What wrong has been done to you that you need to go and utter those three words “I forgive you”?** They may be waiting to hear those words from you to free them for their guilt. We have no right to hold them in that bondage.

I love the closing words of **verse 15**. They are an apt portrayal of what happens when hearts are freed from guilt. After forgiveness comes fellowship. **“Afterward his brothers talked with him.”** They had 20 years of catching up with him. Because he was still at home I wonder if he called in his wife Asenath and their two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim and introduced them. What a revelation it was for Joseph to finally let it all out. In **verses 16-23** Joseph talked about his resources.

II. JOSEPH’S RESOURCES – vs. 16-23

I note two things here.

A. His source – vs. 16-20

B. His sufficiency – vs. 21-23

Everything he promised his brothers and their families was made possible because he had the backing of Pharaoh himself. They had the blessing of Pharaoh. So highly esteemed was Joseph by all the people of Egypt, so indebted was Pharaoh for

Joseph’s strategy in saving Egypt, he gave whatever they needed for their journey, carts for the children and wives so they wouldn’t have to walk; sufficient provisions for the journey so they wouldn’t go hungry; and the best of all the land of Egypt when they arrived. They didn’t need to worry about boxing things up and hauling all their possessions down to Egypt, their homes would be fully furnished, their closets filled with new clothes. Joseph’s source for their provisions was Pharaoh. Joseph’s sufficiency for them was the best of Egypt.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul thanks them for their sacrificial gift that was both a fragrant offering and pleasing aroma to God. Understanding their own needs, he then penned this promise from God **“And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (4:19)**

God doesn’t provide out of His riches, He provides according to His riches and that is an unlimited treasury. **If my pantry is full and I tell you there are some crackers in the cupboard, I have only given you out of my resources. But if I tell you to help yourself to what is in the pantry, I have given to you according to my resources.**

Because of what Pharaoh had, he could meet all the needs of Joseph’s family beyond their imagination. It would be according to his riches. What was his, was at their disposal. He gave according to his riches.

Joseph gave his brothers food and clothes for their journey. Twenty years earlier they had left him in a dry well to die without any provisions, but he gave them ample for their trip.

Twenty years earlier they had stripped him of his robe, but he gave them each new clothes to wear. Twenty years earlier through his enslavement he was forced to walk to Egypt, he gave them carts to ride in.

Twenty years earlier they forced him to move to Egypt as a slave, now he was inviting them to live there as free men.

That is grace. We see God’s grace without measure given to us. He has provided for journey along the way until we reach our new home and with it He

has given us new clothes of righteousness. His grace has freed us from the bondage of sin.

Now, before they left, Joseph gave them one final word. In **verse 24** we see Joseph's request.

III. JOSEPH'S REQUEST – v. 24

Don't argue. They were still prone cast blame and point fingers, so Joseph told them not to quarrel along the way. It literally means to fall out of the way or to be agitated. It is used to describe what leads to a fight. Nothing makes a trip longer than when there's an argument.

Psalm 133:1 "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity."

The prophet Amos (3:3) asks a rhetorical question, **"Can two walk together unless they be agreed?"**

I think Joseph knew their heart. I think that what Reuben said back in **42:22** prompted Joseph to say what he did. **"Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."**

I think Joseph's request is a reminder of what he said earlier that God was the one who sent him down there, so don't fight about what happened in the past, don't become burdened again with guilt over it. He didn't want anything to delay their journey or to cause a disruption in the fellowship they had just enjoyed. What's done is done, so don't bring it up because God meant it for good.

I think it was also a way of reminding them that since he had forgiven them, they didn't need to hold it over anyone's head either. It just goes to show that God still has some work to do and we should take that to heart as well.

After his request, they headed back to Canaan. In the closing verses we notice Jacob's reaction.

IV. JACOB'S REACTION – vs. 25-28

In **verses 25-26** he was stunned.

A. He Was Stunned – vs. 25-26

Jacob had lived with the grief of believing his son had been dead all these years. Hearing the news that he was found alive in Egypt and was a ruler was hard to believe. It was shocking. The KJV says his heart fainted. To put it bluntly, his heart almost stopped beating. Twenty some years earlier they had convinced their father that Joseph was dead and convinced him with a torn robe dipped in blood. Now they were trying to convince him that Joseph was alive, but he wasn't convinced. Their speech left him stunned. He didn't believe them. But when he saw the supply he was satisfied.

B. He Was Satisfied – vs. 27-28

When he saw the donkey's loaded with all the grain, and the carts not to mention their new clothes, our text tells us his spirits were revived and he finally believed them. He mentally and physically prepared himself to go to Egypt to see his son before he died. Incidentally, he would live another 17 years. This is a renewal of Jacob's faith. We aren't told whether they explained how Joseph ended up in Egypt but by chapter 50 he knows the truth. But none of that mattered because it was in the past, Joseph was alive, and if Jacob trusted God, he too would have seen God's sovereign hand working in it for good.

What is our response when we read this chapter? It offers more than just a feel good, happy ending kind of story. Working from the end of the chapter to the beginning, let me suggest three responses that we touched on and this will lead us into communion.

V. OUR RESPONSE

A. Respond By Recognizing God's Preeminence

Never forget that God is sovereign in everything. He has a plan and nothing can alter that plan.

Proverbs 16:9 "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."

Proverbs 20:24 "A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How can anyone understand his own way?"

We read in **Proverbs 3:5-6** to **"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and not lean not in your own**

understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths (make your paths straight)." That means even when we don't know the path He is leading us on or why He is leading us down that path we are to trust Him. Put aside what seems logical and follow Him because there are times His ways defy logic, but they are the right way because it's His plan and His path.

Psa. 37:23 "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in His way."

God is working out all things for the good of those who love Him, even when that way may be painful or as the result of someone else's sin. Our response is to recognize God's preeminence in our lives, trust Him and obey Him along the path He is leading.

B. Respond By Recognizing God's Provision

There are at least 169 verses that speak about God's provision for us in some way. Earlier I mentioned **Philippians 4:19**. He knows the difference between our needs and our wants and provides for us.

Psalm 37:4 "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." That doesn't mean if we delight in Him, He will give us what we want. That's the magic genie approach. Instead it means that when we delight in the Lord, we'll want what He wants for us. It's put differently in **Psalm 23:1**. When we follow the Lord, we lack for nothing or He gives us what we need, because as the shepherd He knows what is best for us.

In **Matthew 6:11**, He gives us our daily bread. In **verses 24-25** He tells us not to worry about daily needs because the Father knows what we need. **Psalm 84:11 "No good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is upright."** That means God does His part to provide our needs when we do our part by walking uprightly.

We must respond by recognizing God's provision. We need to respond by recognizing God's pardon.

C. Respond By Recognizing God's Pardon

Let me just say, that if God were not forgiving, we

would be in an eternal world of hurt. When we follow the thread of God's forgiveness in passages like **Romans 3:23; 6:23** and **5:8** we see that we are all sinners who have missed God's standard resulting in our estrangement from Him punishable by death. But God who is rich in mercy, grace and love sent His Son to die in our place, by taking our punishment so that we could in turn receive eternal life. As we admit our sin and repent of it or turn away from it, while at the same time putting our faith or trust in Christ who took our sin on Himself, He forgives us our sin and gives to us eternal life.

Every sin that we commit, He is faithful and just to forgive us those sins. He can't tell us to forgive others when they sin against us if He hasn't already forgiven our sins against Him.

Psalm 103:8-12 "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Forgiveness has always been God's plan from the beginning.

Psalm 86:5 "For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you."

It is because of His forgiveness that we are able to take communion and remember what Christ did for us by dying for us. As we take communion this morning, remember His preeminence, remember His provision and remember His pardon.