

Introduction: The Bible is an exciting book. As you have probably experienced, there seems to be the constant and very subtle temptation for us to come to the Bible and read it in a routine, monotonous manner. It happens so easily. That is why we need to be reminded that there is a great curse in becoming familiar with holy things. If familiarity with reading the Bible and getting to know the God of the Bible breeds contempt, then we are treading in dangerous waters.

BUT here is the good news: when the Spirit opens our eyes to see the depth of riches contained in the Word, we will begin to possess an insatiable desire to know God through his Word. Our Bible reading and study will not be routine but a joyous adventure. And this is what we should expect as Christians. The Word is a treasure. Every page Scripture unfolds the grand redemptive narrative that is ultimately fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, and *it is anything but boring.*

Today we are going to read a story that is packed with intense emotion. It invites us in to sense the drama between a father and his twelve sons. If you like a captivating story, then I believe you are going to love the story of Joseph and his brothers. Turn to Genesis 37 as we consider . . .

“The True & Greater Joseph” Genesis 37-50

Context: Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Twelve Sons. . .

As we embark on this 14 chapter journey, I will be forced to give more of a sketch and summary than I’d like, but we will read enough to gain the sense and see how it applies to our lives as the church. Follow along as I read vv.1-11 of ch. 37.

The Joseph Story (Genesis 37-41)

Joseph and His Jealous Brothers (37:1-11)

- Joseph had a very nice robe. It has come to be called the “Coat of Many Colors.” This was a nice coat. Straight Gucci.
- The coat represented the preferential love that his father Jacob gave him.
- To make matters worse, Joseph has these strange dreams that elevate him to a place of superiority.
- It’s little wonder this sparked jealousy from his brothers.

Joseph Sold by His Brothers (37:12-36)

- *Summarize* Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were pasturing their flocks near Shechem
- *Read vv 18-24:* Plot to Kill. . . Reuben’s Plan to Save Joseph
- Plot turns in verse 25 with the arrival of the Ishmaelites. Judah steps in and suggests that they sell him into slavery. Unconscionably, Joseph’s brothers sell him for twenty pieces of silver.
- Read 31-36.
 - Jacob is inconsolable. The coat that once served to divide the brothers now serves to identify Joseph’s apparent death.
 - But there is a hint of providential blessing in verse 36. Joseph was sold to a man named Potiphar, who happened to be a captain in Pharaoh’s army.

Chapter 39

We don’t have time to read Chapter 39, but the theme of the narrative is provided in verse 2.

- While Joseph was in Potiphar’s house: “The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.”

God’s presence and favor marked Joseph’s life (39:2)

- Joseph continued to prosper Potiphar, but Potiphar had a wicked wife who tried to seduce Joseph. Though Joseph fled the scene, Potiphar's wife grabbed his garment, which she used to accuse Joseph of trying to sleep with her.
- Upon hearing this, Potiphar had Joseph thrown into prison where the king's prisoners were confined, but verse 21-23 emphasize God's favor on Joseph: "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him . . ."

Joseph's Rise to Power (40-41)

- In chapters 40-41, we learn of Joseph's unlikely and providential rise to power as he went from the prison to the palace. The means God used to move him from the prison to the palace was his ability to interpret dreams. In ch. 40, Joseph interprets the dreams of the cupbearer and baker of Pharaoh.
- Now pick up in (Read) *v. 1-16 . . . vv.25-36*
 - Consider this: In Joseph, we have the example of a true "public servant." Imagine that! A politician actually working for the good of his people Prime Minister
 - He used his position and power to serve.
 - Those of you in education, law, politics, medicine, law enforcement, military, any form of public service, be reminded through the life of Joseph that God has placed you in your vocation to glorify him and love your neighbor through your work.
- *Read 38-43:* Joseph is the only person in the Genesis who is described as one who is filled with the "Spirit of God." He is one who is "discerning and wise."

The Joseph Story (Genesis 42-45)

- In Genesis 42-45 we begin to see the divine purpose behind his placement in this prestigious position as second in command under Pharaoh.

The Unexpected Reunion (42:1-28)

- *Read 1-5*
- The famine had stretched all over the land, including Canaan, so Jacob sent his sons (except Benjamin) to buy grain for his family's survival
- It's in vv. 6-28 that . . . *Joseph Devises a Plan to Detain Simeon & See Benjamin.*
- *Read 6-28*
- Why didn't the brothers recognize Joseph? He was 17 yrs. old when he was sold into slavery. 20 yrs makes a lot of difference. He was dressed like an Egyptian, had the look of an Egyptian, and spoke Egyptian through an interpreter. Moreover, his brothers were convinced he died long ago as v.22.
- This is part of his plan to see his brother Benjamin and test his brothers to ensure that their character had undergone transformation. As we look at this story, it would be natural to read this as Joseph seeking vindication. *However, Joseph's motivation was not vengeance, but protecting and reconciling with his family.*
- In this scene, we see also a wounded conscience in the brothers. They are convicted over the death of Joseph as they discuss it in verse 24. They sense that justice for their brother's death is about to be served. Perhaps God calling them to account for their evil deed, or at minimum, he is disciplining them for their transgression. Did you notice their words in verse 28 [when they find the money in their sack]: "What is this that God has done to us?"

The Brothers Return for Benjamin (42:29-43:15)

- In verses 29-38, the brothers tell their father everything that happened, and he is distraught: Joseph is "no more, Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin!" (36) He was filled with great angst and trepidation at the thought of losing Benjamin like he lost Joseph.
- But after enough time passed and the supply of food was running low . . . *Jacob Finally Agreed to Send Them Back to Egypt (43:1-15)*
- The severe famine forced Jacob's hand for a return to Egypt. You can imagine that the brothers were particularly stressed and fearful at this point. They were fearful and stressed out because 1) they had to

explain why they had the money, 2) they needed to secure Simeon's release, and 3) they had to protect Benjamin, not to mention the concern of their aging and anxious Father back home;

Joseph Prepares a Banquet for His Fearful Brothers (43:16-34)

- The brothers are relieved from their anxiety over the money and dine with Joseph at a banquet he prepared for them at his home.
- Look at *verses 26-34*.
 - Joseph asks about his father.
 - He encounters Benjamin.
 - He seats them from the oldest to youngest and the brothers are amazed...

T: They think they are on their way back to their father, but Joseph has one more trick up his sleeve.

Joseph Plans to Detain Benjamin (44:1-34)

In chapter 44, Joseph continues scheming to get his family to Egypt. This time his Plan was to Detain Benjamin.

- *Possibly Read 1-17. Summarize and*
- *Then summarize Judah's speech in 18-34: his substitutionary offer in light of his Father's pending grief.*
- The story climaxes in chapter 45

Joseph Reveals Himself (45:1-8)

- *Read 1-3*
- *Read 4-8*
- In a remarkable story filled with twists and turns, Joseph provides the wisdom of purposes of God that run through chapter 37-45.

T: So what do we learn from this story? Let me give you what I believe are two valuable encouragements from the Joseph Narrative. #1)

I. Trust in God's providential plans over all the details of your life (Genesis 37:1-45:8).

At every turn in this story, we see God using the evil schemes of man to fulfill his purposes. We must not miss the providence of God in ordering all of the events of Joseph's life to get him to this point.

- Ironically, God used the schemes of Joseph's brothers to fulfill Joseph's dreams.
- We saw how the Ishmaelites sold him to a captain in Pharaoh's army.
- We saw how God used the unfounded accusations of Potiphar's wife to place Joseph in Pharaoh's prison.
- We saw how the cupbearer forgot Joseph's kindness in interpreting their dreams before Pharaoh, but how God provided another opportunity for Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dreams in chapter 41.
- Behind all of these actions and all of these circumstances, there is a providential God who is working to fulfill his ultimate purposes of redemption to preserve his people.
- When we read narrative, a lot of the time we moralize the text and reduce these stories that provide a list of do's and don'ts exemplified through the main characters. Do the good stuff. Forget the bad stuff.
- More than moral examples. God is the main character...
- This is spelled out in verses 5-8 when Joseph says, **"God sent me before you to preserve life. . . . God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God."**
- He says the same thing in the famous words of Genesis 50:20: **"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."**

IV. Providence.

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures (Isa. 46:9-11; Prov. 16:33; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Jas. 1:13-15).

- Providence is God, at work, behind the scenes, to accomplish his purposes in the world.
- Puritan pastor **John Flavel**, wrote a book called *The Mystery of Providence*. In that work he had this to say concerning God's mysterious workings: **"The providence of God is like a Hebrew word – it can only be read backwards."**
- "We see the beginning from the end. God sees the end from the beginning." – Dick Lucas

App...

- Suffering in this life is not a matter of "if" but a matter of "when."
- Jesus said: "In this world, (by which Jesus means this fallen world in light of Genesis 3) you will have trouble..." Will you respond with the perspective of Joseph?
- I'm sure there were days, when Joseph was confined to prison that he wondered how God could allow such evil to befall him.
- Sometimes God allows us to see with great clarity some of his sovereign purposes and the good he works out of the evil in our lives.
- Other times, we may only get a small glimpse, a mere taste of why he allowed suffering in our lives.
- But one day, when all is said and done, when we crossover from this life to the next, we will see the end from the beginning. As Paul says, **"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)**
- Have you observed the providence of God in your life? Can you give an example where you have been able to "read his work backwards"?
- I love the exhortation of **Charles Spurgeon** when it comes to trials: **"Even when you cannot trace his hand, you can trust his heart."**

T: Cross/Jesus . . . God has a plan... "the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son". But that's not all . . .

II. Receive and extend forgiveness in light of the forgiveness of God in Christ (45:1-50:26)

What do we learn from this story about forgiveness?

Forgiveness is enabled by God.

- 41:50-52. This is huge. We know what this is like . . . Naming a baby. Hard work. Important work. Joseph names his firstborn, Manasseh. Why? Because "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house."
- For us to forgive, we need God to do a work in our hearts. God heals our heart.
- Read . . . 50:15-21 "Do not fear, am I in the place of God?"

Forgiveness extends compassion and proper emotion.

- First, when Joseph heard his brothers talking about his death in 42:24, we see him turning away to weep. This is the first of six responses of weeping that Joseph experiences during the reconciliation account all the way to Jacob's death;
- When he saw Benjamin in 43:30, it says, "His heart grew warm" and he had to hurry in order to find a place to weep.
- Chapter 45: Joseph "could control himself" but wept aloud where everyone could hear.
- And in chapter 50:15-17: When his brothers fear pay back after Jacob died and beg for forgiveness one final time, verse 17 says, "Joseph wept when they spoke to him"

Forgiveness fuels love and care for the offender.

- We saw Joseph's ingenious plan to provide for his brothers and get his whole family, especially Benjamin and his father Jacob, back to Egypt.
- He was more concerned about their wellness. "Do not be angry. Don't kick yourself now!" You are forgiven. Your debt has been removed.

Forgiveness seeks complete restoration in the relationship.

- Not only does forgiveness not keep a record of wrongs (*No grudges, no vengeance...*), but true forgiveness is fueled with grace that enables a person to treat the offender as though he or she had never done anything wrong.
- We are after real reconciliation. I know you experience strife in your relationship. A small offense here, a big offense there. Conflict comes out of nowhere. How did we get into this spot in the first place? Forgiveness seeks total restoration.

T: This story is so shocking because Joseph's forgiveness and love is so shocking. But for the Christian, for anyone who understands the nature of the gospel through the work of Christ, this story should sound quite familiar.

- Joseph gives us a beautiful picture of the outrageous mercy, love, and forgiveness that is found in the gospel. That is why I would argue that he is a type of Christ.
- Typology: James Hamilton offers this definition of typological interpretation: "**Typological interpretation is canonical exegesis that observes divinely intended patterns of historical correspondence and escalation in significance in the events, people, or institutions of Israel, and these types are in the redemptive historical stream that flows through the Bible.**"

Those who have experienced the enormous grace of God in Christ understand the gospel is also shocking.

- Joseph was sold into slavery for twenty shekels of silver. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, someone who was like a brother to him, for thirty pieces of silver.
- Like Joseph, Jesus did not simply forgive our sin, but bore the weight of our sin and the just wrath of God on the cross so that we might be completely restored to a right relationship with God.
- Like Joseph, Jesus did not use his power to demand but to serve us and save us!
- Like Joseph, in a much truer (correspondence) and greater (escalation), Jesus will have not just a few brothers bow before him, but one day every person who has ever lived is the one to whom all of creation will one day bow before acknowledging his supremacy (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5).

The Point: Jesus is the true and greater Joseph who forgives those who put him to death and saves all who come to him.

Conclusion

- Have you received the forgiveness of God? Nothing more important! Expound... .
- Who do you need to forgive? Is there anything you are unwilling to forgive? Any offense too great? Jesus has forgiven those who come to him for his provision. He has forgiven it *all!*
- Jesus calls us to follow in his steps. The call of the gospel is radical.
- **"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)**
- So let me ask you again: Who do you need to forgive? Whose forgiveness do you need to seek?
- Don't delay! Walk in the freedom of God's forgiveness and restoration today.

Call to Response... Prayer...