

“God Meant It For Good”

Genesis 45:15-28; 50:20

On a beautiful day in May of last year, I went for a day hike in one of my favorite spots in the Linville Gorge Wilderness area. The trail I was on took me from Shortoff Mountain to Table Rock. It was thick and rough in some places. There were switchbacks and places where the trail almost looked unmarked. But it was worth it when I got to the top of the ridge and was able to look back on the miles I had come. I think that's the way it often is when you come to the end of a journey. Though there were difficult twists and turns, you recognize how they were all part of the trail once you are able to look back on them from a higher vantage point.

Joseph's life, like a climber's path, was marked by hardship—sold into slavery, falsely accused, forgotten in prison—but in the end, he stood at the summit. Reconciled with his brothers, honored by Pharaoh, secure in God's providence. And from that vantage point, every trial made sense, every moment of patience bore fruit, and the story of his life is an illustration of God's faithfulness in full. This morning we've come to the end of our study of the life of Joseph, although there are still a few more chapters left in Genesis that tell the rest of his story. But we'll finish up with our portion of his life story here in chapter 45 which is the high watermark of these chapters. And we'll look back on what we've seen and bring some closing application. (Read)

Joseph has revealed who he is to his brothers. They are reconciled and sent back to Canaan where they will inform their father Jacob of all that has happened. And then in the next few chapters, here's a basic overview of what happens:

Genesis 46 – Jacob journeys to Egypt with his family after God reassures him in a vision. Seventy members of his household settle in Egypt, where Joseph welcomes them.

Genesis 47—Joseph presents his family to Pharaoh, who settles them the land of Goshen. Joseph manages the famine wisely, acquiring land for Pharaoh while providing food. Jacob blesses Pharaoh and lives in Egypt 17 years.

Genesis 48—Jacob blesses Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, giving them an inheritance among the tribes of Israel and placing Ephraim, the younger, above Manasseh.

Genesis 49—Jacob prophetically blesses his twelve sons, describing their futures and the destiny of the tribes. He instructs them to bury him in Canaan, in the family tomb.

Genesis 50—Jacob dies and is buried in Canaan. Afterwards, Joseph reassures his fearful brothers, making the statement that though they intended evil against him, God used it for good to save many lives. And Joseph lives to see his great-grandchildren, and before his death, he asks that his bones be carried back to Canaan, affirming God’s promise.

Now, by way of summary, I want to point out a few things in conclusion as we wrap up our study of Joseph’s life. I want us to think in terms of the lessons, length, and legacy of his story. So number one, let’s pay attention to:

1—The LESSONS of Joseph’s life (45:15)

“And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.”

One of the reasons why it is important to study the lives of men and women in the Bible is because of the truth to be gained by observation. There are things which we learn from them—their mistakes, their failures, and their trust in the promises of God. Remember:

Romans 15:4—“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

2 Corinthians 10:11—“Now these things happened to them as an example but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.”

This most certainly applies to Joseph’s life, so that from his example we receive instruction, encouragement, and hope.

A lesson in forgiveness

The first obvious lesson we glean from the life of Joseph is that of forgiveness. And while I won’t spend too much time on it here, I do want to revisit it for just a moment. Joseph is a picture of what it means to extend undeserved grace to someone who has sinned against us. Joseph forgives his brothers rather than holding onto bitterness.

The only way that Joseph could forgive his brothers was by the grace of God in his life. That’s the only way that any of us can truly forgive. It isn’t something external, something we work up ourselves. Rather, it is only possible by the life of Christ on the inside of us as believers. The forgiveness that Joseph demonstrates is foreign to the understanding of the world. Holding a grudge,

harboring bitterness, and having resentment toward those who wrong us is the way of the world. Jesus said forgiven people forgive people.

Matthew 18:21-22—“Then Peter came up and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven time?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”

Jesus then presents a parable in which a king desired to settle accounts with his servants. There was one servant who owed him 10,000 talents. To put it in perspective, one talent was worth about twenty years worth of labor for an average worker. So 10,000 talents would have amounted to around 200,000 years worth of the average salary. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold along with all that he had in order for payment to be made. All the servant could do was fall on his knees and appeal to the mercy of his master.

Matthew 18:27—“And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.”

You would think that he would have had a new perspective on life, right? That’s not what happens. Instead, this same servant goes out and finds a fellow servant who owes him a hundred denarii, which was roughly three months worth of average pay. It is still a substantial amount, but certainly not in comparison to the amount that he himself owed. And rather than forgiving as he had been forgiven, he went and had his fellow servant locked up in prison until he could pay the debt. And the point is that it was hypocrisy on his part.

Matthew 6:14-15—“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.”

Think of how God has forgiven you in Christ. The Bible says that we've been 'judicially' forgiven. It is legal and once-for-all. As the righteous Judge, God removes the guilt and penalty of sin the moment a person trusts Christ. That means we have been released from sin's debt. That debt has been paid in full by the blood of Jesus. His death has satisfied the righteous demands of God's justice. And now, I stand forgiven and fully accepted in Christ. But then on a daily basis, I am 'practically' forgiven as I confess my sins and shortcomings to God. It is relational and ongoing. Though a believer's judicial forgiveness is secure, sin can still hinder practical fellowship with God or with others. I'm in need of practical, relational forgiveness when I've sinned against another person.

Ephesians 4:30-32—“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Nothing grieves the Holy Spirit any more so in our lives as our refusal to extend grace and forgiveness to those who have wronged us. As those who understand what God has forgiven us of, we are then free to forgive other people who have wronged us in some way. Friends, that is the kind of forgiveness illustrated in Joseph's life. And we're able to see the depth of that forgiveness displayed as he brings his brothers close to himself, graciously embraces them, and extends to them the kiss of reconciliation.

A lesson in faithfulness

A second lesson we can glean from Joseph's life involves a lesson in faithfulness. Despite all that he was up against in his life, he exemplifies faith and perseverance. Faith in the promises of God, and perseverance in the pressures of life. When you and I come to the end of our own lives, is there anything more important than that? We believed in God's promises and kept moving forward when under pressure. Such is the testimony of 'Hebrews 11' styled faith. Joseph was faithful, but more important than that is the faithfulness of God. Providence is written all over these chapters in the book of Genesis. And that may be the most important take away of all—God is faithful to accomplish His purposes in our lives even when circumstances seem to say otherwise. And because of God's faithfulness, what we now find here at the close of Genesis 45 is reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers and—very soon—a reunion with his father.

God's faithfulness is further seen in the way that Joseph is instrumental in providing for his family during a severe time of famine. When Pharaoh finds out about how Joseph and his brothers are reunited, he has a royal transport provided for the whole family. They were to bring their whole family to Egypt. He says to them in verse 19, "Take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours." Their newfound connections meant that they would never have another need! And so that is what happens. The brothers pull up in the driveway in brand new Egyptian BMW's (Big Merciful Wagons) and have some 'good news' to tell their father. The faithfulness of God!

A lesson in fulfillment

Joseph's life is a living testimony to how the plan of God is brought about in the lives of His people. What begins with tragedy and is marked by trials along the way will now end in triumph as he is reunited with his father Jacob. A family reunion is how these chapters in Genesis will conclude.

When his sons tell him that Joseph was still alive and is the ruler of Egypt, verse 26 says that Jacob's heart became numb and he didn't believe them. Something we notice in the book of Genesis is that Jacob's life shows a consistent tendency to assume the worst in difficult situations, often responding in fear, pessimism, or despair before trusting God's promises. Here are some of the ways he displayed this pattern:

- In terms of family conflicts, Jacob assumed the worst (Gen. 27–32).

When Esau vowed revenge after Jacob deceived him, Jacob assumed the worst—that Esau would kill him—and fled in fear rather than trusting in God's covenant promise. Then later, when preparing to meet Esau again (Gen. 32), he expected an attack rather than reconciliation, though God had already promised to protect him.

- In times of personal loss, Jacob assumed the worst (Gen. 37:31–35).

When Joseph's brothers brought him the bloodied coat, Jacob immediately concluded Joseph was dead. He never paused to investigate or consider another possibility. His grief led him to despair as if hope were gone.

- In tests of uncertain outcomes, Jacob assumed the worst (Gen. 42:36).

When his sons reported that Simeon was held in Egypt and Benjamin was requested, Jacob had assumed the worst by saying, "Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!"

Instead of seeing God's providence, he viewed life through a lens of tragedy and loss.

- In trials of old age, Jacob assumed the worst (Gen. 45:26; 47:9).

His sons now come home with wonderful news, but his first reaction is disbelief. And later on when he meets Pharaoh, Jacob described his years as few and evil, highlighting his hardships rather than God's blessings. His outlook showed a tendency to focus on sorrows more than God's sustaining hand. He often jumped to conclusions, saw circumstances as stacked against him, and defaulted to despair instead of faith. And yet God's promises consistently proved his fears to be unfounded. God is fulfilling His plans for Jacob.

A fitting question we should ask ourselves is this one—"Do I have a growing, maturing faith that is learning to view my circumstances from God's perspective?" A mature faith is such that it trusts in God's sovereign designs. A mature believer comes to rest in the truth that nothing happens outside of God's control. Even the painful, confusing circumstances are not wasted, but are woven into God's redemptive purposes (Rom. 8:28; Gen. 50:20).

Something else is that mature faith has perspective beyond just the present. Instead of being consumed by immediate struggles, mature faith looks at life in light of eternity. It learns to see beyond the moment and trust that God knows the end from the beginning. This means interpreting present trials in terms of God's larger purposes of shaping us into the image of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18—"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things

that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Faith recognizes that what is ‘temporary’ is working toward something ‘eternal.’ God is using the temporal stuff of this life to fulfill His eternal purpose in us. Mature faith learns that God’s plan is higher than our own understanding (Is. 55:8–9). That humility recognizes that we may not always get answers now, yet we can be confident that God is wise, good, and purposeful in all He does.

And then something else to consider about mature faith is that it sees providence in retrospect. Often, we only see God’s hand clearly when looking back on life like Joseph did in Egypt. Mature faith remembers God’s past faithfulness, and it becomes fuel for present trust, all while anticipating His future fulfillment of all His promises. The ‘big picture’ is not just surviving trials, but looking toward the day when God will make all things new. God has reunion in mind for His children!

Revelation 21:5—“He who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ Also He said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’”

When they arrive in Canaan, verse 27 says they speak ‘all the words of Joseph’ to their father. Words of hope, words of truth. Those words were not fables, but truth, and their truthfulness could be seen in the radiant countenance of those who relayed the message now to Jacob. The message to be declared was that a son who was dead is now alive, and he is Lord of the land!

2—The LENGTH of Joseph’s life (50:22-26)

“So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father’s house. Joseph lived 110 years...”

In addition to the more obvious lessons we learn from the life of Joseph, something else for us to consider is what the Bible says concerning the length of his life. When we are first introduced to him in Genesis 37, he is 17 years old. And by the time his story concludes at the end of the book of Genesis, he is 110. His story spans more than a century and he comes to the end of his days, but not before God's purpose is fully revealed in his life. Joseph becomes the instrument by which Israel is brought to Egypt. His life was lived as an:

Agent of God's provision

God raises up Joseph for the purpose of providing for his family to save them in a time of famine. This is what he says to his brothers back up in 45:7, "And God sent me before you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors." So that the circumstances and hardships of his life were important links in a chain of providence that God intended for good. Because of his position, he was able to supply food not only for the Egyptians but also for surrounding nations—including his own family. Without Joseph's leadership, Jacob's family may have perished. But God had made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob that He intended to keep!

Jacob's family loading up the wagons and moving down to Egypt must have looked like the Beverly Hillbillies! Can you imagine the reunion that it must have been when Jacob finally lays eyes on his son? The end of chapter 46 paints the scene for us. Verse 29 says, "Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He present himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while." Circumstances had not hardened him, but he remained tender throughout his life. And notice Jacob's statement in verse 30, "Now let me die, since I've seen your face and know that you are still alive." In other words, he says, "I'm ready to die." I wonder if you might be able to make

that same statement in your life? No one is truly ready to live who is not ready to die.

According to God's purpose

Joseph's life shows the fulfillment of God's purposes in the person who is surrendered to Him. We're told that Joseph lived 110 years, which in Egyptian culture symbolized a full and complete life. His was a life that had both deep valleys (betrayal, slavery, prison) and peaks (palace, reconciliation, blessing). And yet, when it was all said and done, the Bible says that he lived a long, full, meaningful life under God's hand.

The measure of a great life is not found in years alone, but in faithfulness. It is not about the years of one's life, but about the life in one's years. Joseph's longevity reflected not just length of years, but depth of obedience in those years. You can live long and still waste your days, or you can live long and fulfill God's purpose. Joseph's life is a reminder for you and me that the legacy we leave is more important than the years we live. Our days are numbered by God, and like Joseph, we must spend them wisely in faith, trust, and obedience.

Psalms 90:12—“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

Your life is a precious thing, friend. Life is a precious thing because it has value that cannot be measured or replaced. Let me mention a few ways to think about its value. First, learn to understand it:

- In terms of its uniqueness

Each life is tailor made, one-of-a-kind. Someone has said that God has given you a fingerprint that no one else has so that you can leave an imprint that no

one else can. Nobody else has your exact DNA or fingerprints, testimony, perspective, or purpose. And once that's gone, it cannot be regained nor can it be duplicated. Each day that we live brings us one day closer to eternity. We need perspective!

- In terms of its stewardship

From a biblical perspective, life is given by God (Genesis 2:7; Acts 17:25). Because He breathes life into us, it is sacred and not something we create or own ourselves.

- In terms of its potential

I think about all the babies we have born around here at Hopewell! Every little life has potential—potential for love, growth, learning, creativity, and impact on others. Even a single life can influence generations. Think of how Joseph made an impact on his family, on those who knew him, and even on us as we study his life today.

- In terms of its accountability

Joseph lived 110 years, but you and I are not given that guarantee. Life is short and uncertain (James 4:14). Its brevity makes it precious, much like a rare jewel that must be treasured because it won't last forever. Life allows us to connect with others in meaningful ways—family, friendship, and connection.

Relationships make life deeply valuable. From a biblical perspective, every person has eternal worth because they are made in God's image (Gen. 1:27).

The fact that Jesus Christ died for us demonstrates just how precious a soul truly is (John 3:16). And then we see how Joseph's life was lived in the:

Assurance of God's promise

I want you to pay attention to the last thing that is said of Joseph's life at the close of Genesis. Before his death, Genesis 50:25 says, "Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.'" Egypt wouldn't be his final resting place, for he was living by faith in God's promise.

Hebrews 11:22—"By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones."

That is the one statement made about Joseph's faith in the New Testament. Joseph believed God's covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—their descendants would not remain in Egypt forever but would inherit the promised land of Canaan (Gen. 15:13–16). Though he was exalted in Egypt and could have been buried with honor among the Pharaohs, he chose instead to be buried with his fathers. He identified, not with Egyptian glory, but with the people of God. His identity was not rooted in earthly success, but in God's redemptive plan. By insisting his bones be carried back, Joseph was essentially declaring, "Egypt is not my home! God has promised us something better." He lived and died trusting in a future he would not see with his own eyes. And it's a reminder for us to anchor our lives in God's promises, not present prosperity, for this world is not our home.

Philippians 3:20-21—"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself."

Hebrews 13:14—"For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."

Joseph's instructions about his bones was his final sermon. It proclaimed that God's promises are sure, that Egypt is temporary, that identity is found in being God's people. My friend, that hope reaches far beyond death. A final thing:

3—The LEGACY of Joseph's life (50:20)

"God meant it for good..."

One of the greatest lessons we learn from Joseph's life is what it means to live with a vertical perspective. Again, we have seen throughout these chapters that Joseph is a God-centered man. In nearly every sentence that he speaks, he refers to God. For instance, when he is tempted, he says:

Genesis 39:9—“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”

When he is put in prison, he responds:

Genesis 40:8—“Do not interpretations belong to God?”

When summoned to stand before Pharaoh, he says:

Genesis 41:16—“God will give to Pharaoh the answer he desires.”

When he gives the names Manasseh and Ephraim to his two sons born to him in Egypt, he says:

Genesis 41:51-52—“God has made me forget all my trouble...God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Then in chapter 45 he says to his brothers, verse 5, “God sent me before you to preserve life.” Then verse 7, “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant.” Then in verse 8, “It was not you who sent me here, but God.” And

then in verse 9, “**God** has made me lord of all Egypt.” In chapter 50, after their father’s death, he reassures his brothers that he had indeed forgiven them.

Verse 19, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of **God**?” Verse 20, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but **God** meant it for good.” And at the time of his death, Joseph was still talking about God. Verse 24, “I am about to die, but **God** will visit you and bring you up out of this land.” Verse 25, “**God** will surely visit you, and you shall carry my bones from here.” It is all the outlook of a God-centered, God-focused man who is looking up.

And then, most important of all, we must not forget all the parallels between Joseph and Jesus. They are numerous and deeply woven into his story, serving to foreshadow the coming of Christ. Some of the most significant:

- In terms of family and betrayal...

Both Joseph (Gen. 37:3) and Jesus (Matt. 3:17) are described as beloved sons of their fathers. Joseph’s brothers rejected him (Gen. 37:4), just as Jesus was rejected by his own people (John 1:11). Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver (Gen. 37:28), while Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces (Matt. 26:15). Joseph was wrongly accused by Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:17-18), and Jesus faced false accusations at his trial (Mark 14:56). Joseph’s coat of colors was stripped from him (Gen. 37:23), as was Jesus’ seamless garment (John 19:23-24).

- In terms of suffering and exaltation...

Joseph was thrown into a pit and left for dead (Gen. 37:24), prefiguring Jesus’ death and burial (Matt. 27:60). Joseph rose from the pit to the right hand of Pharaoh (Gen. 41:40-41), just as Jesus has ascended to the right hand of God the Father (Eph. 1:20). Joseph saved his family and the surrounding nations from famine (Gen. 45:5-7), just as Jesus saves humanity from sin (John 3:16-17).

Joseph was given a Gentile bride (Gen. 41:45), just as the church, made up of both Jew and Gentile, is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-27). And Joseph's rule over Egypt brought blessing to Gentile nations (Gen. 41:57), which illustrates the worldwide reach of Christ's kingdom (Matt. 28:19).

- In terms of forgiveness and reconciliation...

Joseph forgave his brothers who wronged him (Gen. 50:20), reflecting Jesus' forgiveness from the cross (Luke 23:34). Joseph eventually revealed his true identity to his brothers (Gen. 45:1-3), just as Christ will reveal Himself fully at His return (Rev. 19:11-16).

- In terms of divine purpose in suffering...

Joseph's suffering was used by God for a greater good (Gen. 50:20), just as Jesus' suffering fulfilled God's redemptive plan (Acts 2:23).

Friends, in a world that tells us to live for ourselves, make a name for ourselves, serve only yourself, the life of Joseph serves as a sharp contrast. For here we find the testimony of a man whose most enduring legacy is one that points us to One greater than himself. The greatest thing that can be said of anyone's life is that it points others to Jesus. There was a song by Casting Crowns a few years ago that said:

Make it count, leave a mark, build a name for yourself

Dream your dreams, chase your heart, above all else

Make a name the world remembers

But all an empty world can sell is empty dreams

I got lost in the light when it was up to me

To make a name the world remembers

But Jesus is the only name to remember

And I, I don't want to leave a legacy

I don't care if they remember me

Only Jesus

And I, I've only got one life to live

I'll let every second point to Him

Only Jesus

All the kingdoms built, all the trophies won

Will crumble into dust when it's said and done

'Cause all that really mattered

Did I live the truth to the ones I love?

Was my life the proof that there is only One

Whose name will last forever?

That is the way to live, my friend. Think of it in these terms—a life lived for the Lord leaves a lasting legacy. And one of these days when we each come to the end our journey, we too will be able to look back on every mile and say with Joseph, “God meant it for good!”