

Genesis 45

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[0 : 00] Bibles to Genesis chapter 45. You'll find it on page 51 of the Church Bible. Last week, we got to the stage in Joseph's story where after 20 years, he revealed himself to the brothers who had sold him as a slave and thought they would never see him again.

And now we're going to move towards Joseph being reconciled, being reunited to his father Jacob and settling in the land of Egypt.

We're going to try and cover a lot of ground today, which means there's a fair bit to read from this story. Let's hear God's Word beginning, first of all, in Genesis 45 and at verse 9.

It's his words of Joseph to his brothers. Now, hurry back to my father and say to him, this is what your son Joseph says. God has made me Lord of all Egypt.

Come down to me, don't delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me. You, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds and all you have, I will provide for you there because five years of famine are still to come.

[1 : 24] Otherwise, you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute. You can see for yourselves and so can my brother Benjamin that it is really I who am speaking to you.

Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen and bring my father down here quickly. Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept and Benjamin embraced him, weeping.

And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterwards, his brothers talked with him. When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, tell your brothers, do this, load your animals and return to the land of Canaan and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.

You are also directed to tell them, do this, take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives and get your father and come. Never mind about your belongings because the best of all Egypt will be yours.

[2 : 29] So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts as Pharaoh had commanded and he also gave them provisions for their journey. To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave 300 shekels of silver and five sets of clothes.

And this is what he sent to his father, ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. Then he sent his brothers away and as they were leaving he said to them, don't quarrel on the way.

So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him, Joseph is still alive. In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt. Jacob was stunned.

He did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, I am convinced.

My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die. So Israel set out with all that was his and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

[3 : 39] And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, Jacob, Jacob, here I am, he replied. I am God, the God of your father, he said. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt for I will make you into a great nation there.

I will go down to Egypt with you and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes. Then Jacob left Beersheba and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him.

They also took with him their livestock and the possessions they'd acquired in Canaan. And Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt. He took with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters, all his offspring.

And then there's the genealogy, which we will pass over, that is important. And we'll come to verse 26. All those who went to Egypt with Jacob, those who were his direct descendants, not counting his son's wives, numbered 66 persons.

With the two sons who'd been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were 70 in all. Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen.

[4 : 55] When they arrived in the region of Goshen, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.

Israel said to Joseph, Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive. Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, My brothers and my father's household who are living in the land of Canaan have come to meet.

The men are shepherds, they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own. When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, What is your occupation? You should answer, Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.

Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians. Joseph went and told Pharaoh, My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen.

He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked the brothers, What is your occupation? Your servants are shepherds, they replied to Pharaoh, just as our fathers were.

[6 : 08] They also said to him, We have come to live here a while, because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants' flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, Your father and your brothers have come to you, and the land of Egypt is before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen, and if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock.

Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, Pharaoh asked him, How old are you? And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The years of my pilgrimage are 130.

My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers. Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence.

So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Ramesses, as Pharaoh directed. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children.

[7 : 19] Amen. And here we see a long period of 45 to 47, sort of two and a bit chapters. But again, we're going to see God's grace in the story of this family.

I wonder if you ever find yourself reflecting, how did we get here as a family? What are the major points in our family history?

What are those defining moments that still have an impact, that still set the direction for our family today? There's a psychologist, an author in the States called Mary Pifer, and she reckons that history is inextricably linked to identity.

She asked the question, if you don't know your history, if you don't know your family, who are you? And I wonder if you agree with that sentiment, the significance of either political, national, or family history for defining our own lives.

It's certainly interesting to think about and certainly interesting to think about how did we get here? When you read the Bible, you see that God's people are a people who look back and who reflect.

[8 : 37] So you see them put up monuments. God speaks or God delivers, and you see monuments being established. There are people who recite, who sing national history, particularly thinking about God's dealings with them, particularly God's redemption of them.

And when you come to the New Testament church, what we see is frequent reminders to look back to the cross of Jesus, to remember his death, to remember his resurrection for our ongoing walk of faith.

Why is that? Why is it important for us to keep reflecting? Well, because in those reflections, we are being reminded both that we are great sinners who have need, and we have a great Savior.

It's a way for us to connect our own personal stories, our family stories, to the story of a helping, saving, delivering God. So here is Moses again, writing history.

He's writing some hundreds of years later, but as he writes this part of the story, he is remembering and helping the people of God, helping us indeed to reflect that God has always kept his promise to save and to bless.

[9 : 52] Both in Jacob and his family's arrival into Egypt, and then as Moses led that family, now a nation, out of Egypt.

So we're going to look at three big ideas connected to God's grace. First of all, in chapter 45, God's grace in the honor that this family receives.

It's so significant as Joseph speaks to his brothers, the number of times where he says, five times I think, he says, God has raised me up. We read it a couple of times in our section.

Verse 9, God has made me Lord of Egypt. And in verse 13, tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt. God has raised Joseph to this position of prominence so that God would keep his promise to this family through Joseph and through his position.

So we read verses 10 and 11, and we see the comprehensive care that Joseph will provide for his family because of his position. They can have the best land, they can take themselves and their flocks and they'll have food.

[11 : 08] Perhaps even more striking is that Pharaoh himself will honor this foreign family because Joseph, with the help of God, had rescued Egypt.

Verse 16 to 20, we see that. But especially, verse 18, Pharaoh says to Joseph, I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.

And he gives this message to his family. Verse 20, never mind about your belongings because the best of all Egypt will be yours. They are being honored through Joseph and his position.

And then as we got to the end of the chapter, as the brothers went back with their carts full of goods, they came back with this good news, Joseph is alive. And we see eventually Jacob the father's grief turning to joy.

At first, he's so stunned by the news that Jacob is, Joseph is alive. He can't believe it. But eventually, he hears and believes that his son has been raised up.

[12 : 13] And we see, verse 27, the spirit of their father, Jacob, revived. He's ready to go and meet his son. So Moses is writing a long history.

He's writing the long history of this family. But he's making the point again and again that God always keeps his promises. Beyond the challenges that were faced, beyond the challenges of timing, this family will enter Egypt with honor and they will depart from Egypt with wealth and freedom and honor.

It seems as if Moses wants to draw attention to the parallels between the story of Joseph and his pharaoh and then hundreds of years later, Moses and his very different pharaoh.

So when the family were coming into Egypt, Joseph's pharaoh joyfully permits them to come and enjoy the best of the land. But if you know the story of Exodus and you get to Moses' pharaoh, he grudgingly is forced to allow the family that's become a nation to lead.

It's significant the position of Joseph and Moses within Pharaoh's house. Joseph has been raised up by God to become a ruler in Pharaoh's household whereas Moses was a prince being raised in the royal household but he left and then came back to pull God's people out.

[13 : 37] When we've seen the actions of God through Joseph in this pharaoh, as Joseph was given the ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, that softens Pharaoh's heart and he shows favor to Joseph and his family but when God shows up in power in Moses' story to the pharaoh through the plagues, it serves to harden his already hard heart.

So there is similarity but striking contrast but the point is that the attitude of a ruler is neither here nor there. Nothing is going to stop the purposes of God.

The apparent disaster being faced by this family over the course of 20 years, family dysfunction caused by sin, none of it is going to stop God's promises from coming about. Nothing and no one can limit God's promised grace is the good news of the Jacob and Joseph story.

And when we think about who Moses is writing to, he's writing to the newly established nation of Israel. Here they are in the wilderness around Mount Sinai. They still are not in the promised land.

They're still weak and vulnerable as people. But here is encouragement to look back to their story, to look back to God's faithfulness in their story.

[14 : 54] And that's the same lesson for us too when we feel weak, vulnerable, when we are struggling to trust, when circumstances are hard, we are encouraged to look back to see God's grace, to see it primarily at the cross of Jesus, but to see it in our own lives of how God has provided and cared for us.

And of course, as always, we want to see how this part of the Joseph story points us to Jesus. So we see that God, and Joseph is very deliberate on this, saying, God raised me up.

And Jesus will see that God was raising him up for us, for his people. Jesus is raised up in glory.

He is raised up in glory as he obediently gives his life as that perfect sacrifice for sin to secure the salvation of those who would trust in him.

Jesus is then raised up in glory beyond death. Death could not hold him. And then Jesus is raised up and returned to the glory of heaven where he now rules and reigns and prays and intercedes for his people.

[16 : 11] And because Jesus is raised up for his church, Jesus is the one we look to to provide all that we need. Just as Jacob and his family, outside of Joseph's help, would be poor and helpless.

So we come to Jesus spiritually poor and helpless. But in Jesus, we become spiritually rich. If we trust in him, all those spiritual blessings promised in the Bible come to us.

Forgiveness, being declared just in God's sight, adopted into God's family, the assurance that we belong, the promise of heaven, all of those and so many more come because Jesus is raised up for you.

And just as Joseph in his position secured Jacob and his family's welcome before Pharaoh, Jesus secures our welcome from our King, our Father in heaven.

Jesus is our friend in high places. Jesus, as it were, says of his people, he or she is with me. The access, the privilege, the love, the joy that Jesus has, he brings us into that as we follow him, as we are united to him.

[17 : 35] And Jesus is the one, because he has been raised up, is able to turn grief to joy. He can turn the grief of our guilt to the joy of forgiveness, the grief of a fear of death, to the joy of assurance of knowing that Jesus will never let us go now and for eternity.

The grief of being an enemy of God and loaded down with a weight of sin and guilt to the joy of becoming a friend of God as Jesus forgives our sin and secures our peace.

Jesus is raised up for you and for me and we need to trust in him to receive these wonderful blessings. We also see God's grace in this growing family.

So we're now in chapter 46 and especially the first 27 verses. So in the book of Genesis we discover God has made a wonderful promise, first of all to Abraham and then to his son Isaac then to his grandson Jacob.

A restated promise from God that says I will make you into a great nation. And that promise comes into view again.

[18 : 58] But at the beginning of chapter 46 we find Jacob moving towards Egypt and we find him worshipping God offering sacrifices and then God speaks to him in a vision and in verse 3 we see I am God the God of your father do not be afraid to go down to Egypt for I will make you into a great nation there.

So there's that promise again I will make you a great nation and there is comfort for Jacob in verse 4 I will go down to Egypt with you and I will surely bring you back again the hope of the promised land is always there in view with this promise.

But think of this here is Jacob and he told Pharaoh how old he was he was 130 years old and now here he is at that age having to move out of move away from the promised land and he's moving towards Egypt and one of the places where things had begun to go wrong for Abraham his grandfather where the promise had been under threat the place where Isaac his father had been told don't go anywhere near Egypt now Jacob is going but he's being told I will go with you and in that context I will make you a great nation there's that wonderful promise as Jacob is on the move that God's love and God's promise goes with him God's love promise is without borders so verse five to seven we see Jacob and the family on the move and if you've ever moved your family you've had a sense of all that's involved in that all the packing all the organization all the goodbyes that need to be said here is

Jacob and 66 direct descendants all moving together from Canaan down to Egypt on this journey of obedient faith in response to God's grace and so we're told in verse 8 to 27 we didn't read it but we're told of this growing family tree deliberately in the middle of all the actions stick in a genealogy to remind us of the promise God had said that he's going to make them a great family and so we begin to see how big that family is becoming to remind us of our promise keeping God and recognize too that Moses is writing this history and by the time he is writing this family this growing family has become a nation the nation whom God has chosen and saved from slavery in Egypt so even as

Egypt returned from a place that offered blessing to Jacob come and enjoy the fat of the land by Moses' time we know that Egypt had become a place of threat and if we know the story of Exodus we discover a pharaoh there hundreds of years later who is afraid of the strength of these slaves that they have trying to basically crush them with hard labor then trying to kill the first born children in each family to remove their power but God protects God's people keep growing because God's promise cannot be stopped so again as Moses helps the people to reflect they're reflecting on a national history dominated by God's mercy by God's love by God's promises being kept so important to look back and see God's faithfulness what about us in light of the coming of Jesus remember the great words of Jesus when he said I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it and then that call to the disciples and the great commission you'll be my witnesses to

[23 : 15] Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth and as we look around 2000 years later at the global church we see God's promise is still being kept God is still building this family of faith and when we trust in Jesus we're brought into that great family of faith and that faith in Jesus then connects us with a local church but it also connects us with a global church and the church through all history so today God's people will worship with very different cultures than ours and different languages than ours with very different worship styles than ours but we will share the same saviour and we have the same faith and it's so important for us to remember just how big our God is and how big his mission is one of the reasons why we had our mission Sunday a few weeks ago to remind ourselves of just some of what God is doing through various mission partners that we are connected with but Jesus

Jesus builds his church God keeps his promise to make his people a great nation of faith and this is of practical importance to us today it's important for us if we're here today and we're not a Christian to recognize that Jesus would have you to be part of his church his kingdom our youth group on Friday we were thinking about the story of Jesus as he's dying on the cross he's speaking to the thief beside him that thief who says Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom and Jesus turns to that man and says today you will be with me in paradise as he recognized Jesus as Lord and Savior and in his only hope he turned to Jesus and Jesus in mercy and love saved him and promised him eternal glory with him do you see

Jesus as the Son of God as Lord and Savior then will you believe in him will you trust him will you follow him today so Jesus building his church is important if we're not yet part of the church but it's also important if we are Christians because one of our tasks is to be disciples who then make disciples of others so it's important for us to remember when we're sharing our faith it's important for us to remember that we don't save anyone in fact we cannot save anyone it's only God who gives new life but God chooses to work through ordinary people like us so we tell people about the grace of God we share our story of faith with people we want to show the love of God in our families in our workplace in our community to do mercy to love justice for the sake of God's glory and we pray for the people that we care about we pray for our community our country our nation our world because we know people that God loves to save we know that Jesus will build his church and he loves to work through his people and through his people's prayers one last thing to see this time from the end of chapter 46 and then into chapter 47 God's grace in a reunited family family there's something lovely about seeing family reunions we've been seeing family reunions in Jacob's story we were looking after two little kids this week for a mum and a dad and after a few hours we having looked after the kids

Vicky delivered them back to the gathering where the parents were along with lots of other people and as soon as the kids mum was spotted what would we expect to happen the smile came and he started charging through that hall full of people elbows flying plates flying old people flying because he wanted to be back with his mum even after four hours there's that sense of happy reunion back home so how about here in the story of Joseph and Jacob verse 29 and 30 Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel as soon as Joseph appeared before him he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time for both of them this is an unexpected joy this is an unimaginable joy they are restored together the father and son who loved each other are restored after the sin of those brothers had destroyed that bond for some 20 years verse 30

Israel covenant promise name of Jacob said to Joseph now I'm ready to die since I abstain for myself that you are still alive he can die happy because he's been reunited to the son he loves and not only will they be reunited they'll also be settled so that they might live together so again we see Joseph preparing the way we read that end of 46 verse 31 to 34 we see Joseph preparing the way for the brothers to go into the presence of Pharaoh so that they will gain a welcome from Pharaoh so they'll be able to settle in Pharaoh's good land again we see another parallel we see Joseph and his family they are shepherds Moses leaves the palace and he becomes a shepherd lots of parallels in this story but we get after the meeting in the palace we get a wonderful little closing scene in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 47

[29 : 41] Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land the district of Ramesses as Pharaoh directed Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food according to their number to the number of their children God has been preparing the way God has been providing for this family God is keeping his promise to this family reuniting them and then looking after them because this is the God who makes promises and when God makes a promise he always keeps it so we have this wonderful reunion that takes place between Joseph and his father and the brothers and they're now living together in the best of the land in Egypt beyond sin beyond the attempt of destroying the family there is reunion or reconciliation to use a word that the

Bible likes to use to speak of salvation when it talks of Jesus work to save us it talks about reconciling us to God there is a breakdown in the relationship between us as people and God and the break is not on God's side it's on ours because of our sin that perfect loving relationship that you and I were made for that joy that we were made for is broken because of sin but then restored by the work of Jesus Jesus is the son who takes our place to secure our peace we see Jesus on the cross being forsaken by his father as he willingly and lovingly carries on himself the sin of the world so that we might be adopted into the family of God welcomed into God's family because of Jesus it's through the punishment of Jesus that we have peace the cross stands at the very heart of the good news of the

Bible Jesus the night of his arrest and the night before his death in John chapter 14 spoke words of comfort that speak of reunion he said in my father's house are many rooms and he said I'm going there to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place I will certainly come back and take you to be with me that where I am you also will be when our trust is in Jesus we have a wonderful reconciliation that takes place now the barrier of sin is broken because Jesus has paid the penalty for that sin but we also have the promise of an eternal reunion of seeing Jesus face to face of being made like him to enjoy perfect love and joy and peace forever reconciliation and reunion that lasts beyond death and into eternity and we get there through trusting in Jesus the son of

God who's become our savior I wonder as we close what place does God's grace have in your story when you reflect on your own life up till now your family life what part does God's grace have in that story remember our psychologist Mary Piper if you don't know your history if you don't know your family who are you there is a very real danger for us in a church of spiritual amnesia that we can forget our identity that we can forget that we belong in God's family if we're trusting in Jesus we can forget that we are secure we have a new citizenship we have a new family that we have been brought into and you know this is one of the reasons why you and I need the church because when we gather every week we are gathering to remember whose we are that we worship

God as our father in heaven as our creator as our king as our lord we gather to remember how we got here how do we become part of the people of God we remember the loving sacrifice of Jesus that unites us to God and unites us to each other and we gather and we need the church because it reminds us why the gospel the good news of Jesus matters so much to remind ourselves of forgiveness that's only found in him new life that's only found through him the promise of a new heaven and earth in him so like Moses point yourself and point others back to God's salvation reflect back on your story reflect back on the story of Jesus to see God's grace to see his promises kept to see the favor you and I enjoy from him make the gospel make Jesus central to your story to your story