

# God's Grace

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Preacher: James Ross

[ 0 : 00 ] Now, Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house. Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack.

Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain. And he did as Joseph said. As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys.

They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, why have you repaid good with evil? Isn't the cup my master drinks from, and isn't this the cup my master drinks from, and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done. When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. But they said to him, why does my Lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that.

We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die, and the rest of us will become my Lord's slaves.

[ 1 : 11 ] Very well, then he said, let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave. The rest of you will be free from blame. Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it.

Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. At this they tore their clothes.

Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city. Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him.

Joseph said to them, what is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination? What can we say to my Lord? Judah replied.

What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servant's guilt. We are now my Lord's slaves. We ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.

[ 2 : 11 ] But Joseph said, far be it from me to do such a thing. Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you go back to your father in peace. Then Judah went up to him and said, please, my Lord, let your servants speak a word to my Lord.

Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. My Lord asked his servants, do you have a father or a brother? And we answered, we have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age.

His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left. And his father loves him. Then you said to your servants, bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.

And we said to my Lord, the boy cannot leave his father. If he leaves him, his father will die. But you told your servants, unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.

When we went back to your servant, my father, we told him what my Lord had said. Then our father said, go back and buy a little more food. But we said we cannot go down.

[ 3 : 15 ] Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us. Your servant, my father, said to us, you know that my wife bore me two sons.

One of them went away from me, and I said, he has surely been torn to pieces, and I have not seen him sinned. If you take this one from me too, and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.

So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant, my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die.

Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, if I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life.

Now then, please let your servant remain here as my Lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me?

[ 4 : 21 ] No, do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father. Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, make everyone leave my presence.

So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers, and he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph.

Is my father still living? But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, come close to me.

When they had done so, he said, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt, and now do not be distressed, and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

For two years now, there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

[ 5 : 31 ] So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, Lord of his entire household, and ruler of all Egypt.

Amen. And we'll leave the story. There's Judah and Joseph reveal God's grace. We're coming towards the climax of this sort of epic Old Testament story that dominates the last chunk of the book of Genesis.

Two observations before we get going. First of all, and this is for you, if you get drawn in by the drama of stories like I do.

If you find when you're watching movies or television, you're reading books, you really feel for the hero of the story. You're pulling for them, and you're sort of down with the villains.

This is one of those stories that really does have it all in terms of drama, in terms of a range of emotions, in terms of tension. But it's so important that we don't read this just as any old story, as a really great and riveting read.

[ 6 : 46 ] This is God's word. And it's part of that story revealing God's promise to bless and to save the family of Jacob and the nations of the world through this family.

And it's important that we recognize, and I hope we've been seeing it as the weeks go on, that it points powerfully to Jesus. And it points us towards that even bigger salvation story.

So we'll try not to read it just as a really exciting story. And one other observation, because this is a story that revolves around family and family drama, one of the things I guess that happens, you know, in real life, we know of other families that have highs and lows, joys and sorrows.

And we feel that as people. But we feel it in a sense at a distance. You know, that the joy and the sorrow, it fades more quickly for us than it does for the family that's right at the heart of this story. But one of the things that I want us to do and to try really hard is to place ourselves into the story of Jacob and his sons. Not just to stand on the sidelines and say, there's a nice story about that family over there, but rather to recognize that this story includes you and it includes me.

[ 8 : 13 ] Particularly in this section, that we would see ourselves as those who need rescue. That we would see ourselves as those who are being offered grace and peace today.

That in a very real sense, we come helpless before our King, the one who has our lives in His hand and we need His mercy. So that we would make this good story our good news story.

So that just as we come towards, in a sense, one of the climaxes of this. But before we get to there, we need to see that tension is still being built.

The first 13 verses of chapter 44 are setting the stage because here Joseph is introducing one final test for his brothers.

Now, remember, God has raised Joseph up to power. We saw that through the dreams that God sent him. And we also heard it from Joseph's own mouth.

[9:18] For example, chapter 45, verse 8. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God, he made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and over Egypt.

And so God's given him this position. And as God's agent, he's acting for God, he sets this last test for his brothers. So first couple of verses, the test is set.

And we notice that it revolves around Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin. So the sacks of grain are to be filled with silver as they were before. But additionally, the king's special silver cup is to be placed in Benjamin's bag.

What does that mean? Benjamin, the brother, is going to find himself in danger. And what will those older brothers do? We see the plan essentially in verse 10, in the words of the servant.

Once the servant is caught up with them and they've had their conversation and the cup has been found, or it's about to be found. Verse 10, obviously coming from Joseph, we hear these words.

[10:30] Let it be as you say, whoever is found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you will be free from blame. So there's the tension being introduced.

This whole test is going to show that Benjamin stands guilty facing slavery. Those brothers can go free. What are they going to do in that situation?

Because they've been there before, haven't they? Sometimes we have that experience where we're placed in a test situation. I guess driving theory tests get us there a little bit, where there's a simulation where a driver is presented with sort of stressful scenarios and how will they cope.

Here Joseph's brothers are being put back into a stressful scenario or a dramatic situation that they've already been in. Takes us all the way back to chapter 37.

When they had a brother in distress, Joseph, and they left him down a pit. When they had a chance to do the right thing, but instead they sold Joseph to be a slave and they took the money and ran home.

[11:47] They knew how much their father loved Joseph, but they did not care for their father then. How will they act now 20 years later?

And we get some clues in verse 7 and verse 9. We see how united they are. Verse 7, Far be it from your servants to do anything like that.

Verse 9, If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die and the rest of us will become my Lord's slaves. You see how they're united. They're not all looking out for number one anymore. Now they seem to trust each other as well.

Verse 13, As the cup is found in Benjamin's sack, we discover they're not going to take the money and run, though they were entitled to, according to the test.

Rather, they feel the misery of Benjamin. They anticipate the misery of their father Jacob, and they stay so that they might defend Benjamin.

[12:51] There has been change. Stop and think just for a moment. The disaster facing the family of Jacob could not be greater at this moment. You've got these brothers who are all away in Egypt while their families and their flocks are away in Canaan with no one to provide for them.

They also know that if the situation stays as it is, their father will most likely die of a broken heart. They also know that if the situation doesn't resolve, this is the end of their family clan, and importantly, this is the end of God's promise.

God had said he was going to bless them and the world through this family, but if this family comes to an end, then so too does the promise of God. So there is tension here.

There is grief here. In verse 13, as we see them tearing their clothes and heading back to the city, they are now emotionally walking in the shoes of Joseph, their brother, some 20 plus years earlier. How does this story, at this point, connect us with Jesus? One of the wonderful things that the New Testament tells us, especially the book of Hebrews, that Jesus, in love, has become our brother.

[14:19] He identifies with us, becomes one of us, sympathizes with us in our grief. We can think about the words of the steward to the brothers in verse 4, when he says to them, he accuses them, why have you repaid good with evil?

You apply that to our story, we have received good from God. Every day that we have life, we are receiving good from God. We have received the greatest good in Jesus, but by our own natural instinct, we return evil for good.

We turn our back on God. We choose to rebel against God. And unlike Benjamin, our guilt is very real.

But then there's Jesus, our brother. And Jesus, our brother, in love, he walks the road to judgment for us. He didn't need to do that. In love, he came, and he walked that path all the way to the cross where he takes on himself the sin and guilt of his people.

All those who will trust in Jesus, who are in Christ, they are declared forgiven and declared to be perfectly righteous in God's sight.

[ 15 : 41 ] And so we are reminded of the cross as God's greatest good in response to our great evil.

That loving sacrifice of Jesus, a gift for us to receive by faith if we will turn to him and believe.

So the test has been set. And now we're going to see how Judah passes the test. And as he does so, he's going to reveal to us how God has been changing him.

He's going to show us God's transforming grace. So remember, Moses is the one who writes the book of Genesis. And so far, as we've thought about the story of Jacob, Joseph has been the main actor.

But we've also seen Judah from time to time. And we're beginning to see his rising importance. And just as he is beginning to take center stage, we're also being invited to see how God has been changing his moral character.

[ 16 : 53 ] Again, one of the wonderful things about the Bible is its honesty. It doesn't present, you know, picture-perfect followers of God. No, it shows sinners who are saved by grace so that the glory always, always belongs to God and not to us.

We make a mess and God fixes it up and that brings glory to him. So just to remind ourselves very briefly, what we've seen of Judah up until this point, we've seen him jealous of his father's love for his brother.

We've seen him angry and hateful towards his brother. We've seen him sell his brother into slavery. We've seen him totally ruthless, not caring about his father's broken heart.

We've seen him failing to keep his promises. We have seen him guilty of sexual immorality. But now, we're seeing a different side to Judah because of God's grace.

Verse 16, as he begins to talk to Joseph, as he is clearly being seen as the leader among his brothers. Do you see the language?

[ 18 : 05 ] Verse 16, what can we say to my Lord? What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? This isn't a man who's out for himself anymore.

This is a man who is standing to defend his younger brother, Benjamin. Verse 17, even when Joseph dangles the carrot of freedom, when he says, only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave.

The rest of you go back to your father in peace. He refuses to take that freedom. He refuses to walk away from his brother. And what we have instead from verse 18 to the end of the chapter is we have Judah, the leader among the brothers, rehearsing different conversations that took place up until this point.

But for our purpose, what I want us to see is how Judah has changed. We see it in verse 30 and 31 where he is now profoundly concerned for his father's heart.

If the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant, my father, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow.

[ 19 : 27 ] Didn't care about that 20 years ago but now he cares about his father's heart. Now he wants to do his father's will. He wants to keep that promise that he made to his father.

Verse 32, your servant, this is Judah speaking, your servant guaranteed Benjamin's safety to my father. I said, if I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life. He is going to do what he has pledged to do. He will bear responsibility. Verse 33, now then, please let your servant remain here as my Lord's slave in place of the boy and let the boy return with his brotherhood.

What a change God has worked in this man's life. He's going to defend his younger brother to the end. It's a beautiful thing to see the change that God makes in a person's life.

Judah is one of those people that really dramatic testimony to God's grace. You know, if we could talk to Judah, he would say, you know, I was like this. I was jealous.

[ 20 : 36 ] I was hateful. I was immoral. I was angry. I turned my back on God and his purposes, but God intervened. God showed me my sin. God showed me mercy. And now, I'm living, trusting in God's promises.

I'm looking to preserve my family because God has made promises to my family. God has changed me. How do we explain this kind of change?

We explain it in light of the grace of God. Christianity is not work really hard to become a better version of you. Christianity is not try really hard and keep the rules.

Judah is not here turning over a new moral leaf. No, Judah has been changed by encountering the mercy and grace of God. And Judah's story is the story of every Christian.

That there was a time in our life when we were blind to our sin. We were blind to our need of God and his love. When we took our joy from created things and we didn't give praise and glory to God. [ 21 : 46 ] There was a time when we had no care for our Father in Heaven's heart. We did not care to live for him and for his glory. And so that remains until and unless God by his Spirit works in our heart.

In verse 16, Judah says, God has uncovered your servant's guilt. He feels in that test God convicting him of his sin and that has changed him.

And that's what God needs to do for every one of us if we are to be saved. God the Spirit needs to show us our guilt that we have not lived to love God and we have not perfectly loved others.

So by God's standard, we are condemned. God the Spirit needs to show us our need. I cannot save myself but God has sent Jesus, his Son, to die for me.

He can save me. And it's the Spirit that calls us, causes us to put our trust in Jesus to show us not just that Jesus died for sin but that Jesus died for me and for my sin.

[ 22 : 59 ] The Spirit makes it very real and very personal. Judah, he was a mess. Morally, spiritually, relationally, but God's grace was powerful.

God's grace changed him. God's grace is greater than our sin. That means Judah's story can be anybody's story, can be your story today. So we see in the life of Judah a wonderful reminder of God's transforming grace but we also have a wonderful reminder of Jesus in the story of Judah. Judah, in a few chapters will be told that kings and nations, kings of nations will come from him, that the king God promised would come from the line of Judah, Jesus would come from Judah's family and we can see lots of ways in which the story of Judah connects to the story of Jesus.

Just like Judah, Jesus will keep his promise to his father regardless of the cost to rescue his brothers. Jesus came to save sinners by dying for us and we get in the garden of Gethsemane an insight into just what that would cost Jesus.

So the night before Jesus died, he is in a garden called Gethsemane and he's praying to his father and there's sweat coming, drops of blood coming, the emotion, the sense of anticipation of the cross and Jesus, it says, if there's any other way, Father, if there's any other way to save sinners that doesn't involve me dying in their place, then let's do that but nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.

[ 24 : 46 ] Jesus, knowing what it would cost him, his very life, causing him to be forsaken by his father as he would bear the sins of the world, Jesus did not walk away from his father's will, Jesus did not walk away from those he came to save and Jesus never will.

Just like Judah too, Jesus pleads the cause of his brothers. Again, to think about a book like Hebrews in the New Testament, Jesus is described as our mediator.

It's as if Jesus is our defense lawyer. He becomes our representative but the remarkable thing about Jesus, our representative is that although he is perfectly innocent and he knows we are guilty, he takes on himself our guilt so that when we are trusting in him, we can be considered to be absolutely perfect and righteous in God's sight.

There's that wonderful great exchange that happens at the cross, Jesus takes my sin and he gives to me his righteousness. And now, right now, Jesus in heaven is still our mediator.

He's still pleading the cause of his people on the basis of his completed sacrifice. Accept them because you accepted me, Father.

[ 26 : 17 ] and because of that, if we are trusting in Jesus, we have total security as the people of God. Our freedom is sure. Unlike Judah, Jesus, our brother, pays the ultimate price to secure our pardon.

One of the amazing things about Judah is that he was willing to go into slavery for the rest of his life so that Benjamin, his brother, might go free. But that didn't happen. Instead, there was family reunion.

But Jesus, Jesus said, I've come to serve and I've come to give my life as a ransom. I have come to pay the price to free people from the slavery to sin so they can enjoy the freedom of knowing and enjoying God.

God, and he paid the ultimate price. His death on the cross is where we find our freedom. The only way for us to know God, to have peace with God, to enjoy life with God, is because Jesus was willing to pay that price to secure our ransom.

Just like Judah, praise God for the gospel, Jesus passed his test. So where we stand in our place in history, everything that is needed for our salvation has already been done.

[ 27 : 50 ] If you're not a Christian, you have nothing to do to be saved other than to confess your sin and your need, other than to trust that when Jesus died, he died for you, and to have him as your Lord and King, to receive him as a gift.

And when we do that, we get to live and join the freedom that Jesus came to buy for us. That's the story of Judah and how Judah reveals God's grace.

Let's also think about Joseph. Now when Joseph reveals his identity, he's doing more than that. He's also showing them God's saving grace.

I wanted to get to chapter 45 so we wouldn't have another cliffhanger moment but rather we'd get to this point. You know, we've probably seen TV shows that have the big reveal idea for some of us. We maybe grew up watching Surprise, Surprise or maybe Michael McIntyre's big show you see occasionally those big family reunions. People haven't seen each other for decades perhaps and they're on different continents and they're brought back together.

[ 29 : 08 ] You get this wonderful reunion. Everybody loves those, doesn't they? Some of those stories are really profoundly dramatic but none of them come close to this amazing family reunion.

Just imagine Joseph's emotions for a moment. Imagine his joy, imagine all that's going on. Think about all that he'd suffered as a teenager.

The hate that he'd endured from his brothers, the jealousy being sold as a slave by your brothers, being thrown into a pit and then moving from slavery to being a prisoner, falsely accused and having to be there for three years.

He has suffered so much in his story. Think about all he had lost and left behind. he'd been living in the land of promise.

He was part of a family that God had made great promises to but again he's been stripped from that and sent to Egypt. He has gone through a lot.

[ 30 : 20 ] What about his brothers as this reunion happens? How are they feeling? Are they feeling joy? Hooray, our brother's back. Look at verse 3. His brothers were not able to answer him because they were terrified at his presence.

Remember Joseph has been talking through a translator pretending he didn't know their language. All of a sudden they're realizing Joseph has heard every conversation and that's a cause for terror. But now more importantly they're also thinking have we found ourselves the enemy of the second most powerful man in the world? God now we're in the hands of our brother.

When he was in our hands we sold him into slavery. What's he going to do to us now? Two ways we see grace shining in this reunion.

In the words of Joseph first of all in verse 4 words of comfort. Joseph said to his brothers come close to me. What is Joseph saying there?

[ 31 : 24 ] He's saying I am your brother. I am not here as an enemy. I am not against you. I am for you.

We've seen it in his story. There is no bitterness in Joseph's life. He has forgiven his brothers. They gave him evil but now he will return it with good.

And then in verse five to eight obviously a lesson they really need to hear three times he reveals that this was all part of God's plan.

End of verse five it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. Verse seven God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. Verse eight so then it was not you who sent me here but God. Behind their evil stood a faithful promise keeping sovereign God who was in control and who was going to make sure that that promise to Abraham and his family would continue.

[ 32 : 44 ] Just as an aside it's important for us to recognize that both of those things are held true. Joseph will say you were responsible you sold me. Human responsibility is never denied in the

Bible but also God's sovereignty is clearly in view.

God is clearly in control and that's one of the tensions for us as we read the Bible that both of these things are true. It's not an either or. We are responsible and God is in control when it comes to our actions.

But we see in the words of Joseph a wonderful response to the grief the brothers have felt.

Remember back in verse 13 they tear their clothes and they trudge back to Egypt not sure what's going to happen.

Wondering is this the end of God's promise for us? Is this the end of our family? And Joseph in his words of grace answers with a loud and clear no. God's promises can never and will never fail.

We have a God that we can trust. We have a God who is reliable. Now of course we won't always know his timetable and we will not always be able to understand why certain things happen but we do know that God is faithful and God is loving and God always keeps his promises and so we can hold on to that.

[ 34 : 06 ] as we see it work out in the story of Joseph and of course we see this reality again in the story of Jesus.

The very first sermon of the early church in Acts chapter 2 we find Peter preaching and he will say to a crowd quite clearly you put Jesus to death.

You killed God's son and God's savior. He could say to a crowd you are guilty of sin and unbelief and of sending Jesus the son of God the savior of the world to the cross but he can also say that Jesus was handed over by God's set purpose by God's foreknowledge and that God raised Jesus and God made him Lord and Christ.

The greatest evil that has ever taken place was when the perfect son of God was killed on the cross. But behind that great evil was the greatest good we have ever seen.

God's salvation plan for sinners like us established there in the loving sacrifice of Jesus. When the crowd in Peter's day heard his words and they were convicted they said what is it that we need to do?

[ 35 : 34 ] Peter said you need to repent, you need to turn away from sin and turn back to God, you need to be baptized, you need to show that you belong to God to believe in Jesus.

It's a message. Just as Joseph said to his brothers come close to me, Jesus is the brother who invites us.

Come near, come close to me, enjoy peace with God through me, enjoy love because of me, enjoy reunion in a place in the family of God in Jesus.

Have you come to Jesus your brother? Have you found that joy of reunion? If not, what's stopping you today?

What is it that's holding you back from knowing God's love in Jesus? There is a wonderful promise that if you will turn to him, he will never turn away from you, but rather he will welcome you to enjoy life with him now and forever.

[ 36 : 48 ] itor. What? Verse roman■■■■ Emmanuel