

Genesis Ch50v15-26 - Comforting Last Words

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[0 : 0 0] at verse 15. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, what if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?

So they sent word to Joseph, saying, your father left these instructions before he died. This is what you are to say to Joseph. I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father. When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. We are your slaves, they said. But Joseph said to them, don't be afraid.

Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. Joseph stayed in Egypt along with all his father's family. He lived 110 years and saw the third generation of Ephraim's children.

Also, the children of Machir, son of Manasseh, were placed at birth on Joseph's knees. Then Joseph said to his brothers, I am about to die, but God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, God will surely come to your aid and then you must carry my bones up from this place. So Joseph died at the age of 110. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Thank you very much, Chris. And thank you, Ralph, for leading. I'm just going to adjust this. So bear with me a moment. Talk amongst yourselves.

[2 : 5 0] The eyes are going. Can't see so well. Well, let's have our Bibles open at Genesis chapter 50. Let's pray together.

Our Father God, we come to you as the maker of heaven and earth. You spoke the universe into existence.

And by your word, you sustain it and keep it. And it is that same word that we listen to now.

Asking that you would change us, sustain us and give us strength as we seek to follow you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So we've come to the end of Genesis and what a journey it's been. We started all the way back in Eden and here we are now in Egypt.

[4 : 1 1] Eden, of course, was the place where God's people lived, enjoying God's presence and his blessing. But we know from the story the blessing didn't last.

The people rebelled against God and they were removed from Eden out of God's presence. But the rest of the Bible story, all the way from Genesis through into Revelation, is all about the story of going back to Eden.

A better Eden, where God's people will be with God and enjoy his blessing forever. So as we come to the end of Genesis, the big question is, are we going to make it?

Will we reach the eternal destination? Well, we get a chance to listen in to Joseph's final words to his brothers.

And as we listen to what Joseph says, we are given assurance, confidence and hope that God's people will make it in the journey to that better and greater Eden.

[5 : 33] Three comforting words, if you're taking notes. Here we go. Provision, providence and promise. So here's the first one.

God's provision for our past sins. God's provision for our past sins. It seems that Jacob's death has raised an old fear for the brothers.

Look at verse 15. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, what if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?

Now, 40 years have passed since the brothers had sold Joseph as a slave. That's a lot of brooding time for Joseph. Lots of time to plan your revenge.

The brothers are terrified of what Joseph might now do to them. You see, the brothers fear judgment.

[6 : 38] So they come up with a plan, don't they? Verse 16. They sent word to Joseph saying, your father left these instructions before he died.

This is what you are to say to Joseph. I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now, please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.

Sounds good. But the problem is, there's no suggestion anywhere that Jacob had ever said such a thing. In fact, they are so desperate that they tell a few lies to try and force forgiveness from Joseph.

That's what happens when we try to deal with our own guilt. We run into fear. Fear of others and fear of God.

But the point is, they don't need to fear. Because there is assurance of forgiveness. Look at how Joseph responds to the brothers.

[7 : 52] Verse 17 at the very end. When their message came to him, Joseph wept. Now, I think Joseph's weeping here is a weeping of sadness and disappointment.

Joseph isn't angry with his brothers. He feels for them because they're still carrying their guilt and shame. They're still living in fear.

You see, as far as Joseph is concerned, the past, well, that's in the past. It's water under the bridge. Their sin had been confessed and had been dealt with.

Look back with me to chapter 45. In the previous chapter, they had admitted their guilt before God.

And now Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers. Let's pick it up in verse 4. Then Joseph said to his brothers, Come close to me.

[9 : 06] And when they had done so, he said, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed.

Pick it up in verse 14. Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept. And Benjamin embraced him weeping.

And he kissed all of the brothers and wept over them. Afterwards, his brothers talked with him. Tears of reconciliation.

They had come back together again. And if that was not enough, Joseph had ensured that the brothers in the time of famine had received the best of food, that they had got land for all their livestock, and the best of housing in all of Egypt.

Joseph had held no grudge. He wasn't looking for payback. The sins had been confessed and forgiven. So there was no need to fear.

[10 : 16] Let's go back to chapter 50. Well, it seems these brothers are having a hard time accepting this.

Look at verse 18. His brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. We are your slaves, they said. But Joseph said to them, Don't be afraid.

Am I in the place of God? Can I take God's place and bring judgment upon you?

You see, Joseph knows that God must judge all sin. The sins of the brothers can't be ignored. It must be dealt with. Yet Joseph is confident that where sin has been judged, then forgiveness can be received.

But the sad reality is the brothers have not yet grasped the once and for all forgiveness of God. They're still carrying around with them their guilt and their shame.

[11 : 26] They're living in fear. Now, how often are we like the brothers? You know what it's like, don't you?

You confessed some past sin. You know God has forgiven you of it. But yet we still have this nagging fear that somehow God is going to punish us.

We fear that God is just biding his time and he's just waiting to pounce and remind us. You see? You remember those sins? Now I've got you.

Well, it seems we impose on God how we respond to each other in our own relationships. You see, I can say, I forgive you, but I know full well in my heart I can still hold a grudge.

I know I can take subtle revenge. But that's not God. He doesn't hold grudges. He doesn't pay back evil with evil.

[12 : 34] You see, the Bible is crystal clear on this. God has judged sin through the death of his son Jesus on the cross. It's been dealt with.

So where there is now true repentance, there is in its place forever forgiveness. Now we need to drive this truth home time and time again.

Listen to what scripture says. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

From all eternity, he has removed our sin. Or what about this one from Micah? Who is a God like you who forgives sins?

You will again have compassion on us. You will tread our sins underfoot. That is, he will judge them. And when he's done so, he will hurl our iniquities.

[13 : 43] Where? Into the depths of the sea. Never to be brought before us again. You see, God doesn't forgive sins twice.

Or three times. Or four times. God forgives your sin once. And he remembers them no more.

So first, let's see God's provision for our past sins. Second word from Joseph.

God's providence in our present suffering. There's something else he needs to share with them. So look at verse 20. You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Now that's a big statement, isn't it? It's what theologians call providence. It simply means, you can see it there on the screen, God's active rule in the world to accomplish his plan and achieve his purposes for his glory and for our good.

[15 : 11] You see, look what Joseph, look what they said to Joseph.

Or sorry, what Joseph said to the brothers. Verse 20. You intended to harm me. Well, harm is what the brothers caused to Joseph, isn't it?

It was an evil, wicked act what they did. At the age of 17, they threw their brother Joseph into a pit and then sold him off as a slave.

And then they went and told their father that he had been killed by some wild animal. And things were only to get worse for Joseph. Soon afterwards, having been sold off, he was thrown into the pit of a dungeon where he spends 13 years of his life.

Joseph suffered terribly through the evil actions of his brothers. They intended harm and harm is what they did. And harm is what Joseph experienced.

[16 : 30] But yet in it all, God's providence was at work. Look at verse 20 again. He says, You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.

You see, in and through the wicked actions of the brothers, God was working good. trace the story with me, the outline of the story of Joseph.

Joseph was sold as a slave to Egypt, but Joseph became the ruler over all of Egypt. Famine came on the land.

There was no food, but Joseph had stored up food for distribution. His brothers, years later, on the verge of dying, travelled down to Egypt looking for food, and lo and behold, who provides for all of their needs?

Joseph. You see, this isn't coincidence. This is providence. This is God's active rule in the suffering of Joseph to accomplish God's plan and to achieve God's purpose.

[17 : 49] purpose. And what was the plan and purpose? Well, look at the end of verse 20. To accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Out of suffering came salvation. Now, we've come across this theme before. You might remember it.

Go back again to chapter 45. chapter 45, and we'll pick it up in verse 5. Chapter 45, verse 5.

So, Joseph is speaking to his brothers, and he says, 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.

Verse 7. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

[19 : 08] So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. Now, do you see the two actions that are in those verses?

On the one hand, the brothers sold Joseph into Egypt, and then on the other hand, God sent Joseph into Egypt.

The brothers sold him, God sent him. Now, you tell me which one is right. Did the brothers sell him, or did God send him?

Well, both actions are true, aren't they? The suffering Joseph endured was caused by the brothers. They are responsible.

Yet, at the same time, it is all planned and purposed by God. You sold me, but God sent me.

[20 : 05] You see, Joseph's life from beginning to end is in God's control. Joseph suffered terribly, but yet God was at work to accomplish his plans and to achieve his purposes.

And that means your life and my life are in God's hands. There are no chance circumstances that we face. There are no random events in our lives.

Every second of your life is designed and orchestrated by God. Even our suffering.

Go back with me to chapter 50. You see, when we suffer and we can all have our stories of trials and struggle, in the midst of it, we can feel abandoned by God.

That he's ignoring me. That he's forgotten. And we can even ask God to take all the suffering away. But it's still there. We still have to live with it.

[21 : 13] And our experience is dark and difficult. Well, the account of Joseph reminds us that our suffering is not some random chance event.

No, God is in control of your life. God is actively ruling over every circumstance and event. He is working in and through your suffering to accomplish his plans and to achieve his purposes.

Now, we mightn't always see it. We can be sure we don't always feel it. But yet, this is what God's word is saying to us.

Look again at verse 20. Let's read it all. You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Now, let's get this clear. It doesn't say God turns our suffering into good. I know we've got a song about that, don't we?

[22 : 28] We sometimes sing it. Whatever the enemy means for evil, he turns it for our good. Well, I want to say that's kind of half right.

It's not fully right. God doesn't turn our suffering into good as if God were responding to some calamitous event that he couldn't prevent and he's playing catch up.

No, God means all our suffering for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Last week, you may remember, we prayed for Yaroslav, a pastor and his family in Ukraine. Right now, in that situation, in his home and where he lives, there is terrible evil happening.

Drones and missiles are flying through the air. harm is intended and harm is being done. Yaroslav and his church family, they've lost loved ones.

[23 : 37] They live in fear. Any day, he says, could be our last day. But yet, in their suffering and through their suffering, people are trusting Christ and finding hope and peace in him.

Lives are being saved. Not just physically and temporarily, but spiritually and eternally. And so, in the same way, in each of our lives today, whatever the suffering you are going through, it is not a random chance.

God is working in it and through it. He means it for your good. for your best. It can keep you.

It can change you. It can lead you to Christ. And in your testimony as you look to God, it can lead others to Christ.

So, second, God's providence in our present suffering. God's promise for our future salvation.

[25 : 00] salvation. Joseph has one last closing word for his brothers. We pick it up in verse 24. Joseph said to his brothers, I'm about to die, but God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God had promised that his people would have a place where they could live and enjoy God's presence and blessing.

And that promise was given, do you see the end of verse 24, to Abraham and to Isaac and then to Jacob. So, right the way through the story of Genesis, we've been tracing it as we've been going through it.

there's a longing for and a looking forward to this promised land that God would give to his people. But yet when we read this story carefully, we get hints that this promised land is actually something future and something eternal.

Go back with me please to chapter 47. Trace the theme in the story here with me. Genesis chapter 47.

[26 : 29] Here Jacob is talking with Pharaoh but look how he describes his life and the life of his fathers. We'll pick it up in verse 9.

So he's telling Pharaoh all about his life and he describes it like this. Jacob said to Pharaoh, the years of my pilgrimage or sojourn are 130.

My years have been few and difficult and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage or the sojourn of my fathers. You see, they saw their life as a pilgrimage.

They were passing through. Their home was not here. They were looking forward to something beyond this life. Now look at chapter 48.

Here, Jacob remembers God's promise of a land but again look how he describes it. Chapter 48, verse 4. And God said to me, I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers.

[27 : 48] I will make you a community of peoples and I will give this land as a everlasting possession to your descendants after you.

It was to be everlasting, not just for a time here on earth. The promised land was actually a foretaste of a future and eternal land.

A land that's everlasting. everlasting, a forever home for God's people. Now let's go back to chapter 50. So when Joseph tells his brothers, God will take you to the land that he promised, he's saying to them, it's not just about the here and now, it's something future and eternal.

it's the land of God's eternal kingdom, the new and better Eden promised to all God's people. Now to assure them of what's to come, Joseph makes a very strange request.

Verse 25, And Joseph made the Israelites, his brothers, swear an oath and said, God will surely come to your aid and then you must carry my bones up from this place.

[29 : 23] What a strange request. Why the insistence that his brothers would bring his bones up to the promised land.

Why doesn't he just stay buried in Egypt? What difference would it make whether his bones stay in Egypt or whether they go to the promised land? What's the point?

Well, it's not going to make any difference, but it's symbolic. You see, look at the language Joseph uses here in verse 24 and 25.

verse 24, God will surely take you up out of this land. And verse 25, carry my bones up from this place.

You see, it's the language of resurrection. Moving Joseph's bones from this land of Egypt up to the promised land is a picture of a resurrection to come.

[30 : 31] One day, the risen Lord Jesus will come and he will take you up out of your grave and he will carry you up out of this place to your forever eternal home.

You see, if the bones of a dead Joseph can give just a glimmer of hope of what is to come, how much more then does the empty tomb where a dead Jesus was laid make to us today?

You see, we are buried, aren't we, when we die? Not just to be remembered, but God's people are buried in the sure and certain hope that one day the risen Lord Jesus will come again and we will be raised with him and we will be given new bodies for our everlasting future home.

Just as Joseph's bones were carried up, well you can check out the rest of that story in Joshua and see what happened, so we can be sure of God's promise of salvation.

It is guaranteed and it is assured. So here we have it, we come to the end of Genesis, comforting words, not just for the brothers, but for us.

[32 : 12] As we make our journey forward, let us remember that our past sins are all forgiven. Our present suffering is not wasted.

Our future salvation is sure and certain, comforting words that God's people will make it. God will ensure that we get to the ultimate promised land, the new and better Eden.

Thank God for his promise. Thank God for his providence and thank God for his provision.

Let's pray. Thank you.