

# But God Meant It For Good

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, please take your Bibles, and for the last time, let's open up to the book of Genesis. Be honest, some of y'all thought that we would never make it to this point, but we are in the last sermon in a long series in the book of Genesis that we started, I believe, last January. I think this is sermon number 45, maybe 46 in this series. We took some breaks throughout, scheduled breaks, to give us a little breather, but we have come to the end this morning. So Genesis chapter 50, and our passage is verses 15 through 26, and when you found that in your Bibles, if you would, if you're physically able, let's stand this morning in honor of the reading of God's Word.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, it may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.

So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, your father gave this command before he died. Say to Joseph, please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you. And now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.

Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, behold, we are your servants. But Joseph said to them, do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. So do not fear, I will provide for you and your little ones.

Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years, and Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Mehir, the son of Manasseh, were counted as Joseph's own. And Joseph said to his brothers, I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, God will surely visit you and you shall carry up my bones from here. So Joseph died being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, we praise you for your word. And we praise you for the book of Genesis. Even this morning, as we bring it to a close, God, would you remind us once more of your great faithfulness, of your power and your holiness? And would you give us a heart of faith in you and all you've promised us in Christ? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

[ 3 : 08 ] One of my primary responsibilities, if not my primary responsibility as a parent, is to instill in my children a God-centered worldview. I remember when some of them were even smaller than they are now, going out to the beach, and we were out in the ocean. I was holding one of them as the waves crashed against us, tossing us to and fro. We were riding the waves in and out, just this massive body of water. And I would ask, well, who made the ocean? And the answer, of course, is God made the ocean. And we'd look up at the sky, and we'd see the sky. And I would ask, well, who made the sky? And the answer, of course, is, well, God made the sky. We'd look out on the shore and at the sands. Who made the sand? The answer is God made the sand. Well, who made you?

Who made me? Well, God made you. God made me. The follow-up question then, well, to whom does all of this belong? All of it belongs to God. Now, this is foundational starting point theology, but truly, this is the theology that the book of Genesis wants to instill in all of us. And here on the last Sunday of a long series in the big book, I think that is appropriate, to remind us this morning what the book of Genesis is all about. And to put it as simply as I can, the book of Genesis is a book about God. If you remember, this is where the book of Genesis begins. Genesis 1, verse 1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. We learn right from the very first pages that there is an eternal God who is good and powerful and capable of speaking the entire world into existence. All of it rightly belongs to him. Genesis wants to teach us that if we're going to rightly understand the world that we live in, if we're going to rightly live as God intended us to live, we must

do so with a God-centered perspective. Well, this morning, as we bring this book to a close, we get to see some of the implications of that God-centered perspective. What does it look like practically for us to live with God in view?

And what does it look like practically for us to live with a God-centered perspective? And so what we'll see this morning are three effects of a God-centered perspective. This will be our outline this morning.

If you're taking notes, this ought to help you follow along. Three effects of a God-centered perspective. Number one, first, we see that a God-centered perspective produces fearlessness. A God-centered perspective produces fearlessness. And what I mean by that is fearlessness for the righteous. And by way of contrast, a God-centered perspective ought to produce fear for the guilty. Look there, starting in verse 15. And we see the guilty first. Verse 15, it says, when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, it may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him. And up to this point, Joseph has been incredibly gracious to his brothers. I mean, sure, he messed with them a little bit. He tested them with the whole ordeal with his cup and Benjamin.

[ 6 : 48 ] But for the most part, he has welcomed them. He has provided for them. He's paved the way for them to come safely into Egypt. He's cared well for them. But now that dad is gone, well, they wonder and they worry. Well, maybe all of this, maybe Joseph is going to change his tune. Maybe this whole thing was just an act. Maybe Joseph has been waiting for this moment to pay us back for all those things that we did to him. And so they are afraid. Verse 16 says that they craft this message. They send a messenger before them. They can't even come and stand to see Joseph face to face. And they make up this story.

We have no record of this conversation ever happening. In fact, we have no record of the brothers ever coming clean to their father about what they did in the first place. But they make up this story and say, before he died, your father commanded us and he said to tell you to forgive us for all those bad things that we did to you. They make up this story and they try to sweeten them up. They say, and by the way, we're servants of your father's God, the same God that he served and that you serve. Yeah, we serve him to. And they're pulling out all the stops here trying to avoid this judgment that they fear is coming against them. And it says, when Joseph heard these things, look how he responds. It says he weeps.

And already we're getting a peek into Joseph's heart here, aren't we? He doesn't really seem like somebody who's bent on vengeance, does he? He doesn't seem eager for revenge. He weeps at the words of his brothers. And so when the brothers hear that their message has been well received and they could tell that Joseph, he's not preparing the guillotine for them when they arrive, right?

They come and they once again, they they fall down before Joseph. And now this is the third time now that we've seen this happen. You remember Joseph's dreams. Joseph dreamed that his brothers and his father would fall down before him. This is the third time that that's happened. And they grovel before him and they say, we we are your servants. I want you to think about these two groups of people here in the passage for a moment. These two groups of people here on the one side, you have the brothers.

They are guilty and they know that they're guilty. They have sinned and they know that they've sinned. They have done evil to Joseph and they know that they deserve punishment. And so as a result, they are anxious and they're fearful and they're afraid that finally that bill is going to come due for all the evil that they've done to Joseph. That's one side here is the wicked. But on the other side, you have righteous Joseph who has nothing to fear. And in this moment, Joseph has not sinned against his brothers. He's he's he's he's been righteous and has lived in integrity. And in this moment of judgment, Joseph holds all the cards here and the wicked are fearful that Joseph is fearless. You know, there's a proverb Proverbs chapter 28 verse one. It says the wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion. Have you ever experienced that in your own life?

[ 10 : 28 ] Now, when you are walking in sin and when you know that you've done wrong, it's like you're, you're, you're constantly looking over your shoulder. You're, you're wondering if or when you're going to be caught and it colors, all the interactions that you have with people. It, it colors all the, all the conversations that you have. You're just, you're constantly filled with this anxious spirit that you're going to be found out at some point. Well, that's the state of the guilty. You're fearful.

But on the other hand, when you walk in integrity and you, you live in righteousness, you're upright. Well, guess what? You have nothing to fear. The righteous are bold as a lion. You know, when I go speeding down highway 17, right? Going 25 miles an hour faster than I know I should. And I pass by a police car on the way and I see it. I get a sight of that police car. Well, guess what?

Even if he doesn't pull out to come get me, what am I doing? I'm constantly for another 10 miles looking behind me, right? The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion. That's true here and now we experience this with our own sin and our own uprightness. But do you realize that that's ultimately true in light of the coming day of the Lord?

Do you realize church, you remember that one day soon, the Lord Jesus will return and all will give an account of themselves to the Lord Jesus? Do we remember that John 5, 27, it tells us Jesus has authority to execute judgment because he is the son of man.

[12:09] That coming day of the Lord, that's a day of great fear for the wicked. But at the same time, that coming day of the Lord is a day of great joy for the righteous. The wicked are right to stand in fear of that day, but the righteous, meaning those who have been made righteous by faith in Christ, that day is a great day of vindication and joy and celebration in that day. Christians are those who by the grace of God, we live each day now in light of that day then.

This interaction here between Joseph and his brothers, it gives us a small picture. It's like a small representation, the scene of that coming day of judgment at the return of Christ. Think about it. On the one side here, the brothers give us a glimmer of the fear in the hearts of the wicked on that day. And on the other side, Joseph here stands as a type of Christ.

He's a small shadow of the righteous king of all the earth, the one who will judge the world in righteousness. But at the same time, Christian, do you realize, Joseph also gives us a small picture of our future if we're in Christ? Think about it like this. The word tells us that if we are in Christ, and this is beyond my comprehension, church, but the word tells us that if we are in Christ, in fact, we will join Christ in that judgment.

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 22. He goes on to say, in fact, we will judge the angels.

[13:53] Jesus says in Revelation 2, verse 26, The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.

Do you see this represented here by Joseph? And he goes on in chapter 3, verse 21 of Revelation. He says, the one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

This is absolutely stunning, church. At his return, Christ, our head, will execute judgments, but we, his body, will agree with him in full, and even in a way that's beyond my understanding, we will participate with him in his authoritative judgment over the nations.

We will share in a measure of the authority of Christ the King as he rules over the nations. It says, we will sit with him on his throne in the age to come.

This just baffles me. We ought to marvel at this. But it should also force a decision in your hearts right now. Which side of this whole thing do you want to be on?

[15:12] Do you want to stand in fear, as the brothers do, knowing your guilt, worrying whether or not judgment will come, worrying when that bill is going to come due, or do you want to stand vindicated, righteous, with nothing to fear?

It's only by living with God in view, with Christ in view, that the sort of vindicated fearlessness is possible. So first, we see a God-centered view produces fearlessness.

Not only this. Second, we see a God-centered perspective also produces forgiveness. Forgiveness. How do we respond when others wrong us?

Think about this whole thing from Joseph's perspective for a minute. I mean, just imagine the power that Joseph has in this moment. I mean, whoo! Opportunities like this are few and far between, aren't they?

You imagine, you just think about that one person that has wronged you more than anybody else. That one thing that somebody did to you that just makes you so angry, you can't even sleep at night.

[16:25] Just imagine the people who have wronged you, who have cheated you, who have cursed you, who have sinned against you. Well, now they come groveling to you, and you have the power to absolutely just ruin their lives.

How would you respond? I know how you want to respond. Our natural fleshly desire here is to seek vengeance, right? And at the very least, just make sure that they know what they did, right? Stick it to them a little bit. Make sure they know, you better not even show your face around here anymore. But with God in the view. Look at what Joseph does here in our passage.

He gives four better responses here. I want you to see each one. Four better responses that flow out of a God-centered worldview. For one, he responds with mercy.

Look there to verse 19. The first thing he says to these brothers that have sinned against him, that deserve judgment, that have sold him for dead into slavery and betrayed him, the first thing that he says to them, what is it?

[ 17 : 33 ] Do not fear. Do not fear. He knows that they're afraid. Of course he knows they deserve judgment. They do deserve judgment.

But he assures them, I'm not going to repay you according to what you deserve. This is mercy. Mercy is withholding judgment deserved.

It's like when your kids smash in a window with a baseball. This hasn't happened at our house. It's just an example. Okay? Theoretical. You've warned them over and over and over again.

Don't hit the ball towards the house. And then boom, there it goes through the window. They come into the kitchen, just heads down, expecting judgment. And instead, you say, come here.

It's okay. I'm not going to repay you according to what you deserve. This is mercy. That's one response. Not only this. Second, he also responds with humility.

[ 18 : 35 ] Joseph responds with humility. Look what he says. Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? Am I in the place of God to repay you for what you've done?

Joseph recognizes humbly that as powerful as he is, right? He's the second most powerful man in all of Egypt. He's powerful enough to hurt these brothers as much as he wants to hurt them.

Even so, he recognizes, I am not in the place of God. He recognizes humbly, ultimately, this sin, even though it affects me, ultimately, this is a sin and an offense against a holy God.

And while I can insert myself into the situation and stick it to you and hurt you, ultimately, I trust that God will make it right in the end. He responds with humility.

Third, Joseph responds with faith. With faith. This is a word that has been so watered down culturally, it almost means nothing, right?

[ 19 : 46 ] And just have faith, and it'll work out. Just kind of blind faith, empty faith. That's not what faith, biblically speaking, means. Faith in the Bible is trust that is anchored to something.

All right, here, Joseph trusts in a good and sovereign God who is faithful to all his promises. That's biblical faith. But look at what he says in verse 20. And I just want to camp out here for just a minute because verse 20 is at the very heart of the Joseph story.

See, Joseph looks at what's happened to him. He sees how he's been betrayed and left for dead and sold into slavery. He's been imprisoned. He has plenty of reason to be angry with his brothers. He has plenty of reason, we would probably think, to be tempted, to be angry at God for what's happened to him. But instead, look what he says. As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

To bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. This is an incredibly profound statement.

[ 21 : 02 ] Joseph understands that his brothers are completely responsible for their actions, right? They did evil to him. They had evil intentions. They meant to destroy him.

They have sinned against him. But at the very same time, in those very same actions, God was at work for good. And so, with God in view, what does he do?

He responds with faith, that God is working all things for his glory and for our good. This is incredibly challenging, isn't it?

I'll admit, it's a mystery how these things work together. But at the same time, church, this ought to be deeply comforting for us, when we face trials of all sorts.

Whatever it is that you walk through, in the deepest, darkest moment of your soul, God is in it for good.

[ 22 : 04 ] The Bible clearly affirms, at the same time, these two truths. God is at all times, totally sovereign, in all ways, working all things for his glory, and our good.

And, at the same time, we are totally responsible for our sinful actions. Our good and sovereign God, the Bible tells us, he uses, even the sinful choices of man, to accomplish his good plans.

J.I. Packer takes up this apparent issue, between divine sovereignty, and human responsibility. Right? And in his book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, which, it's a short read, great for a week at the beach, I would highly recommend you, take this book and read it.

*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. He says this, what the Bible does, is to assert both truths, side by side, in the strongest, and most unambiguous terms, as two ultimate facts.

This, therefore, is the position we must take, in our own thinking. Charles Spurgeon was once asked, if he could reconcile these truths, to each other. And what did he say?

[ 23 : 18 ] I wouldn't try. I would never reconcile friends. Friends? Friends? Yes? Friends? This is the point, that we have to grasp.

In the Bible, divine sovereignty, and human responsibility, are not enemies. They're not uneasy neighbors. They're not in an endless state, of cold war with each other.

They are friends. And they work together. Church, we see this clearly, here with Joseph. But of course, where do we see this, more clearly, than at the cross of Christ?

Isaiah chapter 53, prophecies of this moment, of Jesus' death. And what does it say? It says, they made his grave, with the wicked.

They made his grave, with the wicked. And with a rich man, in his death. Although he had done, no violence, and there was no deceit, in his mouth. They did that. Sinners did that.

[ 24 : 17 ] They're guilty for that. Yet, verse 10, yet it was the will, of the Lord, to crush him. He has put him, to grief. So Peter, says in Acts chapter 2, this Jesus, delivered up, according to the definite plan, and foreknowledge, of God, you crucified, and killed, by the hands, of lawless men.

This is divine sovereignty, and human responsibility. It is a mystery, but they need not, be reconciled, because they are, friends. Joseph, he recognizes, you meant evil against me.

But he has a bigger, God-centered perspective, on the whole thing. He says, with God in view, I can recognize, that even though, you meant evil against me, yet God, meant even this, for good.

Fourth response. Fourth response. Joseph responds, with grace. Joseph responds, with grace.

He says, you meant this, for evil, but God, meant this, for good, and so, don't fear, I'm going to provide, for you. I will provide, for your little ones. He says, he comforts them, he speaks kindly, to them.

[ 25 : 38 ] This is grace. Do you know, the difference, between mercy, and grace? Right? Mercy, is withholding, judgment deserved. Grace, is giving, blessing, undeserved.

Mercy, is saying, kids, don't worry about, the window. Grace, is saying, come give me a hug, I'm going to give you, some ice cream. Mercy, is the father, not berating, the prodigal son.

Grace, is the father, running, to embrace him, in his arms, and welcome him, home with a celebration. Mercy, is God, not paying us, according to our sins.

Grace, is God, paying us, according to Christ's, righteousness. Mercy, is sparing us, from his wrath. Grace, is delighting us, with his love.

Do you see the difference? Joseph responds, to this, this great sin, against him, in these powerful ways. Why? It's because, he is living, with God, in view.

[ 26 : 40 ] That's the only way. This is the response, of somebody, who doesn't, ultimately, see things, through a self-centered, man-centered, perspective, but rather, he's thinking, about God, and his glory, God, and his purposes, God, and his promises, God, and his work, in the world.

Do you think, that way? Does that shape, the way you interact, with people? Does that shape, the way you respond, when others sin, against you?

Joseph, has experienced, God's kindness, and so in turn, he is able, to offer that, to others. Church, don't you realize, Colossians 3, tells us, as the Lord, has forgiven you, so you also, must forgive.

A God-centered, perspective, Christ-centered, perspective, is what makes, this possible. Third, and finally, we see, a God-centered, perspective, produces, faith.

Look there, to verse 22. The God-centered, perspective, produces, faith, and here, from 22, to the end, we bring, Joseph's story, and in fact, the story, of Genesis, to an end.

[ 27 : 58 ] It says, Joseph remained, in Egypt, he and his father's house, Joseph lived, 110 years. And Joseph saw, Ephraim's children, of the third generation, the children also, of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were counted, as Joseph's own.

And Joseph said, to his brothers, I am about to die, but God will visit you, and bring you up, out of this land, to the land that he swore, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

And then Joseph, made the sons of Israel, swear, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up, my bones from here. So Joseph died, being 110 years old.

They embalmed him, and he was put, in a coffin, in Egypt. You know, it might seem strange, for Genesis to end this way. There really is, no happy ending.

The story doesn't, tie up nicely, does it? There's no, real resolution, here at the end. Genesis begins, in Eden, and it ends, in Egypt. Those are the last, two words, in Egypt.

[ 29 : 01 ] Genesis begins, with life, in the garden, and it ends, with death, in Egypt. But it's interesting, here at the end, we get, we get a reminder, we get a picture here, of so many of the truths, that we've seen, as we've gone, throughout this book.

We see yet, another reminder, for us, of what life is like, outside, of the garden, of Eden. For one thing, we're reminded, life outside, of the garden, is full of blessing.

Even, even in a sin-cursed world, there are, are blessings, from God, to enjoy. Joseph lives, 110 years, and that's a long, healthy life, for anybody, but it's interesting, the Egyptians, saw that number, 110, as the ideal, life span.

Joseph, lived, a long, healthy life. We see that, that Joseph, got to see the blessing, of seeing his own children, grow up, and then, them having children, of their own.

He is blessed, even here, in Egypt. And yet, we're also reminded, that we still have, this looming, presence, of death.

[ 30 : 08 ] The problem, of death, still remains. God promised, Adam and Eve, in the garden, in the day you eat of it, you will surely, die.

We're told later, in Romans, the wages of sin, is death. And we see it here, Genesis begins, with life in the garden, it ends with death, in Egypt. The problem, still remains.

The problem, of suffering, still remains. Sin is still, wreaking havoc, sin still remains. But even so, through it all, we're reminded, God's people, have the certainty, of God's promises.

Look what he says. He says, God will visit you, and God will bring you out, and he will bring you, to the land, that he promised, to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Even though, I don't see clearly, how this is going to work out, I know, and I trust with faith, God promises, still remain. And because of this, this is so fascinating to me.

[ 31 : 16 ] Even here, all the way back in Genesis, Joseph trusts in faith, that one day, by the power of God, he will enjoy, the blessing of all, that God has promised, him.

Did you find it odd, that Joseph gives, instructions about his bones? Why does a dead man, care what happens to his bones? You think about that?

Why does Joseph care, what they do with his bones, once he's dead and gone? Why? Joseph made the sons of Israel, swear, saying God's going to visit, you, he's going to bring you out, you shall carry up, my bones from here, when you come out of Egypt, bring my bones with you, don't leave me there.

Why? Why does he care? Why would he say that? Hebrews 11, the passage that, we had read earlier this morning, gives us some insight, it tells us, Joseph is acting, in faith, by faith, it says, Joseph, at the end of his life, by faith, he made mention of the exodus, of the Israelites, by faith, he gave directions, concerning his bones, by faith, Joseph gives instructions, about his bones, because, Joseph believes, that he will in fact, rise again, even here in the Old Testament, even here in the first book, of the Bible, this is the hope, of the resurrection, he says, I'm going to die in Egypt, my body is going to lay in Egypt, but one day, I will not be in Egypt anymore, why?

Because my God, has promised me, that I will inherit the land, and that promise, is powerful enough, to transcend even death, and so when you go, be sure to bring my bones, to the promised land, because when I rise, I want to be there, this is faith, and the promises of God, and Christian, do you realize, we ought to share, this same confident faith, do you realize, Christian, that God has promised you, in Christ, one day, you will rise, and you will inherit, not just the land of Canaan, but all the new creation, the new heavens, and the new earth, all the world, will be remade, into a new Eden, freed from the curse of sin, freed from the reign of death, nothing but blessing, in the presence of our God, we will rise, to be with him forever, we have guarantee of this, by the resurrection of Christ, the first fruits, of those who have fallen asleep, do you live with that promise, in view, do you live in light, of that great day, does that promise, shape the way, that you think about your life, and the way that you think, about your death,

[ 34 : 16 ] Joseph looked forward, in faith, with a lack of clarity, of how exactly, this was all going to play out, but church, we have the advantage, of looking backwards, in faith, in crystal clear vision,

to see how God, has demonstrated, his faithfulness, in Christ, this is what Genesis, is all about, the Bible tells us, that we are all born, outside of Eden, our natural state, is one of great sin, Ephesians tells us, in fact, we are dead already, in our trespasses, and sins, that's what it means, to be born in Adam, we are born in guilt, we are born hopeless, we are born, separated from God, we are born, under the curse, of sin, but God, has worked, by his grace, to redeem us, from the powers, of sin and darkness, by the gospel, of Jesus Christ, his son, this is promised, all the way back, in Eden, I will send, one, to crush, the head, of the serpent, that one, has come, his name is Jesus, and he has lived, perfectly, in the place of sinners, where we've all failed, and he has died, sacrificially, in our place, bearing the judgment, that we deserve, for our sin, and he has risen, from the grave, praise God, victoriously, over all the powers, of sin and darkness, so that any, who put their faith, in him, have this certain, confident assurance, that not even death, can keep us, from the promises of God, we will live, forever with him, in the new,

Eden, does that promise, shape the way, you go about your life, is this glorious God, at the center, of your world view, as sinner, non-believer, would you come to Christ, this morning, and put your faith, in him, and Christian, church, would you rejoice, in the good news, of the gospel of Christ, would you celebrate, this glorious God, who has triumphed, over every enemy, in Christ, would you share, of this good news, with others around us, who are perishing, would you live, each day, in light of that coming day, when we will rejoice, at the sight of our Lord, from him, and to him, and through him, are all things, to him be the glory, forever, and ever, amen, father, we praise you, for the promises, made here, in the book of Genesis, and we praise you, for promises kept, at the incarnation, at the cross, at the empty tomb, and promises, yet to come, at the return, of Christ Jesus, we pray,

Lord, would we live, each day, in light of that coming day, would you turn, the hearts of those, who are far from you, to the Lord, in faith, and would you cause, each of us, to rejoice, this morning, in your great faithfulness, we pray all this, in Jesus name, amen,