

Genesis 45:1-9 A Person of Grace 11/11/18

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³ And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

⁴ So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, "Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry.

(Pastor prays)

I want to be a person of grace, to be saturated with the remembrance of what God has done for me in Christ, to never stray far from the cross of Jesus where my sins were atoned for and where the love of God was given to me.

The Gospel is grace. Christianity is grace. This book I preach from each Sunday and read from each day is a repository of grace. It is constantly reminding us that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ. I think the book of Genesis, and especially the story of Joseph, is a constant melody of God's grace given to us in Jesus Christ. But far too often, Christian people forget grace and ignore grace and even abandon grace for more tactile emotions like anger and revenge, or their quieter cousins, hate and gossip, or their mother, bitterness. And that's a problem, because real grace, the Jesus kind of grace, dissolves that anger and trumps that disorder and breaks through that hardness. Yeah, the Jesus grace takes control and lords over all our emotions, positions, and upbringings.

This Jesus grace is on full display in the life and story of Joseph. Here is a man who suffered like few others in the Old Testament. He was mistreated, abused, forsaken and

double-crossed. And yet, the single most distinguishing feature of his life is his ability to relate everything back to God. We are fast approaching the end of Genesis and the conclusion of Joseph's life, and I think he is more like Christ in this passage than any other place in the entire story of his life. Now we are going to cover a lot of ground today in order to get the full impact of what is going on here so that you can see what it looks like to be a person of grace. A God-centered life is a grace-filled life, and if your life is not grace-filled then your life is not God-centered.

A God-Centered Life is a Grace-Filled Life

To get the full punch, we've got to back up a little bit and come forward again. I'll quickly tell the story. We ended up last week in Chapter 42 where the brothers had been down to Egypt, they got food and came back. Chapter 43 starts out a whole lot like Chapter 42. Jacob says, "We are out of food again so you are going to have to go back down to Egypt and get some more food for us. I don't know where Ruben is but Judah says, We can't go down there because the man says we can't come back unless we bring Benjamin. Benjamin and Joseph were the only two sons of Jacob's wife Rachel whom he loves so much. She died giving birth to Benjamin so there's no way he's gonna let him go. Judah says again, we can't go back down there unless Benjamin goes with us. So finally, Jacob agrees and says "take a bunch of presents down there with you and twice the money. If I'm bereaved, I'm just bereaved."

They took Benjamin down to Egypt and they stood in front of Joseph. Joseph sees Benjamin and he's not yet overcome with emotion, but he sees Benjamin and figures that this is his younger brother. Joseph has his brothers sit to eat and he lines them up in age order and they look around amazed. It's a really good meal and things go really well, but it's time to get to it at the end of chapter 43. They are eating and enjoying time together. They all have plenty but Benjamin gets five times more than everybody else. That should tell you that something's up for Benjamin.

Chapter 43 ends on a positive note; things are going well. In Chapter 44, they head back home and unbeknownst to them, Joseph told his steward put their money back in their bags and fill them up with grain. And in Benjamin's bag the steward is told to take Joseph's silver Cup of Divination and put it in there, too. I don't know what that Cup of Divination was but it wasn't a Christian cup. But it's in that bag and they go off. Before they get too far out of town, Joseph sends the steward who says, "Why would you treat my master so badly and return evil for good by taking master's silver cup?" The cup is

found in Benjamin's sack so they all go back to Joseph. And in Chapter 44:16, Judah said, "I am guilty, God has revealed our sin." Joseph tells the brothers that Benjamin will become his slave and stay in Egypt. Judah speaks up and tells Joseph of how Jacob will be miserable without the son he loves so much. This is where we pick up and see grace in Chapter 45. So here's my first point.

A Person of Grace is Filled with Compassion

To see this, you don't have to go any further than verse 1. Look at him, overcome with emotion and compassion for his brothers. The brothers who so terribly mistreated him. Something had happened in Joseph's life that erased all the bitterness and hatred. Four times in this passage alone, he weeps over seeing his brothers, which immediately makes us think of Jesus. Twice we see Jesus weeping. Once over Jerusalem, because of its sin and once at the tomb of Lazarus because of his sisters' and friends' anguish.

It's true that the Lord is close to the broken-hearted and He has created a people called the church of Jesus Christ that have the impulse of compassion, compassion that moves us to offer a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus. And it's more than social justice; ours is a religion of cross-centered compassion. Cross-centered compassion drives us beyond justice and fairness and into sacrifice and love. It's why Jesus can say to a cross-centered people: love your enemies. Why? Hatred was crucified and only love remains. That's what grace does. Are you full of compassion? Do you show compassion to people who have wronged you, people who have a different skin color or different political views than you do? Think before you post on social media. A person of grace is full of compassion.

A Person of Grace Seeks Reconciliation

Let me show you what I mean. Watch the interaction as this scene exposes the anatomy of reconciliation. We've already talked about compassion. In verse 2 there is brokenness. The grief over such pain that Joseph carried all those years and the guilt of the brothers. In verses 3 and 4, there is truthfulness. Reconciliation isn't forgetting or excusing or suppressing or getting over it. Reconciliation is truthfulness, sometimes ugly truthfulness. See it in verse 4 as Joseph tells their secret that only they and God had known for all those years. In verse 4, Joseph is forthright and tells his brothers: you did a terrible thing. So, he's truthful, but notice how he prefaced the truth in verse 4. "Come near to me please."

Thus, begins the hard work of making things right and it's rooted in forgiveness. People say forgive and forget, but that is ridiculous. Only God can do that. If I could forget, I wouldn't have to forgive. What I need is a crucifixion, a death, a killing of my sins and pride and pain. And that is what has happened. Jesus Christ carried all of that baggage to the cross and when the nails were driven in, forgiveness and reconciliation became a reality. Who are you harboring hatred against? Who have you not yet forgiven? You can't carry that poison around, and grace is the antidote.

We come to the cross of Jesus where we are reconciled to God. Isn't that what Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 5: 17-19 when he said, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* A person of grace seeks reconciliation.

A Person of Grace Trusts Securely in God's Word

This may be where I learn the most from this story. Throughout Joseph's life, there is hardly a sentence from his lips that doesn't have the name of God in it. In chapter 39, when he was being tempted by Potiphar's wife, he said, "How could I do such a thing as sin against God?" In chapter 40, when he was asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, he said, "Don't interpretations belong to God?" In chapter 41 he told Pharaoh that "God will give the interpretation," and in chapter 41 he proclaimed, "God has revealed it." Finally at the end of chapter 41, his first son was named "Manasseh," which means "God has made me forget." And his second son he named "Ephraim," which means "God has made me fruitful."

You see, Joseph was able to look beyond secondary causes and looked to God. And if you can do that, it's going to give you stability and perspective. It's going to give you the ability to forgive. It's going to give you the ability pray for people who are slaves to their own sin. Look what Joseph says in verse 5 to his brothers as they are really worried about what is going to happen next.

Verse 5 is a pivotal verse. Let me show you a couple of things Joseph does here. He gets them to quit staring at their own sin and gets them looking at God's grace. He introduces sovereign realism. In verse 5 is a classic statement of God's providence. Let's

look at verse 5. *And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.* Joseph says, “you sold me” and shows them their sinful ways, “but God sent me and it is His perfect will.”

This is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when Judas and the band of soldiers came and He told Peter to put away his sword, saying in John 18:11, *So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”* This is Paul in Philippians 1:12 in all his persecution and pain saying, *I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,* It's the reminder that God's will, not man's, is the controlling reality in every event. This truth is Joseph's guiding light and the secret to his astonishing lack of bitterness. He said, “you sold me but God sent me.” He says the same thing four more times.

See, his life is centered on God and saturated with God. He can't conceive a circumstance in life where our good and sovereign God is not in full and complete control. And that's never seen more clearly than when you think about how God saved you, all the things that have to go on for you to come to Christ. I want that truth to bring us to my last point.

A Person of Grace Points Us to Christ

We've said all along that Joseph is a foreshadowing and reminder of the true and better Joseph, Jesus Christ. I'd like to point out a few ways Joseph points us to Jesus.

In the passage, verse 3 says that the brothers were dismayed at finding out that it's Joseph. The shock to the brothers is demoralizing, and the grace Joseph shows points us to Christ. Although they betrayed and rejected him, still Joseph forgave them. In the same way Jesus pursues sinners who have spent their lives rejecting him. James Montgomery Boice says Joseph knew his brothers before they knew him. In the same way, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Joseph loved his brothers before they loved him. 1 John 4: 19 says we love because He first loved us. All of this points to the grace of God found in Jesus Christ. A God-centered life is a grace-filled life, and that grace is found at the cross of Jesus.

(Pastor prays)