



WEEKLY SERMON

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Message #5 Forgiveness

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Text: Genesis 44, 45, 50; Ephesians 4:31-32

Point One: “The Fall of the Athenian Republic - could this be the same for America?” In 1787, a Scottish history professor, Alexander Tyler, said about "The Fall of the Athenian Republic" over 2,000 years previous to that date. "A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse (generous gifts) from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, which is always followed by a dictatorship." The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been two hundred years. These nations have progressed through this sequence:

1. From bondage to spiritual faith
2. From spiritual faith to great courage
3. From courage to liberty
4. From liberty to abundance
5. From abundance to complacency
6. From complacency to apathy
7. From apathy to dependence
8. From dependence back into bondage."

Point Two: In **Proverbs 22:6** we read, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” In order for your child or grandchildren to get the most out of Sunday School, parents and grandparents are vital to the Sunday School experience. The Sunday School hour each week is important for their spiritual growth and understanding to put God first in knowledge and wisdom. **Consistency is the key in helping them to get the benefit from this hour on Sunday.**

Point Three: “There are THREE VOLUMNS of the Book of Life” The **PAST**, the **PRESENT** and the one **YET TO BE**. The **FIRST** is **DONE**, and laid away. The **SECOND** we’re **WRITING** day by day. But the **THIRD** and last of the three volumes is locked from sight, since God keeps the key on that volume. Therefore rely upon Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Point Four: Interesting facts about the Bible: There are **39 books** in the Old Testament – **27 books** in the New Testament – **66 books** in the entire Bible. There are **929 chapters** in the Old Testament **260 chapters** in the New Testament and **1189 chapters** in the entire Bible. **Psalms 117 is the shortest chapter** in the Old Testament; **John 11:35 is the shortest verse** in the New Testament and **Esther 8:9 is the longest verse** in the Old Testament.

Point Five: Sayings to Ponder:

1. Don't sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.
2. For the Christian, life is not divided into the secular and the sacred, for him all ground is holy ground.
3. Your character is what God knows you to be; your reputation is what men think you are.
4. It is not our business to make the message acceptable, but to make it available. WE are not to see that they like it, but that they get it. – Vance Havner
5. It is no disgrace to fail; it's a disgrace to do less than your best to keep from failing.
6. Worrying does not take away tomorrow's troubles. It takes away today's peace.

7. **You will never truly enjoy Christmas until you can look up into the Father's face and tell Him you have received His Christmas gift – John R. Rice.**
8. **Every time a Christian goes wrong, it makes it harder for a sinner to go right.**

In His Amazing Grace –
Pastor David Miklas

"Joseph, Steps Beyond Forgiveness – Part V"

INTRODUCTION: On Sunday mornings we have been dealing with "The Mountain Peaks of FORGIVENESS."

The Apostle Paul warns us in Ephesians 4:31 that bitterness and anger are deadly sins of an unforgiving spirit, **"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour (on the war path over some issue), and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."** Remember, **"An unforgiving spirit is the Devil's playground, and before long it becomes the Christian's battleground."**

Then in those arresting words of Ephesians 4:32 he said, **"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, FORGIVING one another, even as God for Christ's sake, hath FORGIVEN you."** Paul expressed the message that it's characteristic of saints to forgive. Shouldn't we, who have been forgiven by God, also forgive others? But instead, we often shout **"I have a RIGHT to be angry. I have a RIGHT not to forgive."** In truth, you don't actually have that right, since **"An unforgiving Christian is a CONTRADICTION TO THE GRACE OF GOD."**

Here again is our definition of forgiveness: **"Forgiveness is a choice, to reconcile with an offender by erasing their debt, and agreeing to live with the consequences of their sin."**

Forgiveness is a choice, you chose to or not to forgive.

Forgiveness is a concern "to reconcile with an offender."

Forgiveness has a cost, because forgiveness comes with a price tag.

Forgiveness carries a consequence, since true forgiveness requires you to agree to live with the consequences of that person's sin.

We have been learning about an attribute of God that He wants to develop in our lives, that of forgiveness. Thank God:

He forgives every KIND of sin.

He forgives every TIME we sin.

He forgives the very MOMENT we sin and ask for forgiveness.

He forgives each sin FOREVER; He never brings it up again.

In light of this definition, let's look in the Old Testament at the life of an obscure slave named Joseph, who rose to the pinnacle of power and respect. Few have learned more about forgiveness than he.

Joseph grew up in what we would call a classic "dysfunctional family." Most circumstances in his boyhood were beyond his control. After all, he was the eleventh son out of twelve, far down the line.

Joseph's father, Jacob, favors him for some reason. Something about Joseph strikes a tender cord inside of Jacob.

All of the attention from his father turns out to be a curse for Joseph, instead of a blessing. The special coat he received from his father makes him a marked young man. The more Jacob does for him, the more his older brothers hate him. Siblings have a way of picking up on any little inequity; they notice it right away, and they resent it.

To make matters worse, when Joseph was a teenager, he tattles on his brothers. This trait does not improve the situation.

On top of all this, God began to give Joseph dreams about the future, including the future of his family who are to bow down to him. Joseph hasn't asked for this; it just happens.

Joseph's brothers bring the situation to a climax by grabbing him in the field, throwing him into a pit and plotting against him..

Eventually, they decide to sell him to a caravan of slave traders. Instead of going back home, these strangers grab him, roughly treat him like a piece of meat, and carry him into Egypt.

But the Bible tells us in Genesis 39:2 that, "**the Lord was with Joseph.**" Somehow, Joseph ends up being purchased by Potiphar, a man of prestige, who makes him master of his house.

Joseph should at last be safe, but Potiphar's wife has sexual designs on this handsome young man. In time she makes a move on him. But Joseph does not want to disgrace either God or his master by giving into this woman. If he loses God's approval, he will lose everything valuable in life. In Genesis 39:9 he said to this seductive woman, "**How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?**"

Joseph quickly wrestles his way out of his coat which the woman was holding on to and runs. **Isn't it funny how Joseph seems to keep having trouble with coats?**

Potiphar's wife cries "**Rape, Rape!**" and the next day Joseph's life comes crashing down for the second time as he is arrested and ends up in prison.

Yet, even in prison, God is with Joseph. His talent and honesty rise like cream to the top of the heap. Before long, Joseph is put in charge of his cell block, however months go by and Joseph is no doubt thinking, "**Where is God in all this?**"

One day a couple of new prisoners show up. They are former employees, the cupbearer and butler, of Pharaoh. Both men have dreams, which Joseph successfully interprets for them. One fellow is released, promising to appeal on Joseph's behalf, and the other is hanged.

But unbelievably, the cupbearer who is released somehow "**forgets**" and for two more needless years, Joseph rots in prison. And we think we have problems? How would you like to help somebody and have that person promptly forget that you ever existed? Well, that's what happens to Joseph.

After two years, God steps in to overrule human frailty. This time, vivid dreams come to Pharaoh himself. In fact his dreams are a "**double feature.**" Joseph is brought out of prison to interpret the dreams. In effect, these dreams pronounce that Egypt would experience seven years of prosperity and then there would be seven years of famine.

Joseph finally made it to the top of the ranks as second in command to Pharaoh. The well-being of all of Egypt was at his command.

Question, "**What would you have done with all this power?** Do you realize that **Joseph had every reason to sever ties with his family, vent hatred on humanity, and slam the door on God...but he didn't!**

Even though Joseph was tossed into the blackest of pits, he emerged with an unbelievably positive attitude toward those who had done him harm. **What was his secret? We pick up the story in Genesis 44:**

A severe famine has occurred in the land, but through God's intervention Egypt is well prepared. Joseph's brothers have heard of the land's abundance and have made the long journey from Canaan to obtain food. While in Egypt, they encounter Joseph, the prime minister.

What an opportunity for Joseph's revenge. But instead of settling the score, we see a forgiving Joseph. In Genesis 44 Joseph recognized his brothers and puts them to a test.

Joseph wanted to see if they had begun to read God into their daily life, even into things that seemed unfair, even into death.

Joseph wanted to put Benjamin in the same plight he was in twenty years earlier. He wanted to see if there had been a change in their hearts over those years. He wanted to know if they would go to bat for Benjamin.

Judah, the oldest, comes out and stands up for Benjamin, who twenty years earlier had said, "Take Joseph's life, put him into the pit, get rid of him." Now twenty years later, these are transformed men and Joseph sees it.

Now please go with me to Genesis 45:1-4 where Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers.

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. (2) And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. (3) And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. (4) And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt."

I don't think there is any way to adequately describe the emotion at that moment. There is an overwhelming sense of emotion that is felt by these brothers, which included feelings of intense guilt.

Carefully notice verse 5a. **"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither..."** Can you believe it? When faced with people who had done him wrong, the average individual would say, **"Get on your knees and stay there! You think you know what humiliation is all about. Just wait until I unleash it on you."** But Joseph is a changed man, and his first statement is a supportive one.

Carefully notice verse 5b, **"for God did send me before you to preserve life."** Joseph is saying **"It was not you who pulled off what you did to me IT WAS GOD, who allowed it to happen. It was my sovereign God who looked far into the future. He chose me to be the instrument to solve the famine problem. You thought you had done evil to me. Notice in verse 7, it was God who went "before you to preserve life."** Then in verse 8 we read, **"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."**

Now holding your place in chapter 45 go with me to the last chapter of Genesis, chapter 50. Joseph is speaking to them at a later time, and they're still wrestling with guilt. Here we read in verses 19-20, **"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."**

I do not know how you feel today, the hurt you might feel and the memories you have from that hurt. But I do know humanity well enough to know that most of us, at some time in our lives, were badly ripped-off by someone. Now you may be faced with a similar conflict, and your perspective is cloudy because:

You remember the wrong.

You remember the unfair treatment.

You remember the pain, the hurt and the rejection.

You remember that you were dropped off like a bad habit, when you truly deserved the opposite treatment.

You had given and given and given and you were still cast away. Evil was done to you, and it was meant to be evil.

Again verse 20 declares **"You meant it for evil but God meant it for good."** Now go back to

Genesis 45 and to verses 9-12,

“Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: (10) And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: (11) And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. (12) And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.”

Do you get the picture? Joseph wants those who had done him wrong, literally to move in right next to him. Would you want to do that with a person who has wronged you?

There is usually one thing you'd like between you and that enemy – distance - unless he's fully forgiven. But Joseph has no use for distance. He does not want to even the score. For him it was not pay back time. Oh, how sweet it would have been, vengeance at last! But that was not in Joseph's nature.

He had forgiven his brothers years before this encounter. To understand this type of forgiveness, go back with me to Genesis 41 and let's see what Joseph is really like, what he is really thinking. Here we read in verses 50-52,

“And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him. (51) And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. (52) And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

The name of each son is a play on words. Joseph tagged these boys with reminders of God's activity in his life.

The first born was named Manasseh. The root Hebrew word means to "Forgive" or another meaning would be "to take the sting out of a memory." As Joseph stood there holding the infant and thinking of all that had happened, and the blessing of God he said, "I will name this boy Manasseh, because God has made me forget all the evil that has been done to me."

He didn't say he had learned from a seven-step course on how to forgive and to forget. Instead he said, **"God made me forget."** God can still touch us supernaturally where no therapist can reach. Joseph was not referring to amnesia. The facts were not erased from his memory, because he talked about them with his brothers.

**But God took the sting out, so there was no bitterness.
The temptation of a mean spirit was conquered.
God had cleansed Joseph's mind of the residue that would have festered there from the mistreatment he had suffered.**

What happiness would his position and wealth have brought, if he had been an embittered and angry man?

One of the subtle ways Satan hinders us is by playing unpleasant mental tape recordings in our minds over and over and over. People lie in bed at night watching old mental videos on the inner screen of their hearts.

**They dream about the time someone hurt them, took advantage of them and made them suffer.
The replaying of hurtful words said by others is heard again and again.
In their mind horrible, ugly scenes are repeated hour after hour, day after day, year after year.**

Whatever the situation may be in your life, I want you to know beyond a doubt that God can take the sting out, so there is no bitterness. He does not obliterate the events, but he can deliver you from the paralysis of the past.

If you are paralyzed by your past, if Satan is destroying your gifts and your calling by incessant replaying of old hurtful experiences, you're actually being hit by a double whammy. The original damage in the past is one thing, but now you're letting yourself be hurt and sidetracked again and again by the memory of what happened.

God wants to remind you today that the same God who dealt with every sin and wrong deed you've ever done has the ability to take the sting out of the negative and hurtful things in your life. The grace of God can overcome their power to haunt you. Stop for a moment and search your own soul.

Maybe you need to be challenged to give birth to a Manasseh in your life.

Maybe you have some deep hurts the Lord needs to heal.

Only God can ease the sting from your memory, ask Him to do that.

The Second born was named Ephraim. When the second son was born, Joseph chose another significant name. The root word for this son's name means, "**God has caused me to be fruitful in abundance.**" God taught Joseph that if you put your life in His hands, the horrible damage done to you can be turned to good. You can be spiritually fruitful even in the hardest place. Bad memories need not defeat us.

Some of them, you were responsible for; some of them someone else was responsible for. But they need not defeat anyone.

Maybe you are going through the Sunday motions and the religious exercise. You pack a Bible under your arm, yet you keep a long list of people on hand who have wronged you.

There you sit appearing a little religious, yet all the while plotting how you may get even.

Oh, I plead with you to FORGIVE. I plead with you to get rid of that bitterness, and make room for the healing. Joseph forgave genuinely and unselfishly, for in Genesis 45:13-15 we read,

"And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. (14) And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. (15) Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him."

If you are at the point of unfair treatment and yet have a right attitude, you are becoming an example of what grace is all about. Joseph had a right attitude, because he had a forgiving spirit. **"That's how Joseph made it in the PIT, as well as on the PINNACLE."**

Remember my question at the beginning of this message, **"Have you ever said, I don't get mad, I just get even?"** If that is your attitude, you are probably locked into a prison house with an unforgiving spirit.

Now, as you recall the Old Testament illustration of Joseph who was an example of Christ in the New Testament, let me conclude this sermon by giving you **THREE** significant reminders.

FIRST: Realize forgiving is not immediately forgetting: Let me repeat that statement again as it has probably caught some of you by surprise - **"forgiving is not immediately forgetting."** Now, the goal of forgiving is to forget, but it's not immediate. I should immediately forgive,

but I will not immediately forget.

You see **"forgiving is the promise not to raise the issue again."** Let's face it, right away you are not going to forget what was done to you, or what was said about you. Rather, what you need to do is mark that file in your mind as permanently closed.

In I Corinthians 13:5 we read that love **"thinketh no evil."** A genuine forgiving Christian doesn't **KEEP SCORE**. Think of the people Joseph could have included on his "hate list." He had no such list. He disregarded all the wrongs against him and persevered.

SECOND: Forgiving is realizing God is in control of the situation: God was in control of Joseph's future. **"His brothers meant it for evil but God meant it for good."**

**It is God, Who is in control of the person.
It is God, Who is in control of the circumstances.
It was no accident that Joseph went through all that suffering.**

Just maybe, God is using people in your life, as He has in my life, to build character traits that you would not have developed unless they had wronged you or hurt you. Have you ever thought it is God who is using these individuals to help develop you spiritually?

THIRD: Here again is our definition of forgiveness. **"Forgiveness is a CHOICE, a choice to reconcile with an offender by erasing their debt, and agreeing to live with the consequences of their sin."**

Every one of us has had painful experiences in life. If you're alive and breathing, somebody somewhere, at sometime, has hurt you!

Maybe you are living with those hurtful tapes playing over and over and you are paralyzed by them. Every time the Holy Spirit nudges you to step out in faith and do something God wants you to do, this strange bondage to the past is holding you back from God's best for your life. Remember:

**God is the God of Manasseh. He can "take the sting out of your life." He can make you forget.
God is the God of Ephraim. God can make you fruitful in the midst of suffering.**

Maybe your words have embittered someone, and there is a wall of division between you and a brother in Christ or some family member. Why not agree to **"forgive one another just as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us."**

Maybe you need to pray **"Lord I need you to protect my heart from becoming bitter and living with a resentful, unforgiving Spirit. Please help me to maintain nothing between me and them and me and you."**

Forgiveness is the promise **NOT TO RAISE THE ISSUE AGAIN.**
Forgiveness is marked on the permanent file **CASE CLOSED.**

Today, and all this week put into practice Ephesians 4:32, **"And be ye KIND one to another, TENDERHEARTED, forgiving one another."**

If God has spoken to your heart after reading the sermon **"Joseph, a Step beyond Forgiveness – Part V"** then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, **"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..."**
Romans 10:13, **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."**

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: **“I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation.”**

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please let me know. Please send an e-mail to pastormiklas@aol.com and I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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