



Lesson 4 September 6th, 2020

God's Plan Revealed

Study Scripture – Genesis 45:1-15

Background Scripture – Genesis 44-45

Key Verse:

Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life

Genesis 45:5

INTRODUCTION

Evil exists. Evil is everywhere. The world is broken. God cleansed the world in the days of Noah by a Flood, but He swore that He would not use that method to destroy things because of the evil that existed. So God's plan and His solution was revealed when He called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and by faith they came to realize that God was the One that would institute the method that was going to save the world. These men all had their faults and it seemed as if the faults would multiply exponentially. Would the plan of God be thwarted?

We often are floored at the question of whether something is too good to be true. We grow up taught that there is no free lunch and we teach children not to take candy from strangers. When we hear of used-car bargains we say automatically that is too good to be true. We become skeptical early in life. As one writer tells us

“We learn quite early in life to be suspect of blessings and benefits that come to us unexpectedly. They are just too good to be true; we reason.

As Christians, we know that the very best news of all, of course, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is one thing that in no way can be described as being too good to be true. Yet we find the good news difficult to believe at times because of the training of a lifetime that teaches us to be skeptical of a free offer, of something that cannot be worked for and earned”.

So in this lesson we will face an astonishing and remarkably sin where some brothers are overwhelmed with such good news to the extent that they find it impossible to believe their eyes and their ears. For them it was **“too good to be true”**.

We will however learn today that God has a plan and for us it would seem to be too good to be true.

The revelation of God's plan to the people in our story brought an astounding and tearful response.

God introduced us quite suddenly to the story of Joseph the son of Jacob, the man who had received the promise and the inheritance. His new name, after a very uncomplimentary and

probably disgraceful career as a supplanter, who could never be with reason trusted, was changed and he was given a new name -Israel and the great family had begun.

Before the events of the Exodus from Egypt God had quite supernaturally brought together this loose, uncooperative accept in evil collection of tribes and make them into a nation. The family was disintegrating, and these children of Jacob had begun to identify themselves with the Canaanites and Canaanites' worship seemed to be becoming their own worship. So it is necessary to take them out of Canaan, isolate them geographically and socially and ensure that they were comparatively free of idolatry.

From Chapter 37 onward we can see a description of the preparation for their migration into Egypt. God brought about events which made this migration by this very unhappy, and quite ungodly family possible. We saw jealousy, incest involving the eldest son who should have received the promise, greed and selling their own brother into slavery, cruel murder of others, and the incredible ungodly activities of man from whose line the Messiah came. He stands out in Genesis 44. One writer described this immensely important individual for us:

“Judah was the hard hearted, tough individual who used people for his own ends. There was nothing tender about him. But over time this man, whose main interest in life seemed to involve taking care of number one, begun to question his priorities. God gradually broke through his hard shell of self-reliance, pointing out to him his feelings and where he needed to change. Judah's heart is gradually softened, he begins to think of others rather than himself. He finally starts to trust God not himself, to accomplish what needed to be done in his life.

We find evidence of this change in Judah's life in his speech we have mentioned which he makes in Genesis 44. There he states his willingness to become a hostage and remain on in Egypt in place of his brother Benjamin. Judah's concern for his aged father drives him to offer himself as a sacrifice lest Jacob died of a broken heart. What a change has taken place in the life of this form a self-made man!

This Judah had **“little qualms about picking up prostitutes, although abandoning his daughter-in-law. Yet in Genesis 38, when he discovered that it was Tamar, his dead sons' wife, whom he had picked up, he admitted, “*she is more righteous than I.*”**

So we see that God is in everything and that has direct implication for our life and how we behave. Therefore one writer advises:

“The true mature person can see that. He sees God's hand in even the great calamities of life. Isaiah goes so far as to say that God creates calamities. He is the ultimate cause behind everything that happens to us. We know from the book of Job that Satan is at work, too. Certainly, in the case of Job their destruction of his family and home and livelihood came from Satan; but when Satan reported to God, God said, “*Satan, you moved me against my servant Job*”. God takes ultimate responsibility.

Often, I have said, when I have been criticized, “Well, I just have to consider the source”. I don't realize what I am saying. I am thinking, “That person is not qualified, and therefore I am



not going to listen to what he is saying". But what I forget is that the ultimate source of that criticism is God himself. There is something about me that he wants to correct. It may not be that specific thing-- the criticism may be unjust-- but it may be my defensive, retaliatory spirit, my tendency to fly up in my own defence at a moment's notice, or some other area of my life that God is trying to get at.

Therefore, you need to see that behind that criticism, behind that foul mouth, that cheap shot, whatever it was you experienced this last week, is the hand of God. That is God working on you. He is the ultimate source of that criticism. Therefore, you cannot take it lightly and brush it off. You cannot just forget it; you need to take it seriously"

We will see in this Study that Joseph understood that principle that it is God who is behind all those circumstances and it is His finger that is squeezing us. When we realize this it will set us free and we will be able like Joseph to act in love toward those that have wronged us.

In our Study we will examine the possibility that ordinary men and women can be changed. If a person can be changed, this sweeps away the self-pity that men and women often experience, based on the idea that they are doomed to live in their old ways forever.

We will also examine the idea that spiritual transformation and renewal is not something that is a surface change, but must begin in the heart and change everything in the heart as well as everything outside the heart. Along with this is the idea that any claim to spiritual transformation which we say begins with repentance, must be tested in order to prove that it is real. This is epitomized by John the Baptist who preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins as follows:

"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of those stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn done, and cast into the fire."

When the conscience-stricken people then asked John what they should do to demonstrate that they had repented, John then begun to give the people specific instructions as to the behavior God expected of them. For John this new behaviour was most important, for Messiah would come soon and *"thoroughly purge his floor"*. He would then *"gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire"*.

We will also look at the fundamentals of forgiveness.

When we study the life of Joseph, we encounter a Covenant son of God that was ill- treated by others in the Covenant who were of his own blood. They hated him, had seized him unceremoniously, stripped him of his special coat of authority and had thrown him into a pit which though empty could easily be filled in a flash flood, drowning him in no time at all. They



had listened to his cries for help, but had rather cavalierly ignored them as they sat down to a leisurely meal.

Shortly after this they had accepted the suggestion likely proposed by Judah that they sell Joseph as a slave for twenty pieces of silver to some Midianite merchants passing by and this they did. Joseph was sent off to Egypt as a slave and there he endured many years of temptation, ill treatment, harsh imprisonment and distress. His brothers had no mercy on him at all.

Let us be mindful that we are dealing with the harsh brutality of men who were the founding fathers of God's chosen people Israel. The men who were the foundation of Israel were all horrible, generally immoral, were revengeful, would not avoid stooping to kill the vulnerable and make the reputation of the family stink. The eldest was so sexually immoral that he had sexual relations with his father's concubine. Even the one who would hold the scepter in Israel was bad. We are told that the one who was the head of the line from which Messiah came was a horrible character, a deceiver, as one writer said: **"completely self-centered and self-absorbed:**

- 1. It was Judah who proposed the sale of Joseph to the Midianites (37: 26-27)**
- 2. It was Judah who had separated himself from his family to live with the Canaanites (38:1)**
- 3. It was Judah who hung around with an ungodly man named Hirah.**
- 4. It was Judah who married an unbeliever (38:2).**
- 5. It was Judah who was not a spiritual leader and lost two of his sons in death (38:7,10).**
- 6. It was Judah who was sexually immoral and slept with a supposed prostitute. (38: 15-18)."**

So now as we look at Joseph's story, we have to think carefully about the tender love that this wronged brother would display to these men, at whose hands he had survived rejection and brutal treatment.

The behavior of Joseph was quite remarkable. By the grace of God he had been elevated to become the second most powerful man in the world's greatest superpower at the time, the kingdom of Egypt. He decided to exercise tough love in his dealing with his brothers, who did not even recognize him when they met him.

One would have expected that Joseph would have had the maximum amount possible of unresolved anger, bitterness, hostility and feelings of revenge against his brothers. The many years that he had spent in slavery and in prison should have developed a slow burn in him, which should have exploded into anger at the sight of his brothers. He would have been excused if he had plotted to get even with them for so ill-treating him many years before, callously selling him into slavery and assigning him to a fate that they thought would be worse than death.

We should understand what Joseph should have felt, for research says that our modern society is rife with anger, hostility, emotions, attitudes and feelings that take a tremendous toll on everyone around us. We are told that approximately eighty percent of all murders are



committed by people who know each other, who when they get angry grab the nearest weapon and try to inflict the maximum amount of damage possible or even inflict death.

About twenty years ago one researcher warned that over sixty thousand children are beaten to death in North America each year, with many more suffering serious injuries inflicted by their “loved ones”. One writer even commented that more young children in North America are killed by their parents than die of disease. So we know that anger and hostility is an ever-present danger in our society.

Certainly, Scripture teaches that forgiveness is the answer to most of the anger we experience in life. It reverses the bitterness and hostility that abound and it leads to reconciliation and freedom.

Joseph shows us the fundamentals of forgiveness more than most of the great characters of Scripture. There is no chapter in the Scriptures that describes the essentials of forgiveness better than chapter 45.

Jesus warned us that those in a relationship with God must practice forgiveness, for this is vital to fellowship with God. So it is part of Christian responsibility to practice forgiveness. (See Matthew 5:43-45, Matthew 6:14, Ephesians 4: 31-32).

But lest we believe that someone is forgiven of their sins without true repentance and its demonstration of repentance, let us consider the lessons of this chapter carefully.

A CHANGED JACOB?

Chapter 43 shows us Jacob resorting to the same tactics he used when he was preparing to meet Esau his brother in chapter thirty-three. Jacob did not seem too worried that Simeon had been left in an Egyptian jail, but now that the family was running out of food, he had to make a hard choice.

On his sons’ return to Egypt for a second time to get food, he made sure that they took some presents to soften the heart of the Egyptian ruler who had accused the brothers of being spies and demanded that they not come back without their youngest brother Benjamin, as proof that they were truthful.

Surprisingly and ironically, the gifts that Jacob put together to soften Joseph's heart, unbeknown to him was the same list of produce that the Midianite slave trading caravan that took Joseph to Egypt transported.

Jacob was resigned to the fact that he personally could do no more and so he expressed some level of trust in God. He was at the end of the line and simply had to offer a prayer to God.



IN EGYPT

Everything seemed to be going well for the brothers, for the still disguised Joseph treated them all well, especially Benjamin. He was treated as the distinguished guest. But unknown to them, there was still more to come.

Chapter 44 shows us Joseph's severe strategy to test whether the brothers were still wicked and selfish as they had been when they had sold him into slavery twenty years before. He wanted to see if they would treat Benjamin as a brother.

He hid a valuable silver cup in Benjamin's sack of food and then after they left for Canaan rejoicing that this Egyptian potentate had treated them so well, had his servants chase after them accusing them of its theft. They all vociferously denied that anyone of them had stolen Joseph's silver cup and volunteered that anyone in whose sack the cup was found should rightfully become the slave of Joseph, and they all should be treated as collaborators and killed.

To their horror the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Their worst nightmare had come to pass. They all tore their clothes in mourning and returned to the city in complete mental turmoil, thoroughly distressed and broken. They realized that the second favourite son of Jacob now faced slavery in Egypt, as had the first favourite son Joseph. They were doomed!

The brothers who had once sold Joseph into slavery had changed. They could not leave their younger brother Benjamin to face a fate worse than death. They were all prepared to give up their lives, prostrate themselves before the disguised ruler Joseph, beg him for mercy, and the obviously changed Judah was now prepared to take on the role of the 'Redeemer'. He was prepared to be different and to show that he was now being conformed to the ideal 'King', the servant of the people, one willing to be a slave instead of his brother.

Would Joseph see that there was a genuine change in his brothers? Did they acknowledge their sin? Did they show repentance? Did they make excuses? Did their actions match their words?

When confronted many people will promise with some vigour that they will never again inflict the pain they have brought to others. But more often than not, despite their tears and promises they will repeat what they have done before over and over again. It is commonly observed that people, when faced with the destructive consequences of their actions, will frequently say they are sorry for their actions, but it is fear of the consequences that causes their protestations of sorrow, rather than sorrow for the sin.

So it was quite wise for Joseph to test his brothers. He knew that people do not hate sin to any great extent and that once fear of the consequences were taken away, there will be no evidence that their life has been changed.

One writer lists for us the changes in Joseph's brothers, changes that Joseph would have seen following his testing. He states:

"1. They showed no resentment when Benjamin was given a larger portion. (43: 34).



2. They trusted each other and didn't accuse one another of wrong when accused of stealing the silver cup. (44: 9)
3. They stuck together when the silver cup was found. They didn't abandon Benjamin when he was about to be enslaved in Egypt. (44: 13)
4. They completely humbled themselves for the sake of Benjamin. (44:14)
5. They knew their predicament was the result of their sin against Joseph. (44:16).
6. They offered themselves as slaves to Egypt together with Benjamin. (44:16)
7. They showed genuine concern for how this would affect their father. (44:29-31).
8. Judah was willing to be made a substitutionary sacrifice for his brother, out of love for Benjamin and his father Jacob. (44:33).

Then this writer compares this new behaviour to their previous behaviour and adds:

“Consider Joseph's brothers:

- **The same brothers who once callously ignored the cries of Joseph now have expressed regret and remorse for what they did to their brother.**
- **The same brothers who lied to their father about Joseph's death and broke his heart are now doing everything they can to reassure Jacob and protect him.**
- **The same brothers who used to act with deception and treachery are now seeking to act honourably in returning money which they knew weren't theirs.**
- **The same brothers who hated the children of Rachel (Joseph and Benjamin) are now promising to protect Benjamin with their lives.**
- **The same brothers who had once abandoned Joseph now returned to rescue their brother, Simeon.”**

There was no rationalizing, no blaming their dysfunctional family, no making any kind of excuses, no denying responsibility. The brothers had changed. Joseph had decreed that the one found with the cup would become a slave and the rest would go back to their father in peace. Surprisingly we have the remarkable scene of Judah offering to exchange his life for Benjamin.

The lives of the brothers, who were now prostrate before Joseph in fulfillment of his dream, was in the hands of Joseph. The work of the sovereign God who worked all things according to His pleasure had brought everything full circle. The brothers had bowed the knees. The dreams of Joseph were proving to have accurately predicted the future.

The son appointed by God was now ready to save the remnant.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. The one who tested would now be tested himself. He was no longer the carefree spoiled child of his beloved father was willing to show favouritism toward him.

Judah's amazing and emotional plea and his heroic self- sacrificial move completely unnerved Joseph.



Joseph was about thirty-nine years old at this time and he would've remembered the hatred of his half-brothers, who led by Judah had mercilessly sold him into slavery, leaving him for many years without the comfort of a family and the support of a loving father. He would've longed for a renewed family relationship, but he would have had to make sure of what was really going on in the mind of his brothers. Joseph was a man who was feeling powerful and probably contradictory emotions.

When he had first seen Benjamin (43:30) we are told that his heart yearned for his brother and this so affected him that he hastily left the presence of the brothers, went into a private place and wept. Then after that he washed his face and restrained himself and joined the feast that he had prepared for his brothers.

He had tested them and they had passed with flying colors and he could not restrain himself as he had done before. The test was over relief flooded him, for now the brothers showed him that they had changed, thus making reconciliation possible.

This was an intimate moment, he knew that he would be reacting with great emotion, so he cried out ordering the Egyptians in the room to leave him alone with the men. He would not want the Egyptians to see him with his pent-up emotions fully released, for this might affect their view of him as an authoritative, powerful and stern figure of high rank.

This was a moment that he knew would shock his brothers. He would likely have to deal with the issue of their sins and that would require a high order of privacy. Joseph certainly would not want the Egyptians to hear what his brothers had done to him, for if his brothers were to ever come to live with him in Egypt, they would be looked on as scoundrels and never held in high regard. So Joseph would have to protect the family reputation, keeping the skeletons in the closet. So in the privacy of the family Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

Verse 2. He was overcome with the many years of pent-up emotion. All those years of pain, injustice and loneliness burst out and the tears flowed.

If Joseph had thought that by having the Egyptians leave the room they would not hear the outpouring of his emotions, he was wrong. The Egyptian servants all heard Joseph's weeping and they obviously went and told the House of Pharaoh what was happening. Everybody knew Joseph was undergoing an intense emotional experience.

Verse 3. It is likely that Joseph spoke to his brothers in Hebrew revealing that he was Joseph, the long-lost brother who they thought they had gotten rid of. He emphasized that he was indeed Joseph, one of them, the one that they thought was dead. He was alive and standing right in front of them.

This puts us in mind of the reaction of the eleven disciples who after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection were meeting in Jerusalem when Jesus stood in the midst of them. They were



startled, frightened, scared, the hair on their heads standing straight up. They thought they were seeing a spirit. Jesus had to calm them down. (See Luke 24: 36-39).

Now let us be fair to the brothers. Let us put ourselves in their shoes. They were in Joseph's house and had enjoyed his hospitality. They had been roughly questioned before, accused of being spies, thrown in jail, then released by this man who kept Simeon locked up.

On another occasion they had been stopped and searched and incredibly Joseph's cup found in Benjamin's possession. They were so distraught that they all returned with Benjamin to Egypt, acknowledging their guilt and declaring that they were willing to be slaves to Joseph. Judah then made an emotional speech asking Joseph for mercy and offering himself as a substitute for Benjamin, and pleading for mercy on the grounds that if Benjamin did not return to his father his father would die.

They could not really understand this powerful Egyptian potentate. His behavior was so strange, for one minute he could be nice and another minute he could be terrible and dangerous.

He was probably speaking in Hebrew telling them that he was Joseph. This was the worst possible news that they were hearing. This was the worst source of anxiety possible. This man could be so angry when a cup was stolen. But horror of horrors, he was now telling them that he was the one that they had treated so badly and sold into slavery.

They likely felt that given the past, if he was indeed Joseph, a man in such a powerful position, that he might not be impartial and accept Judah's appeal to release Benjamin. There was no way they could hope that this Joseph would treat any of them well. They were afraid and petrified. They probably did not even hear Joseph asking about his father.

The first thing on Joseph's mind however was to get confirmation that his father was still alive and well. He well knew that his final test, which required the brothers to bring Benjamin with them, would have put Jacob under tremendous stress and could very likely have killed him. So Joseph inquired about the welfare of his father, as to his state of mind and health. Guilt must have flooded over them. They remembered the anguish of Joseph's soul when he had begged them to free him. (Chapter 42: 21). They would have remembered Reuben's statement in chapter 42:22 when he had voiced their fears that now Joseph's blood was required of them. They would have recognized that all this time Joseph was listening to what they were saying and had not revealed himself.

Joseph's revelation did not make them happy campers. They had nothing to say. They felt that there was no hope for mercy. It made no sense to appeal to Joseph for anything. So they were speechless, in total shock and dismay, for they feared the worst.

The brother that had told them that they would bow to him now held their lives in his hand. They had refused to believe that they would bow but they knew that they had bowed several



times to him. They had been filled with hate, spite, and envy and they had always shown it to him. What a disaster! O for the chance to relive their lives and make up for what they are done? Could they ever make him know they were sorry?

They must have been thinking that God was ready to repay them for their envy and hatred, the lies and deception they had perpetrated on their father. Now Joseph was even bringing that up and asking how their father was! The word dismay appropriately summed up their emotional state.

Verse 4. The brothers would have run if they could have. So Joseph changed the scene from that of a trial to a scene where he offered intimacy. He called on them to come near to him.

They would have probably pulled away from him for Joseph was dressed like an Egyptian with no beard or distinguishing Hebrew characteristics. They would have known that no Egyptian would have invited Hebrews to come near to them in this fashion and so they would have understood that Joseph was inviting them to come into close fellowship with him.

They finally responded and came near to Joseph and he repeated that he was Joseph their brother whom they had sold into slavery in Egypt.

He did not minimize the sins of his brothers. He brought that out into the open. But in doing so he knew that they had come to the place where they recognized that they had committed a grave sin and had repented. (See Chapter 44).

Since they had repented of their sins, Joseph did not need to spend a lot of time stressing the point. Their repentance had been real. They had been truly convicted and their hearts had been changed. He had tested them and their behavior showed that he was right to be filled with joy.

Joseph knew that God had been working on him and maturing him through all his difficult years in Egypt. He did not hate his brothers. But he also knew that God had at the same time been working on his brothers, especially on Judah.

Joseph knew that change from the inside was possible. It might have been difficult for him to believe but he accepted that God could change even the worst sinners.

We should remember that there is a thing called real repentance and real renewal. We can be made new by the God of Abraham, Isaac, the God of Joseph and the God of Judah.

If He can change Judah He can change us!

Verse 5. Joseph gave the brothers hope. He really loved his brothers and encouraged them not to be so fearful and angry with themselves for what they had done. God had been controlling events and protecting him all along.



He told them that all through the entire time of distress God had been working. God had known them and His hand had been behind every event that had occurred. God knew what He was doing when He gave him the dreams that his family would bow down to him. God knew that they would have sold him into slavery and God had so worked it out that in the fullness of time, he would have been elevated to the second most powerful position in the land.

God had had a purpose. The times had been dark and difficult for Joseph as well as for the family, but God was allowing His plan of redemption to work for the benefit of everyone.

God's purpose was not to bring destruction but to bring salvation. God had so worked that the evil that had been done, worked to accomplish His good and perfect purpose. He had turned the wrong that they were doing around so that good resulted. God had sent him ahead of them to Egypt, had elevated him to a high place, so that he was able to work successfully to preserve a remnant. God had determined to preserve a remnant of the Hebrews, because he had made a covenant with Abraham. Neither the actions of men nor the plan of Satan could thwart God's plan.

Note the implications. Joseph's testing of the brothers was important and was necessary for God had decided to channel His blessings through the seed of Abraham.

It might have become obvious at this stage that this was the early phase of the fulfillment of the prophecy that the seed of Abraham would have to go into a strange land, where they would grow into a great nation and be oppressed.

At this stage the sons of Jacob that would form the nation had to be tested and approved and purified. They could not share in the blessing without that testing.

Joseph was really telling his brothers that his testing of them was designed to make them acknowledge that they had done something wrong against him and then show that they had been changed.

Clearly Joseph had a deep faith that God was omnipotent and omniscient. He would overrule wicked men, as well as Satan and his demonic forces whose actions were designed to frustrate His sovereign will.

It is easy for us to forget that Satan and his demonic forces are always trying to anticipate God's plan and to do whatever they can to frustrate it. These evil beings never stop. From the time Satan managed to get men to sin he has been working his work.

We tend to forget that all believers are in a hot and intense spiritual warfare. We tend to be so casual. Sin can never be minimized and that is why God calls us to repentance and then to show fruits of repentance.



The fact that God would work and turn the intentions of men so that His plan is accomplished, should be no comfort for those who do evil. God hates all kinds of sin with a perfect and complete hatred.

It is the prerogative of God to bring good out of evil. We know that no human being or demon can do evil without God knowing. But we also know that God can and does use evil beings as ministers of His providence. But He insists that He hates wickedness and will punish it.

Note that God prefers to use saints as ministers of His providence, for then He is especially glorified and His holiness and love shines ever more brightly throughout the world. He looks forward to rewarding the saints who are His ministers in reconciling men to Himself.

Your task then is to be a light to the world, and the salt the world needs to stem its corruption.

Verse 6. God's preserving work was still in operation, says Joseph. The famine at that time had only run for two years and there were still five more years to go. The remaining five years would be terrible months. Men would not be able to plant or harvest.

Pharaoh had been warned that the famine would bring that part of the world into a most dreadful and horrifying state. It would be so bad that men would never remember the previous years of plenty. The memory of the good times would be wiped out.

Verse 7. God was in control and knows the future. He had sent him to save the remnant of Israel. They would be saved by a "great deliverance".

Other people who would not have access to Egypt would probably have starved to death with no salvation or deliverance. Others would have lost all their possessions. Even in Egypt we learn that the famine became so severe that eventually the people of Egypt had to sell all their land and possessions to Pharaoh, in order to get food and save their lives.

At the same time the people of God were protected and nothing like that would happen to them. They would not have to give up everything they had to get food. Their deliverance therefore would be a "great deliverance".

Verse 8. So Joseph again affirmed that it was not them that had really sent him, but it was God who had acted to bring him to Egypt.

Not only did God bring him into Egypt but God had made him like a father to Pharaoh, a trusted adviser, the one on whom Pharaoh depended. God had made him second to Pharaoh, a Lord of everything that Pharaoh had and a powerful ruler throughout all of Egypt.

So let us notice Joseph's actions. He took the weight of the horrible crime of the brothers off their shoulders, lifted them out of misery and self-recrimination. He had placed everything that happened squarely under the powerful arm of divine sovereignty. He had pointed every



one of the brothers to God's forgiving grace. He taught that God could wipe away the past and heal the wounds that their sin had inflicted. This was such a wonderful God.

Note that Jesus in His work has done the same things as Joseph did for his brethren. Actually Jesus has done even more things for us.

Verse 9. Since all of this was under the control of God and had worked to His glory and for the preservation of the seed of Abraham in fulfillment of God's promises, they should involve themselves in completing what God intended.

They should hurry, go back home and bring his father to him. God had exalted and prospered him and had used him to prepare the way to preserve His people. Joseph wanted Jacob to stay close to him with the family, so that he would provide for them during the remaining years of famine.

God had been great and wonderful to the family. He had elevated Joseph to a position of glory and power. There would be no doubt that the family would survive and do extremely well.

Jacob would see that Joseph would be comforted by his position in Egypt and would not fear to bring the entire family there so that the remnant of God would be preserved. Obviously Joseph was not relying on his own ability but knew that God was with him, and had sent him into Egypt to fulfill His purpose. He was happy to be an instrument and a tool of God.

Verse 10-11. Jacob would dwell in the land of Goshen with their flocks and herds. They would be near to Joseph so they need not fear. Note that Goshen was a fertile land in the Nile Delta and the Israelites would certainly prosper there.

We must remember that Joseph planned to put his family in the land of Goshen which is in the Delta area. They were shepherds and would need fertile land for their crops and to maintain their animals. Being shepherds, an occupation that the Egyptians scorned, they would be left to themselves most of the time. The Egyptians would not want to intermarry with them for Egyptians looked down on shepherds. So the plan of God was quite clear. It took into consideration the prejudices and foibles of men.

Joseph vowed that he would provide for them so that they would never be in poverty.

Verse 12-13. Joseph seemed to have to still fully persuade his brothers that he was really Joseph. He would have to invite them to come close to him and inspect him. Similarly, we are invited to come close to the Lord Jesus Christ so that we can see His beauty, and the blessing and bounty He has for us.

Joseph seemed to have felt that they would have a task ahead of them to persuade Jacob that he was still alive and in Egypt and in such a high position and able to protect them. The brothers and Benjamin would have to describe his glory in Egypt, giving details about what they had seen and Joseph's power to be able to fully persuade Jacob.



Verse 14-15. The plan of God had worked as we know it would. The plans of God are perfect. Nothing would ever thwart them. All the plans of God would be fulfilled in due time. Note however that Joseph loved his family and he especially loved the Benjamin and his father. He would not see himself living away from his family and his father and so he commanded the brothers to hurry up and bring his father to him.

Clearly Joseph was a very emotional person for he threw his arms over Benjamin and wept again for the fourth time. But he did not leave his brothers out of his joy for he kissed them and wept again. But notice after the kissing and the rejoicing he talked to his brothers and discussed matters with them as to how they would plan their coming into Egypt.

CONCLUSION

Our Lesson for today therefore has some things that are too good to be true. The plan of God will ensure that. God's plan is such that things that will happen will be astounding, but they will be real. God's plan ensured that a family was born and that evil was overcome. The road to reconciliation with God had finally begun to move along quickly.

The innocent but oppressed Joseph loved his brothers but he particularly loved his full brother Benjamin. He and Benjamin hugged, wept and kissed.

Have you ever thought of doing the same thing with your relatives? Are you comfortable and happy with your emotions and your affection from them? Do you show family and your favourites your affection? Do you do like Joseph?

It was the plan of God that the hardhearted Judah would be totally changed and would give what is regarded by scholars as the most incredibly tender, appealing and self-sacrificing appeal in all of Scripture. This was something that was fit for the man from whose loins the Messiah came.

Judah's story is the story of a rebel and a self-centered man who really had no interest in spiritual things. But he repented and learned eventually that he should be willing to trade his own life for that of his brother. The plan of God was that he would be renewed by the Spirit of God. He would become a real leader and a Saviour.

We are told that the Lord Jesus Christ can renew us no matter how hardened and selfish we have become. We do not have to live our selfish lives like that forever. We can repent and we can be changed. Our repentance does not have to be a phony repentance repenting with only words and with no true conviction and without a change of heart.

So note the plan of God. God was at work in Joseph to change him, and He was at work in the brothers to change them. So change is possible. What a family! Each of them became new creatures in Christ. Remember the promise of God is that we too can be made a new creature in Christ.



By this experience Jacob would have learned that he should pay more attention to God and what He wanted to do, depending less of the works of the flesh for success. Later chapters show us that Jacob did learn this lesson.

We have learned that life is a puzzle sometimes and we just do not know where all the pieces will fit. We cannot often make sense of what is happening around us. But we must remember that as long as we are on this earth in the flesh we have to trust God and accept that our Father in heaven knows best.

In fact, as one writer says: **“Though it may not seem so now, your present difficulty may be the instrument to your future happiness”**.

We can also learn that repentance is indispensable for genuine and lasting reconciliation. Repentance and forgiveness go hand-in-hand.

It is clear that once there is repentance forgiveness should be granted quickly and should not be delayed. Anger should not persist but should be dealt with quickly. The Apostle tells us in Ephesians 4:26-27: *“Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity”*.

Forgiveness must be free and unconditional. It always involves some sacrifice. It is never temporary but permanent.

Note also that forgiveness does not involve overlooking sin. It is not leniency. Neither is it free; a price must be paid, for sin must always have a price.

Biblical forgiveness is always designed to correct and restore the offender. It is therefore aimed at serving the interests of the other person, even if it costs us. Forgiveness is the mark of godly character and conduct. It is not an option but a command. Once there is repentance there must be forgiveness.

The need for discipline and correction is extremely important, since forgiveness of sins involves drawing the penitent and the one wronged closer together. (Hebrews 12: 5-11).

Joseph's role in this great drama was very significant. He was chosen to be the instrument in accomplishing God's plan of salvation and to be Preserver of the house of Israel. But important as he was, we should note carefully the following comment which compares him to Judah. One writer states:

“Joseph was not a medium of salvation in the same way as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was indeed a benefactor, not only to his brethren and to the whole house of Israel but also to the Egyptians: but salvation, that is, spiritual help and culture, he neither brought to the Gentiles nor to the house of Israel.

In Jacob's blessing he is endowed with the richest inheritance of the firstborn in earthly things; but salvation is to reach the nations through Judah.



We may therefore without hesitation look up on the history of Joseph as a “type of the pathway of the church, not of Jehovah only, but also of Christ, from lowliness to exaltation, from slavery liberty, from suffering to glory.”

The behavior of Joseph certainly teaches us many great lessons, not least of which is his faithfulness to God, his dependence on God and his assurance that God's revelation to him would come to pass. He submitted himself to the molding and shaping of God and in doing so he worked the work of God and God preserved a remnant of his people.

He did magnificent work, paving the way for Judah and the chosen line to bring forth the Messiah.

Most importantly, when we stop our rebellion and instead make the decision to become sons and daughters of God that decision changes everything.

Note that Joseph's brothers took a step of faith led by Judah. Then when they took the step of faith, they saw dramatic evidence that they had done the right thing

When we take our step of faith things might not seem to change dramatically as was the case here. But God will do the same for us that He did for them. When we make that step of faith all heaven, all the Angels will sing for joy. Heaven will rejoice.

We still know however that sometimes people will disappoint us, and we have to be realistic about that matter. We expect them to be just and are upset when they are not but remember that Joseph suffered many disappointments, from his brothers, from the cupbearer, from Potiphar's wife, and from Potiphar.

But remember that God takes responsibility for all the terrible things that happened to Joseph and He takes responsibility for all the calamities that happen to us.

We are not to do evil because we know that God has a plan. God has forbidden certain behaviours. God does not want us to do evil or sin so that grace will abound. So be very careful about what you do and what you think.

We know however that God will accomplish His will and He will set us free. He will work in our lives to bring about purifying, constructive things so that His people will be prepared for eternal life.

So become a part of God's Plan by being led by the Holy Spirit.

