

## **GOD IS NOT ABSENT IN THE CHAOS**

### **5. Recognizing, Realizing and Resting in the Grace of the Savior Genesis 50:15-21**

This morning we are in the 5<sup>th</sup> installment in a series based on the life of a man in the Old Testament named Joseph. Rather than walking through the entire narrative of his life (which takes up about one fourth of the entire book of Genesis) we've been looking at snapshots (or maybe more appropriately, short video clips) of his life. One of the great overarching truths that we see played out in the guy's life that is so relevant to our lives today is that **God Is Not Absent in the Chaos.**

This morning we're picking up the narrative at the end of **Genesis 49** where we are given the account of the death of Joseph's dad in Egypt.

**Genesis 49:33** When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people.

That moment is PRECIOUS in the sight of the Lord

*Psalm 116:15 (ESV) Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*

The last chapter of the book of Genesis opens with the human side of **Psalm 116:15**

**Genesis 50:1 (ESV) And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.**

God smiles — but we weep! We don't weep for the believing loved one who died. We weep for ourselves because we will no longer see the eyes that once looked at us with love; no longer see the smiles that once brightened our lives. But because of the resurrection of Jesus we don't sorrow as those who have no hope!

**Genesis 50:15 (ESV)<sup>15</sup>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."**

There's a ton of backstory to this moment that we haven't covered. But here's the short form: Joseph's brothers had only **hated** and **envied** Joseph because their father had favored Joseph above all of them and God had given Joseph dreams that showed his brothers and his parents bowing before him. In their hatred and envy they conspired to get rid of Joseph so he never could rule over them. They threw him in a pit and they were going to leave him there to die. But when they saw a caravan of merchants on their way to Egypt, they saw a way to get rid of their brother and make some money while doing it. They sold Joseph to the merchants as a slave.

Once again — the Bible is the best commentary on the Bible. **Psalm 105** tells us that God was not only PRESENT in the all that moral chaos — He was actually over-ruling all that chaos to advance His plan to rescue and redeem fallen man and renew all things through Jesus Christ!

***Psalm 105:16–19 (NLT)** <sup>16</sup>He called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply. <sup>17</sup>Then he sent someone to Egypt ahead of them— Joseph, who was sold as a slave. <sup>18</sup>They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar. <sup>19</sup>Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the Lord tested Joseph's character.*

When that caravan arrived in Egypt Joseph was sold to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of trying rape her and Potiphar had Joseph thrown into prison. But Joseph's unjust imprisonment literally led to Joseph becoming the second most powerful man in all of Egypt. When a great famine came upon the region Joseph's dad sent his brothers to Egypt for food. When they arrived in Egypt they had to bow down before the man Pharaoh had put in charge of distributing grain during the famine. They had no idea that in that moment they were doing what they never wanted to do. The man they bowed before was Joseph.

In return for their hatred and hostility Joseph literally **saved** them from dying of starvation! In return for their hatred and hostility Joseph had **only**

been **steadfast** and **gracious** and **merciful** in his love for them! He made it absolutely clear that he didn't hold any of their treachery against them

*Genesis 45:5 (ESV) And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.*

He restored them and reconciled them to himself. He invited them to live under his rule and his care and his abundance.

**The Holy Spirit inspired Moses** to record their comments for OUR sake!

*1 Corinthians 10:11 (ESV) Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

The way **these guys** were thinking about Joseph **after** he **saved** them; **after** he **forgave** them; **after** he **spoke** words of assurance and peace to them; **after** he **reconciled** them — invited them to live under his rule and abundance — is exactly the same way that way you and I can think about Jesus.

**Genesis 50:15** is an amazing illustration and insight into how the heart of man so easily and quickly fails to **RECOGNIZE** — **REALIZE** and **REST** in grace.

WE have been told of the amazing grace of God — how God sent Jesus to die in our place for our sins, pay in full the penalty for our sins. We've been told how the last words of Jesus from the cross were ***It is finished!*** The price to ransom us from the power and penalty of sin was paid in full! There is NOTHING left to be done! Everything necessary for our salvation was accomplished by Jesus! The moment we placed our trust in Jesus alone to save us — the finished saving work of the cross was applied to our lives. The accounts are settled, the rebel is reconciled. THAT is what God has declared to us in the Gospel!

THAT is what we have believed!

But then — in the face of our daily circumstances and failures,

we can so quickly feel and act like the brothers of Joseph. **WE** fail to recognize and rest in saving grace.

In the margin of your Bible next to **Genesis 50:15** write: **Psalm 136**. **Psalm 136** begins with words that most of you are familiar with

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever"*

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit — the psalmist repeats that **exact same** declaration **25 more times**. I can't count the number of times I've made it a point that in the Bible — God says A LOT about a LITTLE. He doesn't say a little about a lot of things. He states and restates the truth about His eternal nature and attributes, about His loving, gracious and merciful redeeming plans and purposes — time and time again. He holds up those same truths like a diamond — and turns them. He lets us see those same truths them from different angles, let's us see those same truths in a new light through the lives and words of different people at different times and in different circumstances.

The Bible is the revelation of God to man. That alone makes this book worthy of our complete attention. We should treasure it — esteem it above all other books — and above all — LISTEN to what God has to say in it. But there are times when God will repeat Himself within a book of the Bible — within a section of that book — within a chapter of that book! **Whenever** God speaks, we should listen! **But when God repeats himself**, we should pay extra attention because repetition is for emphasis!

LISTEN — When God says the same thing 26 times in one chapter of the Bible we better drop everything and pay attention! Why would God ever need to repeat the exact same truth 26 times in one chapter? God repeats the exact same thing 26 TIMES in one chapter because the fact that *His steadfast love endures forever* is pretty much a matter of life and death for us. Salvation begins with that fact. Everything healthy and thriving and victorious in our relationship with God hinges on the reality of His enduring, steadfast love! God repeats the exact same thing 26 TIMES in one chapter

because He knows that difficulty and failure are not possibilities in our life. He knows they are certainties.

He knows that it is not a matter of IF we will face difficulty or IF we will fail — it's a matter of WHEN. And He knows the feelings of shame that inevitably follow — all of which can eclipse the reality of His steadfast love — make it seem like He's topped loving us — and cause us to think and act as if He's abandoned us — cause us to shrink back from His love. CHRISTIAN — that is the why condemnation is such a powerful and proven weapon in the devil's arsenal.

26 times He repeats for us the truth about the unfailing nature of His love **because** He wants us to know that His love is steadfast in the face of our sin and failure. It is a love that **never fails** even in the face of our countless failures. 26 times in a single psalm God says that *his steadfast love endures forever* **because** He wants us to know that when every human love fails, HIS love will never fail — when men and women abandon us, HE will never abandon us.

THIS IS SO HUGE for anyone here who has yet to give his or her life to Jesus. You need to know that there is no created thing — no human relationship that can deliver THIS kind of love! If you are looking to any thing in creation (that includes a situation — a location — a possession — or a relationship) to deliver love that is unfailing and steadfast — you are looking on the wrong place! You are looking to a created thing to deliver what only the CREATOR can give. ANY created thing is doomed to fail you. The ONLY source of love that can satisfy the soul of man comes from God, the creator and redeemer of man!

**Genesis 50:15-17 (ESV)<sup>15</sup>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."**

Joseph's brother sent a note to Joseph that was nothing less than a lie.

**<sup>16</sup>So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died, <sup>17</sup>“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.”**

“Dad said, ‘be nice to us.’”

**Genesis 50:17 (ESV) <sup>17</sup> ....Joseph wept when they spoke to him.**

Joseph wept because the note was so very telling. **FIRST** — The fact that they sent him an e-mail (if-you-would) instead of coming in person betrayed their fear and mistrust. **SECOND** — The fact that they put words in the mouth of their dead dad spoke volumes about the fear and mistrust they had in their heart concerning their brother.

Joseph was GRIEVED that they thought of him as vengeful and unforgiving! **Joseph wept** because they didn’t believe his words; they didn’t accept the incredibly kind things he had done for them as true expressions of his love and forgiveness. In the end what more could he have possibly done to convince them of his heart towards them? After everything Joseph had done to encourage them — it was nothing less than cruel of them to say *“Now that dad is dead Joseph is going to hate us and pay us back for what we did to him.”*

Joseph’s brothers **should have** said — *Hey, wait a minute. Whatever we’re feeling right now — let’s take a breath and take inventory of everything Joseph has **said** to us and everything Joseph has **done** for us.*

In light of the truth they would have said — *THAT was really dumb! We don’t have a thing to be afraid of. Joseph **does** love us. Joseph **has forgiven** us.*

CHRISTIANS — How do we know that God loves us? How do we know that God forgives those who put their faith in Christ? God has spoken to us!

***1 John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.***

CHRISTIANS — The things we feel don't always agree with what God says! We can never ever judge God's unchanging Word by our constantly changing emotions. In **Romans 8** Paul the apostle asked the question

***Romans 8:35 NLT** Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love?*

Then Paul answers his own question — **NOTHING!** I love how the NLT reads this portion of **Romans 8**.

***Romans 8:35 NLT** <sup>35</sup>Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?*

***Romans 8:37-38 NLT** <sup>37</sup>No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us <sup>38</sup>And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.*

Surely it must break the heart of God when we don't believe His words; don't believe record of all that He has done for us in sending Jesus to save us — the Gospel! Surely it must break the heart of God when we don't accept all of the infinitely kind things He has done for us as the perfect and true expressions of His love for us: His incarnation, His sacrificial death and His victory over the grave; the sending of the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin, show us our need for a savior and reveal Jesus to us as Savior and Lord! We see have seen His infinite kindness in the countless ways He personally and relentlessly pursued us up to the moment we gave our lives to Him.

And despite all of that — at a moment of crisis we **forget** His unfailing, steadfast love — and **we fear intimacy** with Him — because somehow, contrary to everything God has said to us, everything God has done for us, everything we know about Jesus — we **feel** and **think** and **live as though** He is not going to deal with us according to grace! Even though Jesus bore all of the punishment for our sin — we **feel** and **think** and **live as if** God is going

to punish us. We believe what we feel more than we believe the Word of God.

**QUOTE: Warren Wiersbe** — *When you doubt God's Word, you soon begin to question God's love*

**1 John 4:18** *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.*

**1 John 4:18 NLT** *Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.*

Joseph's brothers didn't want to meet Joseph face to face and humbly acknowledge their unjustified fears — and instead sent a message via a third party. We do pretty much the same thing when we refuse to believe all that God has said and done. Here's what it looks like in our lives: We find every possible way to avoid drawing near to the throne of grace to find help and obtain mercy in a time of our own frailty or failure. We avoid any deeply personal devotional time with Jesus.

We avoid really engaging Jesus during times of corporate worship. We are present when the Bible is being taught — but we are half-hearted in the way we're listening. Here's what the Bible says to us in those moments:

**Hebrews 10:22 NLT** *let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.*

INSTEAD — we communicate with God from a distance. We essentially say — *I'm sure I've disappointed God and I'm sure He's angry with me.* We kind of communicate with God via messenger. Only our third party isn't a person. Instead we **substitute** being churchy **for** genuine, honest and humble fellowship with God. We **replace devotion** for Jesus with **going through the motions** of serving Jesus. That kind of relationship is based on fear — **not love**. That kind of relationship is based on fear — **not faith**.



**Joseph's response to his brothers is so radical.** There's so much there for us that I could never do it justice this morning. We'll finish this series by revisiting **Genesis 50:19-20** and zeroing in on THREE REALLY BIG THINGS.

**But here's what we need to see this morning:** The way Joseph assured his frightened brothers is a great picture of how God assures you and me that He has really forgiven our sins.

**<sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them,**

Joseph **spoke** to them. **Two times** Joseph said, **Don't be afraid!** Joseph **comforted them** and **spoke kindly to them.**

**THAT** is exactly how God takes us from fears to faith. When we hear His Word — and receive it for what it really is

***1 Thessalonians 2:13** when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.*

When we take the Word of God into our hearts and trust it completely the outcome is faith and freedom from fear.

***Isaiah 12:2 KJV** Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.*

**“Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.**

Like I said, we're going to take an in-depth look at this — but we just can't pass over it this morning. Joseph didn't minimize their sins. He said — *“You intended to harm me” (Gen. 50:20)*. But Joseph understood that God had overruled their evil deeds to accomplish His infinitely perfect redeeming plans and purposes.

**THAT** is **exactly** what happened when Jesus when nailed to the cross.

*Acts 2:23-24 NKJV Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; <sup>24</sup>whom God raised up,*

Joseph **not only forgave** his brothers — Joseph went above and beyond the guarantee of forgiveness. He assured them of his constant care.

**v. 21 KJV = I will nourish you, and your little ones**

Joseph used his authority to protect them and provide for them — He gave them homes to live in, work to do, food to eat, and provision for their needs. No small side note: Remember that his brothers hated him for the dreams he had about ruling over them.

**THAT is what the Gospel promises** to everyone who believes with their heart on the Lord Jesus. But here again — we are like Joseph's brothers! Before meeting Jesus, we hated the idea of Jesus being our Lord, resented and feared the possibility of having Jesus be the sovereign of our lives. Yet as Christians we live under His sovereign authority and we are provided for from His sovereign authority.

Jesus promised that He would never leave us or forsake us (Matt. 28:20; John 6:37; 10:27–29; Heb. 13:5–6)

Jesus promised to meet our every need (Rom. 8:32; Phil. 4:19).

**HERE'S THE TRAGEDY** — Joseph's brothers lived under a cloud of fear for 17 years because they didn't really trust him. Had they remembered all that Joseph did to save them, had they remembered all that Joseph originally said, they would have fully enjoyed those years with him and with their dad.