

GENESIS 50

PROMISES MADE; PROMISES FULFILLED; FORGIVENESS GIVEN

A death in the family brings with it a multitude of memories and feelings. No matter what your relationship with the deceased, the death of someone close tends to refocus our lives at least for a time. Feelings of nostalgia and even regret combined with the reality of our own mortality can cause us to see things in a different light.

Today, as we close out the book of Genesis, we will see how a family not only comes together, but sticks together after the death of the father that connected the family. We will see how a family followed what was foretold as its destiny. They had to make it through this tragic time in order to take the next step forward, even though for the most part they didn't know what the next step was.

As we open up Genesis chapter 50, Jacob has just died after blessing all of his sons. Let's pick up there, shall we?

Gen 50:1 *Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him, and kissed him.*

Gen 50:2 *And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel.*

Gen 50:3 *Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.*

The Egyptians were famous for their embalming practices. Most of us have seen pictures of the King Tut exhibit. It was a long, drawn out process, aided by the dry desert of Egypt. Joseph was in a position to

have his father embalmed by the best in the business, which were the Egyptian priests.

The mourning period for the death of a pharaoh was 72 days. We see here that Jacob was mourned for 70. This shows us how well thought of he was, as well as how much respect people had for Joseph. After this period of mourning Joseph requested some bereavement leave from Pharaoh.

Gen 50:4 *Now when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying,*

Gen 50:5 *'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back.'* "

Gen 50:6 *And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear."*

Gen 50:7 *So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,*

Gen 50:8 *as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen.*

Gen 50:9 *And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering.*

Gen 50:10 *Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation. He observed seven days of mourning for his father.*

Gen 50:11 *And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a deep mourning of the Egyptians." Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.*

Gen 50:12 *So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them.*

Gen 50:13 For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place.

Joseph requested permission to take his father's body back to Canaan where he already had a burial plot with his wife and his parents. The route they took was not the shortest one. It avoided the land of the Philistines. Pharaoh sent what was essentially a military convoy to escort the body and it attracted much attention. Going the long way avoided any trouble with the Philistines but it brought them into Canaan from the east side of the Jordan River. This is essentially the same way they will enter when they later come back to the land.

This should also be seen as an act of faith on everyone's part. It isn't easy to take your father's body back to a place where no one is there to watch over it. This is the equivalent of you taking your parent's body back to somewhere you haven't seen in years and though you are supposed to come back, you don't know exactly when that will be. And remember, they aren't taking him to an established cemetery where there is a grounds keeper. He is being buried in a place inhabited by other people after their own family has essentially just up and left it.

This shows that they know one day they will return. This is faith. All they have is a promise. Some of the grandchildren don't even know where Canaan is. They will have to tell their extended families about a promise that says they will one day go back to this place. That is all they have, but it is enough.

Once they get there they have a funeral and mourn for 7 days. This attracted a lot of attention from the Canaanites in the area and made quite an impression. They saw all the Egyptian soldiers and government officials and I'm sure they wondered what was happening. It was such a big event that the Canaanites re-named the place Abel-Mizraim. The word Abel means meadow. This was a play on words with the similar

word meaning mourning. The word Mizraim is the ancient name for Egypt. So the new name meant Meadow of Egypt, or mourning meadow of Egypt.

This burial plot is all the land that Israel owns as far as we have record. **The rest of the land is theirs by the promise of God and nothing else.** Try marching into a foreign country and claiming it by saying that God gave it to you. That is what they will have to do when they leave Egypt.

Gen 50:14 *And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.*

Gen 50:15 *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."*

Gen 50:16 *So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying,*

Gen 50:17 *'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." ' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.*

Gen 50:18 *Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."*

Gen 50:19 *Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?"*

Gen 50:20 *But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.*

Gen 50:21 *Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

Have you ever heard the saying: "**Guilty conscience, troubled mind?**"

This is what that means. Now the brothers are afraid that Joseph will seek retribution for their evil actions. Without their father there to protect them they fear that Joseph can do whatever he wants to do to them, and they are right. He could do whatever he wanted. Pharaoh has made that plain.

His brothers fully admitted what they did was evil. Now they are worried about justice. Justice would have it that they pay for their crimes. In fear of this they concoct a story that brings their father into it to give them cover. Jacob was totally ignorant of what they had done. So they go to Joseph and tell their "story."

Joseph weeps, probably because he realizes the lack of character his brothers have and they have failed to see how much character he has.

Whether it was the moment, fear or the sight of Joseph weeping, I don't know but Joseph's brothers fell down in humility and declared themselves to be his servants. Joseph then calmed their fears with a humble question of his own.

Gen 50:19 Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?"

He saw much more than his brothers ever had. Why was this, because Joseph was more familiar with the plan of God? When we understand that God is in control and we are humbly playing our part, then we can have peace even when things seem to be going the wrong way. Joseph had peace in this way. His brothers don't and therefore live in fear. Joseph then explains things to them.

Gen 50:20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Joseph gets it! He sees both sides of the coin. Even if he doesn't understand everything all the time, he still has peace. What they meant for evil, God meant for good. This is as close as you can get to Romans 8:28.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

My friend David Guzik tells this story...

There was an old minister who had a unique gift to minister to the distressed and discouraged. In his Bible, he carried an old bookmark woven of silk threads into a motto. The back of it, where the threads were knotted and tied, was a hopeless tangle. He would take the bookmark out and show the troubled person this side of the bookmark and ask them to make sense of it. They never could. Then the pastor would turn it over, and on the front were white letters against a solid background saying, "God is love." When events in our life seem tangled and meaningless, it is because we can see only one side of the tapestry.

Regarding the relationship of Joseph and his brothers as far as Joseph's forgiving them goes, I will quote Guzik again. He says...

"Often, the problem we have in loving others and in freeing ourselves from bitterness we may have towards them, is really a problem of not knowing who *God is* and trusting Him to be who He says He is." (Guzik)

You see the word purpose there. **We have a purpose.** Joseph was fulfilling his. The question is, are we?

The history of the world, the story that is your life, is one long chain of events. Many see these events as unrelated or coincidental. However, as Christians we can't look at life this way. We have to recognize that God is in control.

- If Joseph's brothers never sell him to the Midianites, then Joseph never goes to Egypt.
- If Joseph never goes to Egypt, he never is sold to Potiphar.
- If he is never sold to Potiphar, Potiphar's wife never falsely accuses him of rape.
- If Potiphar's wife never falsely accuses him of rape, then he is never put in prison.
- If he is never put in prison, he never meets the baker and butler of Pharaoh.
- If he never meets the baker and butler of Pharaoh, he never interprets their dreams.
- If he never interprets their dreams, he never gets to interpret Pharaoh's dream.
- If he never gets to interpret Pharaoh's dream, he never is made prime minister.
- If he is never made prime minister, he never wisely administrates for the severe famine coming upon the region.
- If he never wisely administrates for the severe famine coming upon the region, then his family back in Canaan perishes from the famine.
- If his family back in Canaan perishes from the famine, then the Messiah can't come forth from a dead family.
- If the Messiah can't come forth, then Jesus never came.
- If Jesus never came, then we are dead in our sins and without hope in this world.

Do you see how missing out on one opportunity to minister, to do the will of God can seriously affect not only you, but others around you?

How many things could have been or can be different if only we would heed the call of God?

Joseph was faithful and changed the course of not only his family, but that of the world. **I'm looking at potential world-changers right now!** I'm looking at y'all.

Gen 50:21 *Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

Gen 50:22 *So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.*

Gen 50:23 *Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.*

Gen 50:24 *And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."*

Joseph lived to the ripe old age of 110. He was able to see his great, great, great grandchildren. He left his family with the promise of God on his lips. His legacy was a Godly one. He lived a life of hardship and triumph. He lived a life of humility and forgiveness. He accomplished the task for which he was brought into this world to perform.

I hope we can leave with the same being said of us.