

# GIVING GOOD NEWS

## **GENESIS 45:1-28**

Gossip. It is one of those sins that is often overlooked, even though it is mentioned in the latter part of Romans 1 as a sign of one who has turned away from God. What is gossip? It isn't merely speaking about other people. Specifically, gossip involves speaking bad about other people. It involves giving bad news.

Did you ever stop to think about what is the opposite of gossip? What comes to mind? Silence? Quiet? That doesn't quite get the point. The idea of gossip contains a certain level of viciousness. The opposite of that viciousness is grace and love. If gossip is the spreading of bad news, then the opposite of gossip is the preaching of the gospel -- the spreading of good news.

This is going to be a chapter of good news. Joseph is going to give good news to his brothers. The Pharaoh is going to give good news to Joseph and his family. The brothers are going to return to their father with this same good news.

Throughout all of this, we ought to remember that we are also bearers of good news. We have the best news of all. We have news that means the difference between life and death. We have news that means the difference between hope and hopelessness. We have news that ought to be the cause of the greatest possible rejoicing.

One of the things that makes our good news so good is that it is set against the backdrop of bad news. When you go into a jewelry store and ask to look at a diamond, what does the jeweler do in order to bring out the greatest luster of the diamond? He puts it against a black velvet background. Why does he do this? Because the beauty of the diamond shines all the more brightly against the dark background.

The gospel is the same way. It shines at its brightest when seen against the backdrop of the condemnation of sin and death.

These brothers have been wrestling with their secret sin for a long time. They have hidden it from their father and they have even hidden it from one another. But no more. As they stand before the prime minister of Egypt, Judah confesses his sin openly and offers himself as a sacrifice for his younger brother. He offers to take the place of Benjamin so that Benjamin can return home to their father.

All of the events have transpired to bring Judah and his brothers to this point. They have been brought to the place of confession and repentance and a changed attitude. Now they are ready to receive the good news.

## AN IDENTIFYING ANNOUNCEMENT

*<sup>1</sup> Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me." So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.*

*<sup>3</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. (Genesis 45:1-3).*

Up to this point, there had always been a royal audience when Joseph met with his brothers. There had been Egyptian guards and servants and officials present. It was unthinkable that these foreigners would be permitted a private audience. But that is exactly what takes place now. All of the retainers and guards and officials are sent from the room. For the first time in many a year, Joseph and his brothers are alone.

They do not know what to make of this. To the best of their knowledge, Joseph does not even know how to speak Hebrew. Up to this time, he has communicated to them only through a translator.

It is a time of great emotion. Joseph's weeping in the presence of his brothers is loud enough to be heard by those who have left the room. In this midst of his weeping, Joseph identifies himself.

*"I am Joseph!"* It is the last message they ever expected to hear. As the implications of this statement began to sink in, they must have wondered if it was the last message they would ever hear. This is the brother whom they had betrayed. This is the brother they had sought to murder. This is the brother they had sold into slavery so many years ago. They had come into his presence expecting bad news and now that bad news had just gotten a lot worse.

There is coming a day when Jesus will also reveal Himself. He will return and He will announce Himself in a way He has never before done.

Do you remember what took place in the Garden of Gethsemane when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus? They were following Judas and he made the identifying kiss, but then they were confronted by a fugitive who was making no effort to escape. Jesus wasn't acting the part of a fugitive and this gave the arresting soldiers pause.

*Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him,*

*went forth, and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5 They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them. 6 When therefore He said to them, "I am He," they drew back, and fell to the ground. (John 18:4-6).*

It must have been a comical scene. The cohort is there and the officers and the chief priests and the Pharisees. They have come to arrest this lonely rabbi. Instead of them questioning Him, He takes the initiative and questions them.

*"Whom do you seek?"*

*"Jesus the Nazarene."*

*"I am He."*

And suddenly it looks as though they are at a bowling alley and these soldiers and officers and priests and Pharisees are falling all over them. It is a strike!

There is coming a day when Jesus is going to come back. The Scriptures do not tell us what He is going to say, but they do describe Him riding a white horse and with a sharp two-edged sword going from His mouth. What does He say? Perhaps He will say what He said here: *"I am."*

On that day, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall be silenced except to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

## **AN EXPLAINED PROVIDENCE**

*Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. 8 Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. 9 Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. 10 And you shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. 11 There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to*

*come, lest you and your household and all that you have be impoverished.”*  
*12 And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you. 13 Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here.” (Genesis 45:4-13).*

The long speech of Joseph's stands in contrast to the one made at the close of the previous chapter that was given by Judah. That was a plea for mercy and to be permitted to take the place of Benjamin. Joseph also has a plea. It is a plea for restoration of fellowship, even as he commissions his brothers with a message that they are to take back home to their father.

Joseph's message is one of complete and striking forgiveness. This stands in direct contrast to the modern thinking of today. We live in a day where the common motto is: "Don't get mad; get even." Joseph displays none of that.

1. A Call to Draw Near: *Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. (45:4).*

Joseph calls His brothers to come closer. They are cowering with fright, waiting for the judgment to fall upon them for their past deed. Instead of judgment, there is a call to come close.

God makes the same call to us. When we have fallen into sin; when it seems that we have fallen from the grace of God, He calls us to come close. As a loving father, He embraces the prodigal child and calls for a celebration.

The Bible tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This is not a fear that drives away; it is a fear that draws us near.

2. A Lack of Condemnation: *And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves (45:45).*

Notice that there are no words of condemnation from Joseph. He does not tell them, "You did me wrong and I'm going to forgive you, but I will never let you forget it." To the contrary, he urges them, "*Do not be grieved or angry with yourselves*" (45:5).

The Lord says the same thing to us: *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13).*

You are not called to live in the land of guilt. Your guilt has been taken and nailed to the cross. Your guilt no longer belongs to you. You have no right to continue in that state.

How can Joseph take such an attitude? How is he able to forgive so completely? It is because he has been given a heavenly perspective.

3. A Heavenly Perspective: *God sent me before you to preserve life (45:5).*

Joseph has come to recognize the hand of the Lord in the midst of his circumstances. He knows full well that the motives of his brothers were for evil, but he also knows that the Lord has had a bigger plan underway.

How can you forgive others when they wrong you? You can do it by recognizing the truth that the hurt comes from one hand -- from the hand of the Lord. He has brought the hurt into your life to do something that will turn that pain into a blessing.

You may not be able to see where you are in God's plan or what bad things are happening in your life. That is where faith comes into the picture. You are called to believe in that which you cannot see.

- Forgiveness involves a positive attitude toward the offense rather than a negative attitude toward the offender.
- Forgiveness views the offender as an instrument in God's hands. Jesus did this. He suffered at the hands of sinful men, knowing all the while that it was ultimately God who had delivered Him up.

*Pilate therefore said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin." (John 19:10-11).*

This is not a statement that God was sinning, but rather it is pointing out that the death of Christ was ultimately at the hands of God. He was the One who gave the authority to Pilate and to the High Priests and religious leaders of Jerusalem.

Knowing that allowed Jesus to pray for those who crucified: *But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."*

*(Luke 23:34).*

- Forgiveness looks at the wounds of the offense as God's way of drawing attention to the offender's needs.
- Forgiveness recognizes that bitterness assumes a right that we do not have. Only God has a right to punish.

*<sup>19</sup> Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*  
*(Romans 12:19-21).*

- Forgiveness mirrors the way that God has treated us: *And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32).*

4. *A Saving Plan: God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup> Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God (45:7-8).*

God is in the business of delivering His people. God has not gone out of business. He is still in the same business. Are you in trouble? There is a deliverer.

The only reason God is a reliable deliverer is because He is sovereign. He controls all things. He is in control of...

- The earth
- All of nature
- What appear to be chance happenings
- Nations
- The heart of the king
- Evil deeds
- Man's birth and death
- The seemingly accidental and insignificant

If you have been believing in a God that is not sovereign, then you believe that God is not God. You have been worshiping an idol of your own making.

5. *A Choice Land: And you shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your*

*herds and all that you have (45:10).*

The term “Goshen” is peculiar to the Pentateuch. When we come to Genesis 47:11, we shall see that this land was also known as “the land of Rameses.” This area is thought to have been on the eastern edge of the Delta region. As such, it was well-suited for the pastoral flocks of Jacob. It was prime real estate. Many years later, the treasure cities of Rameses would be built here.

The land of Goshen was to the east of the Nile. This may have had a special significance. The land to the west of the Nile was considered to be the land of the dead. All of the pyramids were located on the western side of the Nile. The Valley of the Kings containing the tombs of the 18th and 19th dynasties were on the western side of the Nile. On the other hand, the east side of the Nile was considered to be the land of the living. This was the side on which the sun came up every morning.

This was appropriate to the Jews because they served the Living God. It was appropriate that they serve Him in the land of the living.

## **A JOYFUL RECONCILIATION**

*Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck. 15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him. (Genesis 45:14-15).*

These actions of reconciliation finally broke the ice between Joseph and his brothers. His actions in demonstrating his love in a physical manner communicated the reality of his forgiveness.

Why is it so hard to forgive? It is because our hearts are not right. The good news of the gospel is that God is in the business of changing hearts. In the meantime, if you are trying to forgive, begin with an outward, physical demonstration of that forgiveness. Do not wait until you “feel like it” to do a forgiving action. Instead, determine that you are going to forgive and then put that forgiveness into real, tangible action.

## **A ROYAL INVITATION**

*Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. 17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Say to your brothers, ‘Do this: load your beasts and go to*

*the land of Canaan, <sup>18</sup> and take your father and your households and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you shall eat the fat of the land.’ <sup>19</sup> Now you are ordered, ‘Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come. <sup>20</sup> And do not concern yourselves with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’” (Genesis 45:16-20).*

If there were any doubt as to whether the offer of Joseph for a place in the land was valid, it is now dispelled by the Pharaoh. He gives his endorsement for the small clan of Israel to come and settle in the land. Indeed, the message is given, “Don’t bother to pack your belongings because we will give you better belongings here.”

Can you imagine what it would be like to be invited to come and to live in a luxurious mansion? Don’t bother with bringing your shower curtain and your old throw rugs. There are much better that are available to you.

We have such an invitation. It was given to us by Jesus when He said, “*In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*” (John 14:2-3). What is our reaction to such a promise? All too often, we focus on packing our “stuff,” forgetting that there is much better awaiting us.

Once upon a time there was a man who was extremely wealthy. He asked God every night in his prayers if God would allow him to bring some of his wealth with him to heaven when he died. One night an angel appeared with a message from God. The angel told the man that God heard his prayers and this one time would grant his request that when he died he was allowed to bring with him one suitcase, but one suitcase only. Finally the day came. The man's life ended and he appeared before Peter at the gates of heaven. Peter saw that he was carrying a suitcase and quickly told him that he could not bring that into heaven.

The man quickly explained the story to Peter. Peter told the man to wait at the gates, and that he would have to go verify the story with God and he would be right back. When Peter returned he apologized to the man and explained that God had never allowed this before. Just before the man walked in through the pearly gates curiosity got the best of Peter and he asked the man if he could see what he brought to heaven. The man grinned with pride and said, “Sure.” The man turned the case on its side and unzipped it to reveal the contents. The suitcase was filled to its capacity with pure solid gold bars -some of the most beautiful gold that man had ever seen. Peter stood there looking at the gold and had a notable look of confusion on his face. The man stood up, looked at Peter, and asked him the reason for the confusion. Peter glanced up at the man and then back at the suitcase and asked, “Why would you bring pavement?”

## DEPARTING INSTRUCTIONS

*21 Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. 22 To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments.*

*23 And to his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey.*

*24 So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the journey." (Genesis 45:21-24).*

As the brothers are preparing for their return journey to Canaan, Joseph again showers Benjamin with extra favor. The others are given grace, but Benjamin is given more grace. He is given grace heaped upon grace.

Does that sound familiar? It ought to. John 1:16 tells us that *of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace*. What Joseph was doing to Benjamin in giving him special favor, so also God has done to us.

I cannot help but to note the parting instruction that Joseph gives to his brothers: *"Do not quarrel on the journey."* (25:24). It is a command for them to get along with one another. He knows them all too well and he knows that, even in the face of true repentance, it is easy to slip back into old habits.

## A REVIVING MESSAGE

*Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. 26 And they told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." But he was stunned, for he did not believe them. 27 When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 Then Israel said, "It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die." (Genesis 45:25-28).*

As the brothers arrive back in Canaan, they are faced with what may have been a difficult task. They are going to tell their father that Joseph is still alive. In doing so, they are also going to make known their own guilt.

That is what we do when we share the good news of the gospel. We aren't telling people how they can be nice like us. Rather we are beggars telling other beggars where we found bread. We are sinners who confess that we need a Savior.

It is a reviving message. It had that effect upon Jacob. The old man was strengthened and ready for the long journey, for it meant the opportunity to once again see his beloved son.

We have already seen many contrasts and comparisons between Joseph and Jesus. They continue to be seen in this passage.

<b>Joseph</b>	<b>Jesus</b>
He was thought to be dead and the news is brought to Jacob that he is still alive.	He was dead and buried; the angels came to report that He has risen from the dead.
Jacob did not at first believe the good news that Joseph was still alive.	Thomas did not at first believe the message that Jesus had risen from the dead.
Jacob was convinced that Joseph was alive only when he saw the evidence of the wagons from Egypt.	Thomas was convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead only when he saw Jesus for Himself and was offered the evidence of sight and of touch.

Has the message of the resurrected Christ strengthened you? Have you said to yourself, "It is enough; I am going to see Jesus"?