

**Reading:** Genesis 45:1-10.

**Theme:** Great Delight in Total Forgiveness.

Last time we saw Judah had tried to plead for Benjamin to try to get the governor of Egypt to spare him. Joseph had heard more than enough and could no longer restrain his emotions. He knew his brothers had truly changed, were truly concerned for Benjamin. Every word of Judah's speech and pleading had pierced his heart. Joseph's 11 brothers were in front of him - afraid, even terrified, with hearts full of sorrow at what would happen. Yet Joseph's heart was a sea of restless emotion, joy and love. The most tender and powerful passions of brotherly love were pent up and about to burst out.

Perhaps with difficulty he gave the order in v1 and then Joseph bursts into tears. The introduction to what he says to his brothers are these tears - not just a few, but a loud sobbing - even the servants outside of the room heard him. Tears are not dishonourable even for the best and bravest men. Joseph shed many tears in his life, but none with such joy as at this time - tears of tenderness and love. By these tears the stern governor of Egypt dissolved from view and his brothers would know their brother Joseph from then on.

How do we imagine God when a person, a lost sinner truly repents and trusts in the Lord Jesus, or when a backslider returns? Do we imagine him as quite laid back, as matter-of-fact about it because He predestined it would happen? From what we see in Scripture we have the picture of the rejoicing God - a sheep found, one lost coin found, the prodigal son returned. There's no coldness, but rejoicing, even an aged father running to meet the tramp "*It's my son*". We are told that there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels in heaven when one sinner repents - it doesn't actually say the angels rejoice, but that there is rejoicing in their presence and

from the parable of the prodigal son it would seem that the father initiates the rejoicing!

Doesn't this show us something of the joy of God expressed. The Lord Jesus will rejoice as He sees the travail of his soul and rejoices over such with singing and joy. To hear of a person's profession of faith should cause within us as Christians an outburst of praise, joy - God is still at work, He is still in the salvation business. It should warmly move our hearts to hear one another's testimonies, to hear of the testimony of others - not to glorify self, or our past life, but to speak of God's grace and mercy to us. We should be those who are pointing others to the One who has done so much for us. In the passage we read I want us to see 3 main things, but only 2 of them this evening:

### **1. The Dreadful Fright.**

The 11 brothers had a dreadful fright. This stern governor was now mysteriously in tears before them, sobbing his heart out, and he speaks to them, and what a shock as he spoke in their own language. If that wasn't startling enough, he says *"I am Joseph! Is my father still living?"*

I wonder what fears, terrors came upon them as thoughts of their mistreatment of him returned at the sound of his name. Here before them, was the most powerful man in Egypt, perhaps the ancient world of that day. This is the one they had been cruel to, had sold and had mocked. *"I am Joseph!"* - must have sounded like a death bell in their minds and hearts. No one said *"Hey, long time no see. You've done well for yourself?"* Not at all!! We are told that his brothers were *"terrified at his presence"* (v3). I think that is an understatement! When they thought he was the governor, they would argue, plead with him; but now they know it is Joseph

who is the governor, the lord of all Egypt they are terrified at his presence!

Countless millions in this country, many thousands even in Doncaster live with little thought of God or of meeting Him. They may have ideas that they'll be ok; will be able to argue their case; that God will say that on the whole they were fine - good parents, children, husband or wife and they will be fine. Many imagine their religion; their church going guarantees it.

There was once a most religious man, he was very, very strict, very active for God, for his religion and hated Christianity. He sought to stamp it out. Everyone viewed Saul of Tarsus with either respect or terror. One day he went on a trip to imprison some Christians when he too had a dreadful fright - at midday there shone a bright light, brighter than the sun and he fell to the ground. If that wasn't terrifying enough, he heard a voice asking why he persecuted Him. Saul in his terror could not understand such, because he had never met, let alone persecuted anyone as glorious as this - so he asked a question "*Who are you Lord?*" He must have been absolutely terrified when he had his reply "*I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.*" Never in his wildest dreams did Saul imagine that this Jesus he sought to stamp out was so great and glorious. He must have feared for his life, but he became one of the great servants of the Lord Jesus and would tell the world about Him.

Many are going to have a dreadful fright when one day they must come face-to-face with this Jesus - the one they heard about in Sunday school or church or school, that they had read about, the One they joked about, the One whose name was used as a swear word without thinking, or an expression or an expletive. But they will know who He is then. He will be there, not as gentle Jesus

meek and mild, but as King of Kings, Lord of Lords, as the Judge of all. It will be an awful fright. We are told that people, great and small, will cry to the rocks in the mountains to fall on them and hide them from His face, let alone His judgements - such will be their terror. What about you listening, do you fear to fall into the hands of the living God in an unprepared state and meet Him as your Judge? We all should do so!

Many have seen something of this terror - as children, young people or even adults and have feared to meet Jesus unprepared. Their dreadful fright led them to make peace with Him and this making peace, through the Lord Jesus, led them to experience, as the brothers did:

## **2. The Great Delight.**

The brothers were initially terrified by Joseph's announcement, but Joseph encouraged them to realise the great delight of forgiveness and acceptance - total forgiveness, unconditional acceptance. This is also what the Gospel proclaims - there is total forgiveness and unconditional acceptance for all who trust in the Lord Jesus as their own personal Saviour.

Joseph's brothers were troubled at his presence at first. It took a while to sink in who he really was. As they realised that, they saw the need of forgiveness by Joseph. They couldn't bargain or talk their way out of it. Perhaps as you have learned about the Lord Jesus, you too have been troubled by Him and His holy demands. Those of us who are Christians, as we tell or preach the gospel, we are to reveal who the Lord Jesus is and with Him there is total forgiveness and acceptance for all who repent and take Him as their Saviour.

The brothers had to see it really was Joseph and he emphasised this to them in v4 "*I am **your** brother Joseph, the **one you** sold into Egypt!*" He wanted them to know his forgiveness and God was behind all that had occurred.

Joseph's forgiveness wasn't a partial forgiveness and acceptance, a sort of cruel, but subtle tyranny. No, it was a total forgiveness and complete acceptance and he wanted his brothers to know, accept and rejoice in such. We can so often think we would like to know God's forgiveness, or really enjoy it but... we have doubts about this or that. As we saw a few weeks ago, it is not always easy to forgive ourselves; we hang on to various things we have done or said and have no peace. God wants us to know that His forgiveness is total and we should rejoice in the glorious truth that if we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, **we are totally forgiven.**

The only salvation worth having is that which gives total forgiveness - God has nothing against us. If it were not the case, then we could have no joy, hope, certainty, no assurance of peace with God; but the Gospel proclaims forgiveness - all our sins, though red like crimson can be as white as snow.

So, what is total forgiveness, this true forgiveness from God? This passage shows us aspects of this glorious truth. Let's look at them briefly - still under this heading of the Great Delight. We can have this great delight personally - it is offered to us all only in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So how is total forgiveness shown?

**a. When the wrong committed is hidden from others by the one wronged.** Total forgiveness has no element of letting others know what was wrong, no remarks about their characters. Joseph had no intention of letting the Egyptians know what his brothers

had done to him. That's one of the reasons they were sent out. There was no one there when he made himself known to his brothers. What the brothers had done was going to remain a secret that would be buried forever. Why? Well gossip would occur; the Egyptians would not view them with honour, but detest ones who could do such to a brother, especially to one who was as honourable as Joseph.

The unforgiving spirit wants to let the world know that it hurts. Joseph had been dealt with by God over the past 22 years and he has a forgiving spirit, a heart full of love. The Bible says love hides a multitude of sins. Hate, bitterness and self-pity wants to let people know what has been done. Total forgiveness protects the one you forgive because you have love in your heart. Thankfully God forgives us like that. He doesn't forgive and then parade our wrong to all, or bring it all back to his remembrance. See **Hebrews 8:10-12, especially v12** “.... *For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.*” God is not absent-minded or forgetful, but He deliberately chooses not to remember our sins any more.

**b. Total forgiveness wants to make the person feel completely at ease:** Joseph's brothers were terrified at his presence. He bid them come close (v4). Why say that? So that they could see him the better, they could see his tears, his face; even see in his eyes that there was no hate, no vengeance, no desire to make them feel uneasy. Hate, bitterness, vengeance wants another to feel uneasy. When there is less than total forgiveness, people want the other person to feel uncomfortable near them; to squirm, to realise what they've done. The look in a person's eyes and on their face can often show their unforgiving spirit. Total forgiveness involves going out of one's way to make the other feel at ease. It is speaking and showing peace. The Lord grants this to all who trust in him.

"Peace" - peace with God, then the peace of God. It is having God's smile upon us.

**c. Total forgiveness will not even allow the person to feel bad or angry with themselves:** See Joseph's emphasis in v5. He did not want them to feel bad or angry at themselves, or one another. He didn't say "*I forgive you, but realise you've done wrong and I hope you feel bad about it.*" When we really forgive someone, we want them to feel good. It means we have to go out of our way to assure them of our forgiveness, to convince them even. Joseph did this and he understood their feelings, also assured and encouraged them. God seeks to do this too. Not so we or He would treat sin as a light thing, but He seeks to assure us of His forgiveness and we are not to spend our time in an unhealthy, morbid sorrow and doubts. Such a showing of forgiveness then:

**d. Makes it easier for the person to forgive themselves:**

We, if we are Christians, know all things work together for good - it is part of God's mysterious Providence. Joseph pointed his brothers to God and His working behind the scenes. Yet God was not responsible for their wrong, but He used even the wrath of man to praise Him and accomplish His purposes - even the sin and wrong in a person's past.

You may want God's forgiveness, may know it, but you find it so hard to forgive your own past and wrong. It grieves you, hurts and haunts you. If God has forgiven it, He has totally forgiven it and we must accept that forgiveness and let go of our self torture and self condemnation. God does not want us chained and restricted by it. He presents to us new life to live. He can take and shape our past to our benefit now and in the future, to the future benefit of others. One day we'll see all the way God has led us and we'll

acknowledge His hand in everything in our life. Total forgiveness also involves:

**e. Keeping the wrong hidden from the one who means the most to them:**

The 10 brothers must have feared most of all that Jacob would find out the truth. They would rather have died than tell Jacob! Does Joseph demand they make a full confession, come clean to him? No. He simply tells them to say to Jacob that he was alive, that he was the governor of Egypt and had been used under God to make provision for him and his family. For him to come down with all that he had. Total forgiveness is when we don't threaten "*Wait until... hears of this*", when we don't dangle threats over a person's head. Joseph could have been vengeful and had them tell Jacob, but did not.

When we are forgiven by God, not one single sin will ever be brought up again. Psalm 103:12 "*as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*" God doesn't just forgive us; He totally forgives and justifies us and demonstrates His forgiveness to us when we are truly sorry (*repent*). We are never, ever to try to excuse or justify our sin and wrong; to blame it on God's providence. No. We are to own our wrong and sin as ours, confess such, believe on the Lord Jesus and God has promised us total forgiveness. We are not only to receive such, but show such in our living, in our forgiving one another, in our obeying and living for God. That will be considered under our 3rd heading - "***The Living Aright***" but that is for next week. My prayer is that we'd know the Great delight of our sin, its guilt and deserved condemnation totally forgiven and go on to live for Him, to please and glorify Him.