

Reading: Genesis 45:1-28. (v11-15)

Theme: Encouragements to Live Aright

As we started looking at chapter 45 last week, we considered two main points - **1. The dreadful fright** that the brothers had when Joseph made himself known to them. We noted the dreadful fright many will have on the day of judgement when the judge is revealed as the Jesus they had treated lightly and even ignored. We saw **2. The great delight** which the brothers had as they realised that Joseph had totally forgiven and accepted them. We saw how Joseph's forgiveness and acceptance of his brothers mirrors dimly the total forgiveness and acceptance God has for all who turn in repentance to trust the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour.

As great as such forgiveness and acceptance was to the brothers, it wasn't to end there. Yes, Joseph had given categorical and immediate forgiveness, with no strings attached and he wanted them to see and know that, to enjoy it, but that was not the end of the matter. Yet now they were not able to live as they pleased. So, we'll go on today to see one further thing from this passage:

3. The living aright.

Joseph had forgiven his brothers, but there was now a life to be lived. Not a meagre existence, for Joseph wanted his brothers, their families, their father to enjoy life. When God forgives us our sin, He doesn't then leave us alone to get on with things. His forgiveness is only the beginning and there is a new life to be lived, lived to the full. Many people do not enjoy life because they know it must end. In one sense, we are not ready to live until we are ready to die. When we have this total forgiveness from God, we are ready to live life, for we are then ready and fitted to die.

The Lord Jesus promises us not only eternal life, but also a fullness of life here and now.

Often our enjoyment of life is affected by our realisation, our understanding, our enjoyment of God's forgiveness. We may have a head understanding that we are forgiven, but often it may not affect our hearts, minds and life. There was a lady in my home chapel in South Wales who was forever pleading for forgiveness, for peace, she constantly pleaded her unworthiness and was filled with doubts about her ever getting to heaven. Yet when you talked to her she would tell you how she was saved, but she had an unhealthy, morbid introspective view that was not an expression of her spiritual sensitivity, but of her own personality. She was in fact doubting God - He who had promised never to remember her sins any more, but she seemed to be doubting Him and casting doubts on the salvation He gave. Such a state and heart of mind can happen to us and it may spring from our own self-righteousness or self-pity, as well as from true doubts about God and what He has promised.

At the start of v5 the brothers were spoken to by Joseph - they were to accept his forgiveness and also forgive themselves and not wallow in an unhealthy grief, anger and distress, but to have a right awareness and understanding of his forgiveness. We also must have a right understanding and appreciation of God's forgiveness and to beware of our own sinful and deceitful hearts. There will be times when it is right to mourn and confess our sin before God, but if that is all we do, then we will not realise anything much of the great work of grace and forgiveness He has accomplished in us.

Joseph wanted his brothers to live aright; he didn't want them to sit about doing nothing and saying "*Hey, this is great now!*" Let's go on and see 3 things Joseph required of them and try to apply such to our own lives:

a. To believe his word.

Joseph told them of God sending him ahead of them to preserve life and in v6 he spoke of the 5 years of famine that lay ahead. He promised them much and he urged them to see who it is that was speaking to them v12 "*You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you.*" The brothers were to trust Joseph's word regarding the future and their future. He said there was no harvest for five more years. It may have seemed far-fetched. Yet in the light of it, great promises are made. The brothers could have questioned him "*How do you know?*" Yet they do not. They accepted what Joseph said; they realised, as Joseph had said, that God had made great provision for Egypt, and also for their families (v7).

If we are Christians this evening, then God wants, expects us to believe His word. He says much in it. From Genesis to Revelation it is His word - not just containing His word, not just becoming His word when it speaks to us, but it is His word totally. Once we have become a Christian, this book should be one of our most treasured possessions - it is a love letter, a lamp, a map, a chart, a sword, a shield, a rock, a signpost, a fortress and a treasure chest. It tells us how we are to live our life. It is best if we read it every day; even study it in more detail. We don't have to be great intellects to read it, God will help us. One way He has made provision is by giving us literature, books etc distilling wisdom of previous ages and our current age. This has to be used carefully, aware that most of all we need the Holy Spirit's help to understand

it; but reliable helps and commentaries will be based on His guiding and leading of others through the years. Some people will come along and claim to have radical, new explanations or insights and these should be viewed with caution as to their claims, as they may be reheating old heresies or they may be introducing ideas that are not biblical or spiritual and which could so easily be a departure from the well-worn tracks of holiness and truth.

We all need directions and that is why we urge all to read and study God's word, to listen to the sermons, join in the Bible studies and fellowship groups. Not that any minister or commentator has the whole truth, or always explains it in ways we would find it easy to digest and fully understand, but we are all to be treasure seekers together of the treasures of God's word. We must be able and willing to compare Scripture to Scripture, to check out what is being said by those who are preaching or speaking in Bible study.

As we read God's word, we will see that God has a plan and purpose - not only for nations, the Church, the local church, but for our own individual lives also. He knows all about us (Psalm 139), there can be no other explanation than God knows and is in control from the beginning to the end of our lives. Nothing occurs by random chance, but is governed by the God who deals with us, His people, from a heart of love and works all things together for good to those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

Joseph knew this – see v5b, 7a & 8a. If the brothers had said this, it would have been almost blaspheming, charging God foolishly and wriggling out of their own responsibility. Yet Joseph says it,

as he saw God's wise, providential hand in all that had happened - that all things were working together for good.

Our God is sovereign, knows what He will do and when He will do it - in every part of all our lives. It does not mean we can sit back and do nothing because He is sovereign. No! We must be determined to serve, work and live for Him, confident He knows what is best for us and we are to listen to what He says in His word and live by what He has revealed in it. Not only did the brothers have to believe Joseph's word, but Joseph says they had to:

b. Tell the good news.

They have to tell Jacob and their families that Joseph is alive and that he is lord of all Egypt! These words were startling, dazzling, they were almost too much for Jacob v26b - AV "*Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.*"

What glorious news to tell - of one who is alive and a mighty ruler! Yet the brothers' message is nothing compared to our message - that of total forgiveness, of Jesus who died, is raised, is ascended and lives forever and ever, who is able and willing to save all who truly go to Him and He is reigning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We have to tell this good news to every creature (Mark 16:15)

The message of good news which the brothers told demanded urgency v9b "*Come down to me; don't delay*" or as AV says "*come down unto me, tarry not:*". This evening God says through His word "tarry not" - don't delay, put off, play about with or neglect such an offer of so great salvation. Today is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time of salvation - do not delay, do not harden your heart, but trust Him as your own Saviour. There

is a hymn which says: *1 God calleth yet: at last shall I not heed? How long shall I refuse the grace I need? While pleasure fades, and time's swift moments fly, still shall my soul in mortal peril lie? ... 4 Yield to Him now, once and for ever yield; make God thy portion, and His grace thy shield. What though the world its pleasures still display? God calleth yet: O heart, do thou obey!*

There is an urgency about the gospel. We need to believe it **now**. Not one of us are sure of the future in our Covid times. Joseph urged Jacob to come down so that he and all he had would not starve, be without any hope, or destitute. If we do not believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus, we will ultimately be starving, without any hope and destitute - not on earth maybe, but in eternity - for there is a place of unending famine and torment - hell, as real a place as heaven is. Eternity is before all of us and we may pass from time into eternity at any moment, so we need to make sure the Lord Jesus is our Saviour.

The brothers were to encourage Jacob by telling of everything they'd seen v13. What a lovely picture of witnessing or preaching. We are to tell what we already know, what we have seen and experienced of the Lord Jesus - His love, His forgiveness, His promises for the future, His care of us and all that is ours at present. Joseph promised Jacob and his family three great things if they came down to Egypt to live:

1. Security - to live in the land of Goshen and he would provide for them all their needs. As believers God provides security for us - most definitely eternal security, but also, He provides for all our needs (*not wants, but needs*). We have a secure present and a guaranteed future. Joseph also promised:

2. His own presence - "and be near me" (v10) or as AV says "*thou shalt be near unto me*". As a Christian the Lord Jesus has promised

never to leave us or forsake us. He is with us even in those times of trial, difficulty, illness and tragedy. He is with us in those times when we cannot see it or even recognise it. Joseph also promised: **3. To care for their families** – v10b & 11a. The Lord cares for us as an individual and yet His covenant relationship with us affects, spills over and encompasses our families.

All these are promised if Jacob and all that were his went down to Egypt; if not, Jacob, and all his would come to poverty, be destitute and perish. God, because He is good - it is one of His attributes, the goodness of God, He does give and grant so many blessings to those who would ignore, mock, despise Him and misuse those blessings, but He has a personal relationship and care of those who trust Him for the salvation He offers in the Lord Jesus. It does not mean that all will be fine - no problems, no trials, no sickness. God has His purposes in such when He lovingly sends them our way - mainly to show His grace, to refine faith in us, to remind us that this world is not our home but heaven is; and in heaven there will be no sickness, pain, sorrow, suffering, tears or anguish and that is our perfect rest, it is, well, heaven!

The brothers were required to do something else in their living aright, to enjoy further their forgiveness:

c. To get to know Joseph better - Joseph stressed it was him speaking to them, but they needed to spend time with him. Joseph held his brothers and wept with them (v14 & 15) - they were made more aware of his love, they were able to respond - v15b says "*Afterwards his brothers talked with him*".

After our sins have been forgiven, in order for us to live aright, we need to be able to talk with the Lord Jesus. That is why prayer is

so important. Yes He loves us and cares for us and we need to spend time with Him, hearing what He has to say to us - through His word as we read and study it, but we should desire to spend time with Him in prayer - worship, adoration for what He has done and praise, adoration for who He is, thankfulness for His help, aid, strength, keeping and provision; confession - telling of our failures to do as He wants us to do, intercession - praying for others. Also, we spend time with Him just getting to know Him - pray through His word and promises we've read.

He delights in this. The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are loved, cared for, belong to Christ and adopted into God's family. He will direct us as we read His word, to recognise the truth of it, to apply it to our lives. He makes known the things of Christ and makes them real to us. What an honour - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all care for us and work to demonstrate God's love and care in countless ways to us and help us to live aright.

By God's enabling, may there be a determination in us to live aright for our God and Saviour. He's done so much for us and we should live to please Him in all we do and say.