

A Study in Genesis: Gracious Forgiving

Scripture Focus: Genesis 50:15-26

Coming to the end of the book of Genesis, a very important lesson is worthy of our attention; the power of forgiveness born of grace. Joseph once again has some options in front of him. Assure and reassure his brothers that he has forgiven them, or unleash revenge for evil done. Without question, his brothers intended and succeeded in doing great harm. They sold their brother into slavery and to hide what they'd done, they lied to their father. Years of slavery and deep sorrow resulted from their actions motivated by jealousy and hate.

Years of guilt and fear also followed for the brothers (42:21-22). Their dismay at learning their brother was still alive surfaced at Joseph's initial self-disclosure. And Joseph's gracious words (45:5-8) and his ensuing provision for them in Egypt did not erase all their fear for what they had done. The death of their father Jacob only further triggered the lingering guilt and anxiety felt by the brothers. Forgiven once, they cry for forgiveness again – even if it means slavery (50:15-18).

Fighting what comes much more naturally for human beings when they are harmed, revenge and retribution, Joseph chooses what is good. Joseph declines to play God and declares that what they intended for harm became God's opportunity to demonstrate redeeming love. Notice, good not only comes from evil in this story; good embraces those who did evil. It all looks like "love your enemies" and forgiveness born of grace.

➤ Whom do you need to lovingly and graciously forgive?

There is also a reminder in all of this of the One who would come later and bring good out of evil. Joseph's ancient words begin to softly whisper in the shadows of Golgotha and a garden tomb. "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good." The vilest of human intentions was fulfilled: the killing of God's beloved son. And yet through that evil, God has brought grace's greatest good: our forgiveness, our healing, our eternal life through faith in Christ.

Amen.