

Forgiveness Beyond Fairness – Genesis 50:15-26 (NIV)
“Hey, That’s Not Fair” Series, Cornerstone Church Wildomar

Two years after the end of the Second World War, a Dutch Christian woman named Corrie ten Boom held meetings through war devastated Germany, preaching a message of forgiveness. “When we confess our sins,” she said, “God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever.”

At the end of a meeting in Munich, a balding, heavyset man in a gray overcoat approached her. She instantly recognized him as a former guard at the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where the woman had been imprisoned and her sister had died.

The man put his hand out and said, “A fine message, *fräulein*! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!”

“You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk,” he was saying. “I was a guard in there.” He didn’t recognize or remember her.

“But since that time,” he went on, “I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. *Fräulein*” – again his hand came out – “will you forgive me?”

- Today we look at Biblical truth, a principle from the Bible, that applies to *everyone*.
- Everyone needs forgiveness, and everyone needs to be forgiven.

Catching up from where Pastor Bill Buffington left us in the story of Joseph:

- The family of Jacob (Israel) came into Egypt, met Pharaoh, and settled in the place Joseph prepared for them (Genesis 46-47).
- Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, then his own sons (Genesis 48-49).
- Jacob died – the last of the great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – and was buried (end of Genesis 49, beginning of Genesis 50). Now it was just Joseph and his brothers.

1. (15) The fears of Joseph’s brothers.

When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?”

- a. [15] **What if Joseph holds a grudge against us:** The brothers feared that perhaps Joseph would turn on them after Jacob’s death. Knowing human nature, this wasn’t an unfounded concern.

b. [15] **And pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?** Here the brothers freely acknowledged **all the wrongs we did**. What they worried about was *justice*. They feared *righteous* retribution. Joseph, with his high status and prestige in Egypt, was certainly capable of bringing this retribution.

2. (16-18) The unlikely story of Joseph's brothers.

So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

a. [16] **Your father left these instructions:** This story was probably made up. Because they had sinned against him so greatly, they felt they couldn't ask for mercy. So, they put the request for mercy in the mouth of their dead father.

b. [17] **When their message came to him, Joseph wept:** Joseph probably wept because it seemed that his brothers thought so little of him and they doubted his character so greatly.

- This illustrates the importance of being *honest* with Jesus about our sin. When we don't come to Jesus honestly, we imply that He doesn't love us enough to handle us at our worst. Don't doubt the character of Jesus the way that the brothers doubted the character of Joseph.

c. [18] **Came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves":** They did everything they could to humble themselves.

3. (19-21) Joseph comforts and forgives his brothers.

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

a. [19] **Am I in the place of God?** Joseph first understood he was not **in the place of God**. It wasn't his job to bring retribution upon his brothers. If the LORD chose to punish them, God would have to find an instrument other than Joseph. Such retribution was God's **place**, not Joseph's.

b. [20] **You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good:** Joseph did not romanticize the wrong his brothers did. He plainly said, **You intended to harm me**. Although this was true, it was not the *greatest* truth. The greatest truth was **God intended it for good**.

i. Every Christian should be able to see the overarching and overruling hand of God in their life; to know that no matter what **harm** man brings against us, God can use it for **good**.

ii. Joseph did not have the **text** of Romans 8:28 (it would not be written for 2,000 years) but he had the **truth** of it: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*. Sadly, some of us who have the **text** do not have the **truth**.

iii. The glorious truth is that ultimately, our lives are not in the hands of men, but in the hands of God, who overrules all things for His glory.

c. [20] **The saving of many lives:** This was the *immediate* good in the situation. If this large family did not come to Egypt, it would have perished in the famine. Had the family barely survived, it would have assimilated into the Canaanite tribes surrounding it. Only by coming to Egypt could they be preserved and grow into a distinct nation.

i. What the brothers of Joseph did was bad – but God still used it.

- If Joseph never went to Egypt, he was never sold to Potiphar.
- If he was never sold to Potiphar, Potiphar's wife never falsely accused him of rape.
- If Potiphar's wife never falsely accused him of rape, then he was never put in prison.
- If he was never put in prison, he never met the baker and butler of Pharaoh.
- If he never met the baker and butler of Pharaoh, he never interpreted their dreams.
- If he never interpreted their dreams, he never got to interpret Pharaoh's dream.
- If he never got to interpret Pharaoh's dream, he never became prime minister.
- If he never became prime minister, he never wisely administrated for the severe famine coming upon the region.
- If he never wisely administrated for the severe famine coming upon the region, then his family back in Canaan perished from the famine.
- If his family back in Canaan perished from the famine, then the Messiah could not come forth from a dead family.

- If the Messiah could not come forth, then Jesus never came. If Jesus never came, then we are all dead in our sins and without hope in this world. *We are grateful for God's great and wise plan.*

d. [21] He reassured them and spoke kindly to them: Because Joseph trusted the overarching hand of God, even in all the evil that came upon him through his brothers, he showed the love and compassion to them he did.

e. [21] I will provide for you and your children: Joseph's love for his brothers was shown not only in feelings and words, but also in practical action. He actually *did* provide for his brothers and their families.

4. (22-24) Joseph is still in Egypt, but his heart is in Canaan.

Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years and saw the third generation of Ephraim's children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph's knees.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

a. [24] God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: Joseph knew that because of the covenant God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the family would not remain in Egypt. They would eventually go back to Canaan.

5. (25-26) The death and embalming of Joseph.

And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."

So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

a. [25] God will surely come to your aid, and then you shall carry my bones up from this place: This promise was fulfilled some 400 years later, when Israel left Egypt (Exodus 13:19) This command showed that Joseph's heart was in the Promised Land. It also proved him to be a man of great faith, trusting in things not yet seen (Hebrews 11:22).

b. [26] He was placed in a coffin in Egypt: According to this passage and Hebrews 11:22, Joseph was never buried. His coffin laid above ground for the 400 or so years until it was taken back to Canaan. It was a silent witness for all those years that Israel was going back to the Promised Land, just as God said.

- Joseph's command to carry his bones to Canaan was made in faith. That wasn't the end of Joseph's faith.
- *Joseph had the faith to forgive.* His faith to forgive wasn't in his brothers, but in God – the God who was greater than whatever evil others had done against him.

What did Corrie ten Boom do when her former camp guard approached her with an outstretched hand and asked her forgiveness?

Corrie ten Boom said that at that moment she faced one of the most difficult things she ever had to do. She said that at that moment:

"Jesus, help me!" I prayed silently. "I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling."

And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.

"I forgive you, brother!" I cried. "With all my heart!"

Today, receive the faith for forgiveness.

- Receive the faith to be forgiven, trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ – who He is, and what He did to save His people.
- Receive the faith to forgive others, so you won't be bound in your own prison of unforgiveness.