

Introduction

Cousins (I & F): animosity and distain since as far back as I can remember; neither appears to have any desire for reconciliation, but if they ever did it would require that one, or both, would be willing to forgive the other

1. The reason for this is pretty simple (Big Picture): forgiveness is a necessary part of reconciliation
2. When someone wrongs us, it creates separation and division—this is true of family, friends, co-workers, and even Christians
3. And if (or when) we refuse to forgive those who offend or sin against us, it simply creates further division, often more animosity, and destroys relationships
4. However, when we exercise forgiveness as Jesus commanded us to do, the opposite is true: it brings about reconciliation; it mends the broken relationships
5. We have an example of this today as Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers, forgives them, and brings about reconciliation:
6. Outline:
  - a. Joseph forgave his brothers because he was grieved over the separation and division caused by his brothers' sin
  - b. Joseph forgave his brothers because he understood God's sovereignty over the events of his life
  - c. Joseph forgave his brothers because he desired reconciliation

A. Joseph forgave because he was grieved over the separation and division caused by his brothers' sin (READ Genesis 45:1-3)

1. This is the second time we've seen Joseph weep:
  - a. It's interesting that in spite of all that Joseph suffered—attempted murder by his brothers, slavery, and 2+ years in a prison (pit)—Moses never recorded him complaining or crying over it
  - b. The first time we saw him cry was back in 43:29-30 after he saw his brother Benjamin—there it says that he had to run out of the room because he was overcome with compassion for his brothers (READ)
  - c. Here in 45:2 it was after Judah's pleading with him to take Benjamin's place:
    - 1) V. 1 says he was so overcome that he **"could not control himself before all those who stood by him"** (a reference to his staff and servants)
    - 2) So, he sent everyone except his brothers out of the room and wept so loudly that **"the Egyptians heard it, and all the household of Pharaoh heard [of it]"**
    - 3) The text doesn't tell us exactly why Joseph wept, but two reasons are hinted at in v. 3:
      - a) He could no longer bear to keep his identity hidden from his brothers
      - b) He may have been concerned that his father was no longer alive
2. The sin of Joseph's brothers had caused a tremendous amount of trouble and grief for Joseph over the past 20+ years:
  - a. Joseph referred to this back in 41:52 when he named his firstborn son, Manasseh, saying **"God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household"**

- b. It wouldn't be unreasonable for us to expect that Joseph would be done with his brothers and wish them good riddance for all they had done to him
  - c. But, instead, we seem him overwhelmed with compassion toward his brothers and weeping uncontrollably because of division and consequences caused by their sin
  - d. As we'll see in a moment, this compassion and grief led Joseph to forgive his brothers, and was used by God to further His plans for Jacob's family, all of Israel, and His redemptive plan
- 3. Takeaway: it's hard for us to forgive when we're not grieved over the consequences of sin and the separation and division it causes, especially with our brothers and sisters in Christ:
  - a. The Bible reveals repeatedly how God is grieved by sin and its consequences:
    - 1) Probably the most profound example of this is Genesis 6:6 before the Flood when God said He regretted making man because of our sin
    - 2) In John 11:32-35 we see Jesus weep over the consequences of sin (in this case, the death of Lazarus and the pain and suffering it caused his family and friends): **"Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept."**
    - 3) We also saw Jesus weep over Israel's sin and spiritual state the Triumphal Entry in Luke 19:41: **"When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it..."**
    - 4) But, God is also filled with compassion which leads Him to forgive sin—not just initially when we place our faith and trust in Jesus, but continually when we confess our sins as John says in 1 John 1:9: **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."**
  - b. Like God, we should be grieved over the consequences of sin and the division it causes between us, but we should also follow His example and forgive those who have wronged us (Ephesians 4:32): **"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."**

B. Joseph forgave because he understood God's sovereignty over the events of his life (READ 45:4-8)
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- 1. The first thing that stands out in these verses is the concern Joseph expresses over his brothers reaction when they finally recognize him:
  - a. V. 3 told us, **"they were dismayed at his presence."**—other translations render this as **"they were terrified..."**:
    - 1) They were already convinced that God was convicting them of their sin and guilt
    - 2) Imagine their shock and dread as Joseph reminded them of their sin, especially now that he was the second highest official in the land and their fate rested in his hands: **"I am your brother Joseph whom YOU sold into Egypt"**
  - b. But, Joseph sought to calm their fear and grief (45:5): **"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here..."**:
    - 1) Joseph's reference to grief and being angry with themselves over what they had done may be a hint that the brothers were experiencing more than just fear but possibly remorse

- 2) We also see here another example of Joseph's mercy and compassion toward his brothers
2. The second thing that stands out here is Joseph's absolute conviction that God, not his brothers, sent him to Egypt—he declared this three times and provides three reasons why God did this:
  - a. God sent him to Egypt to preserve life (READ 45:5-6)
  - b. God sent him to Egypt to preserve a remnant of his family (READ 45:7)
  - c. God sent him to Egypt to rule over Egypt (READ 45:8)
3. Takeaway: it's hard for us to forgive when we forget that God is in control and sovereign over the events of our lives, even when someone wrongs us or sins against us:
  - a. Joseph understood this
  - b. He didn't wave off his brothers' sin or ignore it (he mentioned it twice!), and he didn't deny that their sin played a role in sending him to Egypt
  - c. Rather he recognized that God was sovereignly in control of his life and he was in Egypt because God put him there—and THAT was more important than how he got there
  - d. We may not have the advantage of knowing exactly what God's plan is like Joseph or why God would allow someone to sin against us, but we can know that He is still sovereign and somehow it's part of His plan
  - e. If we understand this, we should be able to forgive

<p>C. Joseph forgave because he desired reconciliation (Genesis 45:9-15)</p>
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1. As we read these next few verses, we can see Joseph's eagerness to forgive his brothers and be reconciled with his family (READ 45:9-13):
  - a. He couldn't wait to see his father (RE-READ 45:9 & 13)
  - b. He wanted his brothers and their families near him (RE-READ 45:10)
  - c. He even looked forward to providing for them (RE-READ 45:11)
2. We also see the intense emotion that welled up inside Joseph as he forgave his brothers and was reconciled to them (READ 45: 14-15):
  - a. Look at his reaction toward Benjamin:
    - 1) V. 14: **"Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept..."**:
    - 2) A number of translations render this as **"he threw himself on Benjamin's neck"** or **"he threw his arms around Benjamin"**
    - 3) This wasn't just some "bro" hug—Joseph **"wept"**, Benjamin **"wept"**—this was a regular weep-fest with grown men balling their eyes out!
  - b. It didn't stop with Benjamin, however:
    - 1) V. 15: **"He kissed all his brothers and wept on them"** (yeah, more weeping)
    - 2) Joseph's emotion toward his brother Benjamin is understandable because they were full brothers (same mother), and Benjamin was the only brother who didn't sin against him
    - 3) However, the other brothers had committed pure wickedness against him and caused him great trouble and distress
    - 4) What we see here from Joseph is pure and genuine forgiveness:
      - a) How often do we offer those who sin against us a half-hearted "well, I guess I forgive you"?

- b) That's not what we see here from Joseph because his forgiveness was accompanied by genuine affection and intense emotion
- 3. Takeaway: it's difficult to forgive when we don't see the need for reconciliation, or worse yet, have no desire to be reconciled:
  - a. But, we are supposed to not only pursue unity within the body of Christ but DILIGENTLY pursue it (Ephesians 4:1-3): **"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, <sup>3</sup> being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."**
  - b. We are supposed to be one spirit, one mind, contending together for one purpose (Philippians 1:27): **"Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about your circumstances, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind contending together for the faith of the gospel..."**
  - c. There aren't supposed to be any divisions among us, but rather we are to be of the same mind and same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10): **"Now I exhort you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment."**
  - d. The Bible COMMANDS unity within the Body of Christ but when we sin against one another, refused to forgive, and have no desire to reconcile with one another, we make reconciliation impossible and threaten that unity; in fact, we make both impossible

Conclusion
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- 1. As we've been studying through the story of Joseph we've seen how he serves as a type of Christ and we see that in our passage today
- 2. He was grieved over the separation and division caused by his brothers' sin, just as Jesus is grieved over the separation and division sin causes because us and God, as well as us and our fellow believers
- 3. But, Joseph was also willing to forgive his brothers in order to bring about reconciliation, just as Jesus is willing to forgive to reconcile us to Himself, not just at initial salvation but any time we go to him and confess our sins (1 John 1:9): **"if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"**
- 4. What God expects of us is that we, too, should seek reconciliation with those who sin against us by forgiving them just as He forgave us and reconciled us to Himself