
Repentance and Reunion

Genesis 45:1-46:27

Introduction Broken family relationships are difficult and painful. Arguments, differences and sometimes divisions wreck havoc on family peace. When these come as a result of distance or differences in lifestyle, they are easier and more understandable. But when these are the result of jealousy, anger, jockeying for power, position and privilege – when they come as a result of sin and being sinned against, resolution sometimes seems almost impossible.

Many of you experience what I am talking about. You know relatives that you just hate to see at family reunions. It is awkward if not outright hostile. Some of you have been terribly sinned against by family with all the hurt, pain and division that comes with it.

But imagine the story we have been following in Genesis. Has there ever been such awful pain? Has there such a grand reversal in personal fortune? Has there ever been such an opportunity to take revenge or at least exact the pound of flesh? Has a family faced such an awful and awesome moment as this?

Many television shows now have plots so complicated that the first few minutes of each show go back to do quick snapshots to set this week's scene. The engaging drama that has been unfolding for us in the Joseph narratives is like that. Where are we today in this story when the narrative opens with a great Egyptian lord standing before 11 brothers one of whom is in front of the others, arms outstretched in a beseeching posture?

These are all brothers, sons of the Patriarch Jacob. They had, many long years ago, sold their brother into slavery out of jealousy and hatred. Through much travail and in the providence of God, this slave has now become the second most powerful man in Egypt. He controls vast stores of food set aside during 7 years of great harvests for the now unfolding 7 years of dire famine. His brothers came to Egypt the first time to get food. He recognized them; but they did not know him. He tested them by taking one brother hostage, sending the others home and warning them that if they came, they must bring their youngest brother, the prize of their father's heart, with them.

The famine has deepened all across the mid-east. So the father, Jacob, sends the brothers back, finally agreeing to send the youngest, Benjamin. Joseph, their brother and Egyptian leader, honors them with a banquet, loads them up and sends them home returning the hostage brother to them. But, he has again returned their money in their grain bags and had his steward hide his silver cup in Benjamin's bag. The steward is sent after them, finds the cup and now they are in fear of their lives before this powerful man. The brothers are repentant, contrite and transformed. Judah, from whom the future kings and the great King Jesus will one day come, now offers to be the substitute and take the punishment for Benjamin.

And so our story conyines...

Reconciliation: the Progress of Souls**(45:1-28)**

There he stands, open arms, great hearted, the shadow of our Lord Jesus willing to die for the safety of his little brother and the sake of his beloved father.

From a Startling Confession**(v.1-3)**

And Joseph can contain himself no longer. He sends all the Egyptian attendants away. Alone with his brothers, weeps and cries so loud he is heard all over the palace. Sobbing he makes a startling revelation, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

Moses, with droll understatement records two things: the brothers are dumb-founded and dismayed. Ah, this is high drama. They are shocked into stunned silence. They don't know what to say. They are dismayed. There has to be fear and wonderment. You can almost hear the, "O, no!" in their heads. Not in their worst dreams could they have imagined themselves being so utterly vulnerable and exposed to the one they had so mightily wronged and sinned against.

With a Humble Reunion**(v.4-15)**

But Joseph moves in reconciliation. He invites them to approach him. He moves toward them in love and mercy calling on them to respond to him with repentance and love. In the midst of real fault, offense and sin, Joseph lovingly instructs them to move toward him in a humble reunion.

The elements of that reconciled reunion are very important.

There is *AN ADMISSION OF THE REALITY OF SIN* (v.4). He is their brother and the one they did sell. There is no minimizing or denying their sin. It was real. It is not even being overlooked. It has been forgiven.

There is *TRUE REPENTANCE NOT VAIN REGRET* (v.5). Two impotent emotions are addressed here, distress and self-anger. These are futile at this point. They can mar the reconciliation and can become a denial of having been forgiven. When forgiven, do not hold the account against yourself when the offended person is not, having forgiven you. Experience the joy of having been forgiven.

There is *AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE PURPOSES AND PROVIDENCES OF GOD* (v.6-8). We acknowledge our sin. We acknowledge the hand of God. He is at work. He sent Joseph to Egypt through the brother's sin and elevated him to the Vice-Regency so that he could take care of his family. It is a great mercy and encouragement when we begin to see some of what God is doing in every circumstance. It is a wonderful heart shaping truth and affection sending certainty when being reconciled to those who have sinned against us.

There are *PRACTICAL DEEDS OF LOVING CARE WITHIN HIS POWER* (v.9-11). Joseph will take care of them. He will bring them down, set aside a place, provide for their welfare and see that they do not come to poverty. These are great deeds of sacrificial love attendant to a forgiving heart.

There are *PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS OF AFFIRMATION AND AFFECTION* (v.12-15). Changed hearts are overflowing will experiences and expressions of affec-

tion. This is not a cold and calculated attempt to restore an undesirable relationship. This is warm and full. Here are tears and hugs and upsurges of trust.

In a Generous Proposition

(v.16-20)

The noise of this great reunion reached the ears of the Pharaoh. He and all his servants are glad to hear that the family is being reunited. So he makes a generous offer and proposes that Joseph bring his whole family down to live in Egypt. He will provide the wagons for transport. He will make provisions for the journey. And he will ensure their prosperity wherever they settle in the land. God's power is at work in the heart of this pagan ruler so that he will rejoice in the good of his servants.

By a Gracious Direction

(v.21-28)

So Joseph instructs his brothers to go and bring the clan down. He takes all that the Pharaoh has provided and gives it to them. He loads them up. He ensures that they are provided for the whole round trip. And then, knowing them as he does, he reminds them not to quarrel on the way.

What news they have as they arrive home. "Father, Joseph is alive. I know this is hard to believe, but he is the ruler over all of Egypt." In an interesting turn of phrase, his heart is numbed because he does not believe them. He is suspicious. He is doubtful. It is impossible.

But then they tell the story Joseph had related. They tell of the fulfillment of God's purposes and promises. They surely acknowledge their own fault. And they bring their skeptical father out to see all that Joseph through the Pharaoh's beneficence had sent. Surely the Pharaoh's standards are emblazoned on the wagons. There are all the provisions. Could it be true? Yes it is! His heart is revived. He stirs himself up. He rises up out of his being downcast and self-focused. Hope surges and satisfaction settles. He is complete. He is ready to see the end of life if he can be granted the sight of his son.

Restoration: the Provision for Souls

(46:1-27)

So preparation is made. The wagons are loaded. The tents are struck. All the family goods and persons and livestock are gathered in a long train. The tribe begins its long trek down to Egypt where, over the next four hundred years, they will become a nation.

By a Divine Assurance

(v.1-4)

On their journey, they travel through Beersheba and stop there for a night. In gratitude and worship to God, Israel (note the change in his name) offers sacrifices to the Lord. But his heart is trembling. This is still a hard journey. His son is in Egypt. But to go there he must leave the Promised Land. In doing so, is he moving away from the God of the Covenant?

God appears to Israel (Jacob) to assure him that this too is in His plan and purposes. Israel is not to be afraid to go to Egypt. Their God will shelter them during the rising tide of Canaanite wickedness and depravity. There God will protect

them so that they may increase in number and become a nation. There God will prosper them so that when they depart they will be rich. But most important of all, he can do down because God is going with him. God will bring him up again. And what a sweet phrase – the gentle hand of much loved son will tenderly close his eyes upon his death.

Upon a Grand Arrival

(v.5-7)

With God's assurance, Jacob arises in the morning and travels with confidence down into Egypt. What a grand caravan this is. All these souls preserved alive. All the pain and trouble and suffering washed away as Joseph stands in the bulwarks of the Egyptian capital and watches the grand arrival. Suddenly, breaking out ahead, rides Judah. Joseph runs down to meet him. Judah will lead them to Goshen and Joseph will meet them there (v.28).

With a Significant Enumeration

(v.8-26)

All of Jacob's sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters arrive in Egypt with him. It is a great procession of souls. To ensure that the census is true and accurate, Moses lists by name and enumerates by number all those who went down into Egypt.

For the sake of our time and my tongue, we will not read this list. But this listing of seventy people arriving in Egypt is significant. Moses alludes to this in both Exodus 1:5 and Deuteronomy 10:22. The number seventy is important. Earlier in Genesis, the table of the nations enumerates seventy nations (Genesis 10-11). From one, Noah, had come the many, seventy nations. From the many, seventy persons, would come the one, the nation of Israel. Under the New Covenant, in the one, the New Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, many from all the nations will be gathered the reconciled and restored.

Lessons

The sending of Israel down into Egypt sets up the great story of the Exodus. Israel will come up out of Egypt and move towards the land promised. But that will be a shadow of the new Israel, the Lord Jesus, who will one day go down into Egypt for safety and will come up out of Egypt the true Israel, the son of God. In the Exodus is the great story of our own coming up out of the world, the realm of sin and our journey through to the land of promise, the new heavens and new earth.

Much shallowness in modern Christianity comes because we are ignorant of or even deny the graces in conversion. The movement of our souls toward God is In this narrative.

There is an open disclosure to our souls of who God is and our true relationship to Him. He shows Himself to our souls in His Word and we see by faith.

There is a deep awareness of our own sinfulness and guilt before the Lord. In that light we understand and feel, we are sensible of our visibility and vulnerability before our God. We know the deep reality of our sin – we do not deny it, diminish it or dress it. It is plain and painful in our hearts.

There is a movement by God who initiates our reconciliation and welcomes us based on His forgiveness. He moves toward us in mercy and we, in response, draw near His throne of grace.

There are great assurances in our souls that we have peace with God. Through words and deeds, God speaks His peace and shows our union with Him. We acknowledge the mighty movements of His grace and the weaving of His purposes.

Finally, there are experiences and expressions of the reality of a restored relationship. We come under His father tutelage, His parental care. We receive His good provisions and gifts. We are guided by His heavenly wisdom. And we are all brought safely home with all the family and all we need.

Here are the characteristics and aims of true repentance and reconciliation:

AN ADMISSION OF THE REALITY OF SIN. We will be reconciled when sin is acknowledged and addressed.

TRUE REPENTANCE NOT VAIN REGRET. We will reject self-focused emotions and enter into the joy of forgiveness.

AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE PURPOSES AND PROVIDENCES OF GOD. We will gladly bow under the hand of a sovereign God moving for our good and His glory.

PRACTICAL DEEDS OF LOVING CARE WITHIN OUR POWER. We will do deeds of sacrificial love attendant to a forgiving heart.

PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS OF AFFIRMATION AND AFFECTION. We will engage one another with real affection and affirmation.

Why? Because our Redeemer and Ruler has reconciled us and restored us just like this! To Him be all the glory.

Notes

Included in the account of the move **to Egypt** is a listing of Jacob's **descendants**. In verse 26 the number of descendants is said to be **66**, whereas the number in verse 27 is **70**. The first number represents those who traveled with Jacob to Egypt, and the second number includes the children and grandchildren already in Egypt. The following tabulation shows how these two figures are determined:

Leah's children and grandchildren (v. 15)	33
Zilpah's children and grandchildren (v. 18)	16
Rachel's children and grandchildren (v. 22)	14
Bilhah's children and grandchildren (v. 25)	7
	70
Dinah (v. 15)	+ 1
	71
Er and Onan (who died in Canaan; v. 12); Joseph and his two sons, already in Egypt (v. 20)	- 5
	66
Those who went to Egypt with Jacob (v. 26)	+ 4
Joseph, Manasseh, Ephraim, Jacob (v. 27)	70
Jacob and his progeny in Egypt (v. 27)	70

It is from these 70 (which included Joseph's two sons born in Egypt, vv. 20, 27; cf. 41:50-52) that the nation of Israel would grow.

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(BKC [OT] p. 96)

Chronology of the Patriarchs			
2166 BC — 2066 — 2006 — 1991 — 1915 — 1898 — 1886 — 1876 — 1859 — 1805			
(100 yrs.) (60 yrs.) (15 yrs.) (76 yrs.) (17 yrs.) (12 yrs.) (10 yrs.) (17 yrs.) (54 yrs.)			
Abraham was born	Abraham died (at age 175; Gen. 25:7)		
Isaac was born (when Abraham was 100; Gen. 21:5)		Isaac died (at age 180; Gen. 35:28)	
Jacob was born (when Isaac was 60; Gen. 25:26)		Jacob moved to Egypt (at age 130; Gen. 47:9) when Joseph was 39	Jacob died (at age 147, 17 years after he moved to Egypt; Gen. 47:28)
Joseph was born		Joseph was sold into Egypt (at age 17; Gen. 37:2,28)	Isaiah died (at age 110, Gen. 50:26; therefore he was born in 1915)

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¹⁰ Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985.

¹¹ Op Cit, BKC [OT] p.96

