

The Joseph Series: Pardon

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning again, church. My name is Dove Cohen, and I have the privilege to open up God's Word this morning. This morning, we're going to be looking at Genesis 50, 15 to 21, as we continue our sermon series on the life of Joseph. Now, we've looked at providence in the life of Joseph.

We've looked at patience in the life of Joseph. Today, we're going to look at pardon in the life of Joseph. We're going to look at forgiveness, forgiveness needed, forgiveness granted, and forgiveness enjoyed in the life of Joseph. And hopefully, you've seen a theme throughout today's worship. Really appreciate the band's intentionality with the theme of forgiveness and all of our sin being no longer counted against us. And we're going to be talking about forgiveness this morning. So, again, forgiveness needed, granted, and enjoyed, Genesis 50, 15 to 21. Now, in preparation for this message, I've been swimming in a sea of forgiveness. Studying the scriptures and reading numerous books, I've seen many good and glorious truths regarding forgiveness between God and man and between fellow sinners. So, this morning, I'd like to bring you on a journey that I've been on and share with you the best of the sights that I've seen. As you can guess from the name of this message, the sermon is going to be composed of three major sections, forgiveness needed, forgiveness granted, and forgiveness enjoyed. And by the end of the message, I'd like us to be able to enjoy forgiveness more deeply than we ever have before, forgiving and being forgiven. And to start off this morning,

I'd like to share with you an amazing story written by the survivor of a Nazi concentration camp. It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, a former SS man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbrück. He was the first of our actual jailers that I'd seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there, the room full of mocking men. The heaps of clothing, Betsy's pain-blanching face. He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing.

How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein. He said to think that, as you say, he has washed my sins away. His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Blumenthal, the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me. I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man. Was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him. I tried to smile.

I struggled to raise my hand. I could not, I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again, I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I prayed, I cannot forgive him.

[3 : 2 6] Give me your forgiveness. And as I took his hand, the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder, on my arm and through my hand, a current seemed to pass. From me to him, all into my heart sprang a love for this man, the stranger that almost overwhelmed me. And so I discovered that it is not in our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on his.

When he tells us to love our enemies, he gives, along with the command, the love itself. Living through the depths of the Holocaust, Corrie Ten Boom was familiar with humanity's potential for horror.

While her family, led by her father, Caspar Ten Boom, helped save many Jewish people from the Nazis by hiding them in her home, she also witnessed extreme suffering, having lived through close to a year of Nazi arrest and detention, ultimately being transported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she witnessed the death of her beloved sister, Betsy.

So many years later, Corrie was confronted with the reality of what she had been through when she met the Ravensbrück SS man described earlier.

She met a man who had mocked her and imprisoned her and caused her and her sister such horrific pain. And yet, by the power of God, Corrie forgave this man.

[5 : 15] Corrie forgave this man. Forgiveness. The need to forgive and the need to be forgiven is a reflection of the human condition.

We're all sinners. We all hurt each other and disappoint each other. We're all sinners. Now, if forgiveness is such a common need, though, why can it be so hard to do?

And as followers of the great forgiver, Jesus Christ, how can we grow to be liked, to imitate, and ultimately to obey Jesus in his command to forgive?

To forgive our brothers and sisters and to even love our enemies. It's these questions we're going to dive into today as we conclude our series in the life of Joseph, a man featured in Scripture as a foreshadow of Christ in his ability to forgive his brothers for some serious injustices.

forgiveness. So like I mentioned earlier, in this message, we're going to uncover three main points in the story of Joseph and his forgiving of his brothers. Forgiveness needed, forgiveness granted, forgiveness enjoyed.

[6 : 30] And we'll see much truth applicable to our own lives as we brush up against the lives of other sinners and as others encounter our own sin. And ultimately, my prayer for this message is that we would walk out of this time better equipped to love and forgive others. And better equipped to seek and enjoy forgiveness ourselves. So let's start by reading the passage. Genesis 50, 15 to 21.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, it may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.

So they sent a message to Joseph saying, your father gave this command before he died. Say to Joseph, please, forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you.

And now, please, forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. Joseph wept. Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

[7 : 42] His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, behold, we are your servants. But Joseph said to them, do not fear. Am I in the place of God?

As for you, you meant evil against me. But God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.

So do not fear. I will provide for you and your little ones. Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

May God bless the preaching of his word. Jesus, in his earthly ministry, spoke much on the topic of forgiveness.

In the Sermon on the Mount, he states, Matthew 6, 14 to 15, for if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

[8 : 53] But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. In Matthew 18, he engages in the following conversation with Peter.

Then Peter came up to him and said to him, Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him, I do not say to you seven times, but 77 times.

Paul, Paul also gives a number of specific commands regarding forgiveness. Ephesians 4, 32, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

Forgiveness and the ability to forgive is clearly important to our Lord. Is it any wonder that Joseph has highlighted in scripture so highly for his ability and willingness to forgive?

As we consider our first point, forgiveness needed, let's begin by flashing back to Genesis 37 and recalling Joseph's need to forgive and all he had to overcome to do so.

[10:14] Remember the brother's jealousy as Joseph recounted what would become prophetic dreams of his greatness and ruling over his family. Remember their anger towards Joseph as he approached Dothan where they were pasturing the family's flock.

Remember their conspiring to kill Joseph by throwing in a pit and remember their ultimate decision to sell him to Ishmaelite traders who really could have done anything they wanted to with Joseph.

If anyone had a right to be angry to hold a grudge to withhold forgiveness to people who had sinned against him it was Joseph.

Unless we think Joseph stoically accepted all the sin against him remember Genesis 42 21 when the brothers were in Egypt seeking grain then they said to one another in truth we are guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the distress of his soul when he begged us and we did not listen that is why this distress has come upon us.

Joseph was not some emotionless stoic robot he truly felt he truly suffered at the hands of his brothers he felt great pain and fear and dread he begged his brothers in the moment to not do what they were doing to not follow through with their destructive plans Jacob's son truly had sinned against their brother and after Jacob's death they surely knew it verses 15 through 17 when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead they said it may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him so they sent a message to Joseph saying your father gave this command before he died say to Joseph please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you and now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the

[12:36] God of your father the sons of Israel by the time of Jacob's death they truly experienced the role of the conscience they felt legitimate guilt and conviction and shame over their sin they knew they needed forgiveness forgiveness they knew that they needed forgiveness and when have you sinned when have you sinned and needed forgiveness when have you felt the sting of conscience of conviction and when has someone sinned against you and you needed to forgive them if sin is a common human experience and it is then surely all of us have experienced both sides of the coin and it is because of this reality if we want to have functioning deep real relationships then we must learn how to forgive and be forgiven so that begs the question what exactly is forgiveness so we've talked about forgiveness needed now let's talk about forgiveness is granted so let's define forgiveness let's look to our text for clues to start in

Genesis 50 19 to 21 what is forgiveness Genesis 50 but Joseph said to them do not fear from I in the place of God as for you you meant evil against me but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today so do not fear I will provide for you and your little ones thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them in this text we can observe a number of aspects of forgiveness that will help us to both forgive and enjoy being forgiven first notice that forgiveness is not just a feeling pay attention to all the action verbs in this passage spoke kindly comforted and even provide

Joseph was resolved to be kind to his brothers to not just feel forgiveness but to act in a way in accordance with forgiving them second notice that Joseph doesn't just forget the sins of his brothers he doesn't just forget it forgiveness is not forgetting instead Joseph actively acknowledges his brother's sins but chooses to pay down the debt himself to absorb it himself third notice that forgiveness is not excusing Joseph never states that what his brothers did was okay or not wrong remember he explicitly states that they meant evil against him forgiveness doesn't take shortcuts by making it seem like sin is not as bad as it really is rather again forgivers acknowledge and truly feel the pain of the sin that's committed against them but they're still willing to forgive so forgiveness is neither a feeling forgetting or excusing what exactly is it what exactly is it so in his helpful book unpacking forgiveness author and pastor

Chris bronze defines forgiveness as the following forgiveness is a commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant for moral liability and to be reconciled to that person although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated let me say that again forgiveness is a commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant for moral liability and be reconciled to that person although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated notice again from our text how this plays out through Joseph's actions Joseph is clearly committed to forgiving his brothers speaking kindly to them comforting them and even stating that he will provide for them he is actively forgiving them he is gracious towards his brothers forgiving freely from his heart and requiring nothing no type of payback does he require from his brothers for their grievous sins against him no payback he forgives and Joseph observes that his brothers are repentant his brothers are repentant to the point of falling down before him and even offering to be his servants

Joseph and his brothers are reconciled now and maybe for the first time living together in peace and personal fellowship now in Egypt and finally notice that in forgiveness not all consequences are necessarily eliminated the brothers while forgiven still to some degree reap what they have sown in their actions against Joseph they had to leave their homeland they had to live in a foreign land and yes this land will be prosperous for them but remember what will happen in further generations as they become enslaved and they are truly no longer living in the land of promise that God has given to them but they are living in a foreign land so when it comes down to it Joseph is a wonderful example of author

[19 : 14] Ken Sandy's succinct condensation of all these thoughts as regards forgiveness so what is forgiveness forgiveness is good thought hurt not gossip never friends forever good thought we think well of those we were previously alienated from hurt not resolve to cause no additional pain to the offenders gossip never as appropriate we don't talk about this incident with others as appropriate we don't talk about this incident with others and friends forever we don't let this incident stand in the way of personal fellowship and friendship good thought hurt not gossip never friends forever now before

I continue I do need to highlight and qualify a couple things first I want to highlight that forgiveness is reserved for the repentant so let me read again from Chris Braun's book unpacking forgiveness Christian forgiveness is a commitment to the repentant it is not automatic Christians are to forgive others as God forgave them God's forgiveness is conditional to be sure God offers grace to all people but he forgives only those who repent and believe likewise Jesus said that Christians should forgive if the other party repents look at Luke 17 3-4 pay attention to yourselves if your brother sins rebuke him and if he repents forgive him and if he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times saying I repent you must forgive him so biblically to repent means to change behavior as a result of a complete change of thinking and attitude people in our culture sometimes limit repentance to an emotion and certainly emotions should be included but at its center to repent means to turn around in actions and attitude

Christians must always forgive the repentant so again to highlight Christian forgiveness is a commitment to the repentant second a qualification Christian forgiveness especially the notion of friends forever must be walked out in wisdom must be walked out in wisdom life is not always as neat and tidy as a succinct poem for every day normally functioned relationships this poem will apply however there are cases I'm thinking specifically of abuse where a saying like that just may not apply just because someone has repented of a sin they have committed does not mean that you will be close personal friends with them moving forward that just may not be appropriate as we all know life is not always black and white there is nuance there is gray and there is so much gray that a sermon within the bounds of time and topic just cannot cover this fully so stay tuned Chris and I are planning to record a podcast about this this week and we will give more detail and instruction we are in the nuance of all this but for now consider again in your standard everyday relationships the wisdom of good thought hurt not gossip never friends forever that can really serve as a guidepost and a picture of what forgiveness looks like good thought hurt not gossip never friends forever so that's forgiveness defined how do we actually do this like how do we actually forgive let's look to

Joseph again for some clues first Joseph remembered his place in the universe check out verse 19 again but Joseph said to them do not fear from I in the place of God Joseph knew that he was a man and certainly not God he knew that he was not the judge that his role was not to inflict harm on his brothers but instead to treat them with kindness he knew the wisdom of Romans 12 beloved never avenge yourselves believe it to the wrath of God for it is written vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord second I believe that Joseph also remembered his faults his own sins and more importantly God's forgiveness of them scripture is not explicit in this but just think of all the time that

Joseph had to reflect upon his own actions towards his brothers maybe naively maybe a little proudly recounting his dreams to them and consider the internal struggles Joseph may have wrestled with on his way to Egypt in that cart in Potiphar's house in the Egyptian jail surely only Jesus is perfect in thought and word and deed Joseph I believe wrestled in his heart with the Lord and with his own desires throughout his trials ultimately confessing receiving forgiveness for and subduing them but acknowledging them nonetheless and again needing the Lord's forgiveness and forgiving his brothers it surely would have helped Joseph to realize all the Lord had forgiven him throughout his life and I think remembering all the

[25 : 50] Lord has forgiven us remember Matthew 18 the parable of the merciful unmerciful servant we need to keep in mind all the Lord has forgiven us and that will help us to forgive joyfully finally how could Joseph forgive his brothers simply put Joseph's long obedience taught him to trust and obey the Lord God called Joseph to forgive Joseph trusted God and so he forgave so good thought hurt not gossip never friends forever through humility trust and obedience that is forgiveness granted all right ultimately forgiveness enjoyed forgiveness enjoyed let Joseph's words of forgiveness ring in our ears so do not fear

I will provide for you and your little ones thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them what sweet words that Joseph spoke to his brothers what relief they must have felt a group of men that were so stung by conscience that felt so guilty Joseph cleared them of that relational guilt what blessings did Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers bring to Joseph and his brothers all right first Joseph he avoided the dangers of bitterness he avoided the dangers of bitterness we go deep here but for now just look at Hebrews 12 Hebrews 12 14 to 15 strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the

Lord see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble and by it many become defiled by forgiving his brothers Joseph brought peace to his family cultivated holiness and prevented a root of bitterness from springing up and defiling many second through forgiveness Joseph had the privilege to restore relationship to restore fellowship amongst his brothers naturally brothers in blood and in spirit look at Genesis 50 17 13 the brothers refer to themselves as the servants of the God of your father the servants of the God of your father they are no longer unrepentant sinners in rebellion against God they are now brothers in blood and brothers in spirit they have repented and they are reconciled could David have had this story in mind when he wrote

Psalms 133 behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity finally consider the joy Joseph must have felt in fulfilling one of his father's final wishes look at Genesis 50 16-17 so they sent a message to Joseph saying your father gave us this command before he died your father gave this command before he died say to Joseph please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you just think of what it felt to Jacob to have his sons not be reconciled and to be afraid that there be bitterness there be unforgiveness that would then spread throughout the generations

Jacob longed for his sons to be reconciled to be forgiven so he said please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you and then the brothers go on and now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father Joseph wept when they spoke to him Joseph wept yes tears of reconciling joy but also sweet tears of knowing that he could do his father's will and fulfill his father's final wishes by forgiving truly forgiveness was a joy for Joseph and can be for us as we avoid bitterness as we experience reconciliation and ultimately as we please our father in heaven as we please our father in heaven so in conclusion forgiveness forgiveness is of vital importance to the

[31 : 39] Lord it can be one of the hardest acts of obedience that the Lord calls us to and yet because we are all sinners we will all run up against this challenge and privilege at some point and it is at those times that we must remember good thought hurt not gossip never friends forever like Joseph we must remember our place in the universe certainly not on the throne of judgment we must remember all the sins the Lord has forgiven us we have been forgiven so much we sang about it this morning we've been forgiven so much and we must certainly remember to trust and obey the Lord a God who loves us and has good things for us in our obedience he means only good for his children in his commandments

Corrie Ten Boom she enjoyed the Lord's power in forgiving someone who had been a monster toward her and Lord has power for us as we extend forgiveness to those who slight and even deeply hurt us so in the power of the cross and Jesus resurrection in humility in knowing that we have been forgiven much and with a great belief in the goodness of God's commands let us go forward now and forgive forgive our brothers and sisters forgive the repentant and truly show the world the beauty of our Lord and Savior the great forgiver let's pray dear Jesus we just thank you you have forgiven us so much our many sins you have forgiven they are gone cast into the bottom of the sea as far as the east is from the west they are removed from us

Lord thank you that you have good things for us and that your commands for us are good so Lord I thank you for your word we thank you for your word and we pray that you would empower this message Holy Spirit help us to live this out and to image you the great forgiver in Jesus name we pray amen and now for communion today I want us to linger on that final thought Jesus the great forgiver yes Joseph was a great forgiver and a wonderful example to us at the same time let us not forget that Jesus is the great forgiver the ultimate forgiver hear his cry from the cross and let's experience afresh a sense of relief that the

Lord has forgiven us for all our many sins Luke 23 34 father forgive them for they know not what they do father forgive them for they know not what they do Jesus did not say this from the comfort of an Egyptian palace he didn't even say it while teaching kindly on a Judean hillside rather Jesus said this nailed to a cross as he the cosmic Christ triumphed over every sin over every ruler and every authority that would have accused us in our condemnation Jesus forgave from the cross and through the cross ultimately so we can know the peace of God fellowship with the father and friendship with our

Lord thank God thank God so come now come now to the table freshly aware that your sins are forgiven that your debt has been paid and your freedom now to forgive empowered until the Lord returns first Corinthians 11 for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he!

[37 : 07] He had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes come now and enjoy the forgiveness of the Lord that the cosmic Christ has bought for us upon the cross