

**Genesis in Biblical Perspective:
The Gospel of Christ from Genesis –
The Life of Joseph #8—The Believers Most Dangerous Enemy**

Genesis 42:29-38

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In this study we'll cover the end of Genesis 42. The book of Genesis is divided up into ten books and we're in the tenth one known as the book of Jacob which basically except for a couple of chapters actually focuses on the life of Joseph. Some very significant things are given to us throughout this book. We will look at about five texts in this study that I believe are absolutely crucial so have your Bible available as we move forward in this study of God's Word. Let's start by looking at a few previous verses to set up for this study. Genesis 42:26–28 says

[26] Then they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed. [27] And as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money in the mouth of his sack. [28] He said to his brothers, "My money has been put back; here it is in the mouth of my sack!" At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I love stories. My family loves stories. I grew up in a family of storytellers. Whenever we get together stories start and go and that's one of the reasons I love the Bible. Christianity is not communicated to us in a encyclopedia or a dictionary. It's God's story that unfolds, creates, the fall and descends and then from Genesis 4 on is the story of His unfolding redemption leading through the Old Covenant, pointing to Christ, the New Covenant, coming to Christ and then the proclamation of now, not a foretaste of Good News but the full proclamation of the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In that narrative of God's redemption are multiple narratives throughout the Bible. People mentioned in the Bible become my stories of learning about God's work of grace.

In our study of the book of Genesis we have been looking at Joseph's story and like God's story has all these subtexts through God's people that He is saving and through whom He is bringing His work of redemption, even in the life of Joseph there are all kinds of subtexts. This narrative on Joseph has been tremendously attractive to me for I'm attracted to it for two reasons in the text and

one is Joseph is a wonderful testimony that both convicts and encourages me that God's grace is greater than my sin and no matter where I am God can and will use me if I am with Him and He is with me and my eyes are fixed on Him for it doesn't matter if I'm in pit, prison, Potiphar's house or the palace.

God's grace is sufficient and it shows up. I love to see how sufficient God's grace is so that Joseph is informed by his faith so that no matter where he is he is the same man. He knows God has in where he is and there is a purpose. God is making him, working him and all the while he is serving God. I won't commit adultery with that woman. I won't sin against God. I won't be depressed because the cup bearer has forsaken me. I am not defined by my circumstances. This God is with me and in Him I am more than a conqueror and it shines through. Now what happens when he gets the power? Does he become someone different? No, for when he gets in power he is a man who is driven by God's goodness and grace. He even blessed a whole pagan nation of Egyptians by taking the feast and taking care of them in a famine. He is a man through whom God works to show His common grace to all humanity. Then one day he comes around the corner and there are his brothers.

These are the people who put him into slavery with a death sentence. They don't even recognize him but he recognizes them but he gives no vengeance or vindication. He gives tough words as he probes and tests their hearts and a tender heart he has for them. Secretly he is weeping but in front of them it says three times that he spoke roughly to them as he tests their hearts.

There is another subtext that is in Genesis 42. These brothers who we have been calling from the Bible the sons of Jacob are now in this chapter called sons of Israel. These cutthroats are about to become patriarchs. I don't say that for the shock factor. Reuben was known for incest with his father's concubine. Simeon and Levi were conspirators to create a holocaust and genocide among the Shechemites. Judah traffics with prostitutes, abandons the line of his sons and does unjustly and treacherously with his daughter-in-law, Tamar. The rest of them go right along with this evil. This is not a group of people I would entrust you to but these sons of Jacob in Genesis 42 are now called for the first time the sons of Israel.

Also for the first time in Genesis 42 God's name leaves their mouth in utter conviction saying "What has God done to us?" This is not said in frustration. They are saying that their sin has come upon them. They are saying what Paul will later say with much better clarity about all of us when he says "What a man sows, he reaps." Twenty years they sowed this, walking with this conscience and guilt for all of these years and now through the tough words of Joseph, the tests he had brought to us and what we now see in the grain, our sin is about to find us out. God is using that to break them and convict them through Joseph as he is in power, through tough words. F.B. Meyer and Jim Boyce say that in Genesis 42 Joseph is probably replicating what they did to him 20 something years ago when

Joseph came from his father's house to see about his brothers as they were out shepherding. When Joseph gets to them in the field wearing his coat of many colors they see him as a spy for the father. They accuse him of spying the land, bind him and throw him in a pit. Could Joseph have been in the pit for three days? Joseph binds his brothers and puts them in a prison for three days. Then Joseph says "instead of sending one of you back and keeping the rest of you, I'm going to keep Simeon." Could it have been Simeon who actually bound Joseph when he went to the pit?

All of it is speculation but it's really interesting how Joseph's tough words are bringing home to them what happened to their brother Joseph at their hands and so they then begin to break in their hearts, so much so that Joseph has to go around the corner weeping at hearing the fact that the guilt is weighing their conscience down. The test is designed by Joseph, so what will they do now? What will they do now with the grain and the money? Twenty something years ago they probably would not have thought twice about it and thought, 'it only cost us a brother.' In fact, twenty years ago they would have done it for twenty pieces of silver. It's the test that's probing.

In light of this, they leave. Not only do they see the grain but money in their sacks. Now they get to Canaan and give a report back to their father. Genesis 42:29–34 says

[29] When they came to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, [30] "The man, the lord of the land, spoke roughly to us and took us to be spies of the land. [31] But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we have never been spies. [32] We are twelve brothers, sons of our father. One is no more, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.' [33] Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain for the famine of your households, and go your way. [34] Bring your youngest brother to me. Then I shall know that you are not spies but honest men, and I will deliver your brother to you, and you shall trade in the land.'"

They come back and give a report to their father. They told him how roughly he spoke to them and Joseph accused them of being spies three different times. You can almost see that it was like a sledge hammer to them. Three days later the man who spoke roughly bore witness to his relationship with the living God. He said "I fear God." Because he feared God, the respect and reverence of God, then that affects his behavior. There are two things that you and I need if you're a Christian today. One is the love of God that motivates us and the other is the fear of God that gives us reverence and respect in the choices of life. Joseph models for them and not only does he probe with tough words but now they see the fact that the fear of the Lord is in his life and it modifies what he says when he says "Instead of keeping all of you I'll just keep one and to prove that there is

something true in your heart you just need to come back with your youngest brother.” His grace and compassion are shown. He lays out a roadmap for them and he sends them back with grain. Little did they know his graciousness went further as he put their money back in the sack with the grain. So they have told their father what had happened but then surprise!

The conviction is still following them. Joseph’s tough words brought conviction and Joseph’s tender mercies, grain and money, even furthers the conviction. The conviction has not led them to repentance yet but it has led them to fear as their sins are coming upon them they see what is happening. It’s not just one of them that have their grain and their money but all have their grain and their money. What is going to happen to us next? It may just cost us Simeon but that doesn’t happen. On the contrary conviction takes hold deeper and deeper, except now.

The subtext has been Joseph’s testimony of grace and a snapshot of Jesus all the time. He is humbled, he is exalted. Here we see Jesus in the life of Joseph as the New Testament shows us that Joseph becomes a picture of Christ. We are now seeing how the sons of Jacob and becoming the sons of Israel but we’re now taking a look at a very unattractive believer. In this study have you not be somewhat attracted to Joseph? He’s one of those guys that I’ll probably look up when I get to heaven to talk to him. There is another believer, Jacob and we’ve already seen his conversion. As attractive as Joseph is, equally unattractive is Jacob. When he sees all of this listen to what he says. Genesis 42:35–38 says

[35] As they emptied their sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid. [36] And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me." [37] Then Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." [38] But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol."

There are his sons under conviction, God is doing a work and all Jacob is concerned with is, ‘it’s all about me’ himself. It’s not his heart breaks for them because they had to leave a brother and make the tough decision or that they’ll have to make another trip to bring a brother to rescue that brother or that they are under conviction because of what they did to another brother. No, this is a father who is so distorted in his view of the situation that he comes across to his sons as if he only has one left, Benjamin.

How do you think these other brothers feel? Who are we? He is talking to one son as if he is not a son as he is consumed with idolatry for this one son. What is

at the core of this? Jacob's fear is at the core of this. He thinks if he send Benjamin, he'll not only have lost Joseph but he'll lose Simeon and Benjamin and then he thinks his life will be nothing. I'll just go all the way to the grave in utter depression. The fear now paralyzes him. Let's just stay here and starve to death. Rueben has an idea to take Benjamin and if he didn't come back Jacob could kill his sons. Not sure how Rueben's sons felt about that deal when it was offered but he doesn't even hear Rueben's plea. Rueben didn't really have a plan he was just trying to make a plea. Fear is dominating, distorting, paralyzing and making Jacob paranoid. It started back at the beginning. Genesis 42:1–4 says

[1] When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" [2] And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." [3] So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. [4] But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him.

Here is a professing believer who has become so unattractive, so narcissistic where it's all about him and he can't see anyone else's hurts, concerns or needs. It's not even about Benjamin or Simeon or Joseph but it's all about him. It is what this is doing to him and he thinks now everyone and everything is against him and his fears have paralyzed him. Where are your fears? Are those fears taking hold of you and me? I'm fearful I'll be a bad pastor. I'm fearful what will happen to the economy and the stock market. Gas just keeps going up and up. Fearful to raise children, fearful about my marriage, fearful there may not be a mate out there for me and then that fear begins to take hold. Fear paralyzes, distorts, and brings utter depression and discouragement.

Look at the contrast between Jacob and Joseph. Joseph says I won't be discouraged, I won't sin against God and Potiphar in this adultery. I won't take vengeance when I'm forsaken by the cupbearer. Why didn't that happen? It was because God was enough for Joseph not because he was a great man. At this point for Jacob it's not that his God is enough but Jacob wants his God to be a genie in the bottle and it's all about him. That is what Jacob wants. Are there valid issues and concerns? Yes, but now fear has brought as the book of Hebrews says, a snare. In that fear something very unattractive and repulsive is now there.

Perhaps there are some of you reading this that have never come to Christ. When you are born into this world you have three main enemies that Bible points out to you – the world, the flesh and the devil. Two of them are outside of you – Satan whom Jesus has defeated and the world system. I'm not talking about trees and grass but the Bible says

[15] Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world—the desires of

the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world (1 John 2:15–16).

In other words, it's this system of rebellion that stands against the rights, glory and majesty of the Almighty and that system wants to ensnare you and trap you and Satan wants to use that system to come against you. Satan and the world know you have an ally for you have a third enemy and it's inside of you. It's called the old man – it's all about *me*. That thing inside is so powerful that I'll even take the Gospel of Jesus Christ and turn it into something to get the idols of this world to make me wealthy, prosperous and that Jesus is here simply to be my counselor for self-esteem. We so easily take what is glorious in Christ and then turn it into something that is all about me and what I decide is right and glorious in life instead of who Jesus is, what Jesus has done and brought to me in my life. For some of you today, that 'me' is keeping you from coming to Christ.

I cannot redefine the Gospel so that Jesus becomes the Gospel of me. Jesus' Gospel calls you to die. If you want to save your life, you lose it. If you want to know what it means to come to Christ then deny yourself and give it to Him. With tender, tough words He tells you to die and come to Him. Believers, you and I have that issue within us. We are constantly looking at everything – our spouse, our children, church, job, life. It's all about me. Very easily, we begin to, like Israel, complain and mumble against the Lord because the Lord doesn't make it all about me but tells me that my joy is in knowing Him and His glory.

So fear takes hold of us. I won't have this or that or what will the future hold. Fear begins to take hold of our life and dominate us. It drives us down into the issues of life. Just as much as that enemy of my soul within me will stop some from coming to Christ as Lord and Savior, that same default program that keeps coming up every day in my life, the 'me' and if it takes over then the good that I would do I don't do. I start doing the very things I said that I don't want to do as a believer.

C.S. Lewis put it this way when a lady came and asked him "What's wrong with Christianity? What's wrong with your church Mr. Lewis?" He said "Madam, it's simple. What is wrong with Christianity and my church is me. I'm what's wrong." I am what is wrong because I have made everything in my life and I've even attempted to distort the Gospel to being about something that is me in this world instead of something that saves me that I might know the joy of Him who made all things and who know has taken hold of my life. As soon as 'me' stands supreme then fear enslaves. That fear that comes enslaves, traps and paralyzes.

Should that fear be in our life? Here is what the Bible says. Do not fear. Do not fear what? Just do not fear. There is only one fear and that's the fear of the Lord that brings wisdom in the choices of life. All other fears we are to banish. One of my heroes said "Never take counsel from your fears." Never plan or live life from fear. Is that Biblical? Let me show you some passages and give you a couple of

takeaways here to think about. Let's start by looking at II Timothy 1. Look at what Paul said to Timothy right before he died. II Timothy 1:6–7 says

[6] For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, [7] for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

I can live by the power of God that is within me, not the fear that paralyzes me. I can be motivated by love and not take counsel from fears but take counsel from love as the love of Christ constrains me. I can also live with self-control that is God's power working through me for His glory.

How do I get there? Here is your first takeaway. God has given you three instruments to dispel fear. Am I going to get a mate, a job, what will happen to my family, my business, and what about the upcoming election? We have all these fears that take hold of us, paralyze us and turn us into something that is very unattractive to a watching world, just like Jacob. Let's look at the first instrument God has given you to dispel these fears and let's look at Matthew 8. In Matthew 8 we see where the disciples were in a boat, in a storm and were afraid. Matthew 8:23–26 says

[23] And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. [24] And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. [25] And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." [26] And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, (then He gives the answer) O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

We don't live by fear, we live by faith. Jacob has all these fears in life with the famine, in Egypt, his family and did not this God say to him 'I'll be a God to you and to your children after you'? Did not this God deliver him from Laban and Esau? Did not this God bring him to the land? Has not God made promises and fulfilled them? O Jacob, where is your faith!? It is not faith that dispels fear but it's faith in the living God that dispels fear. Satan believes and everybody believes something. It is a faith in the living God that drives out fear. Secondly, love is another instrument that dispels fear. Let's look at I John 4. I want you to have these passages and see what God's Word says on this. I John 4:17–18 says

[17] By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. [18] There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

It is the perfect love of Christ that you can never be separated from. That perfect love of Christ casts out all fear. It's not just any love. It's not the love that makes

the world go around. It is the love of Christ that casts out every single fear. There is one more instrument found in Philippians 4:6–7 which says

[6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (What is the result?)

[7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

It is not just any prayer but it is prayer to the One who intercedes for you, Jesus Christ. It is prayer in the name of Christ that comes to Christ. This calling and seeking upon Christ is the antidote to fear and anxiety. Fear and anxiety has to go. We bring our cares to Him because He cares for us and He ever lives to intercede for us. So we have fear banished because our faith is in Christ and it's a solid Rock. We have fear banished because the love of Christ constrains us and nothing can separate us from the love of God. We banish fear with prayer because as the anxieties and fears come up in our life we give them to the Lord through prayer. I want to pray for my spouse, my children, my job and I know there is more to do in life beyond prayer but there is nothing I can do greater than prayer. I am going to come to the One who can handle it. The other day I was faced with a situation when my car broke down. I immediately got on the phone and called one of our elders who handles cars. I told him what happened and brother Phil said "I'll take care of it." I didn't even think about it. I know it seems trivial but there is nothing in my life that I'm really capable of handling but I have a Father who I call upon and He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all we could ask or think. I'm going to take it to Him, give it to Him, trust Him and then I'm not going to worry about it anymore. You bring me my husband or wife. You make me the husband I ought to be for my wife. You God, give me wisdom to raise my children in a broken and perverse generation. God You fulfill Your promise through me to bring my children to Yourself. You give my children that family that You want them to have. God, You provide for us for it's not ingenuity. I'll do what I'm responsible to do but I'm bringing it to You. My trust is in You so now I want to walk in Your light.

There are three marvelous instruments to dispel fear and as long as you leave them aside – faith, love, prayer in and to Christ – then 'me' will crop up fear will make you paranoid where you think everyone is against you. Fear will paralyze you. I think I'll just sit here and die because I won't take action since I don't know what will happen next. Fear will distort things in your life. Look at how distorted Jacob is in the idolatry of one child to the destruction of the rest of his family. What is life? It is the creation of idols that can't satisfy. Fear distorts but Christ will drive out all fear.

Here is the second takeaway. Praise God for His severe mercies. God is doing a work in these sons. God is doing a work in Jacob. I'm tough on Jacob right now but I'll get real excited when you see what happens on down the road. God will do something in His child, Jacob but right now He is giving us another lesson.

God will do something because God's severe mercies, out of His grace, put Joseph in a pit, slave quarters, Potiphar's house, unjustly convicted in prison, brought a famine upon the world and hunger to Canaan, why? God is doing something with His decrees. God is providentially working in the life of His people individually and corporately. We are about to get twelve cutthroats turned into twelve patriarchs because of God's severe mercies but they are severe mercies. Take the grain with you and I'll only keep one. That is merciful and then he puts the money underneath the grain.

I want to point out one more passage. Let's look at Romans 2. Can severe and mercies really go together? Absolutely for when God disciplines He does it out of mercy, grace and love. Why does God reach and probe for you to bring you back? He does it out of His mercy, grace and love. Romans 2:4 says

[4] Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Many will use God's kindness as a reason to rebel. Why has God's love and grace continued to be manifested to us in our rebellion? Why has the rain fallen on the just and the unjust? Why has the sun shone and crops have come up? Why when there is a famine over here that God has raised up people over there with grace and mercy to reach these people over here? Why has God brought certain people into your life? God's grace and mercy is shown in severity as His tough words bring us to the end of ourselves and then He just buries the riches down in the grave.

He has done all that to bring you to repentance, to confession and trust in Him. God probes in all of life to bring us to Himself. He sends His Word with severe mercies to convict us and then severe mercies to tell us of the hope in Christ. He sends His Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and then the Holy Spirit bears witness of Christ to us in His kindness. He sends His goodness and kindness even in the midst of the consequences of our sin as its finding us out, the way it found out these brothers. God's severe mercies are at work in your life. Don't presume upon them and continue in rebellion against Him. Come, for they are designed to lead you to repentance.

Here is one final thought. The third takeaway is that you have a Champion and He's your Victor over fear, Jesus Christ. Psalm 27:1 says

[1] The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Who shall I run from? Romans 8:31–39 says [31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who

died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Him we are more than conquerors and we have a Champion. The Father has sent Him and He has won the victory. He delivers you from the presence of sin, the power of sin, practice of sin and the penalty of sin. One day He'll take you to glory to be with Him and He says "Father those whom You have given to Me, I lose not one and I'll raise them up on the last day." I have a Champion and I thank God for faith but the reason faith is powerful against fear is it is in Christ. The reason love is powerful is because it's the love of Christ. The reason prayer is powerful is because I have a Savior who is interceding for me. My hope is Him and it is built on nothing less than Jesus, His blood and His righteousness. Therefore of whom shall I be afraid? I have a victory in Christ. When I was a kid there were no interstates. When we would go visit relatives we would take what most would call the "back roads" for those were our main thoroughfares. We would take highway 101 to visit my relatives and when I was 7 years old I had one little sister at that time. We never had the best cars in the world and we were always grateful for down hills because we knew we could make it downhill. Sure enough on this trip we ran out of gas because the gas gage was broken and there we were sitting on the back roads of South Carolina with no lights. It seemed at 7 years of age I was seeing every tree become a monster. My dad got out of the car just hoping a car would come by to wave them down for help. I began to ask my mom twenty questions.

Mother, what's over there? What's going to happen to us? She could see what was happening to me and she said to me "Son, get out of the car and go stand beside your daddy." I did and all the fear left.

Leave yourself and go to your Savior. He'll take hold of you and in Him, fear is banished. Let's pray. Prayer: Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. We are in a broken world and fears rise up all around us. Father, there are some that even afraid to come to Christ today. Would You set them free that they may flee to Christ who is ready to receive them and trust in Him for their salvation. We would love to pray with you and for you. Jesus, I thank You for these dear people for they also are beset in a broken world, give them the love of Christ that casts out fear, faith in Christ that banishes fear, prayer that removes the anxieties of this world, but Father, more than anything help us rest in the Savior knowing in Him is the joy of deliverance and security.

He will save us, keep us and take us to glory. Thank you Father, for in Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

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