

Joseph and Esther

Lesson 7 (Joseph) Genesis 45, 50

Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers (Genesis 45)

Imagine how the brothers must have felt when they realized who the Governor of Egypt really was! They were disturbed and terrified (Genesis 45:3) as they recognized that the mighty ruler before them was the very one they had hated and rejected.

So it shall be when Israel recognizes her Messiah at the second coming of Christ (Zechariah 12:10-12; Revelation 1:7). Their eyes will behold the very One they rejected and crucified!

So also, every person needs to realize this: "I was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ. He died for my sins (1 Cor. 15:3). It was for my sins that He suffered and bled and died. I'm guilty! My sins nailed Him to that cross. He died for me." "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

When a person is saved he is able to pray a prayer like this: "Lord, I recognize that I have sinned against God and done terrible things. I am guilty. I have disobeyed. I have done wrong. I have done wickedly. But Lord, I thank You for Your great love for me, even when I was a sinner (Romans 5:8). Thank You for dying on the cross for me. Thank You for paying the full penalty for my sins. Lord, I believe with all my heart that You died for me and rose again, and I thank You for Your gift of eternal life (John 3:16; Romans 6:23)."

Joseph immediately comforted his brothers and reassured them of his forgiveness (Genesis 45:4-8). **You sold me, but God sent me!**

What you did was terrible, but God worked it out for good." The brothers were amazed that Joseph was not angry and revengeful. His forgiveness towards them, in spite of the evil they had done, was quite amazing.

God's amazing forgiveness is seen in the following passages:

The following verses speak of the complete forgiveness that a person receives when He believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. This forgiveness is perfect. God forgives ALL SINS—past, present and future. God in His grace is free to fully justify and forgive the believing sinner based on the blood of Christ (the work which He accomplished on the cross on our behalf, dying as our Substitute). Recognizing God's gracious forgiveness ought to be cause for much thanksgiving and thanks-living, and should be a stimulus for holy conduct (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-13). How can we do anything less than serve and love the God who has forgiven us so!

[Note: The Teacher, need not go through all these verses with the class, but choose two or three that might be appropriate]

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

"If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4).

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

"Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isaiah 38:17). *If something is behind your back, then you cannot see it. If our sins are behind God's back, then this indicates He will not see them, will not look at them, and will not hold them against us.*

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44:22).

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found" (Jer. 50:20). *Our sins are not to be found!*

"Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18-19). *Our sins, as it were, have been cast into the sea, never to resurface again! They are gone forever!*

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12; see Hebrews 10:16).

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. 2:13). *Notice that it says "ALL"! All of our sins—past, present and future—have been forgiven.*

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission (forgiveness) of sins" (Acts 10:43).

Have you personally received God's Son and the forgiveness that is found in Him?

The Joseph story beautifully illustrates the principle of Romans 8:28. "And we know that all things _____ for _____ to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

All things are not good in themselves—the pit, the slavery, the prison, the loneliness—but all things work together for good. Joseph found this to be true.

Many of the ingredients of a cake would taste terrible by themselves (flour, salt, baking powder, shortening, raw eggs, vanilla, etc.), but the end product is tasty and good. So it is with the many bitter experiences in life. For example, the bitter things which happened to Paul at Rome worked together for the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12–18). The bitter prison experiences of John Bunyan worked together to produce Pilgrim's Progress, the

best loved Christian book apart from the Bible. Can you think of other illustrations of this principle?

In Genesis 45:8 Joseph made a remarkable statement, "So now it was not you that sent me here, but God." **You didn't send me, God did!** Joseph certainly knew that his brothers had sold him to Egypt (Genesis 45:4), and so did they! **But Joseph saw God's hand behind it all** and he realized that ultimately it was God Who sent him to Egypt to preserve life (Genesis 45:5,7)! Likewise, Joseph gave God full credit for exalting him as a ruler (Genesis 45:8) even though he knew that Pharaoh was the instrument God used to accomplish this (Genesis 41:41).

Another example of this is found in the book of Job. Who was actually responsible for destroying Job's possessions and servants and sons and daughters (Job 1:12) and for afflicting Job's body (Job 2:6-7)? _____ As far as Job was concerned, Who was responsible for what had happened (1:21; 2:10)? _____ Was Job mistaken? _____ Though men and Satan be against us, what a comfort to remember that God is sovereign over all and in complete control! See Psalm 103:19.

Before his brothers returned to their father, Joseph encouraged them not to **fall out** (literally, **quarrel**) by the way (Genesis 45:24). What would they say to their father? They knew that sooner or later they would have to tell their father the truth. Perhaps they were tempted to argue about which one should do the explaining! Joseph probably encouraged them (see Genesis 45:15) to explain to Jacob how God worked everything out for good. Jacob's heart nearly stopped (Genesis 45:26) as he learned that his son whom he thought had been torn in pieces was alive and was a ruler in Egypt!

Joseph's Brothers' Lingering Guilt (Genesis 50:15-21)

What Is Guilt?

The word GUILT is used to refer to two different things. It is sometimes used to refer to a **fact** and it is sometimes used to refer to a **feeling**. Let us define the word GUILT first as a **fact** and then as a **feeling**:

1) THE FACT OF GUILT.

Guilt is the fact of having committed a crime. Guilt is the fact of having done wrong. A person has guilt (is guilty) because he has sinned and broken God's law. Guilt is the fact of having performed a wrong act. And because this person has guilt (has done wrong), he deserves to be punished.

For example, it might be said of a criminal, "The evidence proved his **guilt**." This means that the evidence proved that he really did break a law and that he was guilty of some crime.

According to Matthew 26:66, who did the Jews say was guilty of death? _____ What was His crime (see the last word in verse 65)? _____
He claimed to be the Son of God (see Matthew 26:63-64)! Was He really guilty? _____ If you were to claim to be the Son of God, would you be guilty? _____

See Exodus 20:7. The person who takes God's Name in vain is not G_____ (without guilt) and therefore he must be guilty. According to James 2:10, if a person breaks just one of the Ten Commandments and keeps all of the other commandments, he is still _____ of breaking them all. If a chain has only one broken link, is it still a broken chain? _____ Suppose you were dangling over the edge of a cliff hanging on to a rope for dear life. Would it make a difference if the rope were to break in one place or if it were to break in ten different places? _____ Would you still plunge to your death either way? _____ Those who break God's law have guilt. **It's a fact!** They are guilty!

Have you kept all of the Ten Commandments perfectly? _____
Are you guilty before a holy God who sees every crime and every sin we have ever done? _____

How many people in the world have a problem with guilt (Romans 3:19)? _____

2) THE FEELING OF GUILT.

The word GUILT is also used in another way. It is used to describe a **feeling**. It describes a feeling of shame or **remorse** (a gnawing distress) because of wrong that a person has done. There is the **fact** of guilt: I've sinned and I have done wrong. Then there is the **feeling** of guilt: I feel bad because of what I have done. Because of my sin, I feel guilty!

Feelings of guilt can be very strong. The person has an uncomfortable inner awareness that he has done wrong. His own conscience condemns him. It is like he has an inner voice which says, "You're guilty! You're guilty! You've sinned! You've done wrong!" On the outside the person may seem as if everything is all right, but deep down inside he is bothered by guilt feelings because he knows that he has done wrong and he can't forget it.

Why do people feel guilty? Most people **feel** guilty because they **are** guilty! The **fact** of guilt causes the **feeling** of guilt. Sometimes a person may feel guilty when he really should not. For example, a person might feel guilty for being tempted. Is temptation sin? _____ Was the Lord Jesus tempted (Matthew chapter 4)? Did the devil seek to rouse desire and seek to persuade, invite, induce and entice the Lord Jesus to sin (Matthew chapter 4)? _____ Did the Lord Jesus sin? _____ A person who is merely tempted is not guilty and should not feel guilty. It is one thing to be presented by a temptation; it is another thing to receive that temptation and to enter into it and to mentally pursue it. Playing with the temptation mentally makes for bad thinking which leads to bad feelings, guilt, etc. If a temptation is continued and carried on in my mind, it will cut off my relationship to God and I'm guilty of sin. The person who yields to the temptation and follows the temptation and falls into the temptation IS GUILTY (fact) and should FEEL GUILTY (feeling).

David succumbed to temptation and fell into the sin of adultery (2 Samuel chapter 11). David was guilty (**fact**) and he felt terrible (**feeling**)! In Psalm 32:3-4 we see that David was being crushed by a sense of guilt: "Thy hand (God's hand) was _____ upon me" (verse 4). In Psalm 51:3 David says, "My sin is _____ before me." As we study the brothers of Joseph we will see that their sin was ever before them, even many years after their crime. Guilt stays with a person until the person takes care of the guilt God's way. The guilty sinner needs to be saved (Acts 10:43); the guilty saved person needs to confess his sins (Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9).

Joseph's brothers refused to believe that Joseph had really forgiven them. They wrongly thought that he was kind to them only because of Jacob. With Jacob dead, they thought that Joseph would avenge their evil deed (Genesis 50:15)! How grieved Joseph was when he learned what was on their hearts. How tragic that the weight of their sin was still heavy upon their hearts 39 years later (Joseph was sold into Egypt about 1897 B.C. and Jacob died about 1858 B.C.)!

How tragic today when people refuse to believe God's promise of forgiveness. God has promised complete forgiveness to all who believe on His Son—see Acts 10:43; Micah 7:19; Jeremiah 50:20; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 38:17; Isaiah 1:18; Hebrews 10:17; John 1:29; Hebrews 9:25; Ephesians 1:7. Likewise, God has promised complete forgiveness and cleansing to the believer who confesses his sins—1 John 1:9. Let us not accuse God of being a liar and untrue to what He has said by not believing His promise of forgiveness.

Joseph's brothers, who had sold Joseph into slavery, now volunteered to be his slaves (in Genesis 50:18, "servants" = "slaves")! Joseph again reminded them of God's good purpose overriding their evil plans (Genesis 50:20), and he again comforted them and promised to care for them (Genesis 50:21; compare 45:11).

Can we forgive those who have so wronged us (Ephesians 4:32)? Could Christ forgive His enemies (Luke 23:34; Romans 5:6–11)? Did Joseph practice the principles set forth in Romans 12:17–21? Can you? Will you?

For further study on the guilt of Joseph brothers, see Chapter 4 in the series of Sunday School lessons entitled, **13 Bible Characters**.

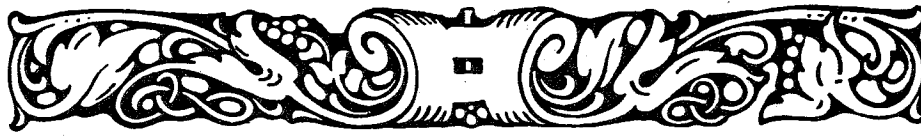
This ends our study of the life of Joseph. The key verse is Genesis 50:20:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Whate'er Thy Will

Whate'er Thy will, Lord, keep me still.
Thy way is best; So let me rest.
Let come what may To me today,
Sunshine or rain, Pleasure or pain,
Gladness or grief, Distress; relief,

May I believe All I receive
Is sent in love Down from above.
So let me rest; Thou knowest best.
Whate'er Thy will, Lord, keep me still.
—Author Unknown



THINGS DON'T JUST HAPPEN

Things don't just happen to us who love God,
 They're planned by His own dear hand.
 Then moulded and shaped, and timed by His clock,
 Things don't just happen, they're planned.

We don't just guess on the issues of life,
 We Christians just rest in our Lord.
 We are directed by His Sovereign will,
 In the light of His Holy Word.

We who love Jesus are walking by faith,
 Not seeing one step that's ahead.
 Not doubting one moment what our lot might be.
 But looking to Jesus, instead.

We praise our dear Saviour for loving us so,
 For planning each care of our life.
 Then giving us faith to trust Him for all,
 The blessings, as well as the strife.

Things don't just happen to us who love God,
 To us that have taken our stand,
 No matter the lot, the course, or the price,
 Things don't just happen, they're planned.

—Esther L. Fields



“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

Romans 8:28