Genesis 199

God’s Sovereignty

Genesis 50:19-21

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The title of our message this morning is "The Sovereignty of God," which is a very important issue. We pick it up in Genesis 50:19 in our verse-by-verse study through the Book of Genesis. God here is dealing with this man, Joseph (Genesis 37-50). His purpose through Joseph has been accomplished; Israel has been relocated in the midst of a famine. God used this man Joseph to do the whole thing. It was a bumpy ride, and now Joseph, at the very end of his life, is getting ready to pass on. His father Jacob has passed on; he has been buried in Canaan. Joseph has now returned from that burial ceremony from Egypt back to Canaan.

Death & Burial of Jacob & Joseph (Genesis 50:1-26)

I. Events following Jacob's death (1-3)
II. Jacob's burial (4-14)
III. Brothers' fear & Joseph's reassurance (15-21)
    A. Brothers' fear (15)
    B. Brothers' message to Joseph (16-17a)
    C. Joseph's response (17b)
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His brothers who betrayed him, are a little bit nervous because they mistreated Joseph so aggressively in the Book of Genesis. Now that Jacob, the buffer between Joseph and the brothers, has passed on they are wondering, "Is Joseph going to use his power?" After all, he has been elevated to second-in-command in Egypt. "Is he going to use his power to exact or take revenge on us?"

You have this paragraph here (Genesis 50:15-21) where this fear is expressed. Joseph comforts his brothers on this basis (Genesis 50:19).

> *"But Joseph said to them, [his brothers who had betrayed him and mistreated him], 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?'"*

"There is a lot of mischief that you guys were involved in," Joseph is saying to his brothers. "There is a lot of sin." Today we would call it criminal activity: being left for dead, being sold as a slave. "There are a lot of bad things that you guys did to me. But

you know what? I am not God, and I am not the judge. I am going to turn judgment over to Him."

That is such an important thing for us to do, because all of us live in a world that has fallen. Nobody gets out of this unharmed or unscathed—everybody gets mistreated at some point—all kinds of injustices are inflicted against us. It is so easy to want to go out there and exact revenge on every single person that has mistreated us. What that does is put us in a place of bondage. It is the spirit of unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is like drinking poison, thinking it is going to hurt somebody else, when in reality, the only person that is really hurt through a spirit of unforgiveness is ourselves. It is so healthy to move into a situation where we say, "The Lord is going to take care of it; the Lord is going to deal with it. He is the judge."

Paul the Apostle tells us to have that mindset as we walk through our lives. He says this in 1 Corinthians 4:5:

> *"Therefore* [we] *do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things that are hidden in darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."*

I have learned, and I am still learning that when I do not take personal vengeance on people and give them over to the Lord, the Lord is far more capable of dealing with people than I am. I am fascinated how He deals with people that have come against me, maybe hurt me unjustly. Sometimes He gives them grace; sometimes He deals with them in ways that you could have never expected.

The moment you take an injustice that has been committed against you and you turn it over to the Lord, the Lord says, "They are on My hook now." But as long as I am trying to avenge myself constantly, defend myself constantly when I am being unfairly treated, the Lord says, "Okay, they are not on My hook. Since you are trying so hard they are on your hook. You deal with it."

When we give the situation over to the Lord, it is so freeing, understanding that God has far more resources than we have—He is far more capable of dealing with people. That removes the bondage from me; and that is where I discover the power of forgiveness. Being a forgiving person does wonders for your psychology. I am not saying put yourself back into harm's way—do not misunderstand me, but it does wonders for what is going on inside of you. The stomach is no longer turning, the high blood pressure is no longer there, the constant plotting about what I am going to do to this person or that person is no longer there. My energy is not being sucked away into those things, and I can instead devote myself wholly to the Lord.

That is what Joseph did here with his brothers. He said, "You are on God's hook. God will deal with you the way He wants to deal with you." Joseph, I believe in this book was a type of Jesus. We will say more about it a little later.

What were Jesus' final words on the cross? "I am going to get you all when I come back the second time." No. It was, "Forgive them, Father. They do not even know what they are doing. They have no idea what they are doing." Paul says in Romans 14:10-12:

> *"But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written,*
> *'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,*
> *And every tongue shall give praise to God.'*
> *So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God."*

It is not as if God has not seen what has happened to you—and God is going to take care of that in His timing. This becomes Joseph's dealings with his brothers that are wondering, now that Jacob is dead, "Are you, as the second-in-command of Egypt, going to come after us?" Joseph's answer is, "I am not. I have taken the whole situation and I have turned it over to the Lord."

In the midst of making these statements, we come to Genesis 50:20, which could very well be the key verse in Joseph's life. It very well could be the key verse in the whole Book of Genesis. It very well could be (and probably is) the key verse in your life. It is a statement about understanding the sovereignty of God.

We move here (Genesis 50:20) into this amazing statement that Joseph makes concerning God's providence. In the first part of the verse he talks about man's plan: what his brothers did to him. Then in the second part of the verse he talks about God's plan: how God allowed it and used it for a higher purpose. Notice if you will, Genesis 50:20, in this pivotal verse, as Joseph is speaking to his brothers, it says,

"'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.'"

What does he mean here when he says, *"'As for you, you meant evil against me'"*? I want to get a little theological with you this morning, if I could. There is a doctrine out there that goes beyond the sovereignty of God. Of course, I believe in the sovereignty of God. God is in control and in charge of all situations. But there is a doctrine out there that goes beyond the sovereignty of God and moves into something that I will call omnicausality, where people are articulating not only that God is God, but that He causes everything. He is not just omniscient, all knowing; He is not just omnipotent, all powerful; He is not just omnipresent, everywhere at the same time; but He causes everything, which I think is a distorted view of God.

Let me give you some examples of those who teach this. This type of teaching—omincausality—is very big in Calvinistic Reformed circles. Louis Berkhof writes in a very strong academic treatise:

> "Reformed theology stresses the sovereignty of God in virtue of which He has sovereignly determined from all eternity whatsoever will come to pass, and works His sovereign will in His entire creation, both natural and spiritual, according to His pre-determined plan."[1]

Mr. Berkhof, I have a question. If God causes everything, did God cause the Fall in Eden? Their answer is yes.

John Calvin wrote.

> "Nor ought it to seem absurd when I say, that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also at his own pleasure arranged it."[2]

Calvin says that God caused the fall of man (Genesis 3), and all of the repercussions of that, that we are still facing today.

Edward Palmer, in his book "The Five Points of Calvinism," says,

> "God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen...even sin...God ordained sin and unbelief."[3]

So if a person is in sin, God caused that. If a person is an unbeliever, God caused that. See, this is a bit beyond sovereignty. This is moving into a doctrine of omnicausality.

Here is a statement from R.C. Sproul's son. He says that God "desired that man would fall into sin...[God] created sin."[4]

Arthur Pink, in his book "The Sovereignty of God," says,

> "That God decreed sin should enter this world through the disobedience of our first parents was a secret hid in His own breast."[5]

In other words, you cannot question that God caused the fall because you are not God. That is a secret known only to God. This is the type of theology that many people are force-fed around the clock—omnicausality.

John Piper, in his book "Suffering and the Sovereignty of God," says,

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[1] Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology: With a Complete Textual Index, 4th and rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1932; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 100.

[2] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* Vol. 3, Chapter 23, section 7.

[3] Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, Enlarged Edition, 1980, 24th printing, 2005), pp. 25, 102.

[4] R.C. Sproul Jr., *Almighty Over All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999, Second printing, July 1999), pp. 53-54.

[5] A.W. Pink, *Sovereignty of God*, p. 201.

> "God's having brought about the Nazis brutality at Birkenau and Auschwitz as well as the terrible killings of Dennis Rader, and even the sexual abuse of a young child..."[6]

Piper says, "The Nazis? God caused that. The concentration camps? God caused that. Those massive shootings? God caused that. Even the abuse of a young child—God caused that." Omnicausality.

I do not believe that this is what the Bible teaches. I think people that believe this kind of thing are walking away with an impression of God that is very warped and very distorted, because here is what the Bible says about these things. James 1:13 says,

> *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone."*

What does it mean "to tempt?" It means to solicit; to sin. A temptation is to set someone up for failure. You can blame solicitations to sin on a lot of different things—the devil being one—but do not blame it on God, because when you make God the cause of everything you are attacking the very fundamentals and foundations of God. At the end of the day, you have a view of God that is a distortion. God cannot cause evil because if He caused evil, it would go against His very character.

First John 1:5 says,

> *"This is the message that we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."*

If all of that is true, where does evil come from exactly? You will notice what Joseph says here at the beginning of Genesis 50:20, "*'As for you*,'" speaking to his brothers that had so mistreated him. "You meant it for evil."

Where exactly does evil come from? There are a lot of different sources of evil. We are living in a world dominated by the world, the flesh, and the devil. That is where evil comes from—the satanically energized world system. We have, as human beings, a fallen nature. Then we have the devil and the demons themselves that cause a lot of problems. Jesus made this statement in Mark 7:20-23:

> *"'That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and great wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these things proceed from within and defile the man.'"*

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[6] John Piper, *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, 42.

There are plenty of bad things that happen in the world, but do not blame God for those. If you do not get that down as a Christian, if you do not get that down as a human being, what you will spend your whole life doing is hating God. Inevitably the rain is going to fall, something negative is going to happen, and you will spend the rest of your life in bitterness against God because you do not understand the sovereignty of God and the source of evil.

You will notice that what Jesus says here concerning sin and sinful thoughts is diametrically opposed to those promoting omnicausality. Loraine Boettner, in his book "The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination," says, God "creates the very thoughts and intents of the soul."[7] Now He could, but Jesus says no. There is plenty of evil to go around; do not necessarily blame God for it.

Giving you that whole quote from the Book of James that I read earlier. I read just one verse, but the rest of it says this:

> *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." (James 1:13-15)*

Describing the consequences of sin, ultimately death, James is very clear: Do not blame this on God. People are enticed by their own lusts and wander outside of the protective custody and care of God. In fact, we are told in the Bible that this whole world that we are living in is in a state of bondage. This world is just temporary, which is the good news, because there is a better world coming.

This world is groaning in travail. Who put it in that state of bondage? Did God put it in that state of bondage? That is not what the Bible says. Romans 8:19-22 says,

> *"For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." (Romans 8:19)*

This means the angels. We want Jesus to come back, and we want Him to remove these chains around creation as He is going to return with his angels.

> *"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope." (Romans 8:20)*

Who would that be? That is Adam; and you might get to heaven and you might run into Adam. I think Adam will be in heaven. He was clothed with the animal skin. Do you remember at the end of Genesis 3? You might say to Adam, "What were you thinking?" But the truth of the matter is, what Adam did we all did. This is called the seminal view

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[7] Loraine Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1932), 32.

of headship. Adam made a choice, but the truth of the matter is, all of us, given those circumstances, would have made the exact same choice. Adam would say, "What were you thinking?" It is easy to push the blame on somebody else.

You have to understand this because when you share your faith with an unsaved person, the number one question they are going to ask you as you are talking about a God of love is, "My grandchild just got hit by a car in the crosswalk. Where is your God of love now?" You need to have an answer for that. The answer for that is: God did not cause that.

We are living in a world where there are many sources of evil that God has nothing to do with. It is like these insurance companies that call these hurricanes and so forth "acts of God." I always hate it when they do that. Why don't we call them "acts of Satan"? Hurricanes and all kinds of problems occurred early in the Book of Job. God allowed it, but He did not cause it—the devil caused it.

The answer to this problem of suffering is: this world that we are living in is not how God designed it. Something went wrong. The free will of the creature—whether you are talking about the Luciferian rebellion in the angelic world or you are talking about the Fall of man in Genesis 3—the creature used their own volition. Satan, in Isaiah 14:12-15 is quoted using the expression "I will" five times. That is when sin entered the universe. The creature asserted its will against that of the Creator. That is what you tell people; but Jesus, having not caused our pain, entered our pain, did He not? He died a horrific death to fix the problem.

> *"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." (Romans 8:19-22)*

This is the reality. The problem of evil that we are living in, the Bible actually has an explanation for it and also says it is only temporary—there is a better world coming.

A proper understanding of God's sovereignty is not omnicausality. If you believe omnicausality, you will spend your life hating God. A proper understanding of God's sovereignty then, is as follows: God allows problems. That is very different from saying God causes problems. When He allows problems He uses them for our benefit, which is exactly what the whole Joseph story is about.

This is what Joseph is saying here. "God did not cause this. You caused it," speaking to his brothers. But you know what? God used it. God used it to bring about a higher purpose that takes precedence over our immediate comfort. I like to be comfortable my whole life. If I had my way, it would be a life with no difficulties whatsoever, but that is not what we signed up for. As Christians, we are walking in a world where bad things

happen to good people. It is so tempting, in the midst of that, to get angry at God instead of saying, "You know what, Lord, how are you going to use this in my life?"

The Lord is into sandpaper ministry. Have you noticed that sandpaper rubbing and fixing some loose or sharp jags on a piece of wood? The Lord does that with you all the time. I know He does it with you because He does it with me. He says things like, "Andy, it is time for you to be a little bit more patient with people; so I am going to introduce into your life some obnoxious people. You are going to have to learn patience through it." Did God cause the obnoxious people? I would say no, but God uses the obnoxious people. You might be obnoxious yourself. God might use you in someone else's life. This is how it works. This is how the Lord refines us into Christ's likeness.

Do not let this kind of thing make you bitter, because it is designed to make you better. Paul, in Romans 8:28, says this:

> *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*

I hear this verse misquoted constantly. People say, "All things are good." That is not what the verse says. The verse never says all things are good. What it says is God uses all things, whether good or bad—in our perception—to bring about His ultimate purpose in our life.

This raises a very important question: What is God's purpose for your life? Why are you here? Is it to live in a nice house? Nothing wrong with that. That is just not God's highest purpose for your life. Is it to make a living and have a great family? Praise the Lord for that; but that is not His highest purpose. Is it for you to use your spiritual gift in the context of the church? Praise the Lord for that; but that is not His highest purpose.

The moment you place your faith in Jesus Christ, what the Lord starts to do is He starts to execute in your life His highest purpose, which is what? It is in the next verse, Romans 8:29:

> *"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;"*

There is the purpose of God. The highest purpose that I have, according to Paul, is to see my daily life and daily conduct, daily thought-life, daily speech, daily moral decisions, daily interactions, conformed into the image of Jesus. Another way of saying it is: He wants our practice to catch up to our position. We are already redeemed, and we have the grace of God and the righteousness of Jesus, and we have the heavenly riches. All of that is given to you at the point of faith alone in Christ alone. That can never be taken away from you; but God says that sometimes the way we act is unbecoming of a child of God. So He starts to use things in your life as sandpaper.

Going over those rough edges so that your daily conduct, daily life, daily thought-life start to reflect Jesus.

There is a reason that those in Antioch (Acts 11) were called Christians. That is the first time the word "Christian" is used in the Bible. Why did everybody call those people Christians? Because they look so much like Jesus. Now, do not misunderstand me. It is not as if they were walking on water and all of these miracles, but their life—the stuff that they said and did and thought—was just like what they remembered of Jesus Christ when He was on the earth.

That is what God is all about. It is not that we become sinless, but we are sinning less gradually. What is happening is our lives are being conformed and transformed into the moral image of His Son. That is His number one purpose for your life. To get us from point A to point B, He will use everything. He will use good and He will use evil. Did He cause the evil? No, but He will use it.

In fact, Jesus said something really interesting after the miracle that He performed of the fish and the loaves. It says in John 6:12:

> *"'Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.'"*

That is the character of God—let nothing be wasted. No matter what you are in right now, no matter what I am in right now, He will not waste anything to execute, to achieve the highest purpose of your life, which is to be conformed and transformed into the image of God. When trials hit your life, do not act as if somehow God is shocked by that. "Oh, I cannot believe this happened." God knows all about it. Did He cause it? Not necessarily. Did He allow it into your life? Yes He did. If it is in your life according to Romans 8, He is going to use it to execute His ultimate purpose for your life.

That is what Joseph is saying here in Genesis 50:20, Joseph speaking to his brothers:

> *"'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.'"*

"It was a rough ride," Joseph is saying. "I was completely mistreated and under evaluated, discarded and left for dead. It is not as if it was good that that happened to me, but you know what? At the end of the day, God used it ,because had it all not happened, I would not have wound up here as second-in-command over all of Egypt. The plans that God had given me to preserve the world from horrific famine, would not have occurred."

"As I was going through my struggles," Joseph is saying, "God had something higher in mind than my immediate comfort." I would rather have the comfort, quite frankly; but God does not work that way. Many times He transcends immediate comfort because He has a higher purpose. You see that being executed here in Egypt: "'...*but God meant it*

for good.'" What is the good that came out of it "'*to bring about this present result*'"? To preserve many people.

The famine as we know of it, the seven years of famine, was very severe. It covered the entire known world. Genesis 41:56 says,

> *"When the famine was spread all over the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth." (Genesis 41:56-57)*

It is almost as if God saw it coming. He knew what his brothers would do to Joseph. Did He cause it? No. Did He allow it to happen? Yes. Did He use it? Yes. Joseph, with the power of hindsight, can look back and say, "Praise the Lord." That becomes one of the great things about being with the Lord over a period of time, you can look back at adversities that you were going through, and you can see how God used them. Were they comfortable? No, but God sure used it.

That forms a rubric for looking at present adversities. You might get to a point where you hit an adversity and you might say, "Praise the Lord. What is the Lord going to do now?" Is that not why James says, "consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials"? This famine was severe—it was in Egypt, and it was in Canaan. God used the discomfort of Joseph's life to create this favorable result.

Notice what the New King James Version says in Genesis 50:20: "'...to save many people alive.'" We need to be careful with that word "save". Most Christians, when they look at the Bible and they see the word "saved,", they think that is conversion to Christ. That is a dominant use of the word "saved," but that is not what it always means.

In Philippians 1:19, Paul used the word "saved" when talking about getting out of jail.

> *"For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the preservation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."*

"Deliverance" is from the word group "save." It is like you are driving in Houston traffic and, fortunately in this case, you left early. You were saved from a traffic jam. That is how "save" is being used here. It does not always mean conversion to Christ.

Hebrews 11:7 says,

> *"By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of righteousness which is according to faith."*

Their salvation is not "Noah built an ark to get to heaven," but it protected his family from water. That is how the word "save" is being used here. The word "save" is so broad and it is so wonderful that there are three tenses of it, related to salvation. The first phase is justification, where we are saved from the penalty of sin at the point of faith alone in Christ alone. That is why 'save" is used in the past tense in many verses: Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5.

Three Tenses of Salvation			
Phase	Justification	Sanctification	Glorification
Tense	Past	Present	Future
Saved from sin's:	Penalty	Power	Presence
Scripture	Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5	Philip 2:12	Rom 5:10

As Christians we say, "I am saved. I am glad that is over with. I am saved now." God says, "We are not finished," because then He moves us into the middle tense of our salvation, which is not justification, which takes place in an instant in the past. It is a process taking place in the present where we are gradually being saved from sin's power as we walk out the Christian life under God's resources. That is where Romans eight is such a big deal, because God will use everything and anything in your life to achieve that result. That is why "save" is used in the present tense.

Then the day will come where either I will die or the Rapture will occur. In an instant, I will be saved from sin's presence. Won't that be nice? I will not even have an ambition anymore to go back and cater to the old nature. I hope you fall in love with this word "save" that is being used here, because it really is the point of the life of the Christian. Joseph is being intentionally developed, I believe, character wise, literarily, as a type of Jesus who is in the saving business. We have pointed out many parallels between Jesus and Joseph as we have gone through the Book of Genesis: Joseph was promoted at age 30, that is when Jesus started His ministry; Joseph was betrayed by his own brothers, which is how the Jewish nation 2,000 years ago treated Christ; Joseph had a Gentile bride, Jesus is the groom and we (the Church) are the bride.

In Genesis 50:21 you will see, as Joseph is comforting his brothers, a type of how Jesus interacts with us. To these brothers he says four things. These are the same things that Jesus is saying to you right now. The first thing he says is, "Do not be afraid." That is how he comforts his brothers. They are worried he is going to retaliate against him, and the first thing out of his mouth is, "Do not be afraid." Go back to Genesis 50:19:

> *"But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid...'"*

Then you go to Genesis 50:21:

*"'So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.'
So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."*

Joseph is speaking to his brothers as a type of Jesus to His people. He is saying the exact same four things to us. First thing He says is, "Do not be afraid. Fear not." Do you realize that the Bible says that 365 times? That is kind of neat, because that is one time for each day of the year. When you wake up in the morning and Jesus says, "Do not be afraid."

Joshua 1:7 says,

"'Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.'"

Even before he gets into all those instructions, he says, "The first order of business is you should not be afraid. Do not waste your emotional energy on fear."

Proverbs 28:1 says,

*"The wicked flee when no one is pursuing,
But the righteous are bold as a lion."*

If you are living your life in fear, you are not living it as a believer in Christ—you are living like an unbeliever. The wicked, they are afraid of their own shadow, "*but the righteous are as bold as a lion.*"

Philippians 4:6-7 says,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

I cannot tell you how many sleepless nights I have been exempted from because of that verse. I will go to bed at night, just like you, with all kinds of things on my mind. Then the Lord will bring across my mind Philippians 4:6, which says, "*Be anxious for nothing*." I do not know how you interpret "nothing," but I interpret it as "nothing." Even your greatest fear, whatever it may be, do not be anxious over it. There are countless times where I will be reminded by the Holy Spirit of that verse, and I will just go right to sleep. Try it sometime.

In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul, writing to a very young man trying to be a pastor, says,

"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and self-discipline."

I have fears in my life just like you. I know every time I start to experience that it is not coming from God, because the Bible is very clear that "*God has not given us a spirit of fear*" a spirit of timidity.

Revelation 21:8 describes unbelievers in the lake of fire. This verse just blows my mind because it lists their sins. Notice the first thing mentioned—this is what characterizes unsaved people.

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

It is fascinating to me that the very first sin described of unbelievers is not murder or some other horrific sin, it is that they are afraid. The reason they are always afraid, according to Revelation 21:8, is that they are not believing. When faith increases in your life, the fear that you are experiencing will decelerate. That is how I always know when I am not walking in faith because I am afraid of something, or I am worried about something. You cannot experience perpetual fear and worry and faith simultaneously. That is why the unbelievers are called cowardly and unbelieving.

The second thing Joseph says is, "I will provide for you."

"'So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.'"

That takes anxiety out of life, because most of the things that we are worried about are financial, if we are honest with ourselves. We are not to worry about that as God's people, because God is in the providing business. I understand we do our part—pursue meaningful work, etc.—but you have to understand that it is not your job that is providing for you, it is the Lord through the job.

In Psalm 37:25 David writes,

"I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread."

David says, "I have never seen that happen." Doesn't that fit with what Joseph is saying to his brothers? "I am not just going to provide for you; I am going to provide for your little ones that cannot provide for themselves."

Philippians 4:19 says, "*And my God will supply all your* [greeds]"—Oh, did not say that—"*all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus*."

Of course, there is the majestic teaching of Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount dealing with this issue. You know these verses Matthew 6:25-34. Jesus says,

> *"'For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?'" (Matthew 6:25-26)*

Oh, ye of little faith. There is a problem. I am just not trusting God.

> *"'And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?'" (Matthew 6:27)*

If anything, it takes away an hour from your life span because worry is not good physically. The way I was always taught by my mom is that it is like a rocking chair; it will give you something to do, but it will not get you anywhere.

> *"'And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'" (Matthew 6:28-34)*

Joseph says, "Do not be worried; I will provide." Jesus is saying the same thing to us.

The third thing it says of Joseph is: "*So he comforted them...*" (Genesis 50:21).

God is in the comforting business. God is able to take the deepest longings of the human heart and provide comfort to them. I cannot do that for you, an elder board cannot do that for you, a mentor cannot do that for you, a family member cannot do that for you—but God can. Maybe we can do it to a very small level, but not like God. This is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4,

> *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves comforted by God."*

Why does God give us comfort in the midst of afflictions? To show us how we can comfort others that are going through those same afflictions. You go through a bankruptcy, a divorce (I do not know what the issue is), and you receive the comfort of God in the midst of that, then the Lord brings down the road someone across your path with the same problem. You say to them, "You know what? I went through something like that a couple years ago. Here is what the Lord showed me." You know what the person is feeling. You know what the person is thinking. You know what to say and what not to say. You know how not to come on too strong because you have walked a mile in their shoes.

What a different way of looking at struggles. You hit a struggle in your life, you say, "Praise the Lord. God's preparing me for ministry opportunity." We do not think like that. "Praise the Lord! God is conforming me into the image of His son." We do not really think that way. We see suffering of any sort as an alien intruder, but that is not Bible.

The last thing we see of Joseph is such a beautiful thing. It says,

> *"So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them." (Genesis 50:21)*

You remember from our study with Joseph that he did not always speak kindly to his brothers when he was trying to figure out where their hearts were. He recognized them, they did not recognize him. He put him through a test. It says in Genesis 42:7,

> *"When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and he spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, 'Where have you come from?' And they said, 'From the land of Canaan, to buy food.'"*

Now Joseph is at a point with his brothers where he is not speaking harshly to them; he is speaking compassionately towards them—he is speaking kindly towards them. I am here to tell you folks that that is the posture of Jesus towards you. It is so tempting to go through your Christian life thinking that God is mad at you.

Sometimes you can come out of an abusive family relationship where maybe your parents, or your father or a coach or a boss or somebody—you could never please the person. They were always mad. We have a tendency to take that and transfer it to God. I am here to tell you, folks, if you are in Christ, God is not mad at you. Even when He disciplines you, He disciplines us out of love, not out of wrath or anger.

Romans 8:1 says,

> *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

Do not take an angry parent and transfer that to Jesus. That is not how Jesus interacts with us. As we celebrated this morning, the wrath of God has been satisfied through the

blood of Jesus Christ. The only part of His character that now can be expressed towards you is love. Sometimes that involves discipline, where God applies pain to a situation to get us not to go do that again—discipline. Even discipline itself is rooted in love.

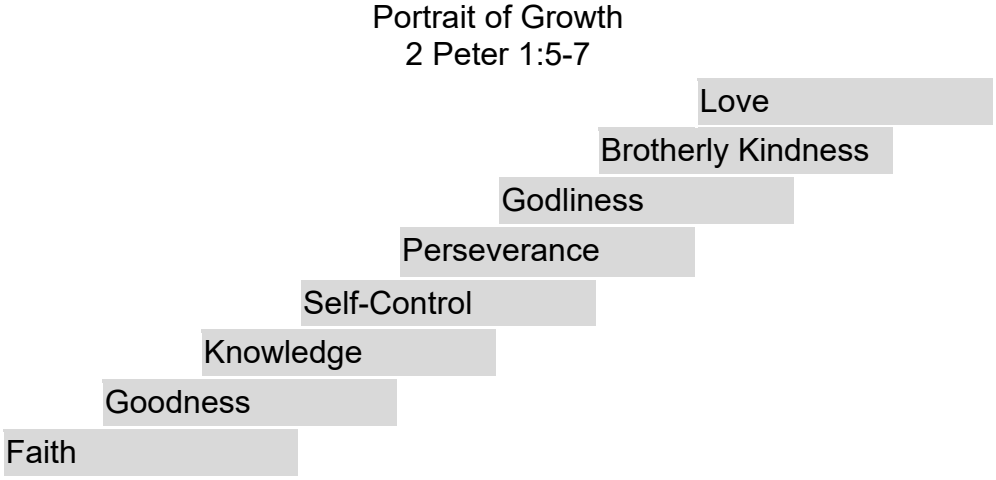
Joseph is comforting his brothers and speaking kindly to them. Because God speaks so kindly to us, maybe we should speak kindly to each other, should we not? One of the things that has bothered me for a while about American society is the amount of toughness in language. Where everybody is in this tough guy mentality. I see it even to some of the people that I follow politically and otherwise. It is always angry speech, harsh speech, vindictive speaking, harsh words, speaking sarcasm, cutting people down constantly.

Now we have the advent of social media, where you can put your sin nature on display in front of millions of people if you want to. The problem with doing it on social media—really strong, harsh speech—is someone takes a screenshot of it and it is there forever, even long after you push delete and feel bad about what you said. There is an awful lot in the Bible about basic gentlemanliness, kindness towards each other.

It works with plants. If you have a plant at home, try this. Start speaking nice words to a plant. Put a little sunlight up to that plant and you will watch it within 24 hours gravitate towards you. If it works with plants, what could it do with people?

Second Peter 1:5-7 says,

> *"Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith, supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love."*



It is the portrait of spiritual growth there in 2 Peter 1:5-7. It shows as you are moving into Christ's likeness, toward the very end there is an exhibition of brotherly kindness.

Proverbs 15:1 says,

> *"A gentle answer turns away wrath,*
> *But a harsh word stirs up anger."*

You get a totally different reaction from people based on the choice of language that you use. If you say to somebody who gives an idea, "You are an idiot," you are going to get a totally different reaction from that person. Instead, you might say something like, "I see your idea, but have you thought about this side of it or that side of it?" You take the "You are an idiot" out. A lot of times we win arguments, but we lose people because our speech can be so coarse and harsh. I find it very interesting that Joseph is speaking kindly to his brothers that mistreated him. This is quite a lesson today on the sovereignty of God.

Now Genesis 50 has 26 verses in it. That means we have Genesis 50:22-26 left, which we are going to cover next week. How do I know that? Because I noticed the count of lessons we have done in Genesis, and we today have just completed 199. I said to the Lord, "We cannot end the series on 199, and we cannot end it on 201 either. We need to have a nice clean landing." So we will be finishing Genesis next week, Lord willing. Take a look at Genesis 50:22-26 for next time.

Let us pray. Father, we love You. We love Your Word. We love how it speaks to us. We do ask, Lord, if anyone is here today and has never received the Savior, that for them today would be the day of salvation. We are thankful for what You did for us through what we commemorated this morning—through the sacrifice of Your body and blood. You command us not to trust in ourselves for salvation and in this case, justification, but to trust exclusively into the finished transaction of Jesus Christ. I pray that many, many people within the sound of my voice will be placing their personal trust in Christ for salvation. I pray that if people are still confused, that they would approach me after the service so that this most important issue in one's life can be clarified. We will be grateful, Lord, and careful to give You all the praise and the glory. We ask these things in Jesus' name and God's people said, Amen.