

My Son is Alive

A Resurrection Sermon from Genesis 44-45

- ¹ Then he **commanded the steward** of his house, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack,
- ² and put **my cup, the silver cup**, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph told him.
- ³ As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys.
- ⁴ They had gone only a short distance from the city. Now Joseph said to his steward, "Up, follow after the men, and when you **overtake them**, say to them, 'Why have you repaid **evil** for good?
- ⁵ Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that **he practices divination**? You have done evil in doing this.'"
- ⁶ When he overtook them, he spoke to them these words.
- ⁷ They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing!
- ⁸ Behold, the money that we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?
- ⁹ Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die, and we also will be my lord's servants."
- ¹⁰ He said, "Let it be as you say: he who is found with it shall be my servant, and the rest of you shall be innocent."
- ¹¹ Then each man quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack.
- ¹² And he searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the

- youngest. And **the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.**
- ¹³ Then they tore their clothes, and every man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.
- ¹⁴ When **Judah and his brothers** came to Joseph's house, he was still there. **They fell before him to the ground.**
- ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed **practice divination?**"
- ¹⁶ And **Judah said**, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? **God has found out the guilt of your servants;** behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found."
- ¹⁷ But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, go up in peace to your father."
- ¹⁸ Then Judah went up to him and said, "Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant, **for you are like Pharaoh himself.**
- ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father, or a brother?'
- ²⁰ And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.'
- ²¹ Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'
- ²² We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.'
- ²³ Then you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.'
- ²⁴ "When we went back to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.
- ²⁵ And when our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food,'
- ²⁶ we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down. For we cannot see the man's face unless our

youngest brother is with us.'

²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons.

²⁸ One left me, and I said, "Surely he has been torn to pieces," and I have never seen him since.

²⁹ If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.'

³⁰ "Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, ³¹ as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol.

³² For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.'

³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.

³⁴ For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."

¹ Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

² And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

³ And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

⁴ So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

⁵ And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.

- ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.
- ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.
- ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry.
- ¹⁰ You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have.
- ¹¹ There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.'
- ¹² And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you.
- ¹³ You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here."
- ¹⁴ Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck.
- ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.
- ¹⁶ When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," it pleased Pharaoh and his servants.
- ¹⁷ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go back to the land of Canaan,
- ¹⁸ and take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.'
- ¹⁹ And you, Joseph, are commanded to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.
- ²⁰ Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"
- ²¹ The sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according

to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey.

²² To each and all of them he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five changes of clothes.

²³ To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey.

²⁴ Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way."

²⁵ So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob.

²⁶ And they told him, "Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them.

²⁷ But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

²⁸ And Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Genesis 44:1-45:28

A Story

There's a remarkable story in the Bible that tells us about events so outlandish that if people today had actually heard about it, they would probably think it could not have happened. It is the story of sin, judgment, intercession, grief, love, death, resurrection, and a great

announcement of salvation and grace at the hand of an all sovereign God. It is a story that claims to be history. It is a story that changed the world. Let me tell you this story.

Once, there was a band of **brothers**. These brothers were about to be sold into slavery for great sin and transgression. But they did not know it what was about to happen to them. They were making their way back home, happy as clams after a long and difficult journey. Suddenly, a powerful man came up behind them and accused them of **evil**. The man challenged the brothers, each in turn denying any wrong doing.

But the man had **divine knowledge**. It had been divined that the brothers had committed evil. God had seen what they did. He knew their secret sin. A man can hide from other men, but can he hide what he has done from God himself? God, who knows all things, hidden things, secret things?

But no, they were innocent, and clung tenaciously to their plea. “**If any of us has done wrong, let him die and let the rest of us become your slaves forever,**” they cried in absolute certainty of their blamelessness.

The man intervened. “**I am kind. Your sentence is too**

harsh. Whoever is found guilty shall become my slave. But the rest shall be innocent. Each man shall be guilty for his own sin.” This was the judgment.

At that, each man was searched for the treasures that did not belong to them. One by one they complied, until the last, the youngest, the very reason for the brothers’ joy and happiness in the first place, was found to be guilty. He had stolen a royal vessel from the treasury of the king. So the brothers tore their clothes and returned in humiliation with the man.

They approached the man’s superior. He was someone with whom they had just had dealings. Someone who had given them tidings of **peace**. But now peace has been broken.

Just then, one brother stood above the others. Or should I say “between.” He stood as a lion, protecting the cub before this powerful prince who now stood before him in judgment. But this lion was not guilty. He only stood with the guilty. Now, he interceded before a man who is as powerful as the king himself. But a strange thing occurred. He **identified himself as guilty**, saying that they were all guilty, even him who had only ever sought to save others

from death and pain.

As he pleads the cause of his brother, he tells the judge that there is a **father** who did not want to see his favorite son go down **to die**. For this father had another son, his beloved son, who had himself been **torn to pieces** by raging lions. Now that his beloved son was dead, he wanted to save his favorite living son, but was forced to send him out of compassion for his whole family. But if anything should happen to him, the father would himself bear terrible loss, for the two are bound up together, so that what happens to one happens to the other. Yet, he knew that unless the living son went down, there could be no salvation, no food to give the others life. The great ruler himself knew this, for he was told it in their last meeting.

So why is this brother standing up now? Well, the great cat had promised his father that he would become a surety, a pledge, a guarantee for the life of the younger son. **“I will die if he should die.”** He tells this to the prince. **“Since the boy is guilty, let me take his place. I will take his punishment. I will die if need be, so that he might live. For I cannot go back unless the boy is saved.”**

At that very moment, a tectonic quake shook the

house. The great ruler, this judge standing before them, had a mighty change of heart. His disposition turned from one of **judgment to grace**. He was profoundly moved by this intercession, this honesty, this humility, this personal conviction of sin, this willingness to die for his brother. Great **compassion** overtook him, and he began to weep. “**Make everyone leave my presence.**” His words must have sounded harsh to the brothers, like a judge about to pass the final, brutal sentence. The force of the words was felt so profoundly that all the land heard it, even to the palace of the great king.

But at that moment, this prince and ruler, this most powerful prince in all the land revealed himself. And **good news** was proclaimed to all the brothers.

The good news first came in the form of a **revelation**. “**I am your brother, you kin, of the same flesh as you. We have one father, you and I.**” The brothers could not answer, for they were dismayed and in shock.

After the revelation came an **invitation**. “**Come near to me, please. Come and see. Touch my hands. Gaze into my eyes. I am your brother, the boy you sold long ago into slavery yourselves.**” Fear gripped them as they were cut to

the quick. They were undone. All their guilt now lay before them. Their brother would punish them once and for all. God made sure they would not get away with a crime they had committed 20 years ago.

But the invitation was not insincere. With it, **forgiveness** was extended. “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves. It does not matter what has happened. All that matters is what God has done.” Thus, God’s **sovereignty** was proclaimed as the root of all kindness. “God sent me before you to preserve life. Again, God sent me before you to preserve your family. Again, my brothers, please believe me. It was not you who sent me here, but God. If you have sinned once, I will tell you this once. If twice, then twice. If you have denied me before your father three times, I forgive you three times, for God has been good. I am chief advisor to the king himself.”

This news generated **urgency** in the prince’s words. “But you cannot stand here looking like that, as if you were deer looking into headlights. Nor can you stay here. You must go and tell others what you have seen here today. Go and tell your father. Tell him that you have seen

his son, that he is alive. Tell him that you have heard his voice and his words. Go quickly, and do not tarry.

“Go, and return all of you together to be with me. Do not worry about where you will live, for I will provide for you. Do not worry about what you will eat, for I will take care of you. Believe what I have told you. Believe what you have seen. Believe that it is me.” And so the long lost brother **kissed** all his brothers and **wept** over each of them, one by one, name by name.

“Hurry now. There is no time to waste. For the bad times in the land have only just begun. The only safe place is to be here with me. Otherwise, you will all die of starvation and thirst.

“Go, and take these with you.” At this, the brother clothed each of his brothers with **new garments**. But to his father’s special son, he gave five sets of clothes. He gave to them all the provisions they would need for their long journey back home. He sent them on their way and gave them only a single command, “Do not quarrel on the way. **Love one another**. Do not blame each other. Do not trudge up the past. Do not fight amongst yourselves any longer, for I have saved each of you this day. I have forgiven you,

therefore, forgive one another and yourselves of your sordid and wicked past.”

As the words flew off the prince’s lips, the news could not help but travel far and wide. They came even to the house of the king himself, who upon hearing it displayed marvelous grace and showered the brothers with more treasures for their trip. “Have no concern,” he said. “When you return, the choicest of the land will belong to you, for I love this prince whom I consider my very own son.”

When they returned home, they told their father of all the things that had happened to them on their trip. But there was a problem. The news was too good to be true. “Your son who died is alive, and now he is ruler over all the empire.”

His heart became numb. He did not believe it.

So they gave him proof and certain evidence that it was true. They told him his words, words that only the son could know. They told him of his features. They showed him the presents, the gifts from the king and the prince.

Upon seeing the evidence, and that this was not a fabrication, not a misunderstanding, not a lie--he believed. His belief created joy as confessed his faith, “It is enough

that my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.” Together, the family left their home and went away to a foreign land to be find salvation from the prince—their brother and son.

What Story is This?

What story have you just heard? As I said, it is a story that claims to be historical. It is a story about sin, judgment, intercession, grief, love, death, resurrection, and a great announcement of salvation and grace at the hand of an all sovereign God. The answer is, **this is the story of the Bible**. It isn't just one story, though I have taken the details here and generalized them from one particular place in the Bible.

As you know, my preferred method of preaching is to go through books of the Bible, though I do like to do special sermons on special occasions. Something that each year I am more and more amazed by is how infrequently I have had to actually deviate from preaching through the Bible when Easter rolls around, even though every year I try to have a resurrection sermon. In other words, it is remarkable how many times I have been able to preach the next passage in a book series and still have a resurrection

sermon on Easter, and I didn't do anything to manipulate what I was preaching to make it "work out" that way. This is because the story of the resurrection, and more broadly speaking, the story of redemption through Jesus Christ is found throughout the Scriptures. It is literally everywhere, though few Christians have been taught to spot this.

This week, an apologetic lecture by Gary Habermas came across my news feed on Facebook. It was a lecture defending the resurrection of Jesus Christ called, "The Resurrection Evidence that Changed Current Scholarship."¹ Scrolling down the page, I saw the first comment said the following:

I was waiting and watching attentively to hear the Resurrection "evidence", but all Habermas proved is that there is NOTHING at all by ANYBODY, including Jesus' own followers, written AT THE TIME the Resurrection supposedly happened! Didn't ANYBODY care that Jesus was resurrected, enough to jot a few lines down? Why not? That's even worse than the fact that, there is NOTHING in existence from ANYBODY in all

¹ Gary Habermas, "The Resurrection Evidence that Changed Current Scholarship." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5znVUFHqO4Q>, last accessed 4-2-2015.

of Jesus' 30+ years of Life from birth to burial that was written anytime IN those entire 30 years, that says He had been of Virgin Birth! So when did people finally hear that Jesus was of Virgin Birth and was Resurrected? ONLY when the stories came out from just a handful of His followers when they decided to form a new religion, and which they started writing 10 years AFTER Jesus' burial! Those writings were not even finished and spread to the superstitious illiterate people of the day, until about till 50 AD to 100 AD, and some Historians hear about the stories and say they had heard the hearsay stories, but NO historians ever actually witnessed seeing Jesus in all of Jesus life to write anything then. For a God trying to "reveal" himself, Jesus sure was extremely unrevealing. Is it more likely that Jesus was actually Resurrected, which defies the Natural Laws of the Universe, or that his followers were good story tellers and copied the well known old tales of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection from older neighboring cultures, where those tales had already proven successful in gathering followers to other cults? Which is more likely, men trying to deceive others as men always have to gain power over others, or a unbelievable supernatural event, with no verifiable evidence?

Of course, one could take this comments in an entirely different direction than I will this morning. I bring it up for this reason. The funny thing is, Jesus had a response to this kind of skepticism before he ever even died. His teaching comes in the form of a story. The speakers are Abraham and a rich man. “Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead’” (Luke 16:29-31). Miracles are not things which induce belief. They are things which strengthen belief. The grounding of belief is not post-resurrection evidence, but pre-resurrection—*the Old Testament*.

I’ve taken to show post-Resurrection evidence for the resurrection in sermons on Easter before. There is nothing wrong about that. It is actually a good thing. The NT does it. Today I will also give evidence, but it is evidence of another kind, of the kind Jesus speaks of, though it is not strictly the kind you see in most OT sermons, which focus

purely on prophecy. This kind of evidence works on the soul of a man. As you listen to the story, you will find yourself knowing that it is talking about Joseph and his brothers and his father. Yet at the same time, you also can't help but think about Christ and his Father and the brothers he came to die for. This is because the story is not primarily a morality play that teaches right and wrong (though it can do that). It is a history lesson that points you to the future work of Jesus Christ.

God's knowledge is so all encompassing and his power so omnipotent that he could work real life events 1,800 years prior to Jesus coming in the flesh, and fashion them in such a way that they are, in effect, the Gospel story lived typologically in the lives of non-divine human beings. Of course, there are differences. Joseph did not die. But to his father he was dead. It was as if he had died. Thus, it is as if he was raised from the dead. This is a picture of the resurrection, as we have seen several times in the Joseph story already. But there is so much more here as well.

Joseph and His Brothers Point to Jesus

In order to help us see things a little more specifically, I would like to go through much of Genesis 44-45, two

chapters that really need to be taken together, and see some direct parallels with the story as it unfolds in the NT. Along the way, you would do well to remember that seeing Christ here is the way our Lord himself taught us to read the Scripture. If we won't follow his own teaching on this, we will be lost.

The first to look at is **Gen 44:1-2**. In these verses, Joseph has his **steward fill each of his brother's sacks with food**, as much as they could carry. But he also puts a **silver cup** into the sack of Benjamin. This act of grace actually sets up a **test** that is pivotal to the entire story.² In a strange way it will become **"The cup of salvation"** so that many

² Several Fathers saw in Benjamin a type of the Apostle Paul—from the tribe of Benjamin. It is a curious typology. Ambrose writes, "Christ finds this money in us which he has himself given us. We possess the money of nature; we also possess the money of grace. Nature is the work of the Creator, grace the gift of the Redeemer. Even though we are unable to see Christ's gifts, nevertheless he is giving them. He is working in a hidden way and is giving them to all people, but there are few who are able to keep them and not lose them. Yet he does not give all things to all people. Wheat is given to many, but the cup to one, who is presented with the prophetic and priestly function. For it is not everyone but only the prophet who says, 'The cup of salvation I will take up, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.' Therefore the word of heavenly teaching already shone in Paul's body, since he was instructed in the law. But because he was still not subject to the justice of God, the cup was within the sack, the teaching within the law, the lamp within the bushel. Nevertheless Ananias was sent to give a blessing and to lay on his hand and open the sack.¹¹ When the sack was opened, the money shone forth, and when the scales fell, in a way like fastenings on the sack, Paul saw straightway. His fetter was unbelief; the loosening of it became faith. And for that reason, when the veil that is set over the heart of the Jews was set aside—like the opening of the sack—he turned to the Lord. Free of the bond, he obtained the grace of liberty and said, "But we all, beholding the glory of God with faces unveiled, are transformed into the same image." (*On Joseph* 11.63–64).

can “call on the name of the LORD” (Ps 116:13).

The test begins by revealing sin (Gen 44:3-13). It reveals the sin of Joseph’s brothers, but not how we might expect. It may even reveal a bit of Joseph’s own sin, as he once again acts deceptively towards his brothers, in the hopes of accomplishing a different goal. Joseph has his steward overtake the brothers when they were but a short distance outside the city in Egypt (4). The man tells the brothers that his lord, that is Joseph, practices divination (the verbal form of *nachash*) and knows that they have stolen something of great value—his very cup of divination (5). This is one of the places where Joseph could have sin. However, whether Joseph actually practices divination is beside the point of the story, for there is no need to divine anything through a magic cup, when it was your idea all along.

The brother’s respond by explaining that after what they had been through in their past visit, and with the gifts they had just brought this great ruler, there is no way that any of them would be so foolish. So they vow upon their own lives that anyone who has taken anything will die, and the rest will go into slavery in Egypt (7-9). The steward

does not accept this steep of a price, because he knows that Joseph wants Benjamin alive (10). When each man searches his own bag, he finds it empty (11), until they come to the youngest. There, they find the cup in Benjamin's sack (12). They tear their clothes and return to the city (13).

Now, no actual sin has been exposed ... *yet*. Nevertheless, because it appears to them that one is guilty, they buy into the charade before them that a court appearance now awaits them (14-15). With Benjamin in the defendant seat, **Judah rises to his defense**. Judah is the father of Christ, the Lion who fiercely protects his brothers and has zeal for his father. He came to Joseph's defense many years earlier. Sort of. It was Judah who convinced them not to kill Joseph, but to sell him. It was Judah who convinced his father to send Benjamin for the saving of many lives. It is Judah now who so beautifully fills the shoes of the Lord Jesus Christ who saves his own brothers by standing in their place.

Notice that Judah does not merely try to defend Benjamin. **He enters into Benjamin's own guilt**, though in actuality, he is the least guilty of all the brothers—save perhaps Reuben. **“God has found out the guilt of your**

servants” (16), he says. He thinks Benjamin is guilty, but he stands with him, just as he swore to do to his father. It is the only way to save his brother. In this, the sin begins to be exposed. This is absolutely necessary, not because Judah was guilty (or even because Benjamin was—at that moment). It is necessary because if there is to be any hope of mercy, acknowledgment of guilt must happen. It is as true today as it was then. As we will see, there is plenty to be guilty for, even if it isn’t this particular offense.

Joseph responds that he is not so unfair as to make them all suffer punishment because of one man’s guilt (17).³ The rest may leave and go to their father in peace. But Judah could not let Benjamin be given over to punishment (18ff). He had promised his father. Do you see how this parallels the work of Christ? Judah reminds the ruler that he is the one who had asked about fathers and brothers (19). They had all responded with the truth (20). Then they did what they were told and brought Benjamin back to Egypt (21), even though we told you that it would kill our father to do so (22). But you were insistent (23). So we told our father Jacob (24), and when our food ran out, he told us to go

³ This is not a commentary on representation, such as Adam or Christ standing for many. Rather, it is a test to see what Judah will do.

get more (25). We said we can't, unless you allow Benjamin to go with us (26).

Our father was distraught and reminded us of our other brother whom he thought had been torn to pieces (27-28). This is a key verse, because it reminds us again of the real crime—the crime that was committed against Joseph, and against Christ. You know, perhaps we forget just how horrible this crime was. To give you an analogy, my college roommate has a childhood friend who went to Singapore last year to teach English. One day, out of the blue, he and several others were charged with serious child abuse, though there was and still is absolutely no evidence. He has been kept in foreign prison for months, though he is an American citizen. This past week, against all evidence to the contrary, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison for a crime he never committed. My roommate, his friend's wife and family are simply outraged at the injustice, and now hope is completely lost. This is what Joseph underwent, and infinitely more, what Jesus underwent for crimes that we committed. As the poetic version of Psalm 22 puts it, “Their lion jaws they open wide, and roar to tear their prey, my heart is wax, my bones unknit, my life is poured

away.” Have you forgotten that he underwent all this while completely innocent?

Well, Judah doesn't admit that they did anything wrong here. What good would that do in the presence of a complete stranger and ruler of Egypt? But it is his willingness to take whatever punishment that Benjamin may deserve that really captures Joseph's emotions. After pleading one last time to take Benjamin's place (30-34), Joseph loses control for a third time (45:1-2; cf. 42:24; 43:30). Here we see in an overwhelming display of affection and compassion, the tiniest glimpse of love that Jesus Christ has for his brothers. It was so powerful that it was told all the way in Pharaoh's palace.

This is the moment the whole story turns. Up until now, it has been about sin and judgment. Again, this was necessary. Sin must be exposed and judgment just come to those who sin. Otherwise, justice is compromised and holiness, goodness, and truth are lost. Now, grace is about to rise over the horizon.

But before grace can be internalized, something else must take place. This is a change of heart. We call it repentance or sorrow for sin and a desire to turn from it

and make it right. Judah's intercession for Benjamin is just the thing that has finally pushed Joseph over the edge. He now knows that his brothers are sorry, though he also knows there is nothing they can do about the past. What's done is done. But over the course of these many months, their hearts have melted and their desire now is simply to care for and love their elderly father and youngest brother.

This, it seems to me, is just the kind of disposition that the Father in heaven saw in his Only Begotten Son, who came to this world and loved the unlovable, who sat with sinners, ate with tax collectors, touched the unclean, taught the unlearned, healed diseases, cast out demons, and showed such great compassion towards the masses. The Father looked upon the Son's love for the world and said, "In Him, I can be favorably disposed towards any who trust in Him. In his sacrifice in their stead, I can be appeased. Through his love for them as one of them, God can be reconciled to any who come to Him for life." Have you come to him for life? The living Christ speaks kindly to you now, "Turn and be saved, for what is why I came." Let me explain in the great detail of the story what this means.

Our story foreshadows this work in the positive intercession of Judah who is willing to die for Benjamin. But it does something more. For one of the great verses in Genesis is now upon us. In this verse, Joseph declares, finally, to his brothers, “I am Joseph!” (45:3). Joseph has come back from the dead. Rather than focus on himself, however, his focus is on his father. It has always been about his father and not himself. “Is my father still alive?” But the shock was so great to his brothers, they could not say anything.

Here then, the Gospel begins to be revealed. First it is through this revelation. Joseph is alive. He is not dead. But this good news will be taken as very bad news to law breakers who fear retribution for what they have done. Could you imagine anything more terrifying to these men than realizing that the brother whom they so despised, so hated, turned against, left for dead, sold into slavery, and lied about to their father is now Pharaoh’s right hand man and standing right in front of them in a court room scene? Beloved, this is why people, though they may hear about Christ’s resurrection, and though it is good news, will not turn to him, but rather run from him. They are terrified of

judgment. They are dismayed. They are undone. They cannot hear it as good, but only as bad, for now Jesus sees what they have done to him, because he is alive.

Therefore, the gospel bids them one and all, “Come near to me, please” (4). The revelation of his life is accompanied by a free and well meant offer to come. It is His invitation to you as surely as it was to Joseph’s own brothers. Yet, this still may not seem good to guilty sinners. This is a King we are talking about, and he is still judge. Is this invitation more like a defendant being told to approach the bench for the final verdict? Is this like a bully about to be punched in the gut by the one he has bullied? And so people take this invitation the wrong way too.

The brothers did come near, but what else are they going to do? But theb Joseph, after reassuring them that it really is him (4), extends the one thing they need most desperately: forgiveness. Joseph forgives his brothers. “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here” (5). Joseph never says that it was a good thing to do, but he is able to let it go for this reason. Joseph believes in God’s goodness, “For God sent me before you

to preserve life.”

In Christ, God was sending his son into the world to preserve life, not to destroy it. In his incarnation, in his coming 2,000 years ago, Christ is God’s **goodness to the world**, God’s grace, God’s gift. Christ displays God’s love, kindness, longsuffering, and forgiveness. Is there anyone he was unwilling to forgive? Did he not even pray for the Father to forgive the very people who put him to death? Now, this news of forgiveness is so difficult to take in, that Joseph repeats himself two more times. “**God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors**” (7). “**So it was not you who sent me here, but God**” (8).

Beloved, too many times **God’s sovereignty** is used by people as a weapon to instill fear and trepidation. It certainly can be that, in God’s law. But in the Gospel, God’s sovereignty is **good news**, not bad. Do you ever give the gospel, but use God’s sovereignty in it as bad news to people who do not know Christ? Do you know people who do or do not know Christ who use his sovereignty in the gospel as bad news? I’ve met many. They disdain it, because they either have not heard it used properly, or

refuse themselves to use it properly. Yes, if we break God's law, his sovereignty will throw us in hell for our sins. But in the Gospel, God's sovereignty brings Christ near to forgive us and he offers it freely for the saving of anyone who will listen.⁴

Notice that Joseph's argument is not that the brothers did evil, but that God was behind their plot, using it for good. In fact, **God was using their own evil for *their own good!*** What an astonishing thought. And this thought is what allows Joseph to forgive his brothers. He knows that they are wicked. He knows that they sinned against him. He knows their thoughts towards him. He has lived with them for twenty plus years. But because he also knows

⁴ **Going Deeper:** Arminians hate God's sovereignty at this point, I think, because they confuse the law and the gospel here. The ability to "believe," a command, rests for them on a libertarian idea of freewill, where God does not have to regenerate anyone first, but simply allows a person to choose apart from saving grace. He does, of course, do this. But they think people actually *can and will* choose for Christ at this point. That is, their choice brings God's saving grace rather than results from it. This is called synergism rather than monergism. So they view sovereignty only against the backdrop of a more basic goodness of mankind, so that any such sovereignty would seem evil (bad). For God to actually save someone through the gospel, rather than letting them make the choice themselves must be bad (there is also much misunderstanding of the nature of the will and when it works in an Arminian view that goes into this). Some Calvinists have the opposite problem. They hear of a well-meant offer of the gospel and think that God must then fail to save his elect. God couldn't possibly will the salvation of everyone and provide for that salvation through Christ for people who won't actually be saved. So, they can't actually tell anyone that God wants them to be saved or that Christ died for them in any sense. There is little to no good news unless you are already "in." Both are guilty of opposite errors, errors that turn God's sovereignty *in Christ* into bad news rather than good. Joseph refuses both errors. The goodness of the news resides not in someone's willingness or ability to accept it as such, but in its own objective nature.

God, I mean truly knows the character of God in his love even towards his enemies, Joseph can extend good news to his brothers. And this news of forgiveness is the only news that finally allows them all to be reconciled. **In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting men's sins against them (2 Cor 5:19)**. This is the news that people must hear if they are to be saved, because only when someone knows that there is forgiveness will they come to a resurrected Sovereign King. Is this the news you know? Have you believed it?

The result of truly believing this news is that you *want to tell people about it*. You don't have to. You want to. You aren't forced to. You love to. Sure, it fits in with your own personality towards people and how you interact with others naturally. Nevertheless, those who truly know Christ cannot keep it in forever. They must tell others. Have you ever told this news to others so that they might believe it? Friends, this is *good* news, not bad.

Notice that the text moves now from forgiveness to *evangelism* of a sort. **"Hurry and go up to my father and say to him" (9)**. **"You must tell my father" (13)**. Here the content of the message is laid out for you. Tell him that

Joseph is alive. “Thus says your son Joseph” (9). Friends, tell them that Jesus is alive.

Tell him that God has made him lord of all Egypt (9). Tell him of “all my honor in Egypt” (13). Christ is Lord of heaven and earth. This gives both the authority and shows the necessity of people turning to Christ. He isn’t just our brother. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. If the King says something, then you are obligated to obey. of all my honor (13).

Bid him to come down (9). Bid him not to tarry (9). When you tell people that Christ is alive, tell them that he bids them to come to him. “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And tell them to hurry. In Joseph’s case, he had to convince his father that the famine was not yet over and that if he did not come, he would surely die. How much more true is it that when this life is over, if people will not come to Christ, they will surely die for eternity because they have to pay for their sins and rebellion against the King?

But tell him that Joseph has prepared a place for you in a foreign land (10). What is that place? It is in the land of Goshen where “you shall be near me” (10). Being near to

Christ is being near our heavenly home, even if we are living in a foreign land, away from all that we love. Jesus Christ provides and is himself the Chief Provision of his people. Tell them that.

Tell them that he will provide safety for you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have (10). This is not some proof text for automatic salvation or your best life now. But it is a promise that his loving-kindness extends to all on Jacob's family that will eat the food that Joseph gives them. And why wouldn't they, when he is their kin? You ought to **make a big deal to your own children** that God displays vast amounts of love to them and that the same life you have in Christ can be theirs too, if they will eat from his table and come to him. Do not make them fear coming to Christ. Encourage them. Show them his love and kindness to you and tell them he bids them to come too.

Tell Jacob that I will provide for you during all the years of famine in the land (11). Tell him that he need not come to poverty if he will come. Show them how much more this is true of Christ. Compel them with the love of the Savior for them.

Oh, and don't forget yourselves to believe what you have seen (12), your eyes, and the eyes of Benjamin. Don't forget the words of my mouth, and the things I tell you now. So often, in telling others, people may not really believe it themselves. Other times, we forget. And so we must be reminded to continue to believe ourselves. Not to believe a pipedream or a fantasy. But to believe what we have seen and experienced, what we have heard and know to be truth ... because it happened, because it is real.

To encourage you in this endeavor, I will give you all new clothes (22). Go, show them to your father. I will give my special brother five pair of new clothes. Show them to my father. Show them to each other. Keep them as tokens that what you have seen and heard is true. To further encourage you, see how I weep over each one of you (14-15). See my love that I have for you by name. You are not unknown to me. To further encourage you, see that even Pharaoh himself is pleasantly disposed to you because of me (16-19). All things are at my disposal. I can give you anything you need to get the word out. "Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours" (20). Do not worry about what you will eat or

where you will stay. I have it all taken care of. Because God has it all taken care of.

You see friends, this is the kind of message that empowers people to move, that compels them to choose, because *this message is life itself*. By the Holy Spirit, it creates life. It comes from the very mouth of God as Special Grace to resurrect dead bones. It is not the choice to believe it that is good news or that creates life. It is the message itself!

It compelled Joseph's brothers because it is the very word of their brother, and they did what he said (24-25). They came to Jacob and told him, starting with the first most critical piece of information. "*Joseph is still alive*" (26). Because he is not God, Joseph could not have really have died. Thus, *he is still alive*. But as a type, and based on the way the word is usually translated, *Joseph is "again" alive*. He has for all practical purposes been raised from the dead. He is a picture of the one who really did rise from the dead and who now lives forever making intercession for us.

But notice Jacob's reaction. It is as I said. "For he did not believe them." In Jacob's case, his disbelief was not caused by sin per se. It was caused by the simple fact that

this was impossible. Thus, his sons told him the news and began relating all that we have talked about today (27). This is as it was with the Savior.

“But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it” (Mark 16:11). “But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them” (Luke 24:11). To he said to Thomas, “‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:27-28). And Peter says, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2Pe 1:16). Proof and evidence, not leaps in the cold dark abyss of faith in nothing. But today, our proof comes in the form of a story ... in the OT!

This news created belief and joy in the heart and mind of Jacob. “And Israel said, ‘It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die’” (28). And Jacob obeyed the voice of The Son. Have you?