

Genesis 49-50 • Prophetic words /the death and burial of Jacob

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Genesis chapter 49. We're going to finish the Book of Genesis tonight, and we'll be moving on to the Book of Exodus very soon, Lord willing. But these last couple of chapters in Genesis are really important. I think you're going to find them very interesting and insightful, and there's some really important stuff that we're going to see in these last 2 chapters of Genesis. Let's just invite the Lord.

Father, we come before You. Every time we open up the Word, Lord, we want to make sure that it in like manner, we're opening up our hearts to really receive from You. And we want to focus our attention on You.

A lot has gone on today, a lot has gone on this week. But we want to set that aside now for just a moment so that we might study to show ourselves approved and that we might really be open to all the things that You desire to say tonight.

So be with us we pray, speak words of grace and insight and understanding that we can lay hold of and carryout and apply to our lives. We ask it Lord in Jesus name, amen. Amen. Amen.

Chapter 49, it says in verse 1, *“Then Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.”” (ESV)*

Now, basically what Jacob is doing is he's going to speak over his sons, but not just over his sons, but over all of their descendants. He's going to speak some words to them as individuals, but he's also going to speak to them in terms of their tribes, which are not even tribes yet. We aren't calling them tribes of Israel at this point.

They're simply the sons of Israel, but they will eventually become tribes, and those tribes will have very specific characteristics. And things will happen to them that are going to be unique one to another.

And Jacob is going to now speak a word of blessing over his sons, but that blessing is going to be filled with prophetic insights. And you're going to see

that as we go on. And you can see that Jacob was aware, even in his advanced age; he's 147 years old, but at this final part of his life, he knows that not only is he about to die, but he's going to be speaking to his sons prophetically.

And he begins in verse 2 by saying, *“Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father.”*

And although you'll notice that he says that they're to, *“Assemble and listen,”* to him, you're going to see in many of the statements that he gives, that it is in fact the Lord speaking. Because the Lord is going to speak about things that are going to happen to these men's descendants and other things that would come after them.

By the way, there's going to be 2 things you're also going to notice here. Jacob is going to address his boys in their birth order, and then secondly, he's going to give an inordinate amount of time actually to 2 of his sons. He's going to speak the longest about Judah and Joseph, and we're going to see that as we go through this.

But we begin with the firstborn, verse 3, *“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.”*

That's the way they considered a firstborn son, but look what he goes on to say in verse 4. *“Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch!”*

And what he's referring to is something that we read about back in the 35th chapter of Genesis. Let me put it on the screen for you so you can see it together. From Genesis 35 it says,

Genesis 35:21-22 (ESV)

Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine. And Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.

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That is what we read and we know that was a great failure in Reuben's life. But that's not the only thing we remember Reuben for. When Joseph was captured by his jealous brothers, and they were going to kill him, it was Reuben who spoke up and said, don't harm the boy, he's one of us. And he said, let's just throw him in a pit. But Reuben's intention was to go and rescue his brother and bring him back to his dad. There were some things about Reuben that were redeeming. And then, of course, Reuben wasn't there when his brother sold Joseph to those merchants who were passing through the area.

Verse 5. He goes on to the next two sons and says, *“Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. ⁶ Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen.”*

And Jacob, by the way, is referring here to the time when Simeon and Levi killed all of the men in the town of Shechem. You'll remember, they were responding to the fact that their sister Dinah had been violated sexually.

Jacob goes on and says, *“⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.”*

And that's an interesting prophetic statement and this is the Lord. Notice the Lord is speaking here. Jacob is not the one who's going to scatter them in Israel. Jacob is about to go the way of all the world. He's about to pass away.

The Lord is speaking here and He says, *“I will divide them”* and I'm going to scatter them. That's an interesting statement in light of the fact that you have these two tribes; the tribes of Levi and the tribe of Simeon.

Interestingly enough, they became the two smallest tribes in Israel, and eventually even the tribe of Simeon was essentially assimilated into the tribe of Judah. If you look at the maps of where the tribal allotments landed, Simeon is there basically in the center of Judah and was just assimilated into that group.

And the tribe of Levi, you'll remember, never got a land allotment because from the Levites came the priests and priesthood. But they received cities instead of tribal allotments and they were scattered over some 48 cities among all of the tribes of Israel.

And so you'll notice in verse 7, he says, *“Cursed be their anger.”* He literally pronounces a curse upon them. But it should be noted that Jacob's curse was specifically for the cruelty of his two sons, not for their descendants. It's not like

the tribes of Levi and the tribe of Simeon were cursed as tribes in a general sense, that curse was intended just for his sons specifically.

Now, as we move on and pick up verse 8, we're going to get to Judah now. And I want you to pay very special attention to what Jacob says here to Judah. Because you'll remember something very important, Judah is the tribe from which Messiah comes. All right. And that's very important. And Messiah, as you know, is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God in human flesh and you're going to see some important things here related to that.

It says in verse 8, *“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;...”* By the way, that's a play on Judah's name because you might recall that's what his name meant. Let me show you this on the screen from Genesis chapter 29.

Genesis 29:35 (ESV)

And [Leah] conceived again and bore a son, and said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she called his name Judah.

And [Leah] conceived again and bore a son, and said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she called his name Judah.

And that means praise. And as we noted, Judah was an interesting man in the sense that he had some pretty big moral failures of his own. And yet his father says, *“your brothers shall praise you.”*

He goes on in verse 8 to say, *“...your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. ⁹ Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?”*

Now, I can imagine Judah hearing this, hearing his father say these things, and thinking, is this me? Is he really..., is he got the wrong son? This is the kind of stuff he would have said over Joseph. Because remember, Joseph had the dreams of his brothers bowing down to him which of course was fulfilled in that whole famine narrative where they came to get food. But here he says that his brothers will bow down.

But look what he says in verse 10. This is important. *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, (and a scepter was a staff held by a king, alright) nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”*

Now, this is actually a beautiful passage that speaks prophetically of the coming of Messiah. You'll notice that it says here in the ESV that, *“the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience ...”*

It's rendered differently if you have a New American Standard Bible (NASB) or a New King James Version (NKJV) Bible. For example, let me show you this on the screen. Actually, this is from the NASB. They've rendered verse 10 as,

Genesis 49:10 (NASB)

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes,

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes,

And that is almost word for word in the NKJV Bible as well. And you might say, well, why did they put the word, Shiloh in there? Well, Shiloh is really just a transliteration of the Hebrew word. In other words, they took the Hebrew word and they just simply converted the letters into English. That's what a transliteration is. It's not a translation. You're simply taking a Hebrew word, and leaving it, and converting the letters.

And what's interesting about that is that in the Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament, it's called, the Targum, or it's also referred to as, the Tanakh. The word, Shiloh is understood as a title for Messiah, all right?

However, the word, Shiloh in the Hebrew, let me actually put this on the screen for you.

Shiloh

The Hebrew word **šîlôh**

is most often rendered *“whose it is,”*

The word, Shiloh is most often rendered, “whose it is,”

Now, the NASB and the NKJV chose not to translate it at all. They just chose to transliterate it and they just gave you the English letters. But the actual translation of Shiloh is, whose it is, or, whose it belongs to, which is a little more clumsy.

Which means that the NIV, believe it or not, actually did, I think, the best job with this verse. Let me show you this, from the NIV. This is from the 84 revision.

Genesis 49:10 (NIV84)

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs...

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs... (or to whose it is)

And there you go. There's the understanding of that whole idea behind Shiloh.

Jacob goes on now concerning Judah in verse 11. He says, “*Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. ¹² His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.*”

Well, what do you think? You read that and you go, what is that all about? I don't understand a word of that. Well, Jacob is waxing poetic here, and I'm sure that this is very prophetic from the standpoint of the Lord gave this to him.

But what he's really doing in these 2 verses is he's giving the language of excess or if you will, the language of overflowing abundance. And he's using what is almost hyperbole to talk about the abundance of the tribe of Judah. And he's saying that their vineyards are going to be so huge, they're going to grow up, they're actually going to hitch their animals to the vines. Normally you wouldn't think of doing that to a vine, but it basically means their vines are going to be so abundant that they're going to hitch their animals to them.

And then secondly, the wine is going to be so incredibly abundant that they're going to use it for washing. Again, this is almost hyperbole, but it is language to speak of great blessing and abundance. But you guys have to understand what it is in contrast to.

You remember when Adam and Eve rebelled in the garden, what were they told that the world was going to produce from them, what the ground was going to produce from here on out? It was thorns and thistles, wasn't it? He said, you're going to work your crops, but you're going to have to deal with all of the thorns and viny, sort of plants that are going to make life miserable for you. And yet the word that is given to Judah and his progeny, his descendants, is overflowing abundance.

And so part of this even looks toward the Millennial Kingdom. That 1,000 year period of time when Jesus will rule and reign on the face of the earth. So it's really pretty amazing, amazing prophetic insights here.

Verse 13. *“Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall be at Sidon.”*¹⁴ *“Issachar is a strong donkey, (I’m not sure if that’s a compliment or not) crouching between the sheepfolds.*

¹⁵ *He saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant, so he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant at forced labor.”* And by the way, the tribe of Issachar was often attacked by invading groups and forced to serve them.

He goes on in verse 16 to speak of Dan. *“Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.”* And you might recall that the name Dan actually means Judge, but it's not all going to be good.

He says in verse 17, *“Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that his rider falls backward.”*

And this is a prophecy over Dan that foretells a time when the tribe of Dan becomes treacherous. And that is actually what we read about in the Book of Judges. When you go through the Book of Judges, you get around chapter 18, you can make a note if you want to and read it later. That's when the tribe of Dan became that viper that bit at the heels. It was not their finest hour by any stretch.

And you wonder if what Jacob says in the next verse is almost in response to what he's just prophetically revealed about Dan because in verse 18 he says, *“I wait for your salvation, O Lord.”* And this is just sort of a, I don't know, an interjection, I suppose, for lack of a better word.

He's in the middle of prophetically speaking over his sons. He brings out this rather troubling information about the tribe of Dan, and he just stops for a moment and says, Lord, *“I wait for your salvation.”*

But then he moves on verse 19. *“Raiders shall raid Gad, but he shall raid at their heels.”* Now, you'll notice that here in the ESV, it says, *“Raiders shall raid.”* The word that is translated, raiders, and raid, is also translated, attackers, and I like that better. In fact, let me show you how the NIV renders this verse. It says,

Genesis 49:19 (NIV84)

“Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels.”

“Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels.”

And the reason I like that a little better is because those multiple references to attack and attackers goes along with the name of Gad because Gad means, attack. And that was their life.

The tribe of Gad and then half of the tribe of Manasseh, you'll remember, are the tribes that settled on the other side of the Jordan. They actually settled in land that was never intended to be the promised land.

When the land of Israel was coming into the promised land, they came to, first of all, the east side of the Jordan and they spent a little time there. But their plan was to then cross the Jordan River, go into the land, and then begin to settle it.

Well, half of the tribe of Manasseh and the tribe of Gad asked if they could stay on the east side of the Jordan and live in that land. The condition was, as long as they crossed the river to fight and clear the land for their brothers, God would then give them permission to go back on the east side of the Jordan and dwell there.

Well, the problem was, the Jordan river became this barrier that would have normally kept enemies at bay, but because they settled on the other side, they were constantly being attacked over there. And not only that, but life got very godless on that other side of the Jordan.

Do you guys remember when Jesus met the man of the tombs, that man who had all the demons that came running at him? They couldn't keep clothes on him, they couldn't even keep him chained. Do you remember where he was? That was in the Gadarenes, the land of Gad.

And so this was an area where it was full of demoniacs, and pagan ways, and the raising of pigs, which was an unclean animal for the Jews. That area across the Jordan where the Gadites lived fell into paganism very fast and it was not a good future, frankly, for those people. But anyway, so you can see what some of these prophetic references refer to.

Verse 20 goes on and says, *“Asher's food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal delicacies.”* A prophecy speaking of the fact that the tribe of Asher would be settling in the northern area of the land of Canaan where the land was fertile, and productive, and would yield great stuff.

Verse 21, *“Naphtali is a doe let loose that bears beautiful fawns.”* The tribe of Naphtali would settle in the hilly regions of the northwest of the Sea of Galilee, really where Jesus was raised. Naphtali is that area of Nazareth, which would later have the city of Nazareth in it. And Nazareth was in the southern section of the tribal allotment of Naphtali.

Now here we get to Joseph and we're going to see that Jacob spends the same amount of time essentially that he did talking about Joseph that he did about Judah. But it's all a blessing.

²² *“Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall.”* That's all very poetic language to speak of overflowing abundance. He's saying the overflowing abundance of Joseph is a thing to be admired.

He says, ²³ *“The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, ²⁴ yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),”* A reference to Messiah.

And he says in verse 25, *“by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb.”*

²⁶ *“The blessings of your father (and that refers there to the Lord God) are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.”*

You can see there's not a great deal of prophetic element here, except just blessing. Blessing upon blessing to Joseph and his progeny.

And then finally, to the last born, a very short word, ²⁷ *“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil.”*

And these words are prophetic toward Benjamin and frankly, more to the tribe of Benjamin than to the man himself. Because Benjamin produced a tribe of

fighters who conquered and liked to divide the spoil. And in fact, some have said that the tribe of Benjamin was the most warlike of all the tribes of Israel. So you can see that this was very much a prophetic of Benjamin.

Verse 28, *“All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him.*

²⁹ Then he commanded them and said to them, “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰ in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.

³¹ There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah— ³² the field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites.” ³³ When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people.”

And of course, that term, “gathered to his people” is a euphemism just speaking of death. All right.

Chapter 50, so Jacob is now dead.

“Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. ² And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. ³ Forty days were required for it, for that is how many are required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.”

By the way, that's why we have gotten into so many coffins left behind by Egyptian Pharaohs and so forth and found mummies that were pretty well preserved, frankly, because they had an embalming process that was second to none. And as it says here, it took 40 days to embalm the corpse. Just incredible. And so the embalming went on and then there was another 70 days of weeping.

“⁴ And when the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, ⁵ ‘My father made me swear, saying, “I am about to die: in my tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me.” Now therefore, let me please go up and bury my father. Then I will return.’” ⁶ And Pharaoh answered, “Go up, and bury your

father, as he made you swear.”⁷ So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,⁸ as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's household. Only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen.

⁹ And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company.¹⁰ When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and grievous lamentation, and he made a mourning for his father seven days.¹¹ When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “This is a grievous mourning by the Egyptians.” Therefore the place was named Abel-mizraim; it is beyond the Jordan.” And Abel Mizraim, it can mean, simply the meadow, or it can mean, the grieving of Egypt, so there you go.

“¹² Thus his sons did for him as he had commanded them,¹³ for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.¹⁴ After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.”

Now, I want you to pause there for just a moment because you'll notice here that it says Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers. And what's interesting about that is we're not told, we're not given a reason, I guess I should say, why they returned to Egypt.

I mean, when they went back to Canaan to bury Jacob, why didn't they go back with their whole family and all their flocks and herds? The famine is over. It's been like 17 years since Jacob got there. We know the famine was only going to last, another 7, 8, 9, 10 years, something like that from the time that he got there. Actually it was a little bit more than that, it was going to be 12 years. It would be for another 12 years, but it's been a few years now since that whole famine ended.

We're assuming the land has begun to replenish itself by this time and it's beginning to bring forth crops, so why did they stay in Egypt? Well, we're left to wonder, except for the fact that their brother was in such a lofty place in the government of the Egyptians. He was second only to Pharaoh, and so I suppose the easiest thing to do was just to stay there with Joseph. Joseph had promised he was going to take care of them. They had it made in the land of Goshen. The

land of Goshen was a very fertile area within the land of Egypt. And it probably just made sense. It's like, hey, Joseph, he's in charge. With him in his position, Pharaoh doesn't even hardly have to do anything. Our brother is in this high position in the Egyptian government, let's just stay there. I mean, we've got a made. I'm assuming that's probably the reason, but anyway, that's where we're left because the scripture doesn't specifically say.

Verse 15 goes on, and this is important. It says, *“When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, (and I'm assuming they said to one another) “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.”*

I want to stop there for a moment because I promise you we'll get through the rest of the chapter. But this is important that we pause here for a moment to ask our self the question. It's been years. It's been years since they've all gotten into the land. It's been the better part of 20 years now that they've been there, that they've been living there, doing their thing, raising their families. I'm sure interacting with Joseph off and on. He was probably a busy man, but I'm sure he took some time to hang with his brothers and that sort of thing. But yet they know him so little.

And this is fear, by the way, this is 100 percent fear speaking here saying. Well, Joseph's going to, now that dad's gone, pretty sure Joseph's going to get back at us now. He was probably just holding back as long as dad was alive. You want to look good for dad, but now that he's gone, there's really nothing holding him back. And they knew Joseph had the power. They knew he had the power so fear makes you do all kinds of interesting things.

Verse 16 says, *“So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: (by the way, this is a big fat fib) ¹⁷ ‘Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.”’* And that's the message.

Now they're saying to Joseph, *“...And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.”*

What they felt the need to do because of their fear was to create a false story to give to Joseph of a message that Jacob wanted them to pass along. And they felt the need to secure Joseph's favor and to quell any thoughts that he might have of retribution.

But you see, the problem was Joseph didn't have any thoughts of retribution. Joseph didn't have any ill will toward his brothers at all. Yes, they were jealous of him, yes, they hated him. Yes, they abused him and sold him into slavery. Yes, during that time of slavery, he was falsely accused and imprisoned and made to suffer grievously. But Joseph had no thoughts of bitterness toward his brothers.

How did Joseph react? End of verse 17, look what it says. He broke down and cried, you guys. That's what it says. It says, “...*Joseph wept when they spoke to him.*”

Now, I want to ask you a question. Why did Joseph cry? Why did Joseph weep? Well, I don't think it's hard to figure this one out at all.

He started to cry when his brother said this because he knew that even though he was free from the bitterness and the resentment from the past, he knew that his brothers were still languishing in this self-made prison made from their own guilt and their own shame from the past. And he knew what that was like. And he wept because he felt sorrow for their sad condition.

I don't know if you can relate. If you've ever seen someone who is literally in slavery to bitterness, or in slavery to guilt, or in slavery to jealousy, or in slavery to anger or any of the other things that we can be enslaved to. And you see their condition, and it's just heartbreaking.

It is heartbreaking, and that's exactly what Joseph is experiencing right now. And in verse 18 it says, “*His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.*” That's a way of surrendering themselves to him and saying, do with us as you will.

“¹⁹ *But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, ...”* See that's what's going on, Joseph knew exactly what was behind it all.

“...*Do not fear, (he said) for am I in the place of God?*” And what he means by that, he's saying, is it mine to bring judgment? Is it mine to exact revenge and so forth. Joseph understood that it wasn't his place, regardless of how grievously he'd been treated, regardless of how he'd been wronged.

Let me ask you a question. Have you been wronged? Have you been wronged by anybody? Have you been wronged by life? Even if you can't find somebody to point the finger to, can you? I hear people say sometimes, the universe has been unkind to me. All right, so you're blaming the universe, whatever.

Let me ask you a question. Are you in slavery to those feelings of being a victim and being bitter? Because that's the condition these men were in and it's pitiful, isn't it? It's pitiful and it keeps you from being the kind of a person that you would otherwise want to be.

And if you recognize that sort of a thing in your life, if somebody has hurt you, and that just is something that keeps bringing itself up to you from your past, you need to bring that to the Lord and you need to tell the Lord, I can't get free from this.

I tell people all the time, you want to get free from areas of sin in your life, then tell God you can't. One of the most important things you'll ever read in your Bible is in the 12th chapter of 2 Corinthians, where the apostle Paul heard something from Jesus Himself. Jesus said to Paul, *“my power is made perfect in (your) weakness.”*

If you want the power of God to be made perfect in your life, humble yourself and tell Him you can't do it, but you know He can. That's what He's really looking for from you anyway, is your willingness.

He's not looking for you to be superwoman or superman. He's looking for you to be willing to surrender those things at the foot of the cross and to let them be crucified there. And to die there so that you might be free from those things.

You see, Joseph was free. He was a free man. He was free to follow the Lord. His brothers were not. They had the open door, the opportunity to be free, but they couldn't get through that door because of their guilt and their shame. They just couldn't take it.

And, I find people that are even that way toward God. God wants to..., God's just ready to forgive them from all their sin, but they just can't walk through that door because they feel so bad about what they've done. I've had people write me, email me over and over and over and over again with the exact same information, just different words.

And it all boils down to, I just can't accept the fact that I'm forgiven. I just can't accept it. Yeah that's prison friends. That is a prison all its own. It may not have bars, but it is a prison nonetheless.

And the Bible says that God wants to set us free. Him whom the Son sets free is free indeed. (John 8:36) And we can be free. We can know that we know right now that we are forgiven of all of our sins, and we can even be free from those

who hurt us in our past. And if they're going to continue to live their toxic life, filled full of venom and vitriol and bitterness, that's their issue. It's not yours. You can be free.

But it starts with coming to the Lord and saying, I can't do this, but you can. I can't make this happen, but you can. And I'm going to..., and I invite you to make it happen in my life. Very, very important.

I got to tell you, I think Joseph is one of the most incredible biblical examples of forgiveness and mercy that we read about in the scriptures. And that's why I'm pausing here a bit.

I think second only to Jesus Himself, who hanging on the cross said, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. (Luke 23:34) That's the greatest because He was taking something upon Himself that He didn't deserve. We deserved what Jesus took upon Himself. And yet He spoke about us saying, Father, forgive them.

And this is the example. We're supposed to take this to heart, you guys. And we're supposed to be like Joseph. We're supposed to forgive in the way that we've been forgiven. Let me show you this on the screen from the Book of Colossians, chapter 3. I love this. Paul says,

Colossians 3:12-13 (ESV)

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; (how?) as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

We are charged, you guys, in the Word of God, to forgive as we have been forgiven. And so my question to you is, have you been forgiven? And then if you say yes, I'll say, how much have you been forgiven? And you're going to come back, if you're going to speak biblically, you're going to say, I have been completely forgiven. Wonderful. You got an A+. Now turn and do that. That's what He's saying.

Now, I get it. I get it. I know forgiveness is a hard thing. I know, and I've had people say to me, I just don't think I can do that. And I always say, bingo, you finally got it. You can't do that. But the Holy Spirit in you can. He can enable you to forgive in ways that your flesh simply cannot. Stop waiting for your flesh to get around to forgive people. I'm just really waiting for that time when I can, I'm working on it, that day when I can forgive them, knock it off.

You're not going to get there. Your flesh isn't good. Your flesh, as Paul said, nothing good lives in my flesh or in my flesh dwells no good thing. (Romans 7:18) Don't wait for your flesh to forgive, trust that the Holy Spirit is going to do it through you.

Verse 22. *“So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years. ²³ And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. (Wow, how cool is that?) The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own.*

²⁴ And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” ²⁶ So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”

And that is where we're going to move into the Book of Exodus next time. And we're going to pick up right there. And Lord willing, we're going to start that study next Wednesday so there you go. We're going to close in prayer.

Father, thank You so much for giving us time tonight to dig into the scripture. We thank You, Father, for the richness of the Word of God and the richness of your love to speak it to us and to minister Your Word to us in a way that fills us with blessing and insight. And we praise you for it, Lord.

We thank You for this opportunity. We thank You Lord for the freedom in our country to gather in this way as the body of Christ. We ask You specifically, Father, to protect this freedom. Keep this freedom as something that we will continue to enjoy.

And we thank You for Your goodness toward us, and we ask that You would continue to speak to us from this Word throughout the week.

And we ask it in the precious name of your Son, Jesus, our Savior, our coming Redeemer. And all God's people said, amen. God bless you.