

## Forgive, Even When It's Hard

- “[Forgive] each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Eph 4:32). Sometimes easy: when your little daughter spills food on clothes, gets all over table, says sorry daddy; or when spouse long day work, comes home frazzled, as talking day, gets snappy, sorry didn't mean – easy to forgive.
- Eph 4:32. Sometimes hard, real hard. I'd like you take moment, think time when hard for you to forgive. Think: when hard forgive someone? What they do/say? What happened, made hard forgive?
- Must been hard Joseph to forgive – Jo patriarch from Gen. Rem Jo? “Go, go, go, Joseph; you know what they say. Hang on now Joseph; you'll make it someday” Andrew Lloyd Webber good job popularizing story of Jo, his amazing technicolor dreamcoat. But if awhile since seen musical, or more imp since you read account in Gen, think back on Jo's story. What happened in life?
- Jo is 1 of 12 sons of Jacob, and one of favs because born to Ja's fav wife, Rachel. So Ja gives Jo beautiful coat of many colors; brothers are jealous. On top that, when 17 Jo goes out into fields with adult bros, tells them re his two dreams (1<sup>st</sup>: sheaves of grain bowing down to him; 2<sup>nd</sup>: sun, moon, stars). Both dreams have same meaning: someday Jo's family would bow down to him. Brothers don't take too kindly to that. So what do? About to kill him; last second decided against that; so just beat up, sell into slavery. Must have been hard for Jo to forgive.
- Then ends up in Egypt with army captain named Potiphar. Jo good worker, well respected, becomes Pot's chief servant. But when Pot's wife tries have affair with Jo and he refuses, she spins story that Jo came on to her. So Pot throws Jo in prison. Again, must have been hard for Jo to forgive.
- Now in prison, meets cupbearer & chief baker of the Pharaoh of Egypt; interprets their dreams for them. CB's dream means he's getting out of prison. So before gets out, Jo says remem me, help me get out prison. But CB forgets all about Jo, for 2 full years. Again, must hard Jo forgive.
- By now I bet you remember rest of story: Jo interprets Pharaoh's dreams re 7 years abundance, 7 years famine. So Pharaoh puts Jo in charge of Egypt. And during drought, when Jo's bros come to buy grain, and there they are, right in front of him for first time in years, again, must hard Jo forgive.
- A few mins ago, when I asked you about time hard for you to forgive, what came to your mind? What think about? Very personal question; answers diff for all us. Maybe you find it hard to forgive: bully that picked on you as kid, or is picking on your kids right now; parent who never much of parent to you; coworker that lied re you; spouse who cheated, ruined marriage; drunk driver who killed your child; pervert who molested your child; doctor who botched your surgery. Or maybe isn't person at all that you're having hard time forgiving, but God himself, because just can't get over why God would let this happen to you. So you're holding grudge vs Lord.
- Well, what does Lord say re forgiveness? Lord Jesus once told parable; went like this: 1<sup>st</sup> guy owes king astronomical, unpayable debt; but the king forgives whole thing. Then a 2<sup>nd</sup> guy owes 1<sup>st</sup> guy much smaller, more manageable debt; 1<sup>st</sup> guy refuses for forgive. When king hears re that, he retracts his forgiveness for 1<sup>st</sup> guy, throws into prison forever. Point of parable pretty clear, isn't it? Through our many sins, we have racked up an ast, unpayable debt. And because of this huge debt God could rightly throw us into hell forever. But Jesus our Savior has paid this massive debt by death on cross. When cried out “It is finished,” those words mean: debt covered, nothing more to pay, payment received, balance paid in full! It is finished, and now we are forgiven.
- And now God calls on us to forgive, even when it's hard. When man forgiven in parable refused to forgive the smaller debt (which represents the sins people commit against us – much smaller, by comparison, than the sins we commit against God) – when he refused to forgive, the king refused to forgive him. And when we refuse to forgive, God refuses to forgive us. Simple as that. That's why emphasis today is: forgive, even when it's hard!
- Think again re Joseph. One of most forgiving characters in entire Bible. When bros come to buy grain from him in Egypt, doesn't hold grudge against them – even for trying to kill him! Instead,

welcomes them with open arms. Even moves entire family from Canaan to Egypt to live near him in good land of Goshen. Jo forgave, even when hard.

- Today's reading is from last ch in Gen, the end of story of Jo; Ja is dead. **Vs. 15**; thinking, dad's gone; now nothing will stop Jo from getting even with us. **Vs. 16a**; means, so scared send messenger. **Vs. 16b-17ab**; and if assume bros telling truth here (I think we should), that means even Ja was afraid that after his death Jo would retaliate vs. bros. Lesson here: sin can haunt you rest of life; without full/free forgiveness, sinners can go to grave in guilt, regret. These bros had guilty cons for sins vs Jo. We have guilty cons for our sins vs others. Other people have guilty cons for their sins vs us. Sin can haunt you rest of life; without full/free forgiveness, con never at peace. That is why God through Jesus gives us full/free forgiveness of all our sins; and that's why God commands that we forgive, even when hard – because cons are plagued without forgiveness. Forgiveness gives peace to soul: for sinner and sinned against. And God wants your soul to have peace. So forgive, even when hard.
- **Vs. 17c**. Jo emotional man. 7x in Gen hear of Jo weeping: 1) bros' 1<sup>st</sup> visit; 2) 2<sup>nd</sup> visit; 3) Jo reveals self to bros; 4) hugging Ben; 5) Jo greeting Ja; 6) when Ja dies; 7) here, with bros. Emos ran high for Jo. Lesson here: this whole business of sin, guilt, confession, & forgiveness is very emotional. When been sinned against, hurts. When guilty of sinning vs someone else, hurts. When confess sins to person sinned against, emoly diff. When you forgive someone sinned vs you, emoly diff. Jo's bros were guilty; that hurt them. Jo's forgiveness was doubted; that hurt him. This whole business of SGCF makes cons esp sensitive. Yet Christian practice of confessing/forgiving our sins is absolutely essential for healing hearts. When you sin vs someone else, don't deny, minimize, try to justify it; confess it. When someone confesses their sin to you, don't browbeat or belittle them; forgive them. Emotions make it hard. But forgive, even when it's hard.
- **Vs. 18-20**. Jo sees big picture. He knows, if brothers had never sold into slavery: never ended up in Egypt, or with Pot, or in prison, or with cupbearer, or with Pharaoh, to interpret his dreams, and be put in authority, to prepare for famine. None of that would have happened if bros had just left him alone. But God had plan; Jo blessed to see that plan. Lesson here: when someone sins against you, hurts you, and you can't imagine why God would let this happen to you, God has plan. Always has plan. And sometimes you are even blessed to see that plan: such when old animosities between two people are finally forgiven and friendship blossoms once again; or when bitter divorce ends a sour marriage but allows a divorcee to find new love in happy relationship – then you are blessed to see the plan. But sometimes, most times, you can't see the plan, and God does not show you big picture of why he allowed some sin to affect your life. There again we have Joseph as example. There were many years between his bros' abuse and his rise to throne; many years of asking, "God, why?" Maybe you'll have many years of asking, "God, why?" But "**we know...love him**" (**Rm 8:28**); and we know that in heaven we will finally find contentment in God's plan.
- **Vs. 21**. Forgiveness is God's antidote against guilt. We see forgiveness in Jo; more imp, we see forgiveness in Jesus. Jesus' will for us is this, **Eph 4:32**. Sometimes easy; usually not. So may God give us guidance and grace, so that we might forgive, even when it's hard.

### Genesis 50:15-21

<sup>15</sup> When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" <sup>16</sup> So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: <sup>17</sup> 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. <sup>18</sup> His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. <sup>21</sup> So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.