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July 18, 2021

GENESIS 45

Series: Understanding Your Roots

[PRAYER] Lord, we can't understand so much about you. You're just so infinite. And that's good because if we could understand everything about you, it would be hard to just trust you. But the fact that you're outside of us, the fact that you are so big gives us the ability to trust you more than we would otherwise. But we're just amazed at how you do certain things, how things come together, and how you work in people's lives. And so, Lord, as we reflect on that now, we ask that you would shake us inside. That for those who are here today who don't know you yet as their own personal Lord and Savior, that you would prompt them to respond to you and to come to you and to give their lives to you fully. And for others who have already made that profession, we all need to be growing more in our faith. That's partly why we're here. We're coming, seeking you and asking you to speak to us today as we open your word. In Jesus' name, amen.

The word 'providence' is not a word found in the Bible. However, it is a word that describes a very important group of things about God in the scriptures. We're going to take three things. It combines the wisdom of God. Wisdom has this idea that God has this amazing ability to put it all together in ways that are wise. Secondly, it's the compassion of God. That God is caring and knows us. So the way that those things are worked out have compassion involved in them. And then also the sovereignty of God, which has to do with His control or His lordship. If you take the sovereignty of God, the compassion of God, and the wisdom of God, you group them together, you have what we call providence. Providence. The providence of God.

I'm convinced that when we understand the providence of God, it changes us. As much as we can understand it. The more we reflect on it, the more we recognize that it's there, the more we're able to change the things. It changes the way we think about ourselves. It changes the way we think about other people. And it changes...well, it gives us a spiritual vitality, I would suggest, in our lives.

Now we are looking at the man Joseph in the Old Testament. We see a guy here that just keeps going. He's like the Energizer Bunny. Things try to knock him down, but he just keeps going and going and going. How could he do that? We are not told, except at the beginning when he had those dreams. But those dreams aren't mentioned again throughout the rest of scripture. Those dreams are mentioned right there at the beginning, but as his life progresses we don't know what he's thinking. Until we get to today's passage.

Now we get it because now we look at Genesis 45. As we look at Genesis 45, we see here the thinking that he has. We see that Joseph got this idea of the providence of God. He understood that God was in charge, that God is caring, that God was wise. And he was able then to trust the

Lord in the downs of his life and the ups of his life. We'll see today he's going to talk about my successes because of God's providence. He's going to say my pit that I was in was a part of God's providence. It's the providence of God that guided him.

I think we're going to take that today and we're going to look at our own lives. We're going to say, "Lord, what is it in my life that I haven't turned over to you and recognize that you're in control?" God is in control of every aspect of your life, including the fact that you're here today. He's brought you here for a reason. God wants to do something in your heart. We're going to look at Genesis 45 to see how this plays out.

Now let me bring you up to speed on the story, in case you haven't been with us. See, Joseph is now in Egypt and he's just listened to a speech by Judah, a long speech. You can read it in Genesis 44. I think that Joseph is listening to his brother plea because he's trying to see if his brother is a changed guy. In Judah's plea, we see Judah saying, "Look, would you please send my brother back to be with my dad because my dad will die if he loses another son. Leave me here in Egypt. I'll be the one to be the servant." That's very different from the conversation that Judah had with the Midianites when he was selling Joseph into slavery into Egypt. You see, now Judah is a broken man. I think it's the brokenness, that Judah experiences that Joseph is waiting for. It's what Joseph sees. When Joseph sees the brokenness of his brother, he says now is the time to reveal myself to my brothers. And that's where we enter Genesis 45.

Watch the emotion develop, watch what happens. This is what we've been waiting for. In all of Joseph's life and all the trials, he comes to this place where, yes, now the dreams are fulfilled, now he's going to share this with his brothers. Enter Genesis 45 with me. Let me read it to you.

It says in verse 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. He's all alone with his brothers. And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.*

He wept aloud. Okay, this is not something we are familiar with in American culture. Men, first of all don't do a lot of weeping and they certainly don't do it loudly. He did it so loudly, it says, that the Egyptians heard it. They heard what was going on in this room.

It just reminds me of a time when I was in Africa and I had been invited to speak at this one church for some revival meetings. In the afternoon, we were going to have a prayer meeting. Now my experience with prayer meetings is that you sit down in a group, someone leads and says, "Can we have some prayer requests here or let's pray for this." Then we go around, and each person prays who wants to pray, and someone closes in prayer. That's my experience with prayer meetings. I had no idea what I was about to experience. Because about ten of us got into a room smaller than this just small part of the Barn here. We're in this part of this room and the guy says, "Okay, let's pray." So then people start praying all at the same time, yelling to the Lord. I am shocked by all of this. And they're moving around. And everybody at the same time is lifting up their prayer, their plea to God, asking God to bring His mercy down during this revival service that we're going to have. All of this loudness is, you know...and so what do I do? Well, I get up and I'm moving around too and I'm starting... Nobody can hear me. They're all yelling, so

nobody can hear anything. So I just pray. And I'm praying to the Lord and joining in. What an amazing experience of a prayer meeting. Something I've never experienced since then. And so when I think about Joseph weeping loudly, that's the picture that comes to my mind. There's so much drama in this passage.

Well then the tone seems to die down a bit. Verse 3 – *And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?”* Can you imagine? This is the first time he speaks in Hebrew to them, first of all. *“I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?”* There's so much shock involved in this, it says (notice what their response is) – *But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.* That's a mild understatement. They were shocked. Can you imagine being there? There's a few times as I read the scriptures where I wish I could just be in the room on the side to hear what's going on. This is one of those times because it's just so dramatic. And it says that *they were dismayed at his presence.* No doubt. I'm sure they were.

Verse 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. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves (mark that) because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.*

Now listen to God's providence being articulated by Joseph as I read this. This is his first statement. He says – *God sent me before you to preserve life. 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. And God sent me before you to preserve life for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.*

Do you see what Joseph is doing? He's revealing to us what he's probably been thinking all along. God is in charge. He's working this out. I can trust Him.

Now, when we understand the providence of God, it's going to affect how we think about ourselves. That's why he calls on the providence of God following his statement that says – *Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves.*

You can imagine them. They're going, “Oh no. I have so many regrets about what we did. I can't believe what we did.” They've been living with this for so long. And now their secret is public. You can imagine the regrets they had.

I just want to talk about regrets for a moment because I'm sure that you have regrets, as I have regrets. And sometimes those regrets we have about past sins or past problems in our lives start to plague us and cause us to feel inferior, cause us to put ourselves on the shelf, they cause us to feel despairing and even worse in our lives because of the plight that we find ourselves in. There are actually four different things you want to consider here about regrets.

One is sin. Because sometimes it's just flat-out sin. What we did was against God's law and against His word.

Secondly, it might not be sin; it might be a mistake. If you're taking a test and you get twenty problems and you get nineteen right, but you made one mistake and you go, "Oh man, I knew that one," that's a mistake. It's not a sin. It's a mistake and you regret. You feel that feeling of regret inside for a mistake.

A third one is foolishness. When you do something foolish. Foolishness is not recognizing the consequences of your present actions. And so you act foolishly. You go, "Oh why did I do that? Oh I knew better than that. That was just being foolish." Not necessarily sin. It could be. But it's a different category.

And the fourth one is offenses. Sometimes you don't do anything wrong and someone else is offended. You feel regret about that, not because you did anything wrong, but because you know there's displaced relationship here that needs to be addressed.

So we have these regrets in our lives. What do we do with them? I really like what Joseph is saying here. After already hearing them take responsibility, already being broken and repentant (notice that from Judah), now he's saying to them, "Don't continue to beat yourself up about the regrets. Don't be distressed and angry with yourself." Why? Because God is in charge in the bigger picture.

Just this morning, a lady texted me. She's in the coaching program. I'm training coaches right now. And she says, "As I'm learning these things, I realize that I didn't do some of these things with my kids. And I see now that they're mistakes, I wish I would have had this when I was younger, and I didn't. What do I do with the regrets?" That was her question. So I did a little video for and I said, "I'm going to preach my sermon that I'm going to teach in a few minutes to you right now about regrets." Joseph is coming in and saying I understand you're broken people. But God is in control. He's sovereign. We need to turn it over to Him.

I am convinced when we understand the providence of God, it changes the way we think about ourselves. Especially in this area of regrets. It changes our self-concept because we're part of something bigger. It's not just surrounded by me. Humanism is all about me being in the center, and how I can control and do all these things. But God is in the center. When I recognize that, I come up above the circumstances a little bit and I can see more about what's going on. Maybe today you're feeling in despair, discouraged about something and God wants to raise you above that. You do that by trusting in His providence and recognizing that He is in control. Wow, what a powerful application.

But let's go on because now he's going to tell them what to do. Notice verse 9. He says – *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. 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. 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.'* And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. 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.” Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

Now they start to talk, but it took some time for them to kind of deal with this, this whole experience. He goes to each one and he greets them each personally, and he kisses them. And he just falls on Benjamin's neck. And then they can talk. I wonder what that conversation was all about? Tell us more about what's happened here. Oh, I can't believe this. And I'm sure Joseph told them stories. And he wanted to know stories about home. And so they talk. It's just a beautiful picture of what's going on in their lives right now. What an amazing reconciliation that's happening.

Let's go on in the passage. *When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, “Joseph's brothers have come,” it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Say to your brothers, ‘Do this: load your beasts and go back to the land of Canaan, 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.’ 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. Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”*

Notice... I want you to just see because I want to bring this back in a minute. But notice in the text, the goodness that's being poured out on them. We're going to need that as we go to some more in the passage.

So verse 21 says – *The sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. 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.*

Now maybe you look at this passage and all you see as Joseph's going through is he's lavishing his brother or he's responding emotionally to the situation and that's why he's taking action. But I look at this and I just wonder if Joseph is somehow further testing his brothers by lavishing these gifts on Benjamin to see if they'll be envious. Because you remember that it was envy that turned into anger that caused Judah and the rest of the brothers to sell their brother into slavery. They were envious of his coat and his speaking, and now would they experience the same thing? Would they have the same envy that they had? There doesn't seem to be any indication of that here. But Joseph is lavishing these great things on Benjamin. And we'll see more of this as we go forward.

He says in verse 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. Then he sent his brothers away.* Now, we don't understand this donkey thing because typically when you go to the store, you don't take your donkey with you. You leave your donkey at home. But think about it as pickup trucks. Okay? He sends them ten pickup trucks full of provisions from Egypt. Then he sends ten more pickup truck loads full of bread and grain and so on for them on their way. He sends these big wagons or U-Haul, so to speak, to bring everything back. That's what's happening in order to bring them.

So he gives them all of these instructions and then notice what he says in verse 24. *Then he sent his brothers away and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way."*

Oh that's so reminiscent for me of what parents say to their children when they go out the door. I don't know what you parents say to your kids when they go out the door. But a lot of parents say, "Have fun!" I just think that's a mistake. In fact, when my wife and I, when our children got to be teenagers, we realized that we don't want to send them on a mission when we send them out the door to have fun on Friday night when they're going out to be with their friends. That is not their mission. And when children believe their mission is to have fun, they get themselves into trouble trying to have fun. So we changed what we said. We said when they went out the door, "Do the right thing!" to try to give them this mission going out the door.

So here's Joseph saying to them – *"Don't quarrel along the way."* Oh I can feel that. That would be a good one to write in your book, if you're a parent to say to your kids, "Don't quarrel along the way." But why can he say that? Why is he saying don't quarrel along the way? Well, the word *quarrel*, in fact some of your versions, if you're looking at your Bible, many of them say *don't quarrel along the way*. But some of them translate that word *don't be troubled along the way* or don't get sidetracked along the way. Because the word really means to quake. In fact that's how it's used in the Bible when the earth quakes. And so now he's saying don't quake on the way. So now the translators say you must be saying don't quake with your brothers on the way.

I think why would he say that to them? And how could he say that? If I look back into the passage, so look back with me at three things that allow him to say *do not quarrel along the way*. Because I think if you get this and you recognize this, this will reduce the quarreling in your home between husband and wife. This will reduce the quarreling in your home between children, between parents and children, between others. The quarreling will decrease if you get these three things.

The first one is the providence of God. God is at work here. I love saying this to young people. As I've told you before. I say to a young man, "God has probably placed your brother in this family for you. So that you can learn how to deal with annoying people." And I think the same thing is true in this situation. If we recognize the providence of God, that God is in control here, the quarreling level will decrease. Maybe I need to learn something here in relating to this person. Maybe I need to become more gentle. I need to come around this a different way. Sometimes in God's providence, we find ourselves in conflict situations so that we can grow and learn. God's providence reduces quarreling. That's number one.

The second thing is this whole motif of forgiveness all through the passage. There's never even a discussion here. Joseph has already forgiven his brothers. So this forgiveness of God or the forgiveness of Joseph is strategic for his brothers. And he's saying don't quarrel along the way. Basically he's saying, look, you've experienced forgiveness. You ought to be able to pass it on to each other. That's why I love Ephesians 4:31-32. It says this. Six different words for anger. It says – *Get rid of all bitterness, and rage and anger and brawling and slander and every form of malice*. Get rid of all of those. It says – *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving*

each other just as in Christ, God forgave you. Where does our ability to forgive come from? The fact that we've already been forgiven. And that's right there in the passage. Joseph has forgiven them and he's saying, don't quarrel along the way. Forgive each other. Just keep going. The quarrelling level will decrease in our homes when we understand forgiveness.

The third thing we see is all the good things that are happening here. I call it grace or gifts that they're giving. The word *grace* is translated *gifts* in the New Testament. But the point is here is that they're receiving all these good things. So the question is, when you have a disagreement with someone, what are you going to focus on? You're going to focus on the fact that the toilet paper was put on the wrong way? Or are you going to think of all the good things that your spouse has done for you? I mean, what are you going to quarrel about? So if you can focus on the good things or the grace that you've been given, and all these wagons and pickup trucks and donkeys full of stuff, then you don't have to quarrel with each other.

Three things that will reduce quarrelling in our lives. Powerful. And that's how he's able to say this to them. Don't quarrel along the way.

Well we're almost done in the passage. Wait till this next part here. Verse 21. It says – *So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. And they told him, “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” And his heart became numb.*

I don't know if you've ever experienced that. You know, you're sitting across from someone and you're eating some food, and all of a sudden they lay it on you, and you're just numb by this. You don't even know what to do. You can't keep eating. You can't talk. You just got to...it has to assimilate a little bit. That's his feeling here.

It says of Jacob – *His heart became numb, for he did not believe them. 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. And Israel said, “It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”*

Now I'm going to read that again to you. But I imagine this being in a play on a stage. This is like the last statement that's made before the curtain comes down. It goes like this. He says – *“It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him.”* And the curtain comes down. That's how I imagine this. And what I say to myself is, “Oh, that was so great. I can hardly wait for intermission to get over. I can go back and learn more about what's going to happen and see the rest of the play or the story, although this is God's word.”

So now when I open chapter 46, I see now Jacob and Joseph and all these people now reunited in Egypt. Well that's for next week.

But I want to take you back to one more idea in the passage, the second to the last sentence in this chapter. It says – *The spirit of their father Jacob revived.* The word *spirit* is the word *ruach*. It's the word for spirit. There's another similar word, it's the word *nephesh*, which is the word for soul. It's that inner part of us. The word for *revived* is the word *chayah*. *Chayah* means that life is coming into this. In fact, in Genesis it says when God breathed into this man He created, *he*

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and he became a living being. He became a *nephesh chayah*. *Nephesh* is soul. In our passage it's *ruach chayah*, which means living. He became this living soul. I think that's what God has created us to be, this living soul.

But there's this thing that happens called life that puts a damper on the living part of that. That's why I think in one way God created the Sabbath day. He created the Sabbath day in the Old Testament, and we don't celebrate the Sabbath like it was celebrated in the Old Testament. But I believe God designed the Sabbath day so that every week they would stop and cease their work so that they could have a *nephesh chayah*. They could have this breath of life again. They could have this new living being inside of them. I think we all need that in our lives. We need to be revived in our spirit, like Jacob did.

It reminds me of Psalm 23 (that psalm we all love, the Good Shepherd Psalm) when it talks about – *He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul.* We need that. And today you can have that. How are you going to get that? I think you're going to get that the same way Jacob does. It's not just news for Jacob, about that his son is alive. It's that now Jacob realizes God is so great, God is so big. I trust in the providence of God. Today you can take whatever struggles you're facing as you're down here in life trying to put things together, and you step up out of that, and when you do and you see the providence of God, you may not get to see the future, you may not see all the pieces come together, but you trust in the providence of God. As you do, your spirit is revived, like Jacob's spirit is here.

Man, I need that in my life. I come away from this passage and I go, wow. The providence of God helps me deal with my self concept as he tells the brothers don't be distressed or angry with yourselves. It helps me deal with relationships, so that I don't have to quarrel with people along the way in life. The providence of God revives my spirit so that I can appreciate life and enjoy life and I can enjoy God. All of that comes in to this. What do I need to do? I need to appreciate the providence of God more. And what is the providence of God? It's the fact that God has the billions of facts and information and decisions tied together in His sovereignty. He does that so wisely, that He's doing something in one person's life that affects other person's life, and it affects my life. And He does it with compassion and care. Oh, what an amazing thing that God does in all the midst of that. I need that in my own heart and life.

Now, maybe you're here today, and you have never trusted the Lord in your walk. You don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The events of your life are bringing you to that decision where you can make that personal decision to accept Jesus Christ in your life. I'd like to help you do that today. If you'd like to accept Jesus Christ into your life today and you'd like to know what that means, we're going to sing a song in a minute. I invite you to come up here during the song, and I'll pray with you and help you come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Maybe you're already a Christian, but maybe there's some stuff about the world and about life that's dragging you down, and you need your *nephesh* to be *chayah*, to be living and to be lifted up. Maybe you need your spirit to be revived today. I encourage you during this next song, to spend some time with the Lord, sing the song, but do business with Him. If you'd like prayer for a particular area of your life, come up and talk to us. We'll pray with you and just share the

request before God for you that you can have that. I want you to leave today with this revived spirit in your life. Amen?

Stand with me and let's pray and then we'll sing together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we are grateful for what you're doing in our hearts and lives. Right now in this moment, we want to do business with you. We want you to speak to us in very personal terms. Use your Holy Spirit to prompt our hearts, to touch us where we need to be touched, we ask. In Jesus name, amen.