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September 19, 2021

## GENESIS 50

Series: Understanding Your Roots

Every one of us has past events that have the potential to rob us of vibrant life. Now I'm going to say that again. Every one of us has past events in our lives that have the potential to rob us of vitality in our lives. I'll just give you some examples. You can put in what you need for yourself. Let's take the person who was in a relationship and then the relationship went bad, and they got hurt in the relationship, and they now have a hard time taking the risk to get involved in another relationship. That's an example of what I'm talking about. Or maybe someone got into an automobile accident in the past and now they have a hard time traveling in a car, in a plane, or something like that for fear or anxiety about that. Maybe you had a problem in your childhood where maybe you lived in an impoverished home and so every dollar was treasured and kept careful. So now you find yourself working hard to accumulate as much as you can, because you're afraid you'll find yourself in that poverty again. All I'm saying is that there are experiences that we had in our past that have the potential to rob us of our current vitality. Whatever you want to put in the blank, you can. It may be a health concern, a financial concern, a relational concern. It could be anything that hinders you from being able to move forward and enjoy life the way God designed for you.

We're going to see that in our passage today. We're going to see the brothers who have some stuff from the past that's preventing them from enjoying the present. It's not only the things that happened to you. Certainly it's the thing that happened to us in our past – things we do wrong, or things that we are exposed to, or whatever. But sometimes it's just watching the news. You watch the news too much... You know this. You watch the news too much it creates anxiety in you about where you're going and it robs you of your vitality in life. We always have to be careful about the input we're getting. So in all of these cases, we need a plan. We need to be able to deal with the challenges that we face as a result of past stuff that's in our lives. Because here's what happens. The past stuff forms these bricks that form a wall around us that we call our safe zone. And our safe zone starts to crowd in us so that we feel anxious going outside of that safe zone in our lives. But I want to tell you, personal growth is to be able to go into the anxiety part of your life with the Lord, knowing that there may be some risk involved there and allowing God to work in your life in the midst of that and good things happen. That's what happens when we are involved in personal growth in our lives.

Now today we're going to look at a story where we see a problem taking place in the lives of these guys that happened years ago, but it's still bothering them today, robbing them of their vitality. See, what happens is you have those stones. You know what the mortar is? It's our fears, our fears that we put around, the mortar that boxes us in and prevents us from expanding our lives. God has more for every one of us in our lives. He wants us to experience great things. He

wants us to enjoy life. He wants us to meet the challenge. That doesn't mean everything is going to be great and rosy and perfect. But it means there's something there for us. And we have to go past the barriers that are there into that anxiety part with the Lord and so on and good things will happen.

There's seven things in the passage that I'm going to show you today that help these guys in our story address their concerns, and I think we need them. I need these things in my life and I know that you need them too. So let's go into the scriptures and see what God has to say.

Genesis 50. This is the story where Jacob has just passed away. Verse 1 says – *Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. Forty days were required for it, for that is how many are required for embalming.*

So Jacob's body was taken care of in the culture of the Egyptians there. The morticians, they're calling them physicians. These are the morticians that are working on his body in order to prepare him for burial. And then it says – *And the Egyptians wept for him for seventy days.* So there's this state funeral so to speak, or grieving that they've set aside. Seventy days it says.

*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, '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.' " And Pharaoh answered, "Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear." 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, 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. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company.*

So you can imagine a funeral procession, a very large one that's moving from Egypt all the way up to Canaan, east of the Jordan River. And then they're going to send an entourage in and bury him on the west side of the Jordan River. But now it's just this big entourage, huge entourage. You know it just reminds me, sometimes I'm driving on the road and I stop at a light and all of a sudden comes a funeral procession. My first experience is annoyance. You know I'm annoyed that the traffic is going to get in my way and I can't progress. But then I stop and I realize these people are all surrounding or dedicated to remembering this person. Sometimes it's a person that they know personally, the family. Sometimes the people that are in this entourage or people that knew the deceased. Sometimes they're friends of the family. But there's this whole entourage going up. That's the picture that we have here of all of these people going up to Canaan in this funeral procession. People are noticing. People around are seeing what's happening.

Notice it says this: *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. 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 (which means grieving of Egypt – that’s what those words mean); it is beyond the Jordan. Thus his sons did for him as he had commanded them, 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.*

So this is the whole entourage that goes down. This is the funeral for Jacob.

I know that some of you have been to funerals. In fact, if you have had the loss of a loved one, particularly a parent and all the kids are around, there's often some can I say, family business that needs to take place. I mean, you got to talk about maybe inheritance, you can talk about something else. But you don't do that at the actual funeral. That would not be proper. But then later on, often there's these conversations that we have to have. And that's what's going to happen. And we're going to see that as the brothers now they have to have a discussion.

Notice what takes place in the next verse. It says – *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. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said...* Now listen. Here’s where we get into the crux of our story here. The past pain that they're bringing into the present life, the pain that's causing them to lose their vitality of where they are now because of things that happened in the past. Watch what they say. They say – *“It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.”* It's been bothering them all these years and now the dad is gone and they're saying, “Oh, no, we better have a talk about this. Oh, no.” *It may be...* I like the words *it may be* that this will happen.

Now, there are seven things that we're going to see that can help us deal with the pains or the trauma or the challenges of the past, in a way that can allow us to experience vitality now. The first one is right in this verse. The first one is this idea that we have to admit that there might be a problem. We have to say, “You know what, I'm feeling pretty anxious. I wonder why I'm feeling anxious about something. What is it that's causing my anxiety?” It may be that Joseph will hate us and we'll be harmed somehow. It may happen. That's what they're saying. So they're acknowledging there might be a problem.

We got to start there. I think we have to start by taking responsibility. There's some people that they just blame their problems on other people. You know, it's my parent’s fault or it was my ex's fault. And so then we have a tendency to blame other people for our problems. And when we do that, we aren't empowered to really deal with ourselves. We've got to come to the place where we say, “Okay, I think I might have a problem here. My anxiety that I'm experiencing now in my life may be caused by something else that I need to deal with.” That's number one.

Now number two, notice what they do about it. It says – *So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: ‘Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.”’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.”*

When there's another person involved, a second thing that you can do to resolve past pain so that you can experience vitality now is to go back and deal with it with that person. In this case, what they needed to do was they needed to go back and ask for forgiveness. Will you forgive us? Your dad said to forgive us. We're coming to you now. Would you please erase this? Would you forgive us. And so there's this desire to be forgiven, that is dealing with this past situation. When we can do that, it's great.

Now you may be in a situation where you can't go back to the person who fired you years ago in that traumatic way and you can't even find them, you don't know where they are. Or where someone has harmed you in some way, you don't even know where they exist. Or maybe it's inappropriate because now they're married to someone else and going back to them would not be right. So there are times when we can't go back and deal with it. We just have to work it out in our relationship with the Lord. And sometimes it doesn't even have to do with somebody else. Sometimes the situation happened because there was a disaster somewhere and we were a part of it. So it's now crimped ourselves, or we're waiting for the next shoe to drop, or we're walking around on eggshells. That's this kind of anxiety that I think we experience in our current world because of other things that are going on that we must address in our own hearts.

This is hard. I just think this is very difficult for us to take these steps. So these seven ideas can contribute to our ability to be able to move forward, if we're willing to address this challenge that we're experiencing because of something in the past.

Well, notice the next thing. This would be the third thing, which is the end of verse 17. Notice it says – *Joseph wept when they spoke to him*. Now this isn't the weeping and wailing from the funeral. This isn't the weeping and wailing that took place in Genesis 45 when Joseph was just so distraught because now he was going to reveal himself to his brothers. This word used here is a quiet weeping. This is tears rolling down his cheeks, but probably not a lot of noise, not a lot of sound coming out. He just feels a sense of compassion. You see why, don't you? Why he's weeping in response to their request. Because he's saying to them, in essence, I can't believe you guys are still holding on to this. I can't believe this is ruining your life going forward. And so he feels the pain that they're experiencing in these moments. His compassion in this moment is strategic. I would suggest that that's one of the things we need in our lives is to experience compassion.

It just reminds me about Jesus in the New Testament. You remember, Jesus was a man of compassion. He wept. In John 11:35 it says *Jesus wept*. You remember the story though. He wept because Lazarus was dead. Now I don't think He wept because Lazarus was dead. Because He knew that He was going to raise Lazarus up in that chapter. I think He wept because He saw the pain that death caused for the people around. I think He wept because of the hurt that they were experiencing in their lives. That He had such compassion on them.

The word 'compassion' is the word attached to Jesus throughout the New Testament. When you read about Jesus and how He's interacting with people, it says - *And Jesus had compassion on the crowds*, or *Jesus had compassion on the men* or whatever it is. That word 'compassion' is the word *spagchna*, a Greek word I like to say. It's just a fun word to say. *Splagchna*. It has to do

with the deeply from inside of you, this sense of feeling you have. And so Joseph's weeping. There's a sense of comfort.

So I would suggest this third idea that we need is we need comfort in our lives. Now, sometimes we can find comfort in a person, or we can find comfort in relationships in a church, or going to a grief share group, or being in a small group. We can find that comfort we need through friends and intimate close relationships. Very valuable to have those in our lives. But always, we can find comfort in the Lord.

In fact, Jesus was experiencing the anxiety that His disciples were experiencing in John 14. He says to them – “Don't be troubled in your hearts. I am going away.” So they're feeling anxious because their comfort zone is about to be enlarged. And whenever our comfort zone is enlarged, we feel anxious about going there. That anxiety is part of the growth experience. And so He says to them, “When I go away, I'm going to send to you the Holy Spirit.” But He doesn't use the word Holy Spirit. He uses the word Comforter. That's the word He uses. The Comforter is going to come. So I need the Comforter or the Holy Spirit in my life to go with me when I must move outside of my comfort zone, when I must take that risk to love again, take that risk to travel again, take that risk to move to a different job, take that risk to take some steps about my health that might concern me, to go to the doctor when I have this history of going to doctors and there are problems, I got to go to the doctor again, I need the Comforter to travel with me. And that's what He does. He lives inside of me.

So this third tool is so valuable as you and I try to move past these limitations we put on ourselves because past offenses. We need the comfort and that's what Joseph is doing here. He's crying. He weeps when they spoke to him.

Notice verse 18. This is fascinating. *His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.”* Because that's what happens when you do not deal with the wall of self-protection that you build around yourself and that I build around myself. We don't deal with it, it becomes our master. We become servants. The fears of our lives become our lords. They become the bosses of our lives and they rob us of the vitality that we want. We'll see that a little bit more as we move forward. But the point is here, they're just really wanting to, “Okay, we'll be the servants here. We're going to sacrifice our vitality, recognizing we're afraid here,” and the fear becomes the boss of their lives. Boy, that's dangerous and should motivate us to say, “I'm not going to allow that to happen in my life. I'm going to do something about it.”

Well *Joseph said to them*, as they're saying we'll be your servants, he says these words, “*Do not fear.*” Okay, that's going to be the next thing. What are we at, number four? Okay, do not fear. It is a command notice. It's not saying you don't have to be afraid. That's not what he's saying. He's giving a command: Do not fear. Because fear is a choice. Oh this is so hard. Because there are so many times in our lives when it doesn't feel like a choice. It is really hard, I think, to sometimes take responsibility for our fears and go past them and allow God to work on them. Because it's hard. But how many times do we see that command in the Bible? *Do not fear.* Why? Because it's a choice that we make. And so Joseph is saying don't do that. You need to put that aside. We need to take responsibility for our fears. We need to say, “Okay. I'm going to make a choice. I'm going to change here. I'm moving in a different direction.” Do not be afraid.

Look at the next phrases. I think we're up to number five here. Look what he says next. He says – *“Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?”* He's saying, “Am I? You're making me into a god here in your life. I am not God.” But that's what happens, you see. When you start having fears in your life, then that thing that you're afraid of, that person you're afraid of, that relationship that you could be involved in that you're afraid of becomes your God. And it becomes this idol in our lives. Wow. Oh I need to be really careful about this. Because I'm reminded in the Ten Commandments *there shall be no other gods before me*. You shall have no other gods besides God Himself, Yahweh. And so now, could it be that I'm allowing, just by the very virtue of my emotional prison that I'm creating for myself, that I am somehow making that a god in my life? Oh man. That's scary and very motivating for me to deal with my own idolatry. To recognize that this is a spiritual issue. That I'm really allowing this to be the lord of my life. So now this thing controls me instead of God controlling me. God wants to take down all those things. He wants to be the only God in our lives to free us up, pull down the wall so we can enjoy life. We can have the vitality He wants us to enjoy. So Joseph is saying to them – *“For am I in the place of God?”* Wow, what an interesting statement.

Now we come to verse 20. Verse 20 is the God factor. So if we're listing all of these, I think now we're at number six. This is the God factor. Because if I'm just trapped by my emotions, the ticket out of the boundaries or out of the walls of that sour relationship I had with my father, or that difficult challenge I had with my mother, or that terrible problem I had with my ex, or whatever it is that you say, the ticket out is the God factor. Because it's the faith that allows us to go past the walls, the boundaries, into the anxiety... I'll tell you there's anxiety out there, but God is with me. I can take Him with me. It's the faith that I can experience.

Let me just show you how he describes this in verse 20. He says – *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”* There's a God factor, guys, you're not considering. You need to recognize that God is the one who's in control here. You need to understand that God has the big picture in mind that we don't understand. And even the bad things that were planned from the past, God uses them somehow in His infinite wisdom in our lives.

God wants to grow us to be stronger people. He wants us to be able to move forward in a powerful way. How is He going to do that? Well He's going to do that through the faith. And the faith takes us outside of the comfort zones that we create for ourselves that are mortared in with fears, and He breaks them down so that we can go outside of them. Is that easy? No. I don't know what God is calling you in your life to do, how He wants you to step out. But I want you to know, it's going to be anxiety-producing at some point. But that's okay. It's going to be uncomfortable for you to go outside of the boundary. But it's okay. Because when you go outside of the boundaries, and you experience that anxiety with the faith of God, you learn something whole new about God. You get to know Him in a new way. That doesn't mean everything's going to be fine. Bad things might happen. But you have the presence of God with you as you're moving forward. Just a beautiful thing that's taking place. The God factor.

In fact, this is Genesis 50:20. This is one of the key verses, I think, in the whole Bible. So I would suggest that we all want to have 50:20 vision. 50:20 vision. The ability to see that God is

at work in my life today and He wants to move me out of my comfort zones. He doesn't want the boys to be hindered by their past problems and lose the vitality of today. He doesn't want that for me too.

So those are six things. But I want to show you one more. The seventh thing. In verse 21 it says – *So do not fear*. So he makes the command again. Take charge here. Don't fear, he says. Then he says three things. I want you to look at these three things in this number seven thing, if we can do that. In other words, now that you start going out of your comfort zone into the anxiety area where God is going to work on your life, be watching for these three things. Because these are the three things that will keep you going. These are the three things that will build your faith. These are the three things that will give you the vitality you need in the midst of the challenges. These are the three things that will help you expand your personal growth with God very much involved in what you're doing. Here's the three things.

Notice he says – *“Do not fear; I will watch out for you and your little ones.”* Watch out for God's provision. Because when God is providing for you, you can say, “Oh God, thank you. I knew you'd provide for me. Here I am. I was afraid of things that are happening in my life, but you're providing for me. Oh thank you God, for doing that for me.” Provision. *Thus he comforted them*. So now we look for the comfort of God in our lives and we say, “Oh God, I needed that today.” Thank you for that friend who called me that you sent to me. Or thank you for that verse I found in your word. Thank you for that worship experience that I enjoyed, Lord. You comforted my soul today. We look for those things. We look for the provision of God, we look for the comfort of God, and we look for the kindness of God, which lastly it says – *He comforted them and spoke kindly to them*.

So we see the evidence of God's goodness all around, and we see and we say, “There it is. There's the promise that God is with me. And I can trust in Him.” We look for the goodness of God. We look for the goodness in the provision and the comfort of God when we're out in that kind of anxious area of our lives. And it's then that God fills up the soil of our hearts, breaks down those walls, and allows us to move forward in a way that has fullness of life.

That's why Paul describes this as when you become a Christian, old things are passed away, all things become new. Now maybe you're here today, and you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you're feeling a little anxious about that. I just want you to know that's good. It means that you're moving into an area of personal growth. When you ask Jesus Christ to come into your life, it launches you into something new, something good, something better than where you are now. It's a movement of faith where you say, “I need Jesus as the Savior of my life to move me forward.” And when you make that statement, you move out of the comfort zone, the protective area where you are into something bigger and better.

Well, let's finish off the book of Genesis with these last words. It says – *So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own. 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.” Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my*

*bones from here.” So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.*

In Exodus 13, when Moses comes to Pharaoh says, “All right, that's the Tenth Commandment. You told us to leave; we're leaving.” He says, “Take the bones of Joseph and let's go.” And so he takes those bones and they go back to Canaan where Joseph will be buried. That's the end of chapter 50.

One thousand five hundred thirty-three verses we've looked at in the book of Genesis. Thirty-eight sermons, fifty chapters in this book. What a powerful book. It started, remember, with God creating all of these things. He created a universe, He created a world for us to live in, He created animals and plants, He created people, He created relationships, He created relationship with Himself, He created the family. But then came the fall. This fall that sin came into the world and broke our world all up. You know that. We experienced the brokenness of the fall continually in our lives. But a promise was made in Genesis 3:15, a promise that said someday there's going to be a solution to this brokenness that you're experiencing. Well, that took us to chapter 12. And in chapter 12, then we start the story of the family, that God's working through Abraham, who failed God. But God kept the promise over Abraham and said, “I'm going to give you the promise of a land of your people increasing and a blessing on you.” Then it went down to his son, Isaac, who failed miserably as well. But God kept the promise over Isaac. The same happened with Jacob. God kept the promise over Jacob. Then it goes to Judah. And now we get to the end of the book and Joseph dies. And we say, “Wow, that's the end of the book.” The book of beginnings. But it's only the beginning of the whole story of the Bible. Because now the other sixty-five books of the Bible are the story about the promise, and how that promise comes about and what it looks like.

It's a great story. We're not going to go into Exodus, although it'd be great to go right through the whole Bible verse by verse. But just for the diet, our own spiritual diet, I go back and forth between the New Testament and the Old Testament. So we're going to go into the New Testament, the book of Philippians. But what a beautiful picture we have of the promises of God that He takes us forward in our own lives.

I don't know what God has for you. But I do know this. That God wants us to move outside of our comfort zones. He wants us to be able to trust Him for bigger and better things. And that step of faith moves us further into where God has for us. Sometimes it's more joy in our lives, as we're going to talk about through Philippians. Sometimes it's moving into another area of your life, progressing somewhere. I don't know. All I know is that we don't want to be trapped by our past, as these boys were. We want to be able to move forward and enjoy the Lord. We really need God in our lives. That is the story of the Bible. That when we have God, we recognize we need Him so much, that we're able to enjoy Him and move forward in a rather powerful way.

I trust that God will use that in your own heart and life in a personal way. That God will apply it to your life in ways that you need today. In fact, I'd encourage you while we sing this next song to just allow God to speak to you. If God is saying to you, “Hey, you really need to trust me as your Lord and Savior,” why don't you come on up here. I'll be up here ready to pray for people during the song. Or maybe you're saying, “You know, God is really speaking to me. I need



something for my own heart,” then come on up here. I'll pray with you. Maybe you've got some friend that you're praying for and you want someone to pray with you for that friend. Come on up and we'll pray with you this morning.