

## Genesis 45:16-46:7 — From Famine to Fortune

**November 13, 2016**

Welcome to CrossWinds. On both of our campuses we are studying through the book of Genesis. For the last few weeks we focused in on Joseph. His story dominates the last part of this biblical book.

In earlier weeks, we saw the great crisis in Joseph's life began when his brothers sold him into slavery out of jealousy, when he was 17. As a slave in Egypt, because of God's graciousness, he rose in the ranks to become the top slave in Potiphar's household before Mrs. Potiphar falsely accused him of rape. She was accustomed to getting what she wanted. She wanted him and wasn't getting him. Accusing him of rape was her way to get even.

For Joseph, I am sure it felt like life was spinning out of control. The truth is God was fully in control. Through a series of circumstances Joseph served the cup bearer of Pharaoh while he was in prison for a crime of which he was later acquitted. Two years after the cup bearer was restored to power, Pharaoh had a dream nobody could interpret. The cup bearer remembered Joseph and connected him to Pharaoh. After Joseph successfully interpreted and applied Pharaoh's dream, that led to Pharaoh making Joseph second in command of Egypt, the second-most powerful person in the world.

Joseph was Pharaoh's man to get Egypt through seven years of prosperity and the seven years of famine. During that famine, Joseph's brothers were forced to come to Egypt and bow before Joseph as they looked for food. Joseph recognized them but they didn't recognize him. He wondered if they were the same scoundrels that would sell their own flesh and blood into slavery, like

they did 22 years before. Joseph put them through a series of tests to see if they changed.

The ultimate test was when Joseph framed Benjamin, the youngest brother, for the crime of stealing Joseph's cup. In what was a forecast of what Christ came to do, Judah, the same brother that sold Joseph into slavery 22 years before, stepped forward and offered to become a slave instead of allowing Benjamin, the younger brother to face slavery and certain death.

Judah stepped in to save Benjamin from slavery and certain death. Jesus, who is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, because he is a descendant of this very brother, came to do the same thing. He came to step in for us. He came to die in our places for our sin and to save us from slavery to sin and eternal death.

Last week, we looked at what happened to Joseph when he saw one brother stepping in to give his life to save another. We saw how Joseph, the man who was usually cool, collected, and under control, completely lost it. He burst out in tears as he confessed his identity to his brothers. It was such a shocking moment that his brothers were left speechless. The brother they thought was a lowly slave or possibly dead by God's grace had risen to become the second-most powerful man on the planet to save their lives and the lives of millions of others during the famine.

Last week, we focused on one particular aspect of Joseph's reunion with his brothers. That was the incredible amount of forgiveness he extended to them after the incredibly dark sin they did to him. How could he find it within himself to forgive them? We learned one key principle that is practical for all of us when life

falls apart. *No matter what sin is done against us, it cannot destroy God's good plan for us.* No matter what sin Joseph's brothers did to him God took it and rolled it into his plan to get Joseph to Egypt and make him ruler over Egypt. No matter what sin Mrs. Potiphar did to him, it did not destroy God's good plans to raise Joseph to power in Egypt and save many lives. God took that sin and incorporated it into his plans. It didn't thwart God's good plans for Joseph's life.

In a similar way, no matter what happens when people sin against us, their sin cannot thwart God's good plans for us. This means we do not lose hope even when our lives feel like they are falling apart because of what others have done against us. The God who loves us is bigger than the sin done to us. It may hurt. It may be hard and long but it cannot ruin God's good plans for you and me.

This morning we continue the story of Joseph's reunion with his brothers and find out what happens when Pharaoh hears Joseph's brother returned and the brothers make the trip home to their father and the cover on their 22-year lie is blown.

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.'" Genesis 45:16–20 (ESV)

When Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers came, he was pumped. Joseph meant so much to Pharaoh. God's wisdom through Joseph's life prepared an entire nation for the famine and carried it through the famine.

Pharaoh, who was extremely grateful to Joseph, saw this as an opportunity to express his thanks to Joseph by blessing Joseph's family. Pharaoh told them to load up and head home. Come back to Egypt because Pharaoh is planning on blessing you. I love the way Pharaoh said it. "You will eat of the fat of the land." Maybe he should have said p-h-a-t. You guys were dying of starvation in Canaan. We are going to fatten you up not on fast food but on the best food we have to offer in the land of Egypt. Joseph's father and brothers just won the lottery. They were going from scraping by to getting the best of everything.

Even the trip there would be luxurious. Instead of walking, everybody was riding in wagons. Wagons are mentioned four times in this passage. These were not jalopies. These were Cadillac Escalades with tinted windows, spinning rims and sub woofers. They were going to ride in style to Egypt.

I love what Pharaoh said next. "Have no concern for your goods for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours." Can you imagine this? You guys don't need to rent a moving truck. Leave all your junk in the desert and walk away. Everything you will have in Egypt will be better than the junk you have at home.

I could relate to this. As many of you know, we recently moved into a different house. We moved lots of historical junk with us. There is the old television that I still can't part with. Of course there is the VCR. I haven't used it for years but I remember paying for it so it is hard to throw away. Then there is my reading light I bought 10 years ago. I bought it because reading a book in my old basement was too dark. Now I read on my iPad and computer so I don't need that extra light but I just can't get myself to throw away. It is hard to let your old

stuff go. Pharaoh said, "Leave everything behind because all of it is junk compared to what you will have in Egypt. You won the lottery."

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. 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, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way." Genesis 45:21–24 (ESV)

After they each get a Cadillac Escalade, and provisions for the journey, they also get a set of new clothes. Why did he give them new clothes? A few thoughts cross my mind. Do you remember what happened when Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack? What did they do? They tore their clothes. Out of grief they ruined their clothes. Joseph gave them new clothes. In addition, what were they jealous of 22 years before that Joseph had which they didn't? New clothes, a coat of many colors. Now Joseph gave them pimped out clothing.

Benjamin he favored. He gave Benjamin 300 shekels of silver. I think that was 22 years of deferred birthday money. In addition, he gave him five changes of clothes instead of one. That is the same amount he favored Benjamin by at the dinner the night before. Why did he favor Benjamin? He was the only brother that was a full brother. The other brothers had the same father but different mothers. Benjamin was Joseph's only full brother so there was a special bond and love.

I also like when Joseph said to them. "Don't argue on the way home." It would be easy for them to deteriorate into arguments. Reuben would tell them he tried to stop them from selling Joseph into slavery. Judah would tell them it was a good thing he sold Joseph into slavery or they would be all dying of starvation.

Their bickering could turn into a complete mess. Who knows how they were going to tell dad and confess their sin. I love the way Joseph said this. He simply said, “Don’t argue about it on the way home. What is done is done. It is history in the past. Let’s not keep hashing up the past. Let’s start moving forward into the future. God is bringing you to Egypt. God is saving you and blessing you beyond your wildest dreams. Stop arguing about the past. Move into your future.”

I think there is some wisdom for all of us in this. When someone has hurt us and they are broken and repentant over their sin, let it go. Refuse to keep bringing it up again and again.

Let me get real practical. When you end up in a fight with your spouse, I have said this many times, when you get hysterical, refuse to get historical. When you fight over an issue, don’t bring up issues from the past over which there was repentance and forgiveness. Let it go. Move on. The story continues.

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, 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.” Genesis 45:25–28 (ESV)

Why didn’t Dad believe them? I think it was because he was used to them lying for the last 22 years. It also seemed too good to be true to have Joseph alive, especially after they had his funeral. How could dad argue with this? The brothers drove up in Cadillac Escalades, or they call them carts in Hebrew. They proved the brothers were telling the truth. The provisions and the carts proved

Joseph was alive, second in command of all of Egypt, and Joseph provided everything necessary to carry his father and his family home.

There is an interesting parallel. Just like Joseph, Jesus was considered dead. Jesus rose from the dead to be second in command of the entire world. Just as Joseph ruled under the direction of Pharaoh, Jesus rules under the direction of his heavenly father. Just as Joseph absorbed the cost of his brother's sin and freed them from the endless cycle of guilt and shame, Jesus absorbed the cost of our sin and frees us from an endless cycle of guilt and shame. Just as Pharaoh was pleased with Joseph and desired to bless his brothers for Joseph's sake, God the Father was pleased with his son, Jesus, and his work on the cross and desires to bless us, his brothers, for Jesus' sake. Just as Joseph provided everything necessary to bring his father and family home to the land of blessing in Egypt, Jesus provides us with everything necessary to bring us home to the land of blessing called heaven. The cart that carries us there is the Holy Spirit who is the downpayment Scripture says guarantees our inheritance and sustains us on our journey to our heavenly home.

Joseph's rescue of his brothers closely parallels Jesus' rescue of us, his brothers and sisters.

So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes." Genesis 46:1-4 (ESV)

Why did Jacob stop at Beersheba? Beersheba was at the southern most part of the Promised Land. It was the last gas station stop before the long trek across the desert. It was the point of no return. In addition, it was where God appeared to Isaac, Jacob's father. That is where Abraham—Jacob's grandfather, called on God. As we saw in our study of Genesis, Beersheba is one of the key places people went to call on God in difficult times in their lives. Jacob did the same.

What is the big question in Jacob's mind? Grandpa Abraham went to Egypt out of fear during a famine and almost lost his wife, Sarah, into Pharaoh's harem. Isaac had also gone to Egypt during a famine in disobedience to God rather than staying in the Promised Land during the famine and letting God provide.

What do you think was on Jacob's mind? My father and grandfather both went to Egypt during a famine in disobedience to God and suffered for it. Now it seems like God is leading us to Egypt with Joseph. Should I go or should I stay?

There is a little practical point of application here. Providence is guidance. Usually. That means we determine God's will for our lives by the doors God opens for us. Usually. If God opens a door of opportunity that seems to answer an obvious need, we should still need to stop and pray over it before walking through that door. We still need to talk with God and ask him to either shut the door or to confirm his direction in our lives by giving us peace of mind or direction on the way he wants us to go.

Sometimes, when we finally get alone to pray, is when we can finally sense that check in our spirit about something that looks right but God will stop us. Other times God will give us confirmation in our spirit about the way he wants us to go, like he did with Jacob. Even when providence looks like guidance, like Jacob, we need to stop and pray before we move.

God confirmed to Jacob that he should head to Egypt and that in Egypt, God would grow the family into a great nation. God would also eventually take them out of Egypt. This is a confirmation of what God said to Abraham.

Then the Lord said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” Genesis 15:13–14 (ESV)

That was God’s word to Abraham two generations before. Just as God used the sin against Joseph as part of his plan to save Joseph’s brothers, God would incorporate the sin of the Egyptians 400 years later as part of his plan to free the descendants of the brothers in the Exodus.

Then Jacob set out from Beersheba. The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt. Genesis 46:5–7 (ESV)

Here is something interesting. Were they supposed to bring their stuff to Egypt? No. Did they bring their stuff to Egypt? Yes. Why do you think they brought their stuff instead of putting it on eBay? They couldn’t conceive of how good their future would be. They couldn’t conceive of all the blessings in store for them. They held onto the past because the future seemed too good to be true.

Isn't that just like us? Don't we hold onto everything we have in this life? Just like Jacob and Joseph's brothers, even though God promises to give us much more than we could ever ask or imagine, we don't believe it. We hold onto things so tightly in this world that we won't let it go.

As I was wrestling with how to apply this passage, the thought came to mind that just as Joseph's saving of his brothers' lives and bringing them home to blessing in Egypt closely parallels Jesus saving our lives and bringing us home to blessings in heaven, when it comes to application, we should explore how that works out in our lives.

### Application

**Christians will love the way their story ends.**

Just as Joseph's brothers were struggling to survive until they received a great inheritance they didn't deserve in the land of Goshen, the best land in Egypt, in a similar way we need to expect that we will face times of struggle and suffering in this life. When life is over, we will be brought home to heaven because of what Jesus, our brother, did for us.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4–7 (ESV)

In eternity God says one of our great purposes is to be a grand display for all of eternity of what it looks like for God to bless the socks off the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ in ways they never deserved and never imagined, just like Pharaoh blessed Joseph's brothers in ways they never deserved and could have

never imagined. If you have confessed to God your brokenness and your sinfulness and trusted in Jesus Christ to pay for your sin, for all of eternity, not because you deserve it but simply because God loves you and wants to bless you beyond your wildest dreams, we will constantly for every day in every way be newly blessed by Jesus and his kindness to us through Jesus. It will not stop for all of eternity.

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)**

Just as Pharaoh blessed Joseph's brothers with every practical blessing in Egypt, God the Father will bless the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ with every spiritual blessing in heaven. As Christians, there will be nothing in all of creation that is more blessed than we are. Nothing. We deserve none of it. It is all a gift from God the father to us because of our brother, Jesus Christ. The Bible says that right now we are below the angels but in all of eternity through Christ we will be over the angels and even judges of the angels. Nothing is more blessed than Christians when we get to heaven. If you liked the way the story ended for Joseph, you will love the way the story ends for each of us through Jesus.

**Some people will NOT like the way the story ends.**

Everyone on this planet will not live happily ever after when he or she dies. The Bible is abundantly clear. There are two options for eternity: Smoking and non-smoking.

**And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. Matthew 25:46 (ESV)**

There is either eternal punishment for our sins or eternal life. We already learned who are the righteous. The only way we have any righteousness is not because of the perfection of our lives but because of the perfection of Christ's life and by our faith in him the Bible says Christ's righteousness is given to us. Christ's righteousness starts to change us.

...and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 (ESV)

Look at this verse. When Christ returns, he will come in judgment. Who will he judge? Those who do not know God and who haven't responded to the good news of Jesus. The punishment they will suffer is eternal destruction away from God. Notice the Bible is clear that only those who have responded to Christ will be in heaven. I know that is not politically correct. We like to think good people go to heaven. There are no good people. We like to think other religions go to heaven. According to the Bible, only those who have responded to Christ go to heaven. Everyone else will face eternal destruction. Just so you know, eternal destruction is not unfair. The whole point of the Lake of Fire in the Bible is a just response to sin. The only unjust response to sin is what Christians receive where Jesus took all the just punishment we deserve and gave us his righteousness that we don't deserve.

This is why as a church we talk about Jesus. As much as we would like there to be some other way to be forgiven of our sins apart from Jesus, the Bible says there is no other way. The good news is all God is asking us to do is

genuinely confess our sin to Jesus and ask him to forgive our sin and trust in him as our savior. In that moment, we are born again. This life is changed and our eternity is changed. We go from getting what we deserve in eternity to getting what we don't deserve and being the most blessed beings in all of creation. Either we will hate the way the story of our lives end apart from Jesus or we will love the way the story of our lives end with Jesus. There is no other option.

**God specializes in turning around hopeless situations.**

I love the way God brought Jacob and his sons to the end of themselves before he providentially brought everything together and completely flipped things around in the opposite direction and blessed off their socks. God loves to make his name great by bringing his children, that is you and me, to the end of ourselves and then coming to our rescue in ways we would have never have imagined. We see this with Daniel, when God came to his rescue in the lion's den; we see this with Abraham and Sarah when they couldn't have a child until their bodies were as good as dead, then God came to the rescue.

This is a pattern that didn't just happen, it is happening in our lives. As Christians, expect God to allow adversity into our lives. Expect God to bring us to the point of brokenness and hopelessness, like Jacob and his sons starving in Canaan, when at the last minute God comes to the rescue in a way we would never imagine and is better than we deserve. That is the way God works. He does this again and again to make his name famous in our lives. We come to the end of ourselves and at the last minute God comes to the rescue.

Now I know there is part of us that doesn't agree with this. Sometimes it seems God doesn't come to the rescue. People don't make it through. They die. But God does come to the rescue. As Christians, when we die, death is not the bitter end. It is the better end. God comes to our rescue and snatches us from an eternity destined for hell to an eternity of being with Jesus as the most blessed beings in all creation for all eternity. It is the same theme all over again. God allows us to be brought to the edge of great tragedy and when we least expect it snatches us into victory as a gift.

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:55–57 (ESV)

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” 1 Corinthians 2:9 (ESV)

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison... 2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

I love the way Paul described this life. All of the hardships in this life are nothing more than a light and momentary affliction compared to what awaits us when we get to heaven.

## Conclusion

If you are like me, you love the way the Joseph story ends. We love how Joseph's father and brothers were snatched from death, reunited with Joseph and blessed beyond their widest dreams by Pharaoh because of the great work of Joseph. That isn't just the Joseph story. If you are a Christian, it is your story.

Just as Pharaoh was pleased with the saving work of Joseph, God the Father was pleased with the saving work of his son, and he delights to bless us,

the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ beyond our wildest dreams for all of eternity in ways we don't deserve and couldn't even imagine. God the Father has sent us the cart of the Holy Spirit to carry us home. This gives us reason to rejoice.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at [www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com) ([www.c2rc.com](http://www.c2rc.com))

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