

Finding Peace

(Overcoming Grief)

Genesis 37:34-35; 42:36; 46:29-30 (2 Cor. 5:8-9)

Sermon Outline

A. No Peace (Genesis 37:33-36):

1. Examined; It is my son's tunic – When love is partial it can damage lives.
 - a) Jacob was given a bloody coat and a deceitful tale that practically broke the heart of the old patriarch. He was convinced that his favorite son was dead. The one who, in his youth, had been a champion deceiver was now cruelly deceived.¹
 - b) Mourning practices. Mourning practices generally included tearing one's robe, weeping, putting dust and ashes in the hair and wearing sackcloth. Sackcloth was made of goat's or camel's hair and was coarse and uncomfortable. In many cases the sackcloth was only a loin covering. The official period of mourning was thirty days but could continue for as long as the mourner chose to continue to grieve.²
2. He refused to be comforted – True love has no cure.
 - a) Jacob mourned for days. He could not be comforted and did not desire comfort from anyone.
3. He refused to be comforted – He never stopped missing his son (Genesis 46:30).
4. He refused to be comforted – Jacob's life was not the same (Genesis 42:36).
5. Go down to Sheol - Hebrew Sheol describes the underground abode of the dead, answering to Greek "Hades." There, according to tradition, disembodied spirits continue to exist in shadowy regions that have no exit and no communication with God or man. It is a mere half existence. Jacob realized that he would be going to Sheol soon, but he had no hope of seeing an end to his poignant sufferings until that hour.³
6. Treat – Jacob loved all his sons, and his desire was to preserve his family (Genesis 43:14).

B. God Restores (Genesis 42:36-37):

1. Jacob said – Upon seeing the money in the sacks Jacob immediately spoke up with no desire to stop saying what he felt.

¹ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Ge 37:29–36). Chicago: Moody Press.

² Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). *The IVP Bible background commentary : Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ge 37:36). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

³ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Ge 37:29–36). Chicago: Moody Press.

- a) For this sons to be taken from Jacob “it is against him” – this is something that is beyond his ability to handle.
2. Bereaved (44:22 – If Benjamin does not return Jacob would die) – Jacob was feeling childless, as if under the divine judgment of God.
- a) But Jacob refused to let Benjamin go. He said if something happened to his youngest, he would sorrow the rest of his days, just as he had said when he heard of Joseph’s “death” (37:35).⁴
- b) Jacob blames the brothers for his bereavement (“deprived,” *šākal*), which explains why Reuben, the eldest son and presumably the most liable, makes his desperate proposal next (v. 37). Loss of children was the most woeful sorrow that a parent could experience in ancient Israel (e.g., Job 1:18–20; cf. 27:45; Lev 26:22). Here, Jacob voices his despair, “Everything is against me!” but later sounds his impotence, “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved” (*šākal*, 43:14).⁵
3. Take – Jacob’s sons were continuously trying to take Benjamin. He did not expect Benjamin to return because he believed that Joseph was dead.
4. All these things – Jacob felt as if his entire family was being taken from him. The use of “against” could mean beyond him; he felt that he had no one left. This is because he loved Rachel’s children more than Leah’s. He appears to act as if he believed that God was punishing him for this.
5. Are against – Because Jacob’s sons continued to try to get him to release Benjamin, Jacob believed that everything was working against him.
6. Reuben spoke (vs. 37) – Upon seeing the grief his father displayed Reuben spoke up and provided a possible solution.
- a) Reuben took the lead. He tried to comfort his father, just as he had tried to stop his brothers from hurting Joseph (37:22). The rash vow Reuben made concerning his own sons was an attempt to show how determined he was. Nonetheless, such vows sometimes brought disaster in biblical times (read the story of Jephthah’s daughter, Judg. 11:29–40). It is better to follow Jesus’ instruction for “Yes” and “No” in Matt. 5:33–37.⁶
7. Said (vs. 37) – Reuben knew they did not deserve their father’s trust.
8. Two sons to death – Reuben keep telling Jacob that if he did not return Simeon and Benjamin, Jacob could execute Reuben’s sons.

⁴ Ross, A. P. (1985). Genesis. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 93). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ Mathews, K. A. (2005). *Genesis 11:27–50:26* (Vol. 1B, p. 783). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁶ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson’s new illustrated Bible commentary* (p. 75). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

9. Put him; Given you – Reuben charged Jacob, since Reuben gave him his two sons (to hand over Benjamin) for him to take care of from his heart. Reuben said he understood the generosity of the gift and therefore would exercise care for Benjamin from his heart.
10. My care; Hands – Reuben would personally use all the means that were within his authority and ability to prevent any harm from coming upon Benjamin – accountability at its best!
11. I will return him – Reuben would ensure that Benjamin returned to his father.

C. God Heals (46:28-30; Revelation 21:4):

1. Sent – He chose Judah to go forward in advance of the company (sent Judah before him ... to direct his face unto Goshen, AV), to meet Joseph and complete the arrangements for their entrance into the land.
2. To point out – Jacob wanted to confirm that the way they were going was established and focused for the 76 people that were with him.
3. They came – To arrive in Goshen which was a fulfillment of God’s promise. They came with a purpose and did not stop until it was fulfilled; used with reference to the man who comes to the sanctuary with his community to pray and bring sacrifices.
4. Prepared – These sentences serve as brackets for a long narration about Joseph’s administration during the famine. The effect of his administrative actions strengthens governmental control over the entire Egyptian population (vv. 16–19). Pharaoh ends up owning all the livestock and property, save only that of the priests.
5. Went up – It did not matter how difficult it was to travel; Joseph went from a lower elevation to a higher elevation to meet his father.
 - a) Chariots in Egypt during this period were light, constructed of wooden frames and leather with two spoked wheels. The ornamental chariots of pharaohs (and undoubtedly their high officials) are often depicted in the art of the New Kingdom period.
6. Appeared – Joseph intelligently inspected all the people in search of his father because that was what mattered most, based on the message he received.
7. Fell – Joseph threw himself down on his face. As prince of all Egypt, Joseph placed himself into the hands of his father.
 - a) 46:28-34. Finally, after 22 years (see the chart “Chronology from Solomon Back to Joseph,” near 39:1-6a), Joseph and Jacob were reunited. Their response was one of mutual joy. Once again Joseph wept (cf. 42:24; 43:30; 45:2, 14-15) and understandably so. Jacob was satisfied to see his son alive, for he was the one designated as the heir, the one whom God had chosen to rule over the family. So, this

was more than a family reunion; it was a confirmation that God's promised blessing was intact.⁷

- b) The last time Joseph saw his father he was about 17 years old (37:2).
8. Wept – To complain really loud; a strong outward expression of grief. There is nothing wrong with a grown man crying. Joseph (as prince, with all his attire and his princely chariot) did not cry, he wept, not once, but several times and God made sure it was recorded. Jacob did not cry – he appears to be in shock but was willing to die now.
 9. A long time – Has a sense of repetition and permanence; a continuation of a past and present event. Joseph had no time (in his mind) to stop crying. He did not care who was looking (76 people are watching); he loved and missed his father so much that all he could do was cry.
 10. Said – The basic idea is the uttering of some type of spoken word. Israel could have also been thinking, with the intention of doing something.
 11. Die – What Jacob was saying is that if someone were to kill him, it was good because he had finally seen his son. Jacob lived with the purpose of hopefully reuniting with his son.
 12. Seen – Israel meant he carefully and cognitively checked Joseph out (Joseph was most likely wearing his Egyptian clothes) and Joseph was truly Joseph.
 13. Before – The person standing in his face is truly Joseph.
 14. You are still alive – Jacob has seen that Joseph is alive, in good health, doing well, and prospering.
 15. You are still alive – God providentially sends Joseph ahead so that all God's people would live and God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled.
 16. Said – Israel started saying that Joseph was alive. There was a sense of excitement as he spoke to the 76 people who were witnessing what was taking place.
 17. Joseph's plans to take care of his family – God restored a family. God will accomplish His purposes that sin once took apart.
 18. Sin brings death (Romans 5:15-17) – Sin causes us to be separated for a while, but God by His power and grace puts us back together in heaven forever (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). We must trust His plan and find comfort (John 14:1-4) and peace because there is going to be no more crying (Revelation 21:4).

⁷ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Ge 46:28). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.