

An Important Introduction

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[0 : 0 0] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 45.

Genesis chapter 45, and if we read again from the beginning. 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. And he wept aloud so that the Egyptians heard it and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

And Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph. Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

And so on. You know, it's often said that introductions are important. Introductions are important. And you know, when I studied at the Free Church College, writing essays, it wasn't something that I enjoyed.

[1 : 0 5] But I was always told that the introduction of an essay, it's an important and an integral part of the essay. Although the introduction, I was always told, it shouldn't be too long.

But it should provide a clear understanding of what the content of the essay will cover. And yet in my mind, when a lecturer said that to me, that was always easier said than done.

But there's also someone I also listen to and read about when it comes to learning about how to prepare and even preach sermons. My favorite preacher is Dr. Steve Lawson.

And he often gives lectures on the mechanics of preaching. And he's also the editor of a magazine that I often read. It's called The Expositor Magazine. It contains lots of articles about preaching and pastoring, something you're probably not interested in.

But Steve Lawson, he says that the introduction to a sermon, it's like the porch of a house. The front porch of a house, he says, it's supposed to attract the attention of the listener and draw them into the message.

[2 : 0 6] The introduction, he says, is intended to create interest as well as indicate the direction that the message will be headed. It should also show the importance of why this message being preached must be heard.

So that's why introductions are so important. Introductions are important. But it's not just an introduction to an essay or to a sermon that's important. When you meet someone for the first time, it's always good practice to introduce yourself.

It's not always easy. But instead of staring at someone when they walk into a room, what often breaks the ice or puts the other person at ease is when you introduce yourself and start a conversation with them.

And this is especially true when even someone comes to church for the first time. Or someone is visiting our congregation. Rather than just looking at them. We could wave to them or say hello to them or introduce ourselves and warmly welcome them.

And it's all because introductions are important. Introductions are important. And you know, we certainly see that in this passage. Because when Joseph finally reveals his identity and introduces himself to his brothers, what we see is that it's an important introduction.

[3 : 23] It's an important introduction. And it's an important introduction because his brothers, they are introduced in this passage. They're introduced first of all to sin. Then the Savior.

And then the Son. It's an important introduction. Because Joseph's brothers are introduced to sin, the Savior, and the Son. Sin, the Savior, and the Son.

So first of all, we see that Joseph's brothers are introduced to sin. They're introduced to sin. Look at verse 4. We read, Now, as you know, we've repeatedly seen and said throughout our study of the life of Joseph.

That Joseph, he isn't actually the main character in the story. Neither are his brothers or his father Jacob. Instead, the Lord is the main character in the story.

He is the author of the story. He's the director in the drama. The Lord has written this storyline. And as a family, they might not have understood the storyline. They might not have known why things were happening the way they were.

[4 : 50] They might not have foreseen all the twists and turns in the narrative. But the Lord did. The Lord saw it all. And the Lord knew what he was doing in this family. Because the Lord was interested in this family.

And the Lord was with this family. And the Lord was at work in this family. Which, as we said before, it's a humbling reminder to us that whatever is going on in our family today, we have the assurance that the Lord is with us.

And the Lord is working in us. But, you know, when Joseph's brothers brought Benjamin to Egypt, you remember that Joseph issued that invitation.

He said to them all, come dine with me. Come dine with me. And then as we saw last Lord's Day, while they were dining with Joseph, Joseph, he put his silver cup, or he had his silver cup put into Benjamin's sack.

And it was all to test his brothers. So the invitation led to this investigation, or even an interrogation of Joseph's brothers.

[5 : 57] Because the real question which Joseph wanted to know, the answer he wanted to know was, in 20 years, have my brothers changed? In 20 years, have my brothers changed?

Has grace worked in their lives at all? And the only way to know was, how would they react? How would they react when the silver cup is found in Benjamin's sack?

Would they treat Benjamin just like they treated Joseph 20 years earlier? Or would they treat him like a brother? Would they despise their father's favorite, or would they defend him?

Would they blame Benjamin or barter for him? How do Joseph's brothers react towards Benjamin? How they reacted, that would reveal whether after all these years, after 20 years, if Joseph's brothers have changed at all.

And what the investigation and the interrogation, what it revealed was remorse and repentance. Joseph's brothers, we read that they tore their clothes, and then they turned back.

[7 : 00] They returned to Egypt. They didn't react the way they did 20 years ago with Joseph. And it was all because their lives had changed. Their hearts had changed.

Grace was at work in their experience. Grace was working in their life. And that was evident by the intercession of Judah, one of the elder brothers.

Judah interceded on behalf of his younger brother, Benjamin. And Judah's intercession, when you read it in chapter 44, it's so humble and so heartfelt. But this is the point.

Judah's intercession was so humble and so heartfelt that Joseph couldn't contain himself any longer. Joseph had to just let it out.

He had to reveal his identity. He had to finally introduce himself as their brother. And we read in verse 1, Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him.

[8 : 00] And he cried, Make everyone go out from me. So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brother. And you know, if you're anything like me, you probably think, Well, Joseph's introduction, it's long overdue.

We've been waiting for this introduction for the last few chapters. We've been waiting for ages. And time and time again, we've witnessed Joseph's emotions being stirred.

In fact, the narrative, it tells us that Joseph's compassion, it grew warm towards his brothers. His love for his brothers, it began to, literally it says, it began to bubble in his bowels.

So his emotions, they're building and building. They're bubbling and bubbling. And we've seen that as we've gone through the chapters. We saw in chapter 42, when Joseph's brothers, they were speaking in Hebrew right in front of him.

And they thought that, well, nobody in the palace is going to know what Hebrew is. They're not going to speak our language. So they start speaking about Joseph and what they did to Joseph. And they're speaking about Joseph right in front of Joseph.

[9 : 06] And on hearing it, Joseph, he runs away quietly. And he starts weeping. And then we see it more again in chapter 43, when Joseph sees Benjamin for the first time in 20 years.

And he has to leave the room to calm down and compose himself because of all this emotion that's building inside him. This emotional tension. And then through the investigation and the interrogation, Joseph then witnesses Judah's intercession.

And you read that Joseph's emotions, as a man, his emotions are all over the place. And they're building and building and bubbling and bubbling to the point that he can't contain himself any longer.

And it's all just becoming too much for Joseph that he sends out his servants. He sends them all out to the room and he just cries in front of his family. I am Joseph. I am Joseph.

I am Joseph. And you know, it must have been a great relief for Joseph to finally introduce himself to his brother. Being with him that long and holding it all in.

[10 : 11] And yet he just bursts out with it. I am Joseph. You know, it's like the relief you feel when you openly and publicly confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

If you're a Christian here this morning, you'll know that there's this weight that was on you for years. And it was weighing you down. But the moment you confess Jesus as Lord, the weight just lifts off you.

And it's the moment you say, I am a Christian. Just like Joseph said, I am Joseph. I am a Christian. I am a Christian. I am a Christian. I am one of the Lords.

It's that relief that comes. Have you done that, my friend? Have you done? Have you confessed Christ as your Savior? Have you confessed him as your Lord?

Because relief will come when you're resting in Christ and resounding his name. Relief will come when you're resting in Christ and resounding his name.

[11 : 18] I am a Christian. But, you know, as we said, when Joseph introduces himself to his brothers, they're actually introduced, first of all, to sin.

They're introduced to sin. Because when Joseph revealed his identity, when he introduced himself as their long-lost brother, whom they had seized and separated and sold into slavery in Egypt at the age of 17, you know, they were confronted immediately with the sins of their past.

That's who Joseph was to them. He was the sins of their past. And it was an uncomfortable moment for them. It was an uncomfortable moment.

But, you know, when is a confrontation with the sins of our past, when is that ever comfortable? Sin should never be comfortable. We should never be comfortable or casual or even careless when it comes to sin.

Because, as the Bible reminds us, Romans 6, the wages of sin is death. The reason people die is because of the wages of sin.

[12 : 32] But the wages of sin is physical death. It's also spiritual death in hell. And so sin is serious. Which is why we should never be comfortable or casual or careless about sin.

But, you know, the glory of the gospel is that even though we're introduced to sin here, it's all in order to be introduced to the Savior. We're introduced to sin in the gospel in order to show us just how bad the bad news is.

And it's bad. And all mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God. And we are hell-deserving sinners. We're under the wrath of God.

But, you know, the wonderful thing about the gospel is that it not only introduces us to sin, it introduces us to the Savior. It shows us how good the good news is. And how good is the good news?

It's really good, isn't it? Because the good news, my friend, is that even though the wages of sin is death, the gift of God, the free gift of God, is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[13 : 52] And we should never lose sight of that fact. This is the greatest gift, the greatest gift to mankind. Jesus Christ.

Life through the Son. Jesus Christ. And so when Joseph introduced himself, his brothers, they were introduced to sin. Then secondly, they were introduced to the Savior.

So introduced to sin. And then secondly, introduced to the Savior. Introduced to the Savior. Look at verse 5. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here.

For God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years. And yet there are five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.

And God sent me before you to preserve 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.

[14 : 51] He has made me a father to Pharaoh and Lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. You know, when Joseph introduced himself to his brothers, we were told that they were shocked and speechless.

Which is hardly surprising because they were all convinced that Joseph was dead. But now he's alive. And what's more is that when Joseph sent out all his servants, he also instructed all the interpreters to leave too.

So it was just Joseph and his brothers. And it was then that Joseph, he spoke directly to his brothers in Hebrew, their mother tongue. Which inevitably had left all of Joseph's brothers completely baffled and bewildered about what was going on.

Because when Joseph reveals his identity, when he introduces himself as their brother who's now dead and alive again. And now the prime minister in Egypt who can speak Hebrew.

They're looking at him and it's a lot for them to take in. But you know what I love is how Joseph, he asserts and he affirms to them, this is all the doing of the Lord.

[16 : 06] You'll notice from the verses we read that when he said, I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into slavery. Joseph's brothers, they're not only introduced to sin, they're also introduced to the Savior.

Because Joseph repeatedly says, God sent me to preserve your life. God sent me before you to keep you alive. It was not you who sent me here, but God.

God sent me, he says. God sent me. God sent me. Three times, Joseph, he asserts and affirms to his brothers that God's perfect plan, path and purpose, it was much bigger and much better, and it was ruling over and overruling all their schemes and sins of the past.

You know, my friend, when Joseph introduced himself, he introduced his brothers to the Savior. He introduced them to the Savior who is not only the Savior of sinners, but also the Savior who is sovereign.

Who's sovereign over all our circumstances and all our situations in our lives. And you know, my Christian friend, that should be our primary purpose and priority.

[17 : 19] To introduce people to the Savior of sinners and the Savior who is sovereign over our lives. Our primary purpose and priority should be to introduce our family and our friends to the Savior of sinners and the Savior who is sovereign over our lives.

Because, my friend, there is no one else like him. There is no one else like this Savior. There is no one else who promises to be with us in life and beside us in death.

There is no one else who is able to deal with our sin and deal with our sickness and deal with our suffering and deal with all our sorrows. There is no one else who is able to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows.

There is no one else who is sovereign over all our lives. And you know, this is something we should never lose sight of. Because when we speak about the Savior's sovereignty over our lives, we always mean that Jesus is King.

He's the sovereign. He's supreme. He's superior. He's ruling. He's reigning. He's enthroned on high where heaven is His throne and this earth is His footstool.

[18 : 28] And everything in our lives, they are all working together according to His perfect plan, path, and purpose. My friend, it's not working according to fate or fortune.

It's not an accident or an incident. It's not by chance or by luck or at random. No, it's all according to the supreme sovereignty of our Savior, Jesus Christ. And you know, for Joseph, you put it into context, for Joseph to say this to his brothers was massive.

Because after all that Joseph had been through in those 20 years, where he had been seized by his brothers, his own brothers separated from his family, sold into Egypt, served as a slave in Pharaoh's palace.

He was securely locked up in prison for years. And yet in God's perfect providence, he was made sovereign over Egypt and he was made saviour of the ancient world.

But you know, as Joseph looked back over those 20 years in his life and all the hardship and all the heartache that he had been through, all he could say was, God sent me here.

[19 : 40] God sent me here. God sent me here. This was all according to the supreme and superior sovereignty of the Lord.

Nothing was wasted or left wanting in the perfect plan, path and purpose of the Lord. And you look at Joseph, my friend, and he is silently submitting and surrendering his life under the supreme and sovereign rule and reign of his saviour.

Why? Because Joseph had a Christian perspective on life. Joseph had a Christian perspective on life. In fact, it was an eternal perspective.

Because in all that Joseph went through, you know, he could echo the words of Paul. He looked not to the things that were seen, but to the things that were unseen.

For the things that are seen, they are only temporal. But the things that are unseen are eternal. Joseph lived his life with an eternal perspective.

[20 : 53] But you know, the question we have to ask ourselves is, if you and I were to look back over the past 20, 30, 40 years of our life, would we have the same perspective?

Would we see the Lord's supreme and superior and sovereign hand at work in our lives? Would we acknowledge that his ways are not our ways?

And his thoughts are not our thoughts? Would we confess that every sin and every sickness and every suffering that we went through and every sorrow we experienced, would we confess that it was all part of his perfect path and plan and purpose?

Would we look at our lives with an eternal perspective? You know, when Paul wrote that well-known and much-loved chapter in Romans 8, that's what he sought to remind us and reassure us, that we must live our life with an eternal perspective.

Because as Christians, Paul says to us in Romans 8, and if you've never read it, read it. If you haven't read it in a while, read it again. He says, In Christ Jesus, as those who are in union with Christ, there is therefore now no condemnation.

[22 : 10] But there is also therefore now no separation. Because neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other creature is able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But more than that, Paul says, as those who are in Christ Jesus, he says, we know. We know that our supreme, superior, and sovereign Savior, he is working all things together for good.

Now that's not a throwaway verse. That's a verse to cling to. We know. We know, he says. As those who are in Christ, we know.

And he says that because the world doesn't know. The world asks, why do bad things happen to good people? The world asks, why me? Why now?

Why this way? The world asks, the world gets angry and agitated with God when things don't work out according to their perfect plan and purpose and all the ways that they want things to work out.

[23 : 23] But Paul says that we need the eternal perspective of a Christian. And when we have it, we know. We know that our supreme, superior, and sovereign Savior is working all things together for good to them that love God and to them who are called according to his purpose.

And of course, my friend, that doesn't mean that the life of a Christian is free from sin or sickness or suffering or sorrow. Not at all. But it does mean that our only comfort in life and in death is that we belong to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

And that without the will of our Heavenly Father, not even a hair can fall from our head. You know, my friend, when we live life with an eternal perspective, we know, we know that our supreme and superior and sovereign Savior is working all things together for good.

And we are assured and affirmed in Scripture that there's no condemnation. There's no separation to those who are in Christ Jesus. And you know, my friend, it's a wonderful reminder that the Lord knows.

That whatever we're going through this morning, the Lord knows the way that we take and that when He has tried us, we will come forth as gold. That's what He said to Job. That's what Job confessed of him.

[24 : 46] You know, we might not understand what the Lord is doing. We might not see the bigger picture. We might not see the beautiful pattern that He has planned and purposed in our lives.

And maybe not until the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly will God unroll that great canvas and explain the reason why these dark threads were just as needful in the weaver's skillful hand as those threads of gold and silver in the pattern He had planned.

We might not know why, but this morning we trust in the Lord who does, the Lord who knows, the Lord who keeps, the Lord who is with His people and promises no condemnation and no separation.

He's the Savior of sinners, my friend. And He's sovereign over our lives. Let's never lose sight of that fact. And so when Joseph introduced himself, his brothers, they were introduced to sin.

They were introduced to the Savior. And then lastly, they were introduced to the Son. It's an important introduction. They were introduced to sin, the Savior, and the Son.

[26 : 05] So lastly, introduced to the Son. Look at verse 13. 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. You know, as Brits or as British people, we are good at many things. But one thing we're not good at is showing emotion.

Because as Brits, we're known for being reticent and reserved. And rather than showing emotion, we're often described as self-restrained or stoic or have a stiff upper lip.

And I'm often reminded about how stoic I am because I never cried the day I got married. But apparently, for an ancient Egyptian, emotion was a non-event.

[27 : 06] They never showed emotion. Which is why Joseph's outburst in this chapter, this outburst of emotion, it was completely out of character, especially for the prime minister in Egypt.

But as you read through this chapter, there's lots of emotion. There's crying and moaning. There's hugging and kissing. There's tears and weeping. The chapter is full of emotion. But that's because the chapter is full of forgiveness.

forgiveness. The chapter is full of forgiveness. Because after 20 years of hurt and heartache, Joseph forgives his brothers.

Joseph forgives his brothers. But as you know, there are so many people who struggle with forgiveness. Whether it's forgiving someone or being forgiven or even forgiving yourself.

But the thing is, you know, we can't just drum up forgiveness. We can't just create forgiveness. We don't have the moral strength to create forgiveness.

[28 : 12] That's why we need the grace of God to forgive and to be forgiven. We need the grace of God to forgive and to be forgiven. We need the grace of God to help us say the hardest word as we were saying to the children.

The hardest word is sorry. But you know, if we've received the grace of God, if we've been forgiven by God, and our sins have been forgiven by God, then we should be willing to forgive and forget.

And I know that's very hard. But you know, you look at what Jesus says. And Jesus never minces his words. He said, if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And you know, my friend, this chapter is full of forgiveness. And it's reminding us that if there's someone in our life whom we need to forgive, then we need to forgive them.

And like Joseph and his brothers, it might be a family feud like it was in his experience or something that has been going on for the past 20, 30, 40 years. But you know, as Christians, as the church of Jesus Christ, as the family of God, those who have been adopted into the family of God, do you know, we should be the most forgiving community on the earth.

[29 : 39] We should be the most forgiving people in the world, especially because we regularly pray the Lord's Prayer with that central plea. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

You know, I often shudder saying that because do you really mean it? Do we really mean what we're saying or are we just holy hypocrites who don't practice what we pray?

And you know, do you remember when Peter came to Jesus? He came to Jesus and asked Jesus, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times.

You know, Peter, he knew that forgiveness was a good thing and he thought that it should have a limit and he wondered, well, what sort of limit would Jesus put on forgiveness? And yet Jesus says, well, I do not say to you up to seven times but 70 times seven.

Now, Jesus never meant 490. He meant forgiveness should be limitless. Forgiveness should be unlimited. And you know, we see that evidenced at the cross.

[30 : 49] the clearest place of forgiveness. Your sin, my sin, nailed to the tree. He's crowned with a crown of thorns.

He's crucified for you and me and yet he's crying, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. You know, it was Dr.

Martin Lloyd-Jones who said, the proof that you and I are forgiven is that we forgive others. if we think that our sins are forgiven and we refuse to forgive someone else, we're making a mistake and we've never been forgiven.

My friend, showing forgiveness it costs because it will cost us our pride. But our forgiveness from Jesus, it costs much, much more.

Therefore, the way of the cross, the way of the Christ and the way of the Christian is to show full and free forgiveness. The way of the cross, the way of the Christ and the way of the Christian is to show full and free forgiveness.

[31 : 59] But as you know, our conclusion is just as important as an introduction. And you know, we've seen that when Joseph introduced himself. His brothers were introduced to sin, the Savior and the Son.

But I'd like to just conclude this morning by noting what Joseph said to his brothers in verse 9. He said, 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. Joseph, he exhorted and he encouraged his elder brothers to return, to return home from what was the far country of Egypt.

And they were to return to their father Jacob with the good news that his son is not dead, but he is alive. And I don't know about you, but it reminds me of the conclusion to the parable of the prodigal son.

A wonderful parable in Luke chapter 15 where the father says to his elder brother right at the end of the chapter, he says, It is fitting to celebrate and be glad.

[33 : 08] For this your brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found. It is fitting to celebrate and be glad.

For this your brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found. And you know, my unconverted friend, when you are introduced to the greater than Joseph, Jesus Christ, you are introduced to sin.

But you are also introduced to the saviour of sinners. And you are introduced to the son of God. And with such an introduction, the only conclusion you should come to is that like the prodigal son, you must come home to the father.

That's why the hymn writer said, Come home. Come home. Ye who are weary, come home. Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling.

Calling, O sinner, come home. Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling. Calling, O sinner, come home.

[34 : 29] My friend, you come home. And you find rest by resting in this wonderful saviour who is Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O heavenly Father, may I give thanks to thee for the wonder of the gospel, that in this gospel we are introduced to our sin.

We are reminded that we are those who have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And yet we thank thee that the good news is that we are able to be introduced to the saviour of sinners, thy son Jesus.

And Lord, as we are introduced to him, even again this morning, that we would not pass him by, that we would not just glance at him, but that we would go to him, that we would confess our sin and our need of him.

And we pray that as thy people, we would keep looking to him day by day, that whatever is in our experience, whatever is in our cup, that we would keep our eyes firmly fixed upon this Jesus, who is the author and he remains the finisher of our faith.

[35 : 47] O Lord, watch over us, we pray. Bless us in our being together. Bless us in our parting one from another, that thou wouldest keep our going out and our coming in from this time forth and even forevermore.

Take away our iniquity, receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing to God's praise in Psalm 130.

Psalm 130, it's in the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 421 in the blue psalm book. Psalm 130, we're singing the whole psalm.

Wonderful psalm that begins in the depths, crying for forgiveness, and it ends in the heights, experiencing that full and plenteous redemption. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.

My voice, Lord, do thou hear. Unto my supplication's voice give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgiveness is that feared thou mayest be.

[37 : 03] We'll sing the whole psalm to God's praise. O Lord, O Lord, Lord, cause of all the age to thee I cry For whom crushed I cry My words Lord do I hear Oh, to Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

[40 : 30] time