

**Sermon preached by Mr. L. R. Broome, Pastor,
at Bethesda Chapel, Southampton,
on Lord's Day morning, 29th January, 1984**

Text: *"And Joseph wept when they spake unto him" (Genesis 50. 17).*

The chapter commences with Joseph weeping. This was mourning for his dear father – which is natural to us all. It is the same weeping that Jesus felt when Lazarus died: "Jesus wept." But here it is a different kind of weeping: something has touched his innermost heart. Some strange, unlooked for event – words from his brothers – has struck him to a point (if there is one) beyond weeping in mourning, and that is this, that his brothers with whom he had had so much to do, and they with him, had seen the Lord's hand so manifest and had enjoyed His protection, provision and care. They had wept with him before they had confessed their sin to him. The whole story of the past was known; it was not as if there were some new secrets to be opened up. The old matter of the dream years back, the strange fulfilment of it, and Joseph going ahead of them into Egypt, how he was raised to such a high position as to be almost a king: all this was known. The way their dear father was eventually brought to see that what he had thought was the deepest, darkest tragedy in his life, namely the death of Joseph, was in fact not so. "My son Joseph is yet alive," he said, "I will go down and see him before I die." All this was opened up; they knew every detail of it. They had had such kindness from him: he had only spoken to them roughly once, and that was at the time when God evidently directed him, and he spoke to them through an interpreter. He had been a marvellous brother to them.

Yet now, when their father has gone, at the back of their minds there was this one prevailing thought, that, "When father dies things will be different. Joseph will not be so kind to us – he will avenge himself." In fact, the words are very clear in verse fifteen: "Joseph will peradventure hate us." What, after all he has done for you? We might almost say to the brothers, "Are you ready and willing to repeat that?" Hate? Requite? Can we fathom the depth of unbelief in the human heart? Because if you can fathom this, you can come close to what those depths are.

They meant what they said. They were going to put aside everything that had gone before and they were going to say, "Well the last barrier has gone now; we knew that whilst father was alive he would behave like he has done." "Now that barrier has gone." "Peradventure" – "Perchance" – "Maybe," yes – maybe not, too! The wickedness of fallen nature is not beyond such treachery.

And then, "And will certainly requite us of the evil which we did unto him." Pay us back. Though he have no coals of fire, no turning the other cheek – of course, they had not heard the gospel then. No going a second mile, no – "He will certainly requite us for all the evil which we did unto him."

And do you know what they were doing? They were condemning themselves by admitting that they had done evil, they had treated him in a vile way. Go back to that pit when they said, "This dreamer cometh," and he was but a lad of some eighteen years of age. Now he is one hundred and ten and they had not forgotten. And they went right back to that evil day when one of them said, "Just don't let us kill him – let us put him into this pit." That was Reuben, and into the pit he went. And how beautiful is that text that says, "But there was no water in it." O, I have found sweetness in that more than once! No water in it: there should

have been, one of those hill pits that had been cut out to hold reserves of water. Not good drinking water, it is true, but it was intended for that purpose, quoted in Isaiah, "My people have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water and hewn out for themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water." There was no water in this pit at this particular time; God saw to that.

They went right back to that time – they could not go much further back because they did not know what happened. Only until he was taken up and then sold to the Ishmaelites and taken over into Egypt and sold there to Potiphar. Joseph knew all about this; they did not. Not from the experience of it. Undoubtedly he related to them what happened in the intervening period. All this, his life's history, one hundred and ten years, mark you! Why, some of us think we are getting old when we get to seventy! But double that and you will find a longer history to remember, but God's dear servant went right into the land of forgetfulness, as he named his firstborn, Manasseh. "For God," said he, "hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house."

And he had suffered this. You see, suffering is about one of the best pens we can ever have – to write in our hearts. It writes distinctly and plainly. Sorrow is a very good writer. And it was written in his dear heart what he had suffered all through those years of his confinement in the land of Egypt. Now when you have got a past like that, and when such strange things happen in that past as happened to Joseph, and when the time comes for God's word to be made plain, when the dream was fulfilled, this was not the first time the brethren had fallen down before him, as they do in verse eighteen, and said, "Behold, we be thy servants."

It was not the first time, but it was the best time, because it was final: they were really in his hands. And they knew it.

They wept tears together, and so had Joseph; he had “turned aside to weep,” and those tears that he wept there were not merely at his pleasure of seeing his brothers again, but on account of the fact that God had brought to pass what He had given him in that dream. When God raised up that hope and persuasion in Joseph’s young mind years ago, it was nothing to do with him, he didn’t set himself up as an autocrat and say, “Ah, the day will come, I hope, when father and mother and all my brothers will bow down to me.” He was not a proud man, Joseph. God sent that dream and caused him to relate it. We might think that perhaps he was unwise to relate it. Never! And it was this that he carried with him, day and night. And when God deals with you, He will deal with you day and night. And His dealings will be as fresh in the morning as they were at night. You will not get out of His hand what He has purposed, nor will you make your own way – He will make it.

Joseph laboured, as the psalmist tells us so beautifully. “Until the time that the word of the Lord came,” he says, referring to Joseph, “the word of the Lord tried him.” No word about the sufferings in prison, the temptations in prison, but the trial of faith, the testing, until the time of the Lord was fulfilled, or came to pass. David says that he looks at this, and a considerable number of years in between as there is with us, as we look at it, it tried him, and he could not wipe it out of his mind and his thoughts. How beautiful are God’s ways when He calls His dear people by grace! How quietly and purposefully He works! And yet there is a word there that stays. They carry it to the grave.

And it influences their lives – the fruit of that is in what David says, “All inspired by the Holy Spirit.”

So that, I say, Joseph had a long memory. He remembered those days, not only from the point of view of his brothers’ treatment, but from the wondrous way God had delivered him in prison, and for the wondrous way in which He had enabled him to explain the dreams of the butler and the baker. They were days of sunshine, light, God manifesting His purpose. Very sovereign, and very solemn, here were two men put in prison because of some misdemeanour, and yet one of them is to be hanged, that is, the baker; the other one is to be restored, and he was the butler, the king’s cupbearer – the one who tasted the wine to see if it was poisoned or not. That is the same as Nehemiah; he was the king’s cupbearer. He did not need a cupbearer merely to carry a cup, even though it was royalty; it had to be tasted first of all. The cupbearer was the one that died if it was poisoned, or told if he felt the slightest evil influence in that wine. But who more able to speak to the king than the butler? And Joseph had said to this butler, “When it shall be well with thee, remember me.” So you see, he was just a man, ready to take the slightest opportunity to obtain his freedom. And who can blame him? The butler did not, the fortieth chapter of this book says, “Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.” Two full years. Poor Joseph! How he must have learnt the folly of putting his trust in man. Isaiah says, “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” What confidence can you put in man, says God?

I say, this is Joseph in his heart, and if you have got things like this in your heart, you will know that they are solemn. When God brings you out of nature’s darkness, into the first rays of gracious light, prayer and desire, and you are found on your knees seeking

your God, you will have a secret life, you will be in another world, you will love these things, and yet there will be much temptation and much opposition.

Thus Joseph comes to the last rites of his dear father. And although, of course, naturally, his heart was heavy, there was a peculiar affinity between him and his father. His father spoilt him, it is true. He made him a coat of many colours and raised the jealousy of his other brothers. He should have known different; Jacob made a lot of mistakes. His history is one of a chequered path, largely through his own folly. But that is another gracious account. I was saying that there was a close affinity between Joseph and Jacob. And who has your mind gone to whilst I have been speaking? Do you know anyone else in the Scripture who runs a close parallel to this gracious Joseph? If this were a Bible Class or a Sunday School I could ask you questions. And I expect I should get a few hands up, too. But it is not. But you know that gracious Person, the Lord Jesus, of whom Joseph is a lively type, fitting in so many different ways. The despised brother, the one who was not received, the one who was cast out, this blessed, suffering Saviour, who not only suffered in the end physically, with open wounds, but heart suffering. "Reproach hath broken my heart," says the psalmist. This reproach which Joseph suffered is the wonderful type God has given us of the experience of the Lord Jesus, who was yet to come.

Now when we come to this point, and also the other points that we have just made, that if the Lord deals with you and calls you out of nature's darkness, He will bring you into the companionship and the pathway of the Lord Jesus. The times of sorrow and of joy. It is thus the pathway that is so divine, so deeply embedded in the Word of God; Jesus wept over Jerusalem. What number, an endless number of expositions have been given

on this, "And Jesus beheld a city and wept over it." He knew the whole history of Israel, and now saw that city of all cities, the one that was finally to be utterly destroyed, and the city in which He Himself (or outside which) He was to be crucified. He wept over it. Why? The sin, the guilt of that wicked people. Read the third of Jeremiah and see there where God says the treacherous sister Judah excelled the sins of Israel.

So now, Joseph hears his brothers say this, but Jacob had never said such a thing as, "Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren," so this was a false plea. They were using father's name as a lever to touch Joseph's heart. Now, there is a Father whose name is above every name: Jehovah-Jireh; there is a Father who has provided a dear Son, caused Him to pass through unimaginable pathways of sorrow and reproach. And that name can be used: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name" – and this is not false, is it? You cannot alter this, no, "He will give it you." It is not an open door to immorality or anything like that, or self-possession or anything of a selfish nature; it is confined wholly and solely to spiritual things "Whatsoever" – blessed word! – like the "Whosoever" – blessed word. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name," He will give it to you.

But the brethren did take their father's name and bring it to Joseph and say to him in this text, "Forgive." "And Joseph wept." But he did not stop to explain, nor did he go aside to weep (as far as the Scripture tells us – it takes great pains, however, to tell us when he did turn aside to weep because he did not want his brethren to know that he had wept). Those were good tears he shed – like you do sometimes, perhaps. It is a lovely thing, is it not, to weep tears and try to hide all trace of them when you have to go out and see someone when it's mealtime or something, when you do not want anyone to know that you have been

shedding tears, do you? You are not ashamed of them altogether, but you have a secret, and that secret is repentance, tears, grief.

But it is your burden is it not? The Lord Jesus too, He wept in front of His people; He was not ashamed. But His heart, you see, was broken. And so was Joseph's. To think that they should think such things of him, and hold this all these years. We can work it out if we wanted to. That there should have been this undercurrent of unbelief and suspicion and doubt; all the while they had seemed to live so happily and comfortably in Goshen, and multiplied as they had done, and not wanted a thing. Yet underneath is this strange suspicion. And is it not so with the church of God? Are there not some of you here who are suspicious of your God? I say it very solemnly, do you doubt His will? You that say:

“And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?”
(Gadsby's 232)

Think you this, that He who has helped you hitherto, is not going to help you all the way? That there is going to be a particular time when He is going to drop His hold? That He is going to say, “I have finished with you; you are suspicious; you don't trust Me; you don't lean on Me; you don't commit your way and confess your sins; you don't bring Me anything”? Is there any who lives thus apart from closer communion? Though Joseph was there all the time. They are suspicious. What is suspicion? Unbelief – no other word for it! What a dreadful thing, is it not? You do not believe that the Lord can do this for you! Although He has done so much! You do not deny it in fact; you perhaps like to speak of it. And yet, with all this, there is this underlying suspicion, rooted down in the bottom of your evil heart; you might

very well take these words up, “Jesus will peradventure hate us and certainly requite us of all the evil which we did unto Him.” But if you should answer me and say, “He can't say that!” well, you are quite right, He can't! But why do you think He can? Why do you think that He will forsake you at last? Why do you deny the Scripture that “He that hath begun a good work will” carry it on? Why do you deny it in effect and say, “He will not carry it on; it will fall short”? You see the baseness of unbelief! What a vile thing it is! When the serpent introduced this first great question in Eden, “Hath God said it?” he introduced unbelief. “Is it true?” he said, “Do you really believe that once you taste of that fruit you shall then know good from evil?” Why, of course not! Unbelief is the root cause, and here it is in the brethren, and not only in the brethren but in our hearts as well. Damaging unbelief that says, “No, Lord, you can't do it!” It sets aside all promises, all covenant engagements and all the words upon which God has caused you to hope, and you say of it, “No.” Now you can get the picture of it here, can you not?

I was thinking of Joshua only yesterday, and what Moses said to him: “Be strong and of a good courage.” This is a gospel word, not emanating from human strength, will and power, but gospel courage – that which faith gives in the quietness of the home and heart and in the public eye too, of the church of God. Courage! And it is this that Joshua was so much tried in in his first test; in that awful day when Achan took of the forbidden things and hid them under the floor of his tent. Had it not been for the Lord directing Joshua, they never would have been found. And as God searched out Achan's treasure, so does the Holy Ghost search out the hidden evils of the heart. And it is this that brings contrition (of which we were speaking last Sabbath). “To this man will I look, who is poor.”

One cannot envisage really, when that hidden treasure lay in that goodly Babylonish garment, exposed in front of them, the poor man, yet not a saved man. It will be a solemn thing, then, when God exposes our sins in the day of judgment, will it not, and we have hidden them all our life under the floor of our tent and said, "Ah, I will make good use of these when I get suitable opportunity." And now death stares us in the face.

Now Joseph wept. His heart was broken. It went right home to that solemn point: he had bestowed such love upon them, such kindness and care; they had been his one thought, and his brother Benjamin too. And they had all lived thus happily together in Goshen, to think that the time should come that they should treat him thus. And do we need to bow our heads and blush that we should make such poor returns in our generation? For this gracious Saviour who called us out of darkness and began His work in us in the days gone by? Who gave us a good hope through grace, who sent His word and healed us? Do we not need to blush when we realise what the Word of God has been to us from the sacred granaries of heaven? Do we? Has it never touched your heart and refreshed your spirit at how secure you have felt underneath it? Why, are we coming to this in our unbelief to say, "Ah, but, it will not last for ever!" We cannot apply the parallel any further because Jacob died. No such thought must and can enter into the thought of the eternal Trinity. But see how far God takes us with His figures – and further, as we see later on in the chapter.

Now these tears. We read in Isaiah 53, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." He shall see (that is, the Lord Jesus) what He has come through. And how all, as it did with Joseph, looked to be such a scene from which there was no deliverance. Although, of course, the Lord Jesus knew and

Joseph did not, that does not alter the fact that the Lord Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Joseph was compelled; he had no option – his brethren were stronger than he; Potiphar's wife would have hurled him into eternity could she have done so. Now the Lord blessedly delivered the man and despite the evil report he was given that exhortation in due course whereby all that wanted anything came to Joseph. There was nothing that the king had that he did not put under his hand. Now this is the God of grace, who has sufficient grace for you, poor sinner, who is inclined to doubt Him. Is this true? Are these things really so? But there, there is a wealth here; we must not try to plumb the depths of this well, but blessed be God for what we may draw from it, and I hope that we have drawn a little this morning.

Amen.