

Starving the Work of Christ

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon highlights how God uses pain and suffering to prepare us for a life of provision and purpose, as exemplified in the story of Joseph.

Duration: 52:12

Scripture: Genesis 45:1-15, Psalm 105:19, Matthew 25:37-40, Luke 4:18

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Spiritual Freedom"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and letting go of bitterness, drawing from the story of Joseph forgiving his brothers. It highlights the power of forgiveness to release freedom and the life of Christ into our hearts, ultimately leading to healing and restoration. The message challenges listeners to make the choice to forgive, even those who have deeply wounded them, in order to experience the joy and provision of God in their lives.

Transcript

Now today I'm going to be speaking a message called Starving the Work of Christ. Now it doesn't sound much like a Mother's Day message, but in fact it is. We're living at a time in history of a lot of pain, and one thing you find more and more happening everywhere in counseling and just traveling and talking with people is we're living at a season of intensified pain, and in many people's lives that pain has come through family issues, whether or not it's the breakup of a marriage or the disappointment of a child or the betrayal by somebody that you truly trusted.

Whatever it is, many, many people dread these days. They dread Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, Easter, all anything associated with family and family getting together. There are times where the pain just intensifies.

They can't wait to get it over with and get on with life as they see it. If you are here today in pain, I have a word for you. I believe the Lord's given me this, and you're going to hear in this word the key to getting out of this pain, the key to starting on another path or a new path in some cases, and looking ahead.

You'd never think that looking ahead comes from looking behind. I'm going to explain this to you today, and if you will let the Holy Spirit, I'm only probably going to speak a half an hour or so, but if you let the Holy Spirit unlock this door of pain, you can leave this service today on a new path. You can leave it, leave this time of fellowship together with a greater strength than you came in with.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you, Lord God, with all my heart for you truly do heal those that have been bruised in heart. You promised to do this, and you said that you would unlock those that are held behind prison doors, and you would set people free.

That's what I'm asking for today, Lord, that you give me the power to speak this, but Lord, it's not in my delivery. It's in what you do in the hearts of those who hear. I'm asking you to go where no one can go but you, Lord.

Go into the deepest places. Go, Lord, into the past if you must. Do whatever you need to do to bring people to freedom and soundness in their walk with you and with one another, and Lord, I thank you for this with all my heart in Jesus' name.

Genesis chapter 45, please, if you go there, first book in the Bible for those that are new to Christ, Genesis chapter 45, Starving the Work of Christ. I'm going to begin to read at verse 1 in this chapter the story of Joseph. Many of you are familiar with this story, but you may hear it in a way today that you haven't in the past.

Genesis chapter 45, beginning at verse 1, Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him. And he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. There stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians in the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph. Does my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

Now therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years has the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years in which there shall be neither earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So now it was not you that sent me hither but God. And he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye and go to my father, and say to him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God has made me Lord of all Egypt.

Come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast. And there will I nourish thee, for yet there are five years of famine, lest thou and thy household and all that thou hast come to poverty.

And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. Now there are many, many people here today that God has prepared you, just as he did Joseph, to speak words of provision and direction to a generation that's quickly descending into a time of incredible need. Whenever there's going to be, whenever, whenever there's a need for people to begin to know the freedom and protection and life and provision that is only found in God, when society is going into a season, whether that season is just a season that we're experiencing today because of the compounded breakup of the family unit as it has been biblically defined, or because of the economic situation, or

because of things that are still yet to come.

In Joseph's day, of course, there was a famine coming. God knew there was a famine coming. It was going to last for seven years.

In order to make provision and preparation for the people of God, he sent a young man ahead. Now this young man had no idea that the things that he was going through were predestined by God into his life, because through his hands was going to flow incredible provision for many, many hurting and confused and hungry people. And folks, I wish I could tell you today that if you want a life that is governed by God, if you want a life that is going to have the resources of God flow through it, that you just have to go to a school somewhere, you just have to have some one or two or three nice experiences with God, and all of this is going to happen to you, but that's not the way it happens.

The scripture says of Joseph in Psalm 105 and verse 18, whose feet they hurt with fetters, he was laid in iron. And very often for those that are going to be used of God, those through whom provision is going to come to hurting and wounded people and hungry people, quite often the pathway to that kind of a life of provision is a very painful one. That's what the scripture says.

You know, I know how many today can say you started out as a child. Do you remember the days as a child when you'd go outside and the whole world seemed so wonderful? Well, maybe for some it didn't seem that way, but for many it did. You went outside and you saw the sun and the clouds and just everything just seemed possible.

And then you started out on this pathway called life, and as you begin to journey on this pathway, painful experiences come into your life, and your pace started to slow down. And some people just can't take the pain anymore. They get to a point where they just don't slow down.

They start to regress or they stop in their tracks. And they lose heart. They lose hope.

They don't see a future. And many fail to realize that this is the pathway, most often, that God will send those on through whom the provision that only Christ can give is going to come to any generation. Think of the apostle Paul for a moment.

Shipwrecked, stoned, betrayed, in perils of false brethren, whipped and beaten several times, imprisoned falsely for the crime really of loving people and telling them about God. And it's through Paul at the end of his days that God was able to put a quill in his hand and begin to write what today is much of what we have, the New Testament Bible that gives us such hope and such provision. This provision came through the hands of a vessel that had suffered greatly.

Many today, like Joseph, have been cast aside. The incredible pain it would be to be betrayed by your own family. Think about it.

He's just been sent by his father just to see how his brothers are doing. But they're so envious of this young man. They don't even know why they feel this way.

They feel this way, of course, because you and I know today from retrospect that God is sending a man to be the vessel through whom the family is going to be given provision so they don't physically or spiritually starve to death. But to go there, and he's the youngest, and the youngest is supposed to be protected by those that are older. And to look out and to see Reuben, his oldest brother, and Judah and Simeon and

Levi conspiring as it is after having thrown him in a pit to kill him, first of all, and then secondarily just to pull him out, not to rescue him, but to sell him off to a group of traitors that are going into a faraway place.

Can you imagine as he's part of this entourage going into Egypt, the incredible pain that would have been in his heart. And there are many people here today, you nod your heads with this one. You say, I know exactly what that's all about.

I know what it's about to be betrayed by those you trusted, to be hurt by those who should have protected you. You know exactly what that pain feels like. Not only that, but after his betrayal to go into a foreign place to serve wholeheartedly, just to be falsely accused and have people that you trusted actually believe it.

And that's what happened. Joseph, he had this incredible promise that God was somehow going to use his life. And from the time he received the promise till the first glimpse of its fulfillment were 13 years of betrayal and hardship and pain.

And it's an amazing thing. You'd say, God, is that the way things have to be done? But as we look at the pattern of scripture, quite often the answer is yes, that's the way God has to do things. So that when you and I finally are in a position of opening this text or opening our hearts or opening our hands, we're finally doing it without condition anymore.

We're doing it as God has done it. Remember that God committed his love towards us. The scripture says, and while that we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The scripture says, this is love. Not that we love God, but that God loved us. And in that love sent his son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Think of the betrayal of doing good to others and having been forgotten by them in your time of need. Joseph was in prison at this time in his life. And he told the chief butler that had been put there by Pharaoh that you're going to be restored to your office.

You're going to be forgiven and put back in the place where you once served. And he said, when you get there, please remember me. He said, I've done nothing to be in this prison.

I've done nothing to suffer the way I have suffered. And God took that butler, as he said, he was going to do and put him back in Pharaoh's court. But the scripture says that Butler forgot all about him.

And it's, it hurts. It's hard when you've done good to others. And then in your own time of need, nobody seems to reach out to you.

Nobody seems to know that there's pain in your heart. And quite frankly, some don't even seem to care. And the deepest pain of all is that these were people you loved as your own family.

And folks, I remember when I first came into the church and I was a cop when I got saved. So I expect people to lie and cheat and steal and all the rest of that stuff. And I remember when I got saved and I came into the church and I thought how wonderful it is now there's finally a minute place where everybody's honest.

They all tell the truth. They, they unconditionally love one another. I really did believe that in the beginning, but not for long, not for long.

Some of the deepest pain I've ever known in my life has come from the house of God, come from people who professed and actually were Christians and still are today. I'll talk about that a little later on. Psalm 105 verse 19 says until the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him.

Many here today, you've got a promise. Maybe it was given to you in youthfulness and that promise given to you was that God's going to use your life and through you, there's going to be provision. But you sit here today and you say, oh, that was so long ago.

And since the day I had that erupt in my heart or that explosion of faith and promise, it's, it's, there's been so much pain. There's been so much hurt that I've kind of lost the promise. I'd be glad just to survive now.

I'd be happy just to kind of get to the end of all of this and get to heaven. And seeing the fulfillment of this promise for many today is not even an option anymore. But I want to tell you something that when God makes a promise to you, he doesn't back away from it because you go through hard times.

He doesn't change his mind. The only thing that can take you away from the fulfillment of that promise is a failure to understand the methods of God, how he prepares you to be the person that he told you he was going to be at this time throughout your, the future of your life. Now, Psalm 55, would you turn there please with me? Psalm 55, the Psalmist David writes into a song this pain that is common to the human heart when we've known betrayal, especially by those who are the closest to us.

And of course, this betrayal takes many forms. In David's case, there were several forms that it took. Psalm 55, verse 11.

Now, he correctly discerns what's behind the actions of those who wounded him. Just like Joseph, he said, wickedness is in the midst thereof. Deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

Verse 12, it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it. Neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him. David says, like you and I did, do.

If it was an enemy, if an enemy walked up to me in the street and said, I think you're a moron, it really wouldn't bother me that much. But if my father or mother walked up to me and said that, it would have a whole different effect or somebody I loved, somebody I trusted. And David said, I could have run if it was an enemy, I could have borne it, but it wasn't an enemy, it was you.

He says in verse 13, my equal, my guide, my acquaintance, we took sweet counsel together, we walked into the house of God in company. Verse 15, he says, let death seize upon them, let them go down quick into hell, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them. As for me, I will call upon God and the Lord shall save me.

Evening and morning and noon, I will pray and cry aloud and he shall hear my voice. He's delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, for there were many with me. Verse 19, God shall hear and afflict them, even he that abides of old, say, Allah, because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.

Now, David is echoing the cry of the natural man. It's a cry from deep within that we've all felt from time to time. Now, because it's written in the Bible does not mean it's the correct practice.

David is writing down exactly what he's feeling. He says, let them go into hell, wickedness is in their dwellings. He said, I'm going to call upon God, I'll call, I'll pray, oh Lord, I'll be the best prayer warrior you got in your whole church.

Evening, morning and noon, I'll pray, you'll hear my voice and he says, God will hear me and afflict them. Because folks, listen, this is an age-old prayer that is prayed in the church. God almighty, bless me and don't bless them.

Don't bless those people that hurt me. Don't bless them. Now, you sit under a sermon on forgiveness and then you finally concede in your heart.

You go out and then you pray something like this, oh Lord, bless them, but it would not grieve me if they're hit by a bus on the way home today. Or if they go broke or starve or pay a price for what they've done to me, but bless them Lord. And so we pray that Lord, bless people that have wounded us in spite of the fact that Jesus said, pray for those that despitefully use you, bless those that curse you, be good to your enemies.

You shall be the children of your father in heaven for he makes his reign, he sends rain on the unjust. But David is a man would like emotions like you and I have, that it's so hard to do that. There's certain people in your life.

Now you're thinking about them right now as I speak. There are certain people in your life that if I were to call a prayer meeting right now, you'd have such a hard time putting your lips together and forming the words, bless them, God do good to them, Lord help them, Lord. And then now the ultimate use me as an instrument to be the hand of blessing in their lives.

But isn't that what God did through Christ? Not that we loved him, he loved us. And in spite of the fact that if you and I would have been most likely part of that crowd that would be going with the flow and saying away with this imposter and crucify him, we would have been wagging our heads or running for fear even if we believed in him like everyone else did. But still he went to a cross and still he said, father forgive them for they don't know what they do.

He calls us to be the sons and daughters of our heavenly father and representatives of God in the earth. Genesis 41, 14 tells us that Joseph is suddenly blessed in a moment of time. Can you imagine? He's been 13 years suffering.

He's been in this jail for who knows how long now. And suddenly a Herald comes in as it is and says, listen, clean up your clothes, go shave. Here's a change of garment.

The King has called for you. Now he's in the King's prison, the scripture says. And you and I will stay in that King's prison until the work is done, until our hearts are ready.

And then he's called out of the King's prison. And in one moment of time in the morning, he was a prisoner and a slave. By the end of the day, he was second in command in all of Egypt.

God is a God of the impossible. He can take you out of where you are and bring you into another place in a moment of time. You've got to believe that with all your heart.

You've got to know that it doesn't take him a thousand years to change you. It doesn't even take a year. It can be in a day.

It can be in a moment. You are lifted out of one place and you are brought into another place. And the only testimony you have in your heart is I don't know how it happened, but I know who did it.

I know who made it happen. I know where I've come from and I know what he's brought me to. He's suddenly blessed.

He's given wisdom and favor that can only come from God. He's given the ability to interpret dreams and to unravel mysteries and not only just to interpret dreams, but he's given wisdom about the future. He's able to tell Pharaoh in this gather of fifth of the nation of the harvest of the land, put it in storehouses in the major cities.

He knows exactly what God is thinking. He knows exactly what to do. And Pharaoh subsequently gives him his ring.

Joseph is from a prison house to wearing the ring of Pharaoh, which means he's got ultimate authority in the nation under Pharaoh. Only Pharaoh was higher than him in all of authority. And from being in a jail cell to people, the scripture says, everywhere he went, every place his chariot passed, the knees of the people would bend in honor to the position that God had given him.

He's brought into incredible authority. He's given enterprise that literally dwarfs every other effort to advance and secure the nation. He's given wisdom that can only come from God.

He has a new family in this place now. He's given a wife and in this, in Egypt, he bears two sons and he has an incredible future before him. He calls his first son Manasseh and Manasseh means I've forgotten my former pain and I have forgotten my father's house.

It's incredible. I've forgotten both my pain and I have forgotten my father's house. His second son is called Ephraim.

It means that God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. And some of you, that is your testimony today. I'm now Christian.

I'm in the house of God. I've forgotten my former pain. I've forgotten my former family and I'm now fruitful in the land of my affliction.

Things are beginning to happen in my life. I'm beginning to experience hope and healing again. And so I've put everything behind me and I'm a new person now and I don't want to think about it.

I don't want to go there. I don't want it to be part of my life. I want it all gone.

Just like my sin is gone. I want my whole past gone. I want everybody in my past gone.

Don't clap too fast. Now everything couldn't be better until one day those who caused him the deepest pain stand before him. They are empty and driven to where he is because of the famine.

He has the provision. And suddenly one day, can you imagine? He's there and he's got this industry and enterprise. He's got literally the keys of the nation in his hand.

He's forgotten his past. He's forgotten his father's house. He's fruitful in the land of his affliction and suddenly standing before him are his betrayers.

And they've come in because they're starving to death. I do believe that you and I are headed for that kind of a season. I just have that feeling in my heart that people are going to come back into your life that you haven't seen for a long time and you'd rather not even have photographs of them in your house.

But they're going to come back. They're going to come back because they know you have the provision. That you're standing when they're falling.

You are steadfast when they're failing. You have a sureness in you when they are in a tailspin because of events. And in the events in this case, there was no food.

There was no security. There was no future. The land was not producing where they were living.

And so they are literally driven to where Joseph is. And what an incredible struggle must have come into Joseph's life at this point. I believe it may have been the deepest struggle that he had known up to this point.

I think this was harder than the 13 years he'd come through in prisons and betrayal and imprisonment. The scripture tells us that his brothers were before him and they didn't know who he was. And he kept running out of the room looking for a secret place to weep.

It's as if he just, I don't want to deal with this. I don't want them to know who I am. Why should I tell them who I am? Why should I give these liars even a pound of grain? Why should I be the source of provision when all they've done is bring pain into my life? When the memory of them before me, why should I be used of God to do good to them when it was in their heart to betray me? And they didn't even care if I lived or died.

It's a type of Gethsemane, folks. It's a type of when Christ went into that garden and he said, Father, if it'd be possible, take this cup from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.

There was a cost to go to the cross. He didn't take it up and hop, skip, and jump all the way to Calvary. There was an incredible cost to the son of God.

And there's a cost to you and I. If we're going to represent Christ in our generation, there is always a personal cost involved before Joseph are his betrayers. And even worse, they don't, they're still not aware of what they are. That's the hardest of it all.

It's one thing if they come in and say, forgive us, we've sinned. But here they are standing and he looks at them, he says, you're spies. He said, you've come in to spy out the nation.

And they said, no, no, we're all honest men. That's what they said. Genesis 42, 11.

We're honest men. Oh yes. Really? How honest are you? Well, they said, we have a father back at home and we have a younger brother.

And they said, oh, unfortunately one has died. God rest his soul. And standing before him are our brethren who are not aware of what they are.

Genesis 49, when Jacob blessed his sons before he died, he looked at Reuben, the firstborn. And he said, you're as unstable as water. He said, you defiled your father's couch.

He was a lustful man. And because of the lustfulness in his life, he said, you will not excel. There's Simeon and Levi that Jacob described as being self-willed and angry.

And all the rest are cowards that were complicit in the betrayal of Joseph. Tell me, why should he feed them? Why should he be used to be part of the provision of God into their lives? And it's a question you legitimately ask. Why should he feed these men? But also in the midst of them is Judah.

It's an amazing thing when you begin to see it. Because in the loins of Judah, when Jacob blessed his family, he said, a lawgiver will not depart from between your feet until Shiloh comes. That's the Messiah.

And unto him shall all the gathering of all the people be. And that's an amazing thing, because when you realize that in Judah, in the physical loins of Judah, was the seed of Jesus Christ. And it was in Joseph's power to starve the work of God.

I want you to--I know conceivably that couldn't have happened. The kingdom of God would have advanced anyway. But here's the point.

When we withhold forgiveness from other people, we starve the work of Christ. The work of Christ is to forgive. That's why God became a man.

That's why He went to a cross. That's why He died. And when you and I find a single person that we simply refuse to forgive, we do just what Joseph could have done.

We starve the work of God. It's an amazing thing. And when I look at it, as failed as these men were, they are the patriarchs of Israel.

They're the founding fathers of the nation of Israel. God had not abandoned them. And folks, no matter who has done what to you, you've got to understand something.

It's not over until it's over. Folks, people can wound you. They can hurt you.

And they can end up your neighbor in heaven for all of eternity. Because God's not finished like we are. Thank God you're not God.

That's all I can say. Thank God I'm not God. His mercy endures forever.

People can abandon you. They can betray you. They can do the nastiest thing to you you can ever imagine and wind up at the throne of God with you when it's all over.

Because God said, I wasn't finished. I know they were unstable. I know they were self-willed and angry.

I know they were cowards and betrayed you. But I was not finished with them. I was not finished with this person.

The mercy of God, when you finally get it, the mercy of God can overwhelm you. The mercy of God can become your foundation. The mercy of God can become the song of your life.

The mercy of God can open your prison door. The mercy of God could cause your fist to unfold and begin to be tender again. The mercy of God, when you and I realize that we stand by mercy.

David the psalmist said, Lord, if you marked our iniquities, who among us could stand? If you took a list and if you judged us by our thoughts and our deeds and our actions all day, there's nobody could stand in the sight of a holy God. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The work of God in Christ is forgiveness.

Praise God. It is forgiveness. And folks, that's why, that's why those who are going to be used of God in the greatest measure quite often suffer the most.

Because we come to a place that we know we stand by mercy and Joseph had to have known it. There had to have been such a deep working in his heart or he would not have been able to forgive his brothers. And the scripture tells us where we begin in Genesis in chapter 45, it said, Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him.

And he cried, cause every man to go out for me. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known to his brethren. And he wept aloud and the Egyptians and all the house of Pharaoh heard.

Now listen to me, I'm not even suggesting that forgiveness in some instances is easy. And I'm not suggesting that when you forgive somebody that it means what they did was right. But Joseph made a decision.

There are hungry people standing before me and it's within my power to close my fist and to close my bowels of compassion to them. Or it's within my power to be as God is to me in this world. It's in my power to open my heart and open my hand.

But I'm telling you sometimes it's not easy. Some of the hardest things you'll ever have to do is to forgive the people who've wounded you the most. But I'm telling you, if you make the choice to do it, there's not a prison door that can hold you.

There's not a wound of the past that can continue to bruise you. There's not an obstruction that the enemy has set before you that can stop you from being what God has called you to be and fulfilling the call of God that he alone has placed on your life. You and I will be put in that position.

Many are in it today, the very position that Christ was in. He didn't have to forgive us folks. He didn't have to forgive you for all the wrong that you've done.

He didn't have to let you off the hook for every time you cursed his name before you knew him as Lord and Savior. But he chose to do it because he is good and his mercy endures forever. Joseph said, send everybody out.

And I see in this passage of scripture, it says he wept aloud. He wept so loud that all the Egyptians in the house of Pharaoh heard. There are moments of forgiveness that are just hard.

He had fought against this when they first came to him. The scripture says he ran into a back room and he cried privately. Then he put grain in their sacks, put their money back in their sacks and sent them home.

He kept simian just to show that he had the power to put them all in jail if he wanted to. But he put the money in their sacks and sent them home. And I believe in measure.

It was because he said, I don't want a single silver coin that you betrayed me for in my hands or in the coffers of Egypt. You deceivers, you take your money and you go home. You say you're honest men, go home.

That was a long journey back home and he didn't know if he'd ever see them again. I don't know at that point if he really truly cared about it. He was in that battle of becoming vulnerable again.

When you forgive people that have wounded you, you become vulnerable to them again. And who wants to do that? Especially in New York city of all places where everybody's got a three foot plus space and I'll love you. Just, there's no, just get out of my space and I'll love you.

Just, you know what I'm talking about. Everybody's got their space. And when you become vulnerable to other people, you're inviting them into that space and you're letting them get close enough to hurt you again.

That's part of becoming vulnerable. And it is part of what it means to forgive people. And Joseph wept aloud.

He wept so hard that all the house of Pharaoh heard it. There was pain involved with this folks. It was not weeping for joy.

It was weeping for pain initially. And because the scripture said his brothers were afraid of him when they saw this weeping, they knew what they had done to him. When they saw the depth of the pain that they had caused him, that's what caused them to back away and become afraid.

I think at that moment they thought he's going to kill us. He's going to deal with us what we did to him only to find out that the heart of God had been formed in him. And he said to his brothers, he said, God sent me before you to preserve you in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

It was not you that sent me here, but God. And this is the key I think to getting out of the prison of pain is that whatever's happened in your life, God allowed it for a purpose. And if it drove you here and if it brought you to Christ as your Lord and savior, as hard as it might seem to accept the statement, is it not worth it? If it took pain to get you here, if it took betrayal to have you in this house today and to make you into the man or woman that God is making you today, was it not worth it? If you had been raised in the finest house with the finest family, if you'd had a credit card with an inexhaustible supply at every ATM machine that you went to, if you could have had everything this world offers you, would you truly be saved today? Would you truly have found Christ as your savior? But yet having found him, now you and I come to the place of saying, God, am I willing to represent you in the earth? Am I willing to be as it is a type of what you are in this earth? Am I willing to be vulnerable to those who wiped their heads and shook their fingers and did things to me? Am I willing to give to those who did nothing to me but take and hurt and wound me? And Joseph said, it was not you that sent me here, but God.

And he's made me a father to Pharaoh and Lord of all his house and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. You are today a son and daughter of God. You now have access to an inexhaustible supply of strength in Jesus Christ.

He said, make haste, go to my father and say to him, your son, Joseph, God's made me Lord of all Egypt. Calm down to me and tarry not. Verse 11, he says, here I will nourish you.

There are yet five years of famine, lest you and your household and all that you have comes to poverty. And behold, your eyes see it, the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it's my mouth that speaks to you. You know, some people just not going to believe it when you forgive them.

They're just not going to believe it. Now, some people are already dead. You can't, you can still forgive them.

You can't go face to face, but you can let go of whatever debt it is that you simply in your spirit have these people by the throat. You can let it go. You can make that choice today.

And there's others. Now you can, you can send an email today. You can, you can write a card.

You can send a video clip. You can do like Joseph and say, your eyes see that it's my mouth that speaks to you. I will nourish you.

I will help you. If you're in need, I'll be a friend to you. If you have no other friend, you can bring what you have.

And I will be that channel of supply that makes a difference in your life and in your future. Now, when I was, I want to just read to you a scripture and I'm going to close with this because when I was preparing this, a scripture that we've read so many times, all of a sudden it just, it just popped in a new way. Like I've not seen it ever before.

Let me read it to you. Matthew chapter 25. This is talks about when those who know God get to the throne and he tells them how pleased he is with them.

He says, then shall the righteous verse 37 answer him saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you or thirsty and gave you drink? When did we see you a stranger and took you in or naked and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and we came to you? And the king shall answer and say to them, verily I say to you in as much as you've done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you've done it to me. When did we see you God? When did we see you naked? When did we see you thirsty? When did we see you in prison? When did we see you hungry? He said, no, when you did it to the least of these, my, my brethren that I was not finished working with, maybe you were finished with them for a season, but I was not finished with them. And you were able to be the vessel in my hand to go to them in their hunger and to go to them in their prison and to give them drink when they were thirsty and to clothe them when they were naked and to provide for them when they were penniless and to give them hope in a hopeless situation.

He said, you, you, you did it. And you could only have done it by the power of my life being lived out within you folks. You'll next to asking forgiveness for your sin.

I don't know if there's a greater decision that you could make in your life than to forgive those that have wronged you. Joseph said, it's my mouth that speaks to you. Mother's day can be a time of pain, but when you forgive and sometimes the forgiveness comes with great pain.

A few years ago, I was in Burundi. There was a group of us went there and we were invited to speak about reconciliation between the two tribes, particularly two tribes, the Tutsis and the Hutus have been committing genocide against one another for years now. When one tribe gets in power, they slaughter the other and vice versa.

And we were invited in to speak about these things. And I was in the pastor's conference and there were, I don't know how many pastors are, I'm told there were three or 4,000. I really don't know how many, it was quite a large gathering.

And I talked about these things. I talked about forgiveness. I talked about if there's going to be a healing come to this nation, there has to be forgiveness.

Now you have to understand, I was asking people in that room, pastors to forgive other people in the room who had killed their families. And these things actually had happened. The last genocide was a pre-planned one where neighbors invited their neighbors into their homes.

It was planned for a specific day, a specific time to invite your neighbors in for supper and at a certain hour to rise up and kill all of your neighbors. And I was asking them to forgive. I said, you can't be ambassadors of Christ in the nation.

You can't be of any effect if you have unforgiveness in your heart. Now I knew the impossibility of this if the Holy Spirit didn't do it. I gave an altar call and stood back and for a moment nothing happened.

But then suddenly one person began to cry with a cry so profound. And I began to understand Joseph's cry then in Genesis. It was a cry so profound.

It was the cry of a person who came home and found their family dead, murdered, betrayed. One of the deepest issues they had is this, I knew these people. They ate at my house.

I ate at their house. And how do I deal with the fact that they rose up and killed my family? Those that survived had to deal with this reality. But they started with a cry.

Then it began to spread through the whole gathering and for the next 40 minutes to an hour, I guess, I don't know how long it went. There was a cry like I've never heard anywhere at any time. It was deeper than just minimal tears of sorrow.

It was something from so deep that came from within. But they made the choice. They made the choice to forgive.

There were lining all over. And this was just something I've been in. I've seen this.

I've been part of this. They cried out to God. Then all I could do, there were two people standing near the platform where I was.

I just grabbed them and cried with them. I didn't know what else to do. There was nobody saying, pray this.

You couldn't because nobody could hear you anyway. For the cry that was in that room, it lasted, it seemed like forever. Then suddenly, joy broke out and people began running over to others.

On the other side, they began hugging each other. They began to dance in the aisles. Forgiveness had come.

That night, it spread onto the field where there were many members of government. There were, I think, about 30,000 people. The same thing that happened in that room spread onto the field and onto the

airwaves and the radio and television.

The dancing that began in that pastor's room spread onto the field and subsequently into the nation. There's still peace there today. God broke that spirit of unforgiveness and broke that desire for vengeance.

But it came when people made a choice. It's not a feeling, it's a choice. It's a matter of knowing what is right and just saying, I'm going to do this because it's right.

Even if you don't feel it, you just simply choose to do it because it's the right thing to do. God is the one who brings the joy. When they were finally released from all of these things that had gripped their heart and today, for those that are wounded, you're in pain, you live your life in pain.

Can you find it in your heart to forgive? Can you find it in your heart to see that maybe the hand of God has been in some measure in this? As difficult as that may be for you to understand, that maybe God has allowed and used this, allowed this to be used to make you the person you're going to be in the days ahead. You're going to be a person of compassion. You're going to be somebody who has this instinctive experiential understanding of Christ that the casual observer and study or never gets, never understands.

There's something of God is coming into your life. You're going to be able to stand as a true ambassador of the one who went to a cross because he loved you and loved people and you're going to know it. You're going to be able to speak it, but it starts with a choice.

Christ had to choose to go to Calvary. He had to choose to forgive. When he rose from the dead, the choice was still within his grasp to forgive or withhold that forgiveness.

And if you and I are going to represent God and the earth in our generation, we have to make the right choice. We've got to let everybody go that owes us anything. Let them go.

And it doesn't mean what they did was right. It means that out of this, in spite of the fact they meant it for evil, God sent you into a place where you're going to be able to be used for his good in the days ahead. He will turn this thing around.

He will turn the pain around and put oil of healing in your hand. He'll put a key in your hand, unlock that prison door and get out once and for all and forever. He'll give you back the joy that maybe you once had, or maybe you've never known it yet, but he'll give you joy that comes in the Holy Ghost and it comes when you and I make the choice to forgive.

You've got to make the choice. There's really no going forward till you make the choice. If you don't forgive those that have hurt you, you will study about God, but never come to the knowledge of where the truth is supposed to bring you.

I know today I've spoken in the Holy Spirit. I know that the words I've had to share have touched a very deep cord in many hearts, and I'm going to give an altar call here in this sanctuary and in the annex, and if God has been speaking to you and you are willing, as repulsive as it even may seem to you, you are willing to forgive. You let God deal with the rest of it, but you are willing to let the grievance go, and you are willing to forgive and even be a channel of blessing.

Now, I'm not suggesting you go back into situations that are violent, or you go back to allowing anybody to do anything to you that is unlawful, unethical, or immoral. I'm not suggesting that. I'm suggesting that you

can become a channel of blessing to those that have been the deepest wounding in your life if you will let God be God in you.

Father, thank You, Lord, for the simplicity of Your Word. Thank You, God, that You're going to set free a multitude of people in this house today to get out of these prisons of bitterness and to get into the place, O God, where the true joy of living for God comes into the heart. Lord, I thank You for this with all that is in me, in Jesus' name.

As we stand in the annex in Main Sanctuary, if you need to forgive, would you come? Just meet me here at this altar, please. I'm going to worship for a moment, and those who need to forgive, if you want to get out of the prison of bitterness, come here. Meet me at the altar.

We're going to pray together, a simple prayer. Would you come and you lay it down? Don't wait for me to lead you. You lay it down.

Balcony, you can go to either exit, make your way down here, Main Sanctuary, slip out. Forgive. Forgive, folks, forgive.

We go to God that knows again. Praise to God, how can it be? I'm going to just pray for you, those that have responded to this altar, and you've responded in your heart. What really happens when you choose to forgive is that you are releasing the freedom of Christ into your own life.

It's not just you're releasing another person, but you're releasing the very thing that Satan uses to keep you in bondage. You're letting it go, and you're letting the life of Christ. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Jesus said.

He's anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He sent me to heal the brokenhearted, and preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, and to set free or at liberty those that are bruised. He said, that's why the Spirit of God is upon me.

This is the work, and then he closed the book. The scripture says, and he said to all that were gathered, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. This day is a day when you can lay hold of that.

You can lay claim to that as you are choosing to forgive those that have wronged you. You are allowing God to be released within your life. I'm going to pray for you.

I don't even want you to pray. Just the fact that you're here, you're making that choice. There's no formula to this.

You're making a choice, not just to forgive, but to be a potential source of blessing to those that have hurt me. Father, I ask in Jesus' name, Lord, that the healing that you spoke about in Luke chapter 4 verse 18, and through the prophet Isaiah, be released into the hearts of those that are letting go the bitternesses of the past, letting go the lists of grievances against people. And Father, you let our grievances go.

You let go the list of the wrongs that we had done, and because of it we have hope today. And I thank you, Lord, that as we make a right choice in this area, that this life of God will be released in us. The joy of the Lord will become our strength.

I pray, God, today that every person at this altar and in the annex standing between the screens be aware that there's an oil of God coming into the heart this very moment. Something supernatural beginning to

touch the lives of those who are forgiving, those that have wronged them. Lord, now make us vessels of provision.

Put kind words in our mouths, and give us resources to help others who need our help, even those who have wronged us, Lord. And God, we thank you for it. Thank you that this is a new day for many.

This is the beginning of a brand new day. The pain is gone. The memory is there, but the pain is gone.

The power to imprison us is gone. I believe it. I proclaim it to be so according to the Word of God in Jesus' mighty name.

Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord.

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