

Reconciliation

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[0 : 00] Please do take a seat and perhaps we could open our Bibles again to Genesis 49 and 50. Are you pleased to know we're not going to go through these chapters in forensic detail because some of us do need to go to work on Monday.

So I just want to pick out three very simple truths that I think we can take from this passage to encourage us. But I thought we'd start with a question.

How do you know if you can trust someone? How do you know if you can trust someone or not? What makes somebody trustworthy? A good track record.

They do what they say they'll do. You take a risk every time you trust someone, definitely. Character. If you have a relationship with them.

Very good. There was a study published this week by New York University. And they said, actually, we have an inbuilt reflex that makes us in milliseconds decide whether we're going to trust someone or not.

[1 : 10] They did a research project of literally thousands of people. And they came to the conclusion that if you have pronounced cheekbones and arcing eyebrows, you're trustworthy.

Also, they decided you're more likely to trust thin people than fat people. But I guess you may or may not believe that coming from me.

Wikipedia. WikiHow. Source of all knowledge says there's three things that we should look at if we decide whether we're trusting people or not. The first is this. Credibility.

Does the person tell the truth? Secondly, reliability. Does the person do what they promise? Thirdly, authority.

Can the person do what they say? Credibility, reliability, and authority. As we end Genesis, I think what Moses is trying to do in these two long chapters is give his people a plea and evidence for why they can trust God going forwards.

[2 : 25] Why they can trust God. As we end the Joseph story. Moses is telling the people, trust God.

And that's going to be so important because as we leave Genesis, we're going to go into Exodus and it'll be like God hasn't spoken for 300 or so years. They start to become very Egyptian in their thinking.

The generations will pass and people will talk about the patriarchs, but no one will remember them. And therefore, this is like an adrenaline shot in the arm that Moses is giving his people.

Trust God. Trust God. It's actually going to be the key test for the rest of the Old Testament. Will God's people really trust him?

Or when the chips are down, will they turn somewhere else? When God isn't quite behaving as they think he should, will they turn to the Baals and the Asherahs? Will God's people trust him? Do they look at his credibility, reliability and authority and say, yes, God, we can trust you no matter what?

[3 : 39] I guess that's a key test in my life and your life. Do we really trust God's? We can sing and I will trust in you alone. And we can do that when we're all sitting comfortably on a Sunday night.

But what about when life and the storms of life crash over the bow of our experience? What? When the bank balance is wearing really thin. What about when the P45 is slid across your desk and your boss says we don't need you anymore?

What about when the doctor says, I'm sorry to say it's not good news? Or what about when things don't go the way that we hoped?

Maybe we trusted someone who let us down. Do we trust God then? Do we trust God then when it is really scary and it is really dark? Do we trust God?

Well, I want us to see from this passage that God is trustworthy. And of all the people, all the things in all the world we can trust, God is head and shoulders above everybody else.

[4 : 52] So here's the first thing I want us to see. Trust God with your tomorrows. Trust God with your tomorrows. Because Jacob has been in Egypt for 17 years.

Since he arrived at the beginning of chapter 47. He's 130 when he moves to Egypt. So for some of you who think he's moved house for the last time, there's lots of scope.

It's not only move house but move country. He dies at 147. Full of years at a ripe old age. In the previous chapters, Jacob has blessed Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

They did that whole hokey-cokey thing that Johnny took us through last week. And now we see in chapter 49, verse 1, Jacob gathers his remaining 11 sons.

He gathers them to him. And look what it says. So that I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come. That Jacob is laying out for the brothers what is going to befall them as their history unfolds.

[5 : 59] What's going to happen to them and their tribes and the people of Israel as they go forward. There's quite a lot in these predictions.

At the end of the chapter, it calls them blessings. Although I think if you were some of the sons and were receiving what your dad was saying about you, I'm not sure you'd see it as a blessing. So what I want to do is just for a very short while pick out a few of them and show you just how accurate they are.

It's been kind of like biblical air hunters this week. So we've traced this family tree through the rest of the Bible. So let's start. Let's start with Reuben as he is the firstborn.

Reuben, Jacob even says that in the prophecy. And he's saying that Reuben, you should have had every privilege. You're the firstborn.

The first sign of my strength and honor and power. You excel. But verse 4 is a bit of a stinging indictment.

[7 : 06] You are turbulent as the water. You're unstable. You're fluid. You're not to be trusted. You change easily. And it's the consequences of Reuben's adultery with Bilhah back in chapter 35, verse 22.

When Jacob is mourning the death of Rachel, Reuben slinks up to his bedroom and sleeps with Bilhah.

And the sin seems to constantly cloud Reuben going forward. We get these words. End of the beginning of verse 4.

You will no longer excel. This one who should have been the cream of the crop is told by his dad, you will no longer excel. And as you read the rest of the biblical Old Testament and the people of Israel, you'll see the Reubenites are a footnote.

No one famous is a Reubenite. They have no kings, no prophets. They don't even have a bad king. No judges. Not even any notable fighting men.

[8 : 24] Therein also ran in the people of Israel. There's certainly not a tribe that excels. But the best point is in the Song of Deborah.

They talk about the Reubenites and said they thought about going to war, but they searched their hearts and didn't. That's about as good as it gets. They certainly did not excel, you have to say. Jacob's words certainly do come true.

Then we get these two brothers, Simeon and Levi. They're instruments of violence, he says.

They've got a track record as they massacre all the Shechemites, having deceived them.

Look what it says. They'll be scattered and dispersed in Israel. Scattered and dispersed in Israel.

And it's an amazing thing to see. Because both the tribe of Simeon and the tribe of Levi are scattered and dispersed throughout the rest of Israel.

But, for Simeon it's a curse and for Levi it's a blessing. The Simeonites, if we read Numbers 1, are the third largest tribe when they go into the wilderness wanderings.

[9 : 39] Third biggest tribe. By the time we get to the census in Numbers 26, they're the smallest tribe. And by the time they get to the promised land, they don't even get a segment for themselves.

They're given a little corner of the land allotted to Judah. That they're scattered and dispersed. And it really seems to come true.

Levi, on the other hand, things actually go quite well. In Exodus 32, verses 26 to 28. They're the instrument of God's judgment. As he pours out judgment for the golden calf.

And it's because of this that they're chosen to be the priestly tribe. And by the time they get into the promised land, they don't get land themselves. They don't get inheritance themselves.

The phrase is written that God himself is their inheritance. And therefore they're literally scattered throughout the whole province of the promised land.

[10:40] Amongst the tribes to dispense these priestly duties. You have to say. Three sons. And Jacob's got them absolutely right.

He's absolutely nailed it. And then we get Dan and things don't look that great for Dan. Verse 16. Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel.

Dan will be a snake by the roadside. A viper along the path that bites the horse's heels. So that its riders will tumble backwards. Again, having looked at this, you have to say it's very accurate.

This idea of Dan dispensing justice. Seems to hone in on one of the most famous judges. The incredible hulk of the Bible.

Samson. The one who dispenses judges. Is the last of the judges. He is a Danite. From the tribe of Dan.

[11:42] Seems pretty good. Verse 16. But then it talks about him being a viper. A snake. By the roadside. That's going to bite people. And they're going to stumble backwards. And as we move on.

Particularly into the time of the kings. Dan becomes a bad place. It's where Jeroboam puts one of his golden calves. So that the people in the northern kingdom of Israel.

Don't need to travel to Jerusalem. And undermine the new king Jeroboam's authority. By the time we get to Amos 8.

Verse 14. Amos says, Dan, you're an utter disgrace. You've become the center of idolatry. And it's from you that all the sorcery. And badness in the world happens.

You have to say what Jacob says to Dan. You're like a snake that's going to bite people's heels. And make them go backwards. Seems very accurate. So they become a place synonymous with idolatry.

[12:44] Then we move to Joseph. It seems silly that we wouldn't look at Joseph. And this seems to be a lot less. Predicting what Joseph's tribe is going to be like.

Because he doesn't have one. Because his place is taken by his two sons. Manasseh and Ephraim. But looking back at the end of Jacob's life. He makes some remarkable proclamations.

He says of Joseph that he's been a very fruitful vine. A fruitful vine that's prospered near a spring. That has overflowed outside the territory. Of Canaan. Whose branches climb over a wall. That blessing, that fruitfulness has spilled out from beyond.

The immediate proximity. And he's prospered through adversity. It seems that it's like archers have been attacking him. And we can see that throughout his life.

[13:44] That it's not been great. Particularly the early half. It was not great. It was like archers were attacking him. But it says his bow remained steady.

His hands remained calm. He prospered through adversity. And the reason. Because God's arms held up Joseph's arms.

That behind it all God was faithful to Joseph. God was strong in Joseph's life. This is Jacob talking about why Joseph prospered.

And it's nothing to do with Jacob. Look what he says. But his bow remained steady. His strong arms stayed supple. Because of the hand of the mighty one of Jacob. Because of the shepherd, the rock of Israel.

Because of your father's God who helped you. Because of the almighty who blesses you. As Jacob looks back on the life of his favorite son. He says you've prospered.

[14:48] And it's been because God has been with you. What an incredible acknowledgement from a guy, Jacob. Who'd not had the greatest history.

Had been a bit murky. Had been a lot of up and downs. But looking back he says, God you were real. And you were in control. And you were helping and strengthening. And it was your will that was being done.

And you even used my son. And helped him. Lastly, let's look at Judah. Because this is where it's so amazing.

Verse 8. Judah, your brothers will praise you. If you remember when Judah was born as Leah's fourth son. She gives the first three sons pretty awkward names.

But Judah, Leah says, this time I will praise the Lord. So he called, so she called her son Judah, which is the word for praise.

[15:47] And so it says, Judah, your brothers will praise you. It'll be an ultimate reality. And your hand will be on the neck of your enemies.

This is almost the same language as we heard back in Genesis 3 about the offspring of the woman being the serpent crusher. The one who lifts the enemies up by the neck. And it never goes well for anyone being held up by the neck.

Then we have this lion imagery that's going to be picked up particularly in Revelation. This majestic lion who has authority and power.

Who offers real rest. Look at the end of verse 9. Like a lioness, who dares to rouse him? I don't know if you used to watch Natural World, but the lions would go out on the savannah. They'd kill a wildebeest.

They'd all eat their fill. And then they'd lie out sunbathing on the rock. And you'd have to be a brave man to go and give it a tickle at that point. Because there's real rest here.

[16:49] This picture is of one who is defeating enemies, who is worthy of praise. And who offers real rest. Look at what it says about the donkey in verse 11.

He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch. I don't know if you've ever been in a vineyard. But vines are pretty scrawny little things.

Not something that you would really tie a donkey to. Because it would just run away. Well, meander away. Donkeys are not the speediest of creatures. So if you've got a vine that's able to have a donkey tethered to it.

We're talking like a big vine. Big vines bring big clusters of grapes. We have a picture here of abundance. You also wouldn't put your donkey on a vine. Because the donkey quite likes a grape from time to time.

It would eat quite a lot of the produce. The only time you do that is if you had strong vines. And also so many grapes that if Eeyore helped himself to a few. It wouldn't really matter.

[17:52] Because you've got so many. And then look at what it says about the wine. He will wash his garments in wine. His robes in the blood of grapes.

How much wine would you need to do your weekly washing in it? This is before the days of A plus eco rating.

You're going to need an awful lot. There's going to be an abundance of wine. I'm not sure how clean it would be. But you're going to need an incredible amount.

And as I read this this week. My mind couldn't help but go towards John 2. When Jesus goes to a wedding. But there's a real problem. Because the wine runs out.

And so they fill 50 gallon jars. Six of them to the brim. And it turns into wine. That seems to be like an abundance of wine. It's almost like. This prophecy finds its fulfillment in.

[18:52] Jesus. In fact it really does. Because verse 10 tells us it does. The scepter will not depart from Judah. The ruling stick. Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet.

Until he to whom it belongs shall come. Even here in this prophecy. The lion of Judah is being seen as coming in the future.

And he will reign forever. That the scepter will be passed. And obviously it will go through David.

The greatest of Judah's descendants. In the Old Testament. Who was the pinnacle of kings.

But eventually this scepter will side with. The Lord Jesus. The promised ultimate seed. And at that point.

There won't need to be another king. Because he'll be the king forever. Do you see how accurate this is? Do you see that God even right at the beginning. Knows what the end is going to look like?

[19:56] It says this. And the obedience of the nation shall be his. It's been very interesting in Genesis. Because we started with all humanity. In Eden. We then moved to Noah.

And to Shem. And then from Shem to Abraham. And from Abraham to Israel. And from Israel we got to Judah. And now we focused in on one person. From the tribe of Judah.

This one. Whom the scepter belongs to forever. And it seems doesn't it. That it gets narrower and narrower. And narrower and narrower. But then we find in this one.

That it opens out again to all humanity. As it is him. Who will rule all the nations. All the nations. Shall be his. I think what we see.

Or what I've tried to show you. From these prophecies. Is that you can trust God with your tomorrows. Because he knows what they look like. It says in Isaiah 46 verse 10.

[20 : 55] I make known the end from the beginning. From ancient times what is still to come. I say my purpose will stand. And I will do all I please.

You can trust God. If he's got all this worked out. I think we can trust him with Monday morning. Pretty sure we can trust him.

When it's difficult. And when it's dark. And when it's tough. If God is able to make something out of these people. I'm pretty sure he can make something out of you and me. And even right at the beginning.

He can tell us about the end. Trust God with your tomorrows. Secondly and much quicker. Trust God with your yesterdays. Turn to chapter 50 and verse 15.

Jacob dies. And there seems to be a real problem. Because the sons don't really think they've been forgiven. That Joseph has just been playing at it for the sake of his dad. So his dad can die with family harmony going on before his eyes.

[21 : 57] And now Jacob is dead. The brothers are terrified. Because he thinks now we're for it. You can't just strip people and throw them in a pit. And sell them to the Midianites.

And have them in prison in Egypt. That's all your fault. And you not get punished for it. So there's real panic. Are we really forgiven? Or was this just for show?

Is this really grace? Or is it just withheld judgment until the old boy dies? Yes. So they send word to Joseph.

Please forgive the sins of the servants of God of your father. Joseph cries because he can't believe that they haven't got that they're really forgiven.

They throw themselves down before him. We are your slaves. They tried to do that back when Benjamin was found to have the priced cup of Joseph. And Joseph says these words which have been alluded to so many times in this series.

[23 : 05] Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me. But God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done. The saving of many lives.

Am I in the place of God's? If God so worked it out this way. That my coming to Egypt. My ascending to Prime Minister.

Has led to the preserving of many lives. Why would I hold a grudge against you? Who can forgive sin but God? Am I in the place of God? Is it me? To give my own justice and retribution?

He says to his brothers. You're really forgiven. What you did you are totally responsible for. You intended to harm me.

But over and above that God. God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done. The saving of many lives.

[24 : 05] The saving of many lives. Do you see how sovereign God is in the midst of this? That the brothers do exactly what they want to do. But in the end it only turns out that they do exactly what God had predestined should happen.

It's kind of like what happens in the cross. No? Well that's certainly how Peter talks about it in Acts 2. That you with the help of wicked men put to death the author of life.

But you only actually accomplished what God had determined beforehand should happen. Do you see looking back God.

Joseph could say. You intended to harm me. It did really hurt. But God used it for good. Do you know what if we look back at our lives.

And thought about the stuff that was really hard and really horrible. Wouldn't it be so gracious of God if in this life. He showed us how we used it for our ultimate good.

[25 : 10] Because we clung to him perhaps. Because we felt the embrace of his people in his church. Let's be clear if we don't get that kind of closure in this life.

In eternity. Like it says at the end of Daniel. The scars of this life will shine. Brighter than the sun as we see. That it was all worth it.

In the end. Trust God with your tomorrows. Trust God with your yesterdays. And lastly trust God with your forever.

Jacob dies. And at the very end Joseph dies. But from what we read they both die in faith. They both die in real faith.

That their future is bound up with who God is. And what God has promised. Rest. So Jacob dies. Chapter 49 verse 53.

[26 : 11] And he makes people promise. That they won't bury him in Egypt. He's not going to get a pyramid to himself. He's not going to be on the same mound as Tutankhamun and all his friends.

He says I want to be buried back in the cave in Machpelah that Abraham bought. I want to be buried with my people.

Because my future is bound up with the covenant people of God. And I know ultimately. That'll be worth everything in eternity.

Jacob dies in faith and asked to be buried amongst his people. Joseph the same. Although Joseph has a different dimension in view. He dies at the age of 110.

Another ripe old age. He sees some of his grandchildren and some great grandchildren as well. He says I'm about to die. But I want you to embalm me and put me in a coffin.

[27 : 14] But don't let Egypt be my ultimate resting place. He says when you've been here God will visit you. He will come to your aid.

And I want you to take me with you. He has great assurance that God will not leave his people forever in Egypt. But they'll be rescued. He died within the covenant family.

And as we look at this. That's why we can trust God with our forevers. Because if we're found. Not in God's people by race.

Descendants from Abraham. But in God's family by grace. Being heirs of the new covenant. Dying. In Jesus Christ. Then we can have absolute confidence.

That God will come to our aid. And we won't be transported as a mummy in a coffin. From Egypt to the promised land. But we'd be transported as sons and daughters.

[28 : 20] In resurrection bodies. To the ultimate promised land. To be with God forever. Because of the Lord Jesus. That's why we can trust God.

Because Judas promised seed one. And because of him we have ultimate assurance. The ultimate proof that we can trust God.

Is that he sent his son. Who died for us. They put him in a grave. And the grave couldn't hold him. And because he lives. We also will live.

What did we learn from this chapter? Trust God. With all your tomorrows. Trust God. With all your yesterdays. And trust God. With your forever. Because he's trustworthy.

And he will never let us down. I don't know if you saw in the paper this week. But Elizabeth Elliot died. And this was one of the tributes that was written.

[29 : 18] Elizabeth was a woman who knew and trusted the Lord. Here was a woman willing to trust the Lord no matter what. Trusting him no matter what happened.

No matter where he called her to go. No matter what he called her to do. Here was a woman who suffered the loss of her young husband on the mission field. As a martyr.

And then trusted God in staying for several years to share the good news of Jesus Christ. With the same people who killed her beloved Jim. A few years on and her second husband died of cancer. Elizabeth Elliot in her life suffered beyond what I could even imagine as a wife and mother. And her response to it all was her repeated phrase.

Trust God. And obey him. And do the next thing he asks. No matter what. All for his glory.

[30 : 19] All for his glory.

Alone. Let's pray. Father God thank you that we can trust you with all of our lives. And our eventual deaths.

Father thank you that we have every reason to trust you. As the one who knows the end from the beginning. The one who is the Alpha and the Omega. The one. Who in the hands of his son holds the keys of death.

And hell. And so Lord we come. Repenting of all the times we've doubted you. All the times our fears and anxieties have got the better of us.

And we failed to see your face. And so Lord we pray this week. We would trust you no matter what comes. No matter what we see.

[31 : 21] And Father that trust in you would give us a steadfast confidence. To take risks. To grab opportunities. And to live life differently before a watching world.

Father we thank you for your son. Who ultimately proves we can trust you with tomorrow. And who conqueringly proved.

We can trust you with forever. Father what's useful seared on our hearts we pray. Father what's been near rumblings and ramblings. Father may they blow away in the wind. Father bless us this week we ask. In Jesus name. Amen.