

When Jacob Met the Apostle Paul

by Warren Wiersbe

The sermon illustrates how Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers learned profound spiritual truths about God's providence, purpose, and forgiveness through their encounters with the Apostle Paul's teachings in Romans 8.

Duration: 36:13

Scripture: Romans 8:28-31, Romans 8:33-35, Romans 8:37

Topics: "Gods Providence", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses three important spiritual truths that Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's brothers learned when they met the Apostle Paul. The first truth is God's pardon, which means that no matter what is happening in our lives, God has forgiven us and will never remind us of our sins again. The second truth is God's providence, which Jacob learned, reminding us that God is in control of all things and is working them together for our good. The third truth is God's purpose, which Joseph learned, showing us that God has a specific plan and purpose for our lives. By understanding and applying these truths, we can stop worrying, complaining, and fretting, and instead experience joy, blessings, and a deeper relationship with God.

Transcript

Let's open the Word of God together to Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 is a mountaintop chapter in the Bible, and sometimes we're tempted to say, well, is there anything there we haven't already learned? But I'd like us to learn it in a new way tonight, because I'd like for us to have a meeting between the man who wrote this chapter, the Apostle Paul, and some people who lived this chapter long before Paul was ever born. Now these people are Jacob, and you all know Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's brothers. Did you know that Jacob and Joseph and Joseph's brothers met the Apostle Paul spiritually in Romans chapter 8, beginning at verse 28 and closing with verse 39? Jacob met the Apostle Paul in verse 28.

Joseph met the Apostle Paul in verses 29 and 30. And Joseph's brothers met the Apostle Paul in verses 31 through 39. Now since that is true, you're going to have to keep a marker in Romans 8 and turn back to Genesis chapter 42.

Jacob and Joseph and Joseph's brothers learned three important spiritual truths when they met the Apostle Paul. Now if you and I will learn these truths, we'll be able to walk out of this auditorium tonight and not worry. Some of you are worrying.

There's something deep down inside that just eats away at you and you're fretting. Believe me, if you and I will learn these three spiritual truths, we'll stop our fretting and our worrying and our complaining. Now if we stopped complaining, we wouldn't have much to talk about, but it might do us good.

It will help our praying. It'll help our witnessing. There'll be a new joy in our lives.

There'll be a new dimension of blessing in our lives. Now with that kind of advertising, you're saying, well I wonder what in the world he's talking about. Let's start with Jacob.

I like Jacob. God calls himself the God of Jacob. I like that because I find myself so much like Jacob.

Let's begin in Genesis 42 about verse 29. Jacob's sons have come back from Egypt. Now you know the story.

You learned it in Sunday school. A famine in the land. They went down to Egypt to get grain.

Verse 29. And they came unto Jacob their father under the land of Canaan and told him all that befell unto them saying, the man who is the Lord of the land spoke roughly to us. Of course this was Joseph.

And he took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, we are true men. We are no spies.

We are 12 brethren, sons of our father. One is not. And the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

And the man the Lord of the country said unto us, hereby shall I know that ye are true men. Leave one of your brethren here with me and take food for the famine of your households and be gone. And bring your youngest brother unto me.

Then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men. So will I deliver you your brother. You see he'd kept Simeon for hostage.

And ye shall do business in the land. And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks that behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

And Jacob their father said unto them, me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not. And Simeon is not.

And ye will take Benjamin away. Now here we get to Romans 8 28. All these things are against me and bless your heart.

Jacob, all of these things were working for you and not against you. Now, what are these things that Jacob is complaining about? What problems did he have? Same problems we have today. He was having some economic problems.

They had the money, but they couldn't buy the food. Had to send down to Egypt to get food. And then when they got back, they had the food and had the money too.

A little bit scared. Economic problems. He had problems with just getting the everyday necessities of life.

He had family problems. I doubt that there isn't a person here tonight who at some point has not had family problems. Now, Jacob was sort of a morose fellow.

He got this from his father. Isaac was this way. Isaac was always going to die.

I had an aunt like that. As long as I was alive and can remember the phone ringing, oh, she was going to die. She was going to die.

She finally died. She was over 90. Outlived her husband, her daughter, her son.

Isaac was that way. And Jacob was a little bit like that. Jacob is saying, I've got family problems.

I can't trust these boys. They get out of my sight. I don't know what they're doing.

Jacob always had a feeling that they had done something with Joseph. And now Simeon was being held hostage. And Benjamin, the darling of his heart, was going to have to go down to Egypt or they wouldn't get Simeon or any food.

So he had family problems. But you know what his biggest problem was? Not a food problem. Not a family problem.

You know what his biggest problem was? A faith problem. He really wasn't trusting God. He'd forgotten everything God had done for him.

We do this. Mr. Spurgeon used to say that Christians write God's blessing in the sand and they engrave their complaints in the marble. And that's true.

Oh, how many times have we sung, all the way my Savior leads me, what have I to ask beside? And we've forgotten what He's done for us. He forgot what God had done for him. God protected him.

God provided for him. God protected him from Esau. God protected him from Laban.

God blessed him. God met his every need. One night Jesus wrestled with Jacob and He weakened Jacob in the thigh.

And He said, I'm going to give you a new name, Israel, a prince with God. And here is the prince with God, sitting and crying and saying, all these things are against me. Don't you be too critical of Him.

Because you've done the same thing. So have I. Last time you woke up from the sodium pentothal, you said, all these things are against me. Last time you went to the doctor's office and he read the x-rays and looked at the reports, you said, all these things are against me.

We're prone to do this. And about the time that Jacob was crying out, all these things are against me, the Apostle Paul was shouting across the centuries, and we know that all things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Jacob, stop complaining.

Jacob, turn on the lights. Jacob, dry your tears. Jacob, don't be afraid.

All of these things are working for you. And they were. He'd lost Joseph.

It's a good thing. Joseph was down in Egypt preparing to save the nation. He'd lost Simeon.

Good thing. That guaranteed the boys had to go back to Egypt and that meant Joseph could reveal himself to them. He was going to lose Benjamin, he thought.

Oh, it's the best thing that could happen to him. Because Joseph would look at Benjamin and he would go off into another room and weep and come back and give Benjamin five times more food than anybody else got. And then there'd be a great big reunion.

Now, the Word of God does not say, and we see all things working together for good. It doesn't say that. I'm glad it doesn't.

I have seen things that weren't there. So have you. I woke up in the hospital one night and I saw some things.

Boy, did I see some things. They weren't there. And I rang for the nurse and she came hot footing it in there.

And I told her what I saw. And she just patted me in the head and said, now you just go back to sleep. But they were so real.

And yet the Word of God says we don't see all things working together for good. It doesn't even say we feel all things working. I felt some things that weren't true.

It says we know. And I'd rather know something than see it. I'd rather know something than feel it.

And we know that God is at work, Jacob. He's putting all the pieces together. You think God has forsaken you.

You think He's working against you. Bless your heart, Jacob. He's working for you.

And somebody here tonight needs to meet the Apostle Paul at Romans 8.28 and learn the truth of God's providence. God's providence. You know what the word providence means? Pro, beforehand.

Video, to see. To see beforehand. The psalmist says about Joseph, and God sent a man before them.

Oh, they meant it to him for evil, but God worked it out for good. Isn't that great? Somebody tonight, they're working against you for evil, and God is saying they can work all they want to, I'm going to work it out for good. Jacob learned the lesson of God's providence.

All things are working together for good. Now, some of you are good Bible students, and as you look at Genesis 42, you say, but why did these things have to happen? I mean, couldn't God have worked it out some other way? Yes, sure. God is not limited.

Well, why did he have to go through these things? Two reasons. One, he was reaping what he had sown. He lied to his father about his brother, and so his sons lied to him about their brother.

You reap what you sow. The chickens come home to roost. He had killed an animal to deceive his father.

He put those skins on his body, and his sons killed an animal and put blood on Joseph's coat to deceive their father. You reap what you sow. That's God's government.

Jacob had been pampered by his mother, and he got in trouble, and so he pampered Joseph, and God had to take Joseph out of the scene, or Joseph would have grown up and been a spoiled brat. He was reaping what he'd sown. Be careful.

Be careful what you do. Be careful how you treat your parents. It may come right back to you.

The second reason why he was going through these things is because God was overruling even the pain, even the heartache, even the misunderstanding, the loneliness. He was overruling it for Jacob's good and for his own glory. Just quickly before we move on to the second truth, God's providence.

Look at Romans 8.28, and we know that all things are working, are working together. God is working consistently. He never quits.

He never takes a vacation. All things are working together. God works consistently, and God works coherently.

He puts it all together. And he works completely. All things, not some things, all things.

We have a God up in heaven who is working for us. You say, my body is sick. He's working for you.

I'm facing surgery. He's working for you. I may lose my job.

He's working for you, if we love him, and we're seeking to fulfill his purpose. Jacob learned the lesson of God's providence, Romans 8.28. Now, what lesson did Joseph learn? He learned the lesson of God's purpose. What is God's purpose? Look at Romans 8.29, to be conformed to the image of his son.

Them who are called according to his purpose. What is his purpose? To be conformed to the image of his son. Joseph went through thirteen years of suffering.

Thirteen years separated from his beloved father. Thirteen years separated from his brethren. Thirteen years living in pagan, idolatrous Egypt.

He was a slave. Now, he became a steward in the home of Potiphar. He had all the credit cards, all the bank books, signed all the vouchers.

Potiphar's wife lied about him. Anybody who lives as pure a life as Joseph did will be lied about. Put him in prison.

There he befriended people. Became the assistant jailer, but he was still a prisoner. Lost his reputation.

Didn't lose his character. Lost his freedom. Didn't lose his spiritual liberty.

Helped a man get out of prison. The man forgot all about him. You'd think as soon as that man got out of prison, he would have said, I'm going to do something to help Joseph.

He didn't do a thing. Forgot all about him. You ever done somebody a good turn and they forgot about you? And then all of a sudden it happened.

A guard comes to the door and says, are you Joseph the Jew? Yes. Pharaoh wants to see you. Not the way I look.

We'll fix you up. Off to the barber shop. They shaved him.

They prepared him. They perfumed him. They clothed him.

He goes and stands before Pharaoh. He interprets Pharaoh's dreams. He's made second ruler of the land.

Like that. Thirteen long years of suffering. Now why did God permit that? I don't know everybody here tonight, but I think I know one problem all of us face collectively.

I confess I'm in this problem. You know what it is? We don't know how to wait. Right? If we took an honest poll, I'm in an honest poll now tonight, and said do you ever have the problem of impatience? Being unable to wait.

I think most of us, if not all of us, would say I'm a candidate for that. I have a hard time waiting. Imagine waiting 13 years and while you're waiting people are gossiping about you.

Did you hear what that Jewish boy did to his mistress? Did you hear what happened? He's in prison. Now where there's smoke there's fire. What was God doing to Joseph? Joseph met the apostle Paul in Romans 8, 29 and 30.

Joseph learned the lesson of God's purpose. He was being conformed to the image of his son. Now hear me.

Did you know that no one in the Old Testament is a more beautiful picture of Jesus Christ than Joseph? Arthur Pink in his commentary on Genesis has 100 comparisons and contrasts between Joseph and Jesus. Both were beloved of their father. Both were hated by their brethren.

Both were tempted and won. Both were lied about. Both were prisoners.

Both got a Gentile bride in their exile. Both fed the nation. The name Joseph means adding.

A-D-D-I-N-G. Jesus is the great adder. Satan is the great subtractor.

Jesus said about Satan, the thief comes not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy. That's the devil. He's the great subtractor.

Jesus is the great adder. He adds to your life. Joseph was sold for the price of a slave.

So was Jesus. Joseph was numbered with the sinners. So was Jesus.

Joseph was exalted after his suffering. So was Jesus. You could go on and on and on.

How did God make Joseph like Jesus? Joseph went to a seminar. No. How did God make Joseph like Jesus? He sent him suffering.

When will we ever learn that when we pray, oh God, make me more like Jesus, we're going to suffer. Conformed to the image of his son. Now Joseph suffered for his own sake.

It built his character. He suffered for his family's sake. He saved them.

And he suffered for our sake. We wouldn't be here tonight if it weren't for Joseph. Did you know that? Joseph kept the people of Israel alive.

Had it not been for Joseph, the nation of Israel would have died. And how could Jesus have been born? We're here tonight because Joseph suffered. Conformed to the image of his son.

Jacob learned the lesson of God's providence. Joseph learned the lesson of God's purpose. I don't know what you're going through.

I know what I go through, but I don't know what you're going through. But I know this much. If we wait, if we have faith and patience, we'll become more like Jesus.

You won't see it. I won't see it. As we grow in the Lord, we sometimes don't see our own spiritual growth.

Others will see it. At Pentecost, no man could see the fire over his own head. Other people could see it.

Nowhere in the New Testament does one man say to another man, you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You can't always see what's going on in your own life. Others can see it.

God can see it. A third lesson. Jacob learned the lesson of God's providence.

Joseph learned the lesson of God's purpose. Joseph's brothers, verses 31-39, learned the lesson of God's pardon. Let me remind you what happened.

Those boys had a guilty conscience, and rightly so. They sold their brother into slavery. They lied to their father.

They perpetuated the lie when they came back from Egypt. That would have been a good time to say, Father, we have something to confess to you. We sold Joseph into slavery.

They didn't. Joseph knew they were lying. That's why he dealt with them the way he did.

You know why Joseph was doing what he was doing? Not because he was brutal. The man dealt roughly with us. But how roughly did you deal with the man? You know why Joseph was rough on his brothers? He loved them.

He wanted to bring them to the place where they would admit their sin. And they finally did. They didn't know he understood.

In the Hebrew language, they said, oh, we saw our brothers travail, and we wouldn't release him. And Joseph's heart welled up. They admitted their sin.

But they had not yet admitted it to their father. They had to. When they went back the next time, and they brought Benjamin along, and Joseph revealed himself to them, did you ever notice in the Bible that whenever God sent a Savior to Israel, they rejected him the first time and accepted him the second time? Joseph, Moses, David, Jesus.

Joseph said, I am your brother. And oh, were they scared. There comes a time, my friend, when your past catches up with you.

What's he going to do? He's going to forgive you. Forgive us. He's going to forgive you.

And he did. He wept and he kissed them. And he said, I know you meant it to me for evil, but God meant it for good.

I forgive you. Now forget about it. Go home and tell Father.

And all the way home, that long distance from Egypt to Canaan, they were writing their speech. And if you were following behind them, you would have seen pieces of parchment start all over again. How do you tell your father? You've been lying for all these years.

How do you tell your father what you've done to your brother? But it has to be done. True repentance always involves restitution. And they told him, Joseph is alive.

And dear Jacob, in his moroseness, I want to go see him before I die. And down they went to Egypt. They had a great time.

Joseph put them up in the best part of the land. Joseph was able to minister to them. And then one day, Jacob died.

Now you remember what happened? It's found back in Genesis chapter 50, if you want to turn back there. When Jacob died, the brothers became frightened. Oh, they say, what's going to happen now? Verse 15, Genesis 50.

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will perhaps hate us and will certainly repay to us all the evil which we did to him. And they sent a messenger to Joseph saying, thy father did command before he died, saying, I don't know if he did or not, but they said he did. So shall ye say unto Joseph, forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren and their sin.

For they did unto thee evil, and now we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And how did Joseph take this message? Did he say, now I've got those fellows, I'll let them have it. That's what some of us would have done.

Some of us would have said, now's my chance to pay them back. But Joseph wept when they spoke unto him, and his brethren also went and fell down before his face. They said, behold, we're thy servant.

It sounds like the prodigal son. He comes home and says, oh, make me one of your servants. And the father says, no, you're my son.

I forgive you, I clothe you, I put shoes on your feet, I put a ring on your finger, make you a servant. Joseph said unto them, fear not, am I in the place of God? Fear ye not, I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spoke kindly unto them.

I've met people like that. The devil comes and reminds them of their old sins. The devil comes and says, oh, the Lord doesn't love you anymore.

Oh, you see what you did. Oh, what you said. Oh, the Lord doesn't love you anymore, says the devil.

You're forsaken, you're forgotten. Watch out, you're in trouble. All over this country in these last 11 months, I have met Christians who are miserable, they're on the shelf, they have no witness, no joy, no prayer power, no blessing because they are afraid and they're listening to the devil.

Now look at Romans 8 and verse 31. What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? And the answer is no. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us, for I am persuaded that neither death,

that's our last enemy, puts it first, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities or powers, that's the devil, nor things present.

Whatever you're going through right now, nor things to come, the things you're worrying about, nor height, nor depth, nor any other thing in all of creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul is saying to Joseph's brothers and he says to us, he will not hate you, he loves you, but what we've done to him, he will not hate you, we'll work our way in, he has forgiven you, you have been pardoned, nothing, nothing, nothing can separate you from his love. I know what it feels to have tubes stuck in your body, I know what it feels like, you know what it feels like, you know what it feels like to hurt, we know what it feels like, all of us do, to lose a loved one, and the first inclination of our carnal hearts is to say God doesn't love me anymore, I'm afraid.

Joseph said to his brethren, you're breaking my heart, I'd sooner have you slap me in the face than not believe that I've forgiven you, and I won't hold the past against you, it's gone, my sin, oh the bliss of this wonderful thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole is nailed to the cross, and I bear them no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul, and I wonder sometimes if we don't make the heart of our Savior weep, because we don't believe what he says, he says I have forgiven you, your sins are buried in the depths of the sea, they are blotted out, as far as the east is from the west, I have removed them, I'm remembering them against you no more, all I want you to do is love me, because I love you. I know you say, well I'm lying here in this hospital bed and God doesn't love me, but I love you, and I'm perfecting my glory in you, and I'm working out my purposes in you, now stop complaining, stop worrying, stop fretting, and start trusting.

Nothing, nothing, nothing can separate you from God's love, he loves you whether you feel it or not, he loves you whether you know it or not, but if you want to enjoy it, just love him back, and just say dear God I hurt, oh I hurt, but I love you, and you love me. And nothing in all of creation, heaven or hell, past, present, or future, valleys or mountains, can separate me from your love. Jacob learned the lesson of God's providence, no matter what's going on in your life, God is working it together for good, believe it.

Joseph learned the lesson of God's purpose, no matter what is going on in your life, God is conforming you to Jesus Christ. Joseph's brothers learned the lesson of God's pardon, no matter what is happening to your life, God has forgiven you, he'll never remind you of your sins again, and he loves you. No wonder Paul says, what shall we say to these things? You know what we ought to say to these things? Hallelujah, what a Savior! That's what we ought to say.

That takes faith, and faith comes by the word of God. Let's learn these lessons, and share these blessings. We can't explain it, we can't understand it, but thank God we can believe it.

As you folks know, one of my great heroes is J. Hudson Taylor. On more than one occasion I have gone to the biography section of my library and pulled down those two great volumes written about that man. There came a time in J. Hudson Taylor's life when he was physically, emotionally, mentally at his worst.

And he wrote this, I cannot think, I cannot even pray, but I can trust, I can trust. And you can trust a God like the God of Romans chapter 8. Father in heaven, I pray that you will encourage us tonight, deliver us from the shallowness of unbelief. Help us to believe your word.

We are so quick to believe our feelings and our circumstances, and they change. Help us to believe your word, which never changes. And may we not only believe your word, help us to achieve your purpose.

Make us more like Jesus. Father, you never promised to make us comfortable, you did promise to make us conformable. Make us more like the Lord Jesus.

Forgive us when we've been impatient and critical, we've complained, we've broken your heart. Help us to love, and to trust, and to know. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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