

Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).

READ Genesis 33.

Jacob's caution and fears about Esau became a non-event when Jacob met Esau. There he is, setting his family in order so as to protect them, worrying, reserved, cautious, bowing again and again, using terms like "my servant," in essence, returning the blessing he stole. In contrast, Esau lets loose, runs to Jacob, arms opened wide, embraces him, falls on his neck, kisses him, *'oh it's so great to see you, brother!!!'* Ever had that experience? Take a look at this video and you can see the same kind of emotion.

[https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;\\_ylt=AwrTcdatcmFXQ7cADD0nnIIQ?p=greeting+so+meone+you+haven%27t+seen+for+a+long+time.&fr=yhs-mozilla-003&fr2=piv-web&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-003#id=18&vid=c6e41fc1025c34b3cb83c24adbae5d86&action=view](https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;_ylt=AwrTcdatcmFXQ7cADD0nnIIQ?p=greeting+so+meone+you+haven%27t+seen+for+a+long+time.&fr=yhs-mozilla-003&fr2=piv-web&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-003#id=18&vid=c6e41fc1025c34b3cb83c24adbae5d86&action=view)

For Esau it was a family reunion—*'who are these people with you? Introduce me!'*

For Jacob it was anxiety—his family are all bowing, he's sending gifts . . .

For Esau—*'don't worry about gifts! I have enough, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself!'*

For Jacob—*'I want to find favor with you, my lord. No, no, please take them!'*

Esau—*'I want to go with you. Let's journey together, alongside you!'*

Jacob—*'No, let me have my pace with my family. We will meet in Seir.'*

What do you suppose is going on? How has the former rift affected them over the past twenty years?

You have two sons. They have a major falling out and do not see one another for years. How would you want it to turn out?

Here, one son is solemn and tense. He approaches with a carefully rehearsed strategy. He's begging for favor. His words are stilted and cautious. His fear and discomfort permeates.

The other abandons himself to total joy. He is happy; he's willing to go the second mile.

The one who abandons himself to total joy is the one who was sinned against. That blows my mind—does it yours?

Previously his state of mind was this:

“Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”” (Genesis 27:41).

But somehow all that has changed. Now he is freed from hate. His words and actions are gracious. He can embrace the one who hurt him. He has no fear of his brother doing anything else to him.

How did he get so free? There's one little clue. He said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."

He who lost his blessing was satisfied with what he had. He had trusted God. God had provided for him. Thus, he let go of his grudge and trusted Jacob and so he gladly invited Jacob into his world.

Contrast his personal response with the New Testament story of the Prodigal Son. Remember the story? The younger brother had demanded his part of his father's estate and took off with his father's wealth, squandered it, and then come back asking forgiveness. The older brother couldn't forgive. He seethed in resentment. We don't know if he ever got over it, but he was not able to be happy and join in the party.

When you don't forgive, it is hard not to be angry.

We ask the question today, why forgive? What freedoms do you see?

- Esau is free enough to run and embrace and be joyful over someone whom he previously hated.
- Esau was free to not be angry.
- He's free enough to say "I have enough possessions!"
- He's free enough to even extend companionship and protection to Jacob.
- He's free to be his brother's friend.

That's pretty free! It would be nice to be half that free. Forgiveness equals freedom.

Let's look at Jacob. It's been twenty years since he saw Esau. He's worried enough about meeting him that he sets up a protective stance. He also bows in submission. He is subject to this brother's response.

He does not expect forgiveness.

The word that might describe him is guilt. Guilt is like a disease that plagues you. I went to Google and typed in "guilt." I got 12,500,000 results. In a lifetime you couldn't read all that has been written about guilt.

Our prayer of confession was about guilt. It said:

"Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin" (v. 5).

God forgives guilt. But Jacob would only know Esau forgave him by seeing Esau.

But there is this other aspect of guilt when you have received forgiveness but you don't assimilate it into your mind and heart. The Psalmist describes it like this:

“My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear” (38:4).

Do you ever feel like that? When you are burdened with guilt, it is hard to imagine someone forgiving you.

Guilt has various levels of paralyzing us. Sometimes it prevents people from going to church or doing anything for the Lord because we feel unworthy. So we need to ask the Lord to help us accept forgiveness and forgive ourselves.

The Bible says:

“If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Step Number One is to take God's forgiveness to heart. The Old Testament primarily refers to guilt as having offended God first. But God is the first to forgive when you ask.

Jacob seemed to understand that. Jacob had felt God's presence numerous times, and had now seen God face-to-face and been blessed.

Perhaps Jacob was uptight because he had not seen his brother. But when his brother greeted him so graciously and when he realized his brother had forgiven him, he said, “truly, to see your face is like seeing the face of God.” The face of God to him was forgiveness.

Step Number Two is to let go of guilt and accept forgiveness from others fully.

Step Number Three is to give a gift. Jacob insisted that Esau accept his gift because it was his way of returning what he stole. It is sort of a restitution. He wants to find favor with Esau.

When you do something wrong toward another person, don't you feel better when you can make amends?

Once a child I know broke out a window. He had locked himself out of his house and wanted to get inside. It seemed reasonable in his young mind to break the window and crawl in. When his mother arrived home she was appalled. She called a counselor. The counselor said, “Provide him a way of making amends.” The mom said to her son, “You need to fix the window.” She took him to the hardware store to buy a piece of glass and they repaired the window. The boy felt much better about the damage. He had made restitution. Jacob needed to give the gift.

Jacob settled in the land that God had promised him. He built a house. Then he erected an altar to God and called it El-Elohe-Israel, God is the God of Israel. That was his name. He had embraced the way of God. The old had passed away. He was a new creation.

His story invites us to be a new creation, too. Why forgive? There is no greater freedom.

AMEN