

From PRISON to Palace

A Study of the Life of Joseph

Class 4 • Joseph Reconciled • Genesis 42 - 43

- This section is the heart and substance of the Genesis account of the life of Joseph
- Joseph is now glorified, yet his brethren remain guilty of their crime, and Jacob is still alienated from his beloved son
- Both Jacob and his sons are glum and depressed at the famine which humbles Canaan
- Certainly the brethren found that such circumstances only raised up in their souls the remembrance of their crimes and ungodliness
- Their guilt concerning Joseph was a particular cancer to their souls that prohibited happiness, especially with regard to their father
- Before being saved from the famine in their souls, these brethren must see the exceeding sinfulness of their sin
- They were aware that they had done wrong, but they must be brought to despair at their sin before true reconciliation is possible

APPLICATION:

- **Read Romans 3:9-20: Part of Joseph's goal was to make his brethren conscious of their sin. In our lives, what has this effect upon us?**
- Today there is likewise a desperate need for man to see his sin, not as simply shortcoming and failure on a horizontal level, but as eruptions from a well of corruption in the heart that causes us to be enemies of God and under His wrath
- Only when the disease is truly diagnosed can the necessary remedy be applied with resulting reconciliation
- Possibly Jacob has seen caravans returning from Egypt laden with grain
- The fact that all ten sons go to Egypt suggests that they had hardly any cattle left to tend
- Probably Jacob's flocks had been almost wiped out

- But Benjamin remains home. For over twenty years he has been a protected child, doted on by Jacob while pining for Joseph and Rachel
- Benjamin also longed for Joseph, for he was certainly more of a brother to him than the other ten
- As the baby of the family he was used to staying at home to care for his father
- So Jacob's sons appear to have joined themselves to a Canaanite caravan on the way south, this possibly reflecting their lack of concern regarding unholy alliances
- They felt comfortable amongst the Canaanites
- Like Jesus Christ, Joseph knows his brethren before they know him
- How circumstances have changed - Earlier Joseph was humiliated and his brethren were in charge, and now Joseph is in charge and the brethren are humbled
- Now a further part of Joseph's dream is fulfilled
- Twenty years have not erased from Joseph the memory of their faces, even though sin and age have left their marks of guilt and worry
- Joseph "spoke roughly to them," or "harshly", not because of sadistic desire for revenge, but, rather he desired to induce guilt in them that would lead to humility and repentance
- He sought to learn more about his father and family
- Real reconciliation was only possible when the offense had been dealt with
- Note that in the midst of dealing harshly with the brethren, yet like God, Joseph manifested grace and compassion
- However, Joseph's brethren do not recognize their exalted brother - Verse 8
- Their only hope is the pure grace of Joseph
- They are stark blind, guilty, impotent, closer to just retribution than they imagine
- These brethren are strangers to the truth until Joseph determines to reveal himself
- The issue is not their "decision," but Joseph's mercy in granting them sight
- Why now does Joseph accuse his brethren of being spies?
- Not because he really believed this to be true, but as a disciplinary test to discover, "Are they sorry for their evil against their father and I?"

- It enabled Joseph to probe their sin without revealing himself, or listening to false confessions
- It was also a believable charge since a hungry nation would be inclined to attack a well fed land
- The reply of the brethren leads to further probing
- Suddenly they are feeling the force of a charge against them that is not true, as did Joseph by his brethren and by Potipher's wife
- Joseph's refusal to accept their defense leads to their revealing of more information, as Joseph desired
- Subtle probing results in the mentioning of Benjamin, Jacob, and Joseph
- Jacob is declared to be still alive with the result that Joseph is inwardly moved
- Joseph is described as "one who is no longer alive", this being continuance of the lie told to his father
- Joseph's test is designed to discover the present state of the brethren in comparison with their past attitude toward him
- Hopefully, there will result guilt, repentance, and confession
- Benjamin must be brought south to Egypt before Joseph will believe their story
- Then Joseph gives the brethren comfort and encouragement when he declares, "Do this and live, for I fear God" - Verse 18
- He is confirming his integrity, and confessing his faith
- However, in the midst of trial, Joseph is careful to remember mercy, so he graciously sends food to his hungry family
- Certain types of cancer remain dormant, but given a trauma they suddenly erupt
- Likewise here, latent guilt is loosed by the sudden remembrance of past circumstances and suddenly erupts
- For twenty years the brethren have been haunted by vivid memories of Joseph's anguished look and his cries for help
- Yet their repeated attempts to suppress these feelings did not succeed

APPLICATION:

- **Read John 2:23-25: Joseph had this same advantage, because he spoke Hebrew. Do we have anything like it?**

- Being fluent in Egyptian, yet Joseph had not forgotten his Hebrew
- Although an interpreter was necessary in the circumstances, yet he knew their hearts and every aside comment, though they did not know this
- Likewise, Jesus Christ knows the hearts of men
- In Joseph we now see a picture of the goodness and severity of God
- What was Joseph's motive in being so gracious and considerate in the face of their sin?
- Imagine the grief and depression that overshadowed this sorry band as they traveled home, for they anticipate their father's grief at the absence of Simeon, and his dismay at the demand for Benjamin
- The brethren are confounded when one of them discovers his original purchase money in the mouth of his sack - Verses 27-28
- Perhaps they expected an Egyptian contingent of soldiers at any moment to overtake them and take them back on account of a frame-up regarding the money in their sacks
- Notice how their unsettled guilt causes them to be blind to Joseph's grace
- Note now for the first time a spontaneous reference to God's sovereignty, which they now fear more than that of Pharaoh - Verse 28

APPLICATION:

- **Returning the money was an act of Grace, but the guilty couldn't see it. What is like that in our lives?**
- While favoritism is not uncommon in a monogamous family, yet in Jacob's polygamous situation, this problem is greatly enhanced
- Jacob appears to have no concern for Simeon
- But, necessity is the mother of invention, and a change of mind, especially during a prolonged famine
- God can lead us, according to His divine squeeze, to do that which we at first resisted doing
- God can use a famine in the soul to lead us reluctantly to food on God's terms!
- But Joseph has insisted that unless Benjamin comes to Egypt, the other brethren will not so much as see him, and thus receive any grain at all

- We must come to Jesus Christ on his own terms, not our own
- The ten brethren reported to Joseph's government office where the grain was sold, v. 15
- Of particular interest to Joseph would be the behavior of the brethren towards Benjamin
- On the way from the office to Joseph's house, they fear being trapped on account of the surprise money earlier found in their saddle bags - Verse 18
- On the doorsteps of Joseph's palatial home, trembling, they make an unsolicited explanation
- There appears to be some change of heart - Note their honesty and desire for integrity
- The household manager dispels their fear - Verse 23 - "I had your money," suggests that the manager was definitely aware that they had paid for their previous purchase
- Hence, what money they discovered was a gift from God
- Though relieved, yet the brethren are more perplexed than ever
- The Egyptians and Joseph sat at different tables from those of the Hebrews, yet they could closely watch each other
- Joseph's setting of the Hebrews' table was according to age - Hence, the brethren marveled, for how could this ruler know their ages?
- Benjamin receives five times the servings as do the others - Why?
- The brethren now felt relieved and relaxed
- All seemed well now, for surely they would all now return to Jacob
- But all is not well, for this is not a real reconciliation
- The basic problem has yet to be dealt with
- Having a party and feeling good isn't the same as confession and repentance...