

Genesis Ch. 42

- Between Potiphar's house and prison Joseph spent 13 years in bondage.
 - Once elevated to power as 2nd only to Pharaoh himself, 7 years of plenty have passed, and they are 2 years into the 7 years of severe famine.
 - 22 years have passed. Joseph's brothers are in their fifties, presumably have wives and children – and have carried their dark secret all this time – never really knowing what happened to the baby brother they sold into bondage.
 - The family has fallen on hard times along with everybody else, the famine is severe. They have money – but that doesn't do you any good when there is simply no food to buy.
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V: 1 Jacob, like Abraham and Isaac before him will be tested through a trial, God allows a famine into his life. (Genesis 12 & 26)

- Often during a time of testing, soul searching, we find out where we really stand with God.

Jesus said:

John 16:33 “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of Good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

- These times of trials are often those times of real soul searching – asking God what He's up to in our lives, and at the same time examining our lives with renewed vigor.

Psalm 139:23-24 ²³Search me oh God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

- As the famine continues, word reaches Jacob that there is grain in Egypt.

“... why do ye look one upon another”

- I used to hear this once in a while when I was a kid from my parents – “what are you looking at each other for? Get to work!”
- Jacob's sons are adults and he's looking for some initiative.

V: 2 *“That we may live, and not die.”*

- This is now a matter of life and death – just as God spoke through Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dreams – the famine was real and wide spread – over all the earth.

V: 3-4 Joseph’s 10 older brothers go down Egypt to buy grain. Benjamin is held back by his father.

“**Jacob**” because his decision about Benjamin is based in part on fear.

“Lest peradventure mischief befall him.” (perfect loves casts out all fear...)1 Jn. 4:18

- Jacob may have been suspicious of the events leading to the disappearance of Joseph. Maybe he looked around one day and noticed that he was the only one grieving over his loss. Maybe there was some other clue.
- Jacob wasn’t going to make the same mistake with Benjamin.

V: 5-6 *“... the sons of Israel...”* – doing God’s will, part of God’s plan.

- It was contrary to God’s will for Abraham & Isaac to go to Egypt, but it is God’s will that Jacob and his family eventually go to Egypt.
- God cannot be constrained, limited, or figured out.

Isaiah 55:8-9 *“⁸For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

- The 10 brothers who had sold Joseph into slavery arrive in Egypt to buy food and without knowing it – fulfill Joseph’s dreams from Chapter 37 – bowing down before him.
- Joseph is a type of Jesus, the world is dying, where are they going for salvation?
- To the only one who can meet their need.

V: 7-8 Joseph recognized his brothers, but he kept his identity from them, they didn’t recognize him.

- Joseph spoke Egyptian and used an interpreter to communicate to them.
- There has been a lot of water under the bridge.

- Joseph was a smart guy, he had to have known and even anticipated that this day would eventually come.
- He knew that the dreams of his youth would be fulfilled, particularly in light of his current circumstances.
- 22 years have passed, the Egyptian style of clothing and shave, and being such a powerful person – they certainly weren't expecting to see Joseph.

V: 9-10 Joseph remembers the dreams, seeing the fruition of it and seemingly takes advantage of his position to set his brothers on edge.

- Joseph accused them of being spies, the penalty of which was death.

V: 11-14 Joseph uses all of this to draw out information about his family back in the land of Canaan.

“true”: (G-3651) “kane” - right, just, honest, true.

- Maybe in this instance, but overall... I don't think so.
- 12 brothers, 10 present, one at home – “one is not.”
- They assume that after all this time Joseph is dead – possibly believing their own lie.

V: 15 The test: I want to see the younger brother that you spoke of – that will be the proof.

- Getting Benjamin wouldn't really prove anything, he could be a spy also. Bringing Benjamin for the stated purpose doesn't seem to match – unless it was simply a way of being re-united with his brother or determining his well being.
- The one who will ultimately be “proved” will be Jacob – will he release the grasp on his only remaining son? Or maybe Joseph will be the one who is really proved – he'll be seen for who he really is.
- Joseph swears by Pharaoh's life:

Hebrews 6:13 “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself.”

- Joseph didn't have this problem, but only Pharaoh was greater than Joseph, so that is who he swore by.

Hebrews 6:16 “For men verily swear by the greater:...”

V: 17-18 Showing his brothers that he means business, they are put in prison for three days. During that time they don't really know what is going to happen, for all they know, they are doomed.

- Had they been spiritually discerning they would have taken notice of Joseph's words.
- A pagan Egyptian saying; "*this do, and live; for I fear God*". (Elohim)
- They could have started putting things together, but they didn't.
- They are in prison, in the pit if you will for 3 days, then they are shown the path to life.

V: 19 One would be held as a ransom for all the rest.

V: 20 "... *ye shall not die.*"

- 2nd mention of death, they were facing a death sentence for espionage.

Exodus 21:16 "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

Deuteronomy 24:7 "If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you."

V: 21-24 No sooner had they declared themselves "true" men, than they are confessing their sin – which would lead to repentance.

- None of them have forgotten what they did to Joseph – it has been in the back of their minds these last 22 years.
- The brain is an interesting thing. We can see, hear, and experience people, places, and various events, and they are imprinted in our memories – then sometimes it's funny how things come out.
- We can see someone who's name is on the tip of our tongues, or someone that we recognize, but can't place. An hour later we're cruising down the road and boom it all comes back to us.

- Often times music is part of the identifier. Certain songs from my early life will bring back a flood of memories, or a specific song that is related to a specific memory will likewise bring it all back in a flash.
(Aretha Franklin – “Killing Me Softly”, with his song.)
- The sons of Jacob are in a difficult spot, this Egyptian minister to Pharaoh is a tough guy who isn’t cutting them any slack. They are stressed – and what memory pops into their heads – how they mistreated Joseph – and the anguish of his soul when they sold him into slavery.
- Even though they had tried to get rid of that sense of guilt for what they had done to their brother, still it was coming back to haunt them.
- Guilt isn’t just hard to get rid of, it is impossible apart from the Lord.
- We may think that we suppressed it, that we’ve gotten it out of our minds – then in the right circumstances it all comes flooding back.
- Un-dealt with guilt, un-forgiven sin - is always detrimental to mankind. Often times that guilt is manifest in a subconscious desire for punishment, people become neurotic, they engage in self-destructive behavior, there is that deep rooted need to be punished for our sins, to somehow in the flesh get rid of that guilt.
- Eventually this will destroy us:

“For the wages of sin is death...” **Romans 6:23**

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” **Ezekiel 18:4**

- Guilt – un-confessed sin interferes with our relationship with God – we become alienated from Him:

Isaiah 59:2 “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that He will not hear.”

- In this alienated state with God we’re no longer able to hear the voice of God; we no longer see the glory of God, we don’t sense His presence.
- We’re in a spiritually deadened state:

As the Psalmist said:

Psalm 32:3-4 “³When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. ⁴for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.”

- These guys carried this guilt around, hidden inside themselves for 22 years. Now, when faced with real problems it surfaces.

- Guilt remains until it is removed.

Testimony: cleaning up old grape syrup in basement – thinner, WD-40, torch – water.

- The only thing that can effectively remove guilt is the blood of Jesus.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:7b “... and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

- Once the proper remedy is applied, then we like the Psalmist can declare:

Psalm 32:1-2 “Blessed / Oh how happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

- As they discuss these events, they don't realize that Joseph understands their conversation.
- One might have formed a conclusion about Joseph's dealing with his brethren, that somehow this was going to be pay back time.
- This verse reveals that Joseph's heart was actually softened towards his brethren, he wept over them and will do so again.
- As the discussion goes, Reuben reminds them that he wasn't part of what they did – professing his innocence.
- Joseph binds and keeps Simeon as collateral, pending their return with their youngest brother Benjamin.
- Why Simeon? Was he the original ring leader?

V: 25-26 Joseph is working out a plan to further test his brethren.

V: 27-33 The sons of Jacob realize that their money is in their sacks, meaning that the Egyptians weren't paid – they are made to be guilty, as thieves.

V: 34 When you bring your youngest brother, then I will know that you are not spies.

- It's a 2-3 week journey one way, but they don't head straight back. Only when they run out of food.... Where's the love?

V: 35 Their money was returned, rejected. Again, Joseph is a type of Jesus:

- Their attempt to purchase their salvation was rejected – just as it is today.

Titus 3:5 “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”

Ephesians 2:8-9 “⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of god: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

V: 36-38 Jacob is pretty pessimistic. He thinks that all things are against him – he doesn't know what lies ahead.

2 Peter 1:2-9 (turn to)

- Jacob didn't know that this stern man, this rough leader in Egypt was none other than his long lost, beloved son – whom he'd be re-united with shortly.
- At this point all he can say is that “all things are against me...”
- Often times in our own trials we say pretty much the same thing – we need to remember:

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

- Unless God reveals it, we can't know the future – but we can know our God and trust in His goodness.
- As the next chapter unfolds we see God's awesome plan come to fruition – we see that it is much different than what Jacob or his sons could or would have expected.
- It is our faith and trust in God that sees us through those dark hours when we think, because of the circumstances, that everything is going against us.
- It is our faith in God's promises, faith in the Word of God that sustains us, that keeps us going and we know that when we turn the corner things are going to be different because God is working out His plan in our lives.
- God isn't thinking, “I'll teach them a lesson they'll never forget!”
- God is in essence saying “I am thinking of you constantly”
- Jacob will look back some day and see it differently.

David tells us in the Psalms:

Psalms 40:5 “Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.”

Psalms 139:17-18 “¹⁷How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! ¹⁸If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:...”

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you and expected end.”

“... to give you a future and a hope.”

- God's thoughts toward us are blessing upon blessing, how to show His love to us. How to demonstrate that He really cares and that He is in control, to somehow show the depth and the breadth of His love for us.
- He looks on us with loving eyes and he thinks about us constantly!

V: 37 Reuben make this sort of wild, un-realistic claim. Like Jacob would slay two of his grandsons.

Later when Jacob was blessing / judging his sons:

Genesis 49:3-4 “Reuben my firstborn.... Unstable as water...”

V: 38 The dilemma: Sacrifice the 1 for the 10?

- Difficult decision, Jacob doesn't want to.
- I always hate it when for various foolish reasons I dig in my heels and say stubbornly “I'm not going to do” Whatever – then a chapter later God simply re-directs me or my circumstances and I look silly.
- At this point Jacob doesn't trust his sons, and he's not asking God – yet God is merciful.
- Eventually the father does send his beloved son so that the rest may live.
- Not trusting Reuben or his silly promises, but trusting in God.

Proverbs 3:5-6 “⁵Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”