

GENESIS 42:18-28 (THE LORD PROVIDES THE GRAIN)

Introduction: The sons of Israel had sold the favorite son of the father off to the gentiles where he became the ruler of all of the land of Egypt. Now that there has been an extended famine in the land, they are in need of food and so they have been sent to Egypt to find it there.

However, Joseph recognized them and accused them of being spies, throwing them into prison saying that they must remain in Egypt while one of them brings the youngest brother back to prove their story. With the start of our verses, it is now the third day and, all but one of them will be released to carry out the task.

Joseph is using time and circumstance to bring about a change in his brothers before he reveals himself to them. And this is what Jesus has been doing too. Though the time frame is millennia instead of days, the work is being done and a great time of reunion and reconciliation is ahead.

Text Verse: I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles. ¹² Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! Romans 11:11, 12

Had Israel not fallen, the promises of the Old Testament Kingdom Age would have been realized immediately. But in His infinite wisdom and to serve the greater good, Israel went into a time of blindness, not seeing their Messiah for who He is.

But that time will end and the healing will come. Eventually, they will see Jesus as the fulfillment of all of their hopes and will confess Him as their own. It probably won't be long now. They are back in their land and the times are coming to their fulfillment, just as His word shows us.

Let's go there again today and see the continuation of this beautiful unfolding story. And so...May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Time to Reflect on Deeds of the Past (18-21)

¹⁸ Then Joseph said to them the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God:

The last verse we read last week said, "So he put them all together in prison three days." Let's remember that any part of a day in the Bible is considered a day. If someone arrives at 3pm on Monday, that is considered a day. When Christ rose on Sunday morning, that is considered a day.

This is important because we're now told that it is the third day since the brothers were bound in prison. The Bible gave the number and so it is asking us to think on that number. The Jews rejected Christ and they have been in exile for 2000 years.

Consider that their time in prison. The brothers had time for reflection while there, and the Jewish people have had the past 2000 years as a time of reflection while they have been dispersed from their land. Now they can look back on that time and put it in its proper perspective.

The brothers are being prepared for an open meeting with Joseph by what he is doing now. And this looks forward to the coming meeting between Israel and Jesus. Hosea gives us an insight into this -

¹ Come, and let us return to the LORD;
For He has torn, but He will heal us;
He has stricken, but He will bind us up.

² After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight. Hosea 6:1, 2

As a day represents a thousand years, we see Israel will be revived after two days and raised up on the third. They are now revived as a people, after the tribulation period, they will be raised up. This time of the brothers in prison and then being released on the third day appears to be a brief picture of that before the story continues.

And so Joseph now says to them *ha'elohim ani yare* - "**The** God I do fear."

He uses a definite article in front of God saying "the God." This would have been a huge relief to the brothers because if this person fears "the God" and not just one of the Egyptian gods, then he would in essence be their ally in the truth.

People swear by God all the time without being honest, but when the governor of the entire land of Egypt speaks to them as fearing *the God* when he had no need to because of his position and authority, then they can be confident that whatever he does will be completely fair towards them.

¹⁹ If you *are* honest *men*, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.

Because he has invoked "the God" he is now obligating himself to "the God." In response to that premise, he then says, "If you are honest men...." The subtle hint here is that, "I am completely honest because I am accountable to God. Now we will see if you are completely honest because *you* are accountable to me."

And as an offer of good faith in himself and the expectancy of good faith from them, he turns around his original edict which said that one of them would go back to Canaan and nine would stay in jail. Now nine will go back home and one will stay in jail.

The rest are told they can carry grain for their houses because of the famine. There's no doubt he intended to let them go all along because he knew his family would need food, but by keeping them in jail for three days, he'd know it would impress on them that they were completely at his disposal.

He knows the famine will be for seven years, he knows they will need more food, and he knows that there will be one in jail to remind them that they needed to do what he tells them. He is using exceptional wisdom while allowing them to see his mercy and his grace towards them.

*Go and carry grain for the famine of your houses
I know there is a need which must be fulfilled
Take the food to your children, servants, and spouses
The food will sustain you, so do as I have willed*

Jesus is written all over the account. He has protected Israel over the past 2000 years. They rejected Him, but He has kept them as a people, just as He promised throughout the Old Testament. They may suffer hardship, but He will never completely abandon them. He has faithfully provided the grain they need to live.

²⁰ And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die."

After his words of release and his implicit vow of integrity towards them, he gives them his explicit warning. The Hebrew says emphatically, "And your brother, the little one, you shall cause to come to me." And as a reminder why - "And you shall not die."

Without Benjamin, there will be no sense in returning to Egypt for more food and they will die. Or, without Benjamin, if they return to Egypt for more food, they will die. Either way, without him being included, they will not make it through the ordeal ahead.

It's a little early to see this, but we should determine why Benjamin didn't come and who he is picturing. Jacob is Israel, the collective Israel of the ages. The brothers are the individual tribes. Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, pictured the grace of the New Testament.

Joseph pictures Christ as the one to add gentiles into salvation, hence his name - *Yosef*, "He shall add." But Benjamin is also a son of Rachel. He actually pictures Christ in another way. In this verse, he is called *akhikem ha'qaton* - "Your brother, the little one."

Benjamin is the youngest, but he's over 30 years old. He's not a baby. But the term is used to point us to a group of people in the New Testament.

Luke 12:32 cites Jesus when speaking to the Jews who were willing to follow Him -

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Benjamin then is picturing Christ, but also those who are in Christ from Israel. He is the youngest of Israel and yet the cherished and beloved of Israel because of Jesus. This will be clarified in the sermons ahead.

Later, we'll see that Jacob adopts Joseph's sons as his own. And so it becomes clear. The gentile people who are in Christ are pictured by Joseph's marriage to a gentile. The Jews who are in Christ are pictured by Benjamin - the Jews who have called on Jesus.

²⁰ (con't) **And they did so.**

One is left in prison, the others get their things ready for the trek back to Canaan. But as they do, the events of the past three days come out. What was a time of reflection in prison has become a time of regret and repentance now that they have been released.

²¹ **Then they said to one another, "We *are* truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."**

In the entire book of Genesis, this is the only time that sin is personally acknowledged. Imagine that! This book covers about 2500 years of human history and it contains some of the greatest acts of wickedness in the Bible, and yet personally acknowledging wrongdoing before God is as rare as this one occasion.

Their short time in prison, among other things, has now led to one of the most prominent examples of the power of the conscience in the entire Bible. It's been about 22 years since the time that Joseph was cast into the pit and sold into slavery.

During all of that time, it appears that they had never reflected on what they had done. But the conscience is a powerful force which will eventually find its rightful place. And indeed, everything done by Joseph has been targeted to remind them of what they did.

Genesis 37 says they "conspired against Joseph to kill him." Now in this chapter Joseph has accused them of being in a conspiracy to spy on Egypt. Joseph pleaded with his brothers and they wouldn't listen. Now, they pleaded for food, and Joseph wouldn't listen.

They threw him into a pit and he in turn threw them into prison. The account drips with irony and everything that has happened has been precisely arranged by him to prompt their memories and to hopefully awaken their conscience... and it has succeeded.

Throughout the Bible, there are examples of people who are conscience-stricken over guilt. Then there are people whose consciences are seared to the point where nothing, no matter how wicked it is, bothers them at all. In them the conscience will have all eternity to sort out the actions left unattended in this life.

There are also examples of those whose consciences are clean. Others are shown to have theirs purified. There are those who suffer as if they were wrongdoers and yet they did nothing wrong. Instead their conscience remain undefiled because of right living.

Doing a study on the work of the conscience in the Bible reveals almost every possible scenario one could think of among humans. And this verse here shows us that when we are put into the same position as those we have harmed, it can lead to an understanding of what they went through and a remorse in the conscience.

Yes, the brothers threw Joseph into the pit and then abandoned him to his fate. They have now been thrown into prison and one of them will be abandoned to a sad fate if they don't act rightly. The tables have been turned and now they see the error of their ways.

But more than Joseph's own story is the greater picture of Jesus and Israel. Joseph was in the anguish of his soul and they wouldn't hear; they wouldn't listen. Jesus was in the anguish of his soul and those around Him wouldn't listen as well.

In the 22nd Psalm, the same word for Joseph's anguish at that time is applied to the anguish of Jesus. The parallel between the two is simply remarkable. In these words, we can almost feel the pain of both of them and reflect on how they must have felt -

⁹ But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust *while* on My mother's breasts.

¹⁰ I was cast upon You from birth.

From My mother's womb

You *have been* My God.

¹¹ Be not far from Me,

For **trouble** *is* near; (**tsarah**)

For *there is* none to help.

¹² Many bulls have surrounded Me;

Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.

¹³ They gape at Me *with* their mouths,

Like a raging and roaring lion.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,

And all My bones are out of joint;

My heart is like wax;

It has melted within Me.

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd,

And My tongue clings to My jaws;

You have brought Me to the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me;

The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.

They pierced My hands and My feet;

¹⁷ I can count all My bones.

They look *and* stare at Me.

¹⁸ They divide My garments among them,

And for My clothing they cast lots.

If it seems as though the connection between Joseph and Jesus, and the brothers and Israel is a stretch, I should note that the same term in this verse is used for both Joseph and what they are now facing.

The verse says, "we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us." Both "anguish" and "distress" are the word *tsarah*. As it was applied to Jesus in 22nd Psalm, so it is applied to Israel in Jeremiah 30:7 -

"Alas! For that day *is* great,
So that none *is* like it;
And it *is* the time of Jacob's **trouble, (tsarah)**
But he shall be saved out of it."

The term "Jacob's trouble" is speaking of the tribulation period which will happen after the rapture of the church. What Joseph suffered, the brothers will now face. What Jesus suffered, Israel will also endure. The parallels should not be missed.

Joseph came through his ordeal and is in the process of being reconciled to His brothers. And Jesus... He made it through as well and is, even today, working towards that great moment of reconciliation with His own brothers of Israel. The tribulation period will refine them and bring them to their Messiah.

*Oh! How this great distress has been brought upon us
For we surely saw the anguish of His soul upon Calvary's tree
When He pleaded but we would not hear - our Lord Jesus
And yet He calls once again to undeserving you and undeserving me...*

It has to be admitted that the distress of his brothers and that of Israel were both self-inflicted, but for both of them the distress will come to an end in the presence of their long estranged brother.

II. The Lord Who Weeps (22-27)

²² And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us."

Reuben never agreed to the deed of harming Joseph. While the others had him in the pit and finally sold him off to the Midianites, Reuben was in the fields tending to his flocks, maybe looking for a way to get him out of the pit and restore him to Jacob.

He has specifically told them not to harm the boy and he gives the reason for it here. He says, *v'gam da-mow hinneh nidrash* - "And therefore his blood, behold it is required." What is he saying?

Reuben remembered the words of God which were spoken to Noah 640 years earlier. The flood was over, the ark was opened, and Noah built an altar and made an offering to the Lord. After this, the Lord said this to him -

⁵"Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.

⁶"Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man." Genesis 9:5, 6

Reuben was certain that divine justice was now required because of what they did. Whether he was dead or not, they had consigned him to whatever fate, including death, a slave would face.

*From the hand of every man's brother
I will require the life of man, for the one dead
Whoever sheds man's blood, the life of another
By man his blood shall certainly be shed*

Reuben pled with them, but they wouldn't listen, but this may explain why another action will be taken by Joseph who, though speaking through an interpreter understood everything they said...

²³ But they did not know that Joseph understood *them*, for he spoke to them through an interpreter.

At this time in history, the languages between the Hebrews, Canaan, Egypt, and Syria were all very similar. Most people could understand others about as well as someone in Florida might understand someone from Boston or another foreign city like that.

And so it could be that Joseph was speaking some royal dialect or pretending he didn't know Hebrew at all. Whatever the situation, they were speaking and had no idea that Joseph understood them. But that was enough for Joseph to finally lose himself...

²⁴ And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them.

Despite his treatment of the past, Joseph's heart never hardened towards his brothers. And now that the truly remorseful words of Reuben as well as the other brothers have come out, he can no longer stand the emotions which have arisen. And so he turned himself away from the moment and broke down in tears.

When Peter heard the crowing of the cock, he went outside and wept, when Jesus rode towards Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday, He wept over the city. And in Revelation, when John realized the sad situation that no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll before him, or to even look at it, he wept and wept.

Emotions are the shallowest part of us and yet they show us the deepest seat of who we are at the same time. Joseph's longing for his family never ended and the moment became too much to bear. But Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:4, "Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted."

Joseph's time of mourning will continue, but the end is now in sight. The long night is almost at a close and the joy of a new dawn lies ahead.

²⁴ (con't) **And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.**

There is a lot of speculation as to why Simeon was the one who was bound and kept behind. Some traditions say it was he who was the main instigator in tossing Joseph into the pit and selling him. Others say it was because He was the oldest son of those who agreed to the plan. Reuben is the oldest, but he didn't consent to it.

And Joseph heard Reuben's words which cleared him. This then makes the most sense. I would suggest that the name Simeon also gives insight into what is happening. His name means, "He who hears." And so this is a picture of Israel not yet hearing the truth.

Again and again in the New Testament Jesus says, "He who has an ear, let him hear." The brothers were not yet ready to hear, and Israel is not yet ready as well. If it is this, or some other reason, it says he was bound right before their eyes. This was done to remind them that the last time they saw him was in this condition.

It was also to remind them that they faced the exact same fate if they tired to come back without following through with his command. It is what we might call a speaking act. In other words, the action speaks for itself.

III. What Has God Done to Us? (25-28)

²⁵ **Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.**

There are a few different things happening here that you might not notice in English. First, Joseph commands to fill their sacks with grain, but the word for sacks is *keli*. That would be a completely different type of container than the other sack where the money and animal feed went.

That other type of sack is the Hebrew word *saq*. It's where the word we still use today comes from. Joseph commands that the *keli* for the food be filled with *bar* - purified grain. Then to put the money from each man into the sack along with the animal's fodder. And finally, to give them provisions for the journey.

In other words, they would have the sealed containers for the household grain; they would have the sacks for the animal's food; and they would probably have a take-along bag with prepared food for something to snack with on the way back to Canaan.

In all, he is completely supplying their needs for every step of the journey and doing it without any payment at all. Even though he has been very harsh in his attitude toward them, his care for them as his brothers is still evident.

The obvious question that should arise from this verse is, "Why did he return the money to their sacks?" The Jewish scholar Baumgarten is certainly correct when he says, that Joseph felt "it impossible to bargain with his father and his brethren for bread."

He's right, but he doesn't go far enough in his explanation. The money they brought to him in some way included the money they received for selling him in the first place. I looked and the very last time silver, or *keseq*, is mentioned in the Bible was when Joseph was sold. Listen to this -

"Then Midianite traders passed by; so *the brothers* pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt." Genesis 37:28

Wealth is one of those things that remains, even while it is spent. In other words, if we earn fifty dollars, it is added to our wealth. That same fifty dollars is a part of that wealth, even if the same fifty dollar bill is spent on a pair of shoes or food. The fifty dollars remains as a part of what we own, though it's in a different form.

What they think they are buying as food to live on is something Joseph will not sell. It by necessity must be a gift or it becomes an exchange of payment for what he was actually sold for. Do you see a picture of Christ here? I hope so.

²⁶ So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there.

Ok, this is the third time grain has been mentioned in today's sermon. In verse 19, Joseph said, "...let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house, but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses."

Then in the previous verse, it said, "Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain." And now it says, "So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there." But in the Hebrew the two different words we saw last week are both used.

First Joseph says to take *shever*, then he gives a command to fill their containers with *bar*, then it says they loaded up with *shever*, not *bar*. *Shever* gives the idea of a kernel that is broken to get out the grain. *Bar* on the other hand is purified. It's been threshed and then winnowed.

What is the sense of using both types of grain in this way unless it is telling us something about the work of Christ for the people of Israel. Both types of grain are mentioned in one verse in Amos 8, so they are not being used synonymously. There is a distinct meaning for using both of them.

And there is also the consideration that it is about a 200 mile journey that they have been on. There would have been many servants with their animals who went with them. This would be a journey to get enough grain to last the entire camp of Jacob for as much as six months, but only the brothers have been mentioned.

God is asking us to focus on them, the brothers of Joseph, who picture the tribes of Israel. Joseph is already the ruler, he has already endured the pit, and he is now working to be reconciled to his brothers and to care for them. Everything about this points to Israel of today coming back to the Lord Jesus.

The doctrines of preterism and replacement theology which say that prophecy is fulfilled and the church has replaced Israel are so foreign to these pictures that it is incomprehensible that people still believe them. What God is picturing here couldn't be clearer.

²⁷ But as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack.

The nine brothers are at their first night's stopping place and one of them opens his sack to get out fodder for his donkey. Right there at the mouth of the sack is his money. In Genesis 43 we'll see that because he found the money in his sack, the rest will look and find theirs too, but only one realizes it at first.

In this verse though, a different word for sack is used - *amtakhat*. The word is used 15 times in the Bible and all of them are concerning this story of the brothers *before* they come to know Joseph is their brother. The word *amtakhat* means "to spread out."

²⁸ So he said to his brothers, "My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!" Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, "What is this that God has done to us?"

In utter surprise, he tells the others what happened. After this, the Hebrew says *v'yitse livam* - "their heart went out." Nowadays, we'd say our heart was ready to leap out of our mouth. And believing that it was divine judgment, they ask why God did this to them.

This takes us back to verse 19 where Joseph told them, "If you are honest men..." They must come back with Benjamin to get Simeon and this puts a touch of trouble in that proposition for them.

But the fact is, the Lord doesn't charge for what should be freely received. We see this explicitly noted in both testaments of the Bible. Money can't purchase what God freely offers. Grain makes bread and bread is what

sustains us. Isaiah tells us about this in the 55th chapter of his book. A verse on the door of my truck -

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread,
And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

These brothers are looking to purchase what Joseph offers freely. The money is returned because it *cannot* be a part of the deal. And so it is with Israel. They cannot earn what God has freely offered, nor can any of us. The Bible says we are saved by grace through faith. Works are excluded, lest any man should boast.

It is the constant theme of the Bible. God is pleased to lavish His grace upon us. Joseph is pleased to offer grain to his brothers in anticipation of their presenting Benjamin to him. And the Lord is pleased to continue to sustain Israel until they call on Jesus - the Son of the Right Hand and to defend Him at the expense of their own lives. Something we will see in the coming pages of Genesis.

This is where we have to stop the story today. The brothers received their grain and they also received back their money. It is not money that the Lord wants, but truth, honesty, and a broken and contrite heart. What He offers comes freely when we are ready to receive it.

Closing Verse: You visit the earth and water it,
You greatly enrich it;
The river of God is full of water;
You provide their grain,
For so You have prepared it. Psalm 65:9

Next Week: Genesis 42:29-38 (Not Thinking Clearly in the Land of Canaan)
(106th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord Provides the Grain

Then Joseph said to them the third day
“Do this and live, for I fear God:
If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined away
To the prison house while off you trod

But you, go and carry grain
For the famine of your houses where you abide
And bring your youngest brother to me when you come again
So then your words will be verified

And you shall not die, it will be well with you
And they did so, the thing they were instructed to do

Then they said to one another
“We are truly guilty concerning our brother

For we saw the anguish of his soul that day
When with us he fervently pleaded
And we would not hear, we turned away
And so this distress has come upon us, his words were not heeded
And Reuben answered them, saying,
“Did I not speak to you, in this way
‘Do not sin against the boy, I am praying
And you would not listen to my words that day

Therefore behold, his blood is now of us required
And to us this terrible trial has transpired

But they did not know that Joseph them he understood
For he spoke to them through an interpreter
Though his Hebrew was really good

And he turned himself away from them and wept
Then he returned to them again and talked
As his composure now he kept

And he took Simeon from them, one of the accused spies
And bound him right there before their eyes

Then Joseph gave a command so they wouldn't lack
To fill their sacks with grain, well supplied
To restore every man's money to his sack
And to give them provisions for the ride

Thus he did for them, showing attentive care
So they loaded their donkeys with the grain
And off they departed from there

But as one of them opened his sack
To give his donkey feed at the encampment
He saw his money had been given back
And there it was, in the mouth of his sack...
A sight of confused enchantment

So to his brothers he said
"My money has been restored
And there it is, in my sack! Oh my head!"
This matter must be explored

Then their hearts failed them, each and every brother
And they were all of them sore afraid
And then saying to one another
"What is this that God has done to us?" So they were dismayed

Such is the nature of a conscience which isn't right

When the memory comes to the troubled mind
The thoughts that chase us and make us uptight
And tell past deeds done to others in a way unkind

And yes, every such thing will be judged by our God
He will peer into our lives and render to us our due
So we should with care and caution in this life trod
Living our lives for Him in a manner upright and true

And when we fail, let us confess
On bended knee with contrite heart
And God will in our moment of distress
Forgive us, yes divine mercy He will impart

Help us in our walk, O Lord, each and every day
To honor You and live for You; never to fall away

Hallelujah and Amen...