

Jacob's Idolatry Purged Again

Genesis 42:25 – 43:34
Halifax: 18 December 2016, 10:30 AM

Introduction

Some time ago in our Genesis sermon series, we saw how the Lord purged Jacob of an idol in his life.

- It was back in chapter 35, just after Jacob had finally returned to Bethel after several years of dilly-dallying—it was just after he had gotten back on track.
 - I pointed out to you how it is often when we have done the right thing that instead of smooth sailing, you are instead brought into trials to deepen your repentance and to test your commitment.

And the reality was that Jacob had made an idol out of his favoured wife Rachel.

- Even the very reason that he was in a situation in which he had several wives was on account of not wanting to risk losing Rachel.
 - Laban, his scheming father-in-law, after switching his daughter Leah in place of Rachel at Jacob's wedding had proposed the idea that he would give Jacob Rachel also...
 - And instead of standing up for what was right, Jacob had conceded.
 - He was feared that if he insulted Laban, Laban might refuse to give him Rachel as his wife.
 - When you have an idol, you are willing to do what is contrary to God's will (in this case taking an extra wife you don't want) in order to secure your idol.
- And then as we followed Jacob's life after that, we saw that Rachel was indeed an idol!
 - It was at Rachel's suggestion, to keep her happy, that Jacob took her maidservant to try to raise up children for her when she was barren.
 - And not only that, but he brought strife into his home by treating Rachel and her children with blatant favouritism—regarding his other wives and their children more like servants than family.

And so it came about that after Jacob finally returned to Bethel,

- the LORD took Rachel from him through hard labour as she was giving birth to Benjamin, her second son, Joseph being the first.
 - It was very difficult for Jacob to lose her, but he responded quite well.
 - He did not become bitter toward the LORD, but he expressed his hope by naming the child Benjamin (which means son of the right hand) when Rachel had named him Ben-oni (son of sorrow).
 - By this, Jacob showed that he was still looking to the LORD to bless him, even though Rachel had been taken from him.

But now as find Jacob in chapter 42, he stands in need of purging again from another idol.

- We will be looking at this today—at how the LORD works to purge him and at how He purges all of us from our idols so that we might serve Him alone.

- Last week, we saw how the LORD worked in the life of Jacob's sons to convict them of their sin against their brother Joseph.
 - The LORD used Joseph to bring this about...
 - The brothers were forced to accept the fact that they needed to go to Egypt to buy bread from the vizier of Egypt who, unknown to them, was their brother Joseph whom they had wickedly sold to Egypt as a slave over twenty years before.
 - This reminded us of how the LORD humbles sinners to see that they will perish without the bread of life that He has provided through Jesus.
 - And so Jacob's sons went to Egypt only to find that the vizier of Egypt, who happened to be Joseph, although this was not known to them, dealt harshly with them...
 - for there were promises made and provision given to them even while they were being tested by Joseph...
 - even as the LORD sometimes deals harshly with those who come to Him for the bread of life when they have not yet repented.
 - And we saw how the brothers were wonderfully brought to conviction of sin through Joseph's harsh dealings that were tempered with mercy and hope,
 - through the testing that Joseph imposed, they saw rightly that the LORD was dealing with them because of what they had done to Joseph...
 - In the same way, the LORD's harsh dealings with us that are tempered by His mercy and His promises bring our sins up to our remembrance...
 - We are humbled and we confess our guilt.
- But I told you that conviction of sin is not the same as full repentance.
 - Before Joseph is revealed to them, they must first be further tested to see if their sorrow is really sorrow that will lead them forsake their sin and follow the LORD.
 - When we come to Christ, He calls us to forsake all and follow Him if we want to enter into His kingdom.
 - It is not that we are saved on the merit of our works—
 - We are saved by the virtue of His righteous life and His work on the cross.
 - But He saves us that we might come to live for God, and if we are only coming so we can be pardoned, He will not receive us.
 - If we are not ready to forsake our father and our mother, and even our own life, we cannot be His disciple.
 - And so when we first come to Him, and even after we have been walking with Him for years, He tests us to purge us of idols we did not even know we had—idols we must forsake if we are going to follow Him.

Over the next two weeks, we are going to be looking at how the LORD tests Jacob and his sons to bring them to repentance.

- This week, we will see how He works to bring Jacob to repentance from making an idol of Rachel's sons.
- And next time, Lord willing, we will see how He brings Jacob's sons to repentance.

For this week, our Scripture reading begins in Genesis 42:25 and runs to the end of chapter 43.

- We pick up here with the brothers returning home after going to Egypt to buy grain because of the famine.
 - Joseph their brother, whom they had not recognised, being the vizier of Egypt has accused them of being spies and is keeping Simeon as a hostage,
 - insisting that if they want to verify their story, they must return with their youngest brother, Benjamin whom they had told him about.
 - They rightly see all of this as God visiting them for their sin of selling Joseph as a slave to Egypt and so they are very uneasy in their consciences as they return home without Simeon to their father.
- And so we pick up, beginning in Genesis 42:25 where Joseph is seen restoring the silver they had used to purchase the grain. Here is God's holy Word:

Gen 42:25 – 43:34: 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. ²⁶ So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there. 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. 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?" ²⁹ Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying: ³⁰ "The man *who is* lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. ³¹ But we said to him, 'We *are* honest *men*; we are not spies. ³² We *are* twelve brothers, sons of our father; one *is* no *more*, and the youngest *is* with our father this day in the land of Canaan.' ³³ Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, 'By this I will know that you *are* honest *men*: Leave one of your brothers *here* with me, take *food* for the famine of your households, and be gone. ³⁴ And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you *are* not spies, but *that* you *are* honest *men*. I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.' " ³⁵ Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man's bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw

the bundles of money, they were afraid. ³⁶ And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more*, Simeon is no *more*, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me." ³⁷ Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." ³⁸ But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave." ^{43:1} Now the famine *was* severe in the land. ² And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food." ³ But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.' ⁴ If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. ⁵ But if you will not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.' " ⁶ And Israel said, "Why did you deal *so* wrongfully with me *as* to tell the man whether you had still *another* brother?" ⁷ But they said, "The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, '*Is* your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?' And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" ⁸ Then Judah

said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones. ⁹ I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. ¹⁰ For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time." ¹¹ And their father Israel said to them, "If *it must be* so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. ¹² Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. ¹³ Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. ¹⁴ And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!" ¹⁵ So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph. ¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon." ¹⁷ Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. ¹⁸ Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, "*It is* because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and fall upon us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys." ¹⁹ When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house, ²⁰ and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food; ²¹ but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, *each* man's money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight;

so we have brought it back in our hand. ²² And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks." ²³ But he said, "Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. ²⁴ So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed. ²⁵ Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there. ²⁶ And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth. ²⁷ Then he asked them about *their* well-being, and said, "*Is* your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? *Is* he still alive?" ²⁸ And they answered, "Your servant our father *is* in good health; he *is* still alive." And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves. ²⁹ Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "*Is* this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." ³⁰ Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought *somewhere* to weep. And he went into *his* chamber and wept there. ³¹ Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, "Serve the bread." ³² So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that *is* an abomination to the Egyptians. ³³ And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. ³⁴ Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.

May the LORD bless to us the hearing of His holy Word.

As we consider this account about the purging of Jacob's idolatry, I want to begin by pointing out to you that...

I. The LORD is faithful to expose the idols in our lives.

A. When Jesus calls us to enter His kingdom, He commands us to leave all and follow Him.

1. We saw that in our New Testament reading in Luke 14:32 where He said, **“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”**

- Often we are tested and there are specific things that we have to give up—
- Of course we have to turn from our sin, but sometimes forsaking all even means giving up a relationship with someone that is very dear to us.
 - It is not that we turn against them, but it is that following Christ causes them to reject us so that we lose them.
 - The bottom line is that we must not let anything that is precious to us, even our own mother and father or our own life, keep us from obeying Jesus.

2. When we see what a marvellous Saviour Jesus is, we leave all and set out to be His disciples.

- While the Lord accepts our repentance, the truth is that there are still idols that we cling to, in various degrees, sometimes without even realising it.
- And as we go on following Him, there are various tests that He brings to us, and often there are things that we have to give up about which we say,
 - “But not *that*, Lord.”
 - We still want to follow Him, and we know that is what we must do, but we struggle to do so—we hang on with our fat little fist to our treasures.

3. Now understand that in calling us to forsake all, the LORD is not being cruel to us at all.

- He is setting us free so that we can have greater joy than we could have ever had from our idols that we have wrongly set our affections on...
 - And very often, when our idols are good things that we are idolatrously holding on to, He only takes them that He might give them back to us.
 - Then we can enjoy them even more as God's gifts which we receive with thanksgiving instead of as idols that can never satisfy us.

TRANS> But sometimes it is difficult to admit that we have made an idol of something.

- We can get pretty angry at someone who tries to point it out to us—

B. But look at Jacob's example to see how the LORD exposes idolatry in our lives.

1. First, He exposes idols in our lives by bringing to surface our anxiety about them.

a. Jesus talks about worry in the Sermon on the Mount, and how it is an evidence that we are not trusting in our heavenly Father to take care of us.

- It is as if we are saying, “Okay, I am serving God, but I am not confident that He really will bless me the way He says He will.”
- We especially say that when following Him has put us in a place where we are rejected or persecuted,
 - or even when we simply encounter trouble like job loss or sickness or something like that.

- We might not actually say that we are unsure if it is a good thing to follow the LORD, but that is what our worry shows about our heart.
- b. You can see how Jacob’s worry is revealed here about sending Benjamin to Egypt.
 - Joseph made it clear that if Jacob’s sons came back, they had to bring Benjamin or else he would be convinced that they were spies.
 - But Jacob says, “no, not Benjamin! not my precious Benjamin.”
 - He is afraid that something will happen to him.
 - As he says in verse 36 of chapter 42, “**Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin.**”
 - He has made an idol out of Benjamin, because Benjamin is the only remaining son of Rachel.
- 2. Second, the LORD exposes idols in our lives by exposing the bitterness we have about those that have been taken away from us in the past.
 - a. We just say in verse 36 how Jacob is still bitter about Joseph.
 - If we look at the whole verse, we can see how he blames his sons for the loss of Joseph...
 - It says, **And Jacob their father said to them, “You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin.”**
 - When you are bitter about a loss, you will blame others—the doctors, the car manufacturer, whatever.
 - My friends, let me tell you—if you are cranky with other people when things don’t please you, you are bitter and not accepting what God has done.
 - If you are quarrelsome with your spouse or with your parents and your siblings, you are not yielding all to Christ and you need to repent.
 - b. And look, we can see the bitterness of Jacob in the awful word he speaks against the LORD at the end of verse 36...
 - He says, **all these things are against me!**
 - What an awful thing to say when you have the LORD who has promised to bless you—
 - a God who has promised to be your God...
 - a God who has sent His only Son to die for your pardon...
 - a God who has promised you an everlasting inheritance in glory.
 - ***All things are against me?***
 - Do you ever say things like that?
 - It is a very sinful thing to say when you belong to the LORD.
 - It reveals the bitterness that is in your heart and your unwillingness to accept what God has promised.
 - c. Yes indeed, if Jacob had only believed the revelation that God had given to him...
 - not only the revelation to be his God to bless him and give him an inheritance...
 - but also the specific revelation that he had given through Joseph’s dreams, he would have known that he would see Joseph again.

3. Third, the LORD exposes idols in our lives by bringing to light our refusal to let them go when we are called to do so.
 - a. This is so very clear with Jacob.
 - He feels that Benjamin is all he has left.
 - Even though his sons have told him that the man told them that when they return, they must bring Benjamin to verify their story, he absolutely refuses.
 - In verse 38, he says: **“My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.”**
 - b. I ask you, is there something in your life that is keeping you from receiving the bread of life—something that you are refusing to let go of?
 - Is there someone you are trying to please, even though pleasing them means that you are setting aside what God has said?
 - Don’t let anything stand in the way of following Christ. It is an idol!
 - c. Think of what a big deal this is!
 - Jacob was depriving his whole family of the bread of life by refusing to give up Benjamin when the one who had the bread demanded it!
 - Do you have things that are standing between you and the bread of life that you could be feeding on even now?
 - Is it greed or pride or freedom or food and drink or some habit or some person that you do not want to displease even though they are standing between you and the bread of life?

TRANS> God will expose you if you are truly His child, and He will break you!

- And that is the second thing I want you to see from our text today...

II. See how the LORD breaks His people to purge them from their idols.

A. He brings us to face the fact that they are not in control.

1. We cannot control the way God gives us the bread of life.
 - We would like to grow it ourselves, but God has not given us that option.
 - Only Jesus has the bread of life and we must go to Him.
 - Jacob did not like it that there was a famine...
 - He did not like it that only the vizier in Egypt had bread for his family and that that vizier had required him to send Benjamin!
 - We would rather that the terms were different—that we did not have to lose loved ones for Jesus... but we have no control over what God requires.
 - Jacob tried to get around the requirement—he wanted to ignore it.
 - He told his sons in verse 2 to ‘go back and buy us a little food’...
 - As if he could ignore the requirement to give up Benjamin.
 - But Judah rises to the place of leadership and insists that the man did not give them an option.
 - Jacob had no control over this situation—neither over the famine nor over the requirement of sending Benjamin.

2. We also cannot control the past.
 - Jacob foolishly complains to his sons for telling the vizier of Egypt about their brother Benjamin...
 - In verse 6 he says: **“Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?”**
 - It will do you no good say, “why did Adam and Eve have to eat the forbidden fruit and put us into this mess?”
 - It is a foolish question.
 - The fact is, that is what they did, and the whole human race is fallen.
 - Instead of complaining about the past which we cannot control, we should be thankful that the LORD has provided for us.
 - Yes, we are fallen and we must die to self—and to everything—we must forsake all and go to Jesus...
 - But praise God that Jesus has life for us so that we may live and not die!

B. And the God, having shown us that we are not in control, also brings us to repentance.

- We come to see that our idol is not worth holding on to if it keeps us from the bread of life.
 - Wasn't it ridiculous for us to ever think otherwise?
1. God often has to send people to convince us.
 - Judah, the once wicked son of Jacob whom God had broken and brought to repentance when he had gone after the world—back in Genesis 38...
 - is the son of Jacob that now rises into the place of leadership in the family and convinces his father Jacob to let go of Benjamin.
 - The other brothers are side tracked by their father's question about why they had told them man about Benjamin...
 - In verse 7, they go into an explanation of how they could not have known that Joseph would ask them to bring Benjamin in verse 7,
 - But Judah goes right the point in verse 8 and says what needs to be said:
 - **“Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die,** [Jacob had used these very words when he had sent them to Egypt the first time] **both we and you and also our little ones.** [He shows that three generations are in peril if Jacob continues to hold on to Benjamin and then in verse 9 he says:] **I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.** [It is not certain what this means, but probably that he would be cut off from his father's inheritance. Unlike Reuben who foolishly offered to let Jacob kill his sons, Judah puts himself on the line for Benjamin—he is willing to take full responsibility for Benjamin. And then he adds, verse 10:] **For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time.”**
 2. And to his credit, Jacob listens to his son Judah.

- He realises that by holding on to Benjamin when the one who has the bread requires him to send Benjamin, he is going to lose all.
 - How foolish we are to hold on to our idols so tightly when doing so keeps us from the bread that we must have to live.
3. And here we see Jacob's repentance. He does what we must all do.
- a. He sends an offering of the best of what he has to the one who has the bread of life.
 - **Verse 11: And their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds."**
 - Anyone who comes to Jesus as the bread of life will do this—they will bring to Him their best—whatever it is—a little balm, a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.
 - They give their gifts to Him.
 - b. Secondly, he gives back what the Lord who has the bread of life had given to him.
 - **Verse 12: "Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight."**
 - We bring our tithes to Him, and He keeps returning them, so we bring them again. We never give Him anything that He has not given to us.
 - c. But most importantly of all, he sends Benjamin, the one that the Lord of Egypt had specifically asked him to send.
 - **Verse 13: "Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man."**
 - Too often, we try to go with our offerings while withholding the very thing that he has asked for—
 - But thanks to Judah's intervention, Jacob does not do this.
 - It is so foolish to hold on to something in our fat little hand that prevents us from receiving the bread that we need to live.
 - It is not easy for Jacob to do this—his words are brief—he does not even say Benjamin's name—just **"take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man."**
 - It is an extremely difficult thing, but he does it.
 - d. And he does all of this with prayer, entrusting it all into God's hands.
 - **Verse 14: "And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"**
 - What an encouragement it is to see this!
 - Now Jacob is again acting like Israel—
 - Instead of saying that he cannot be blessed—that all is against him—he is now again looking to the LORD to bless him and his family!
 - **May God Almighty give you mercy before the man!**
 - That is where our hope belongs—in God's hands!

- Do you see the point?
 - When you relinquish what you have been idolatrously holding on to, you shift from clinging to what cannot give you life...
 - to looking to God to give you life and blessing.
 - You go from trusting in whatever to trusting in the LORD.
 - You start living by faith, realising that the only blessing worth having is the blessing of God.
 - If there is comfort to be found, it will be from Him.

III. And look! The One who has the bread of life warmly receives us when we give up our idols!

A. Everything changes when He sees that we have given our idol up...

1. This is beautifully illustrated for us in verse 16...do you see it?
 - It says, **When Joseph saw Benjamin with them...**
 - And then it tells how Joseph warmly receives them.
2. When you are clinging to your idols, you can go through the motions of coming to Jesus—you can keep coming and bringing your gifts and offerings...
 - But everything changes when you bring your Benjamin and give it to Him.
 - When He sees your Benjamin, it is then that He welcomes you and comforts you.
 - Again, I would stress the fact, this is not what justifies us.
 - It is the bread of life whom we receive that gives us life and salvation.
 - But when we come to Him to receive life, He calls upon us to forsake all and follow Him.
 - He makes us leave our idols behind that we may be devoted to Him.
 - And I would also remind you that with Jacob, God had accepted him long before this...
 - But the idol had gotten in the way of him receiving the bread of life, and in faithfulness,
 - the LORD had exposed the idol and had led Jacob to repentance in His great mercy and truth.
 - That is what He promises to do our whole life long—
 - to put His finger on the idols that dry up our spiritual life and lead us to see that we must forsake them so we can feed on Christ.

B. And now look at the warm welcome He extends to us, as illustrated by Joseph.

1. First, see how his stewards speak peace to us to ease our fears.
 - a. Joseph's poor brothers were very nervous.
 - They knew that the LORD GOD was dealing with them because of their sin.
 - They had seen how guilty they were of selling Joseph and had been reminded again and an again of their guilt through the things that Joseph had done and the things that had happened to them.
 - But they know that they must come to Joseph for life.

- You can see their uneasiness...
 - They are invited—or in their minds, summoned—to Joseph’s house and their response is given in verse 18:
 - **Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph’s house; and they said, “It is because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and fall upon us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys.”**
 - Even though they knew that they were not guilty of stealing the money, they felt that God was going to punish them because of what they had done to Joseph.
 - Having sold *him* into slavery, they were certain that *they* would be sold into slavery.
 - Poor sinners who come to Jesus know how guilty they are for rejecting him in the past—and it is a fearful thing for them.
- b. But this steward, this wonderful steward, comforts them.
- 1) He seems to know the language of Canaan—
 - I don’t mean that he speaks Hebrew, though he apparently does, but I mean that He speaks of God in the unique and gracious way that God had revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!
 - The brothers desperately explain how it is that they came to have the money they had purchased the grain with when they came the first time—and the steward speaks to them.
 - a) First, he says, (v. 23) **“Peace be with you and do not be afraid.”**
 - This is the blessing that God pronounces upon His people to assure them that they are not under condemnation...
 - He sends His stewards, ministers of the gospel, to preach the gospel of peace—to tell us that in Christ, all is well, and to bless His people.
 - b) Next, the steward speaks of God as their God and the God of their fathers who gave them their treasure in their sacks.
 - He knows the true God who is the God of their fathers...and who is the God of all providence—who brings all things to us.
 - He encourages them to trust that the return of their treasure was from the LORD.
 - c) It is evident that this steward had been taught by Joseph himself to speak the language of Canaan.
 - Joseph had taught the gospel to the men of his household, and so they have gracious words to speak all who come into his house.
 - Psalm 105 speaks of how Joseph taught the elders of Egypt about God.
 - Everyone that Joseph speaks to seems to end up talking about the Lord.
 - This is what Jesus does with His stewards...he teaches them to speak words of peace to all who come into His house for bread.

- 2) And then the steward brings Simeon to them (v. 23).
 - What an encouragement it must have been to them to see that their brother was safe and sound...
 - It was a harbinger of hope—as it is to us when we see those who have been through trials in God’s house come through safe and sound.
 - 3) And then the steward invites them in and refreshes them (v 24).
 - He welcomes them and provides water to wash their feet and fodder for their donkeys.
 - They are being welcomed as friends, not taken as prisoners!
- But these men were still nervous...as we see them making ready their gift to present to Joseph (verse 25)—nervously fiddling around with it.
2. And now Joseph himself comes to feast with them (v. 26)!
 - a. He is actually inviting them to come and feast in his house!
 - They are not being taken as prisoners, but welcomed as honoured guests at his table.
 - b. They greet him appropriately, presenting their gift to him and bowing down to him with their faces to the ground.
 - He graciously asks them about their father, and they respond and bow down to him again as representatives of their father—in fulfillment of Joseph’s dream of long ago.
 - So we come before the LORD Jesus in His house, bowing before Him and presenting our gifts to Him.
 - And He shows that He is concerned for us and our affairs.
 3. And then he especially welcomes Benjamin, the very one that he has asked for...
 - a. He speaks gracious words, pronouncing a blessing on this sacrifice that Jacob has sent to him—
 - this son that he has relinquished to him that his family might live and not die.
 - To him, Joseph says, **“God be gracious to you my son,”** just as Jesus pronounces His blessing on us...
 - Yes, our LORD Jesus comforts us when we have given up what was precious to us for Him...
 - He assures us that our sacrifice is acceptable to Him.
 - b. And we see what his brothers and Benjamin do not see at this time...
 - That he not only blesses the sacrifice of Benjamin, but he is deeply moved by it...
 - Our Lord weeps when we give up what is precious to us for Him.
 - He delights to see our love and his loving heart is filled.
 - c. And then to their astonishment, he seats them exactly according to age, from the oldest to the youngest,
 - And he takes servings from his own table for them to eat.
 - He is having table fellowship with them, showing his acceptance of them—sharing of his bounty as one committed to them.

- And in doing this, he gives Benjamin, their father's sacrifice, five times as much...
 - not that Benjamin had to eat it all, but as an expression of extreme favour and acceptance.
 - He is showing them all that he accepts their family's sacrifice because they have brought what he requested.
- Again, this is the comfort we obtain when we sacrifice what we had been clinging on to for Jesus.

C. And you see how the brothers respond.

1. They drank and were merry with him!

- They are thrilled to be accepted at his table.
- They are no doubt amazed to be there feasting with the vizier of Egypt.
- By table fellowship, he has pledged his good will to them, all because they have brought Benjamin.

2. And so it is for us to rejoice that we have a place at the Lord's Table.

- It is here that He pledges His acceptance of us and His grace toward us.
- He is committed to us because we have left all to come to Him for life.
- We have come to Him for bread, and He has welcomed us.

Please rise and let us give thanks to Him for His gracious acceptance of us—as unworthy as we are.

- He has purged us of our idols and now we are free to eat with Him.