

**“THE GOODNESS AND LOVING KINDNESS OF GOD OUR SAVIOR”**

**I. Introduction**

- A. When we look at what the apostle Paul says in Titus 3 about himself and other Christians prior to conversion, it is easy to see how this description can be applied to Jacob and his sons.
- B. On a number of occasions, they were foolish, disobedient, and led astray.
- C. They acted as slaves to sinful passions and pleasures.
- D. And they exhibited a significant amount of malice and envy.
- E. Yet in spite of this, the Lord persisted in extending his goodness and loving kindness to them.
- F. As we study this chapter today, we will consider what it teaches us about how God works out his gracious purpose in the lives of his people.

**II. God Changes His People’s Hearts**

- A. In the first part of our text, we see the Lord changing his people’s hearts.
  - 1. Remember the background for what transpires here.
  - 2. In the previous chapter, Joseph detained Simeon and instructed the other brothers to prove that they were being honest with him by going back to Canaan and then returning to Egypt with Benjamin.
  - 3. But when the brothers got back to Canaan and told their father about this, Jacob refused to send Benjamin to Egypt, leaving Simeon in the hands of his captors.

## Exposition of Genesis #52

4. This may indicate that Jacob did not trust his sons with Benjamin.
  5. He may have suspected that they had something to do with Joseph's demise.
  6. Whether or not that was the case, it is clear that Jacob could not bear the thought of losing Benjamin, who had replaced Joseph as his favorite.
  7. Thus, once again, Jacob's favoritism was bringing harm to the other members of his family.
- B. As we are told in verses 1 and 2, the famine continued and the grain that they obtained in Egypt eventually ran out.
1. This causes Jacob to realize that they are going to have to return to Egypt after all.
  2. So he tells his sons, "Go again, buy us a little food."
  3. It almost sounds as if he is sending them on a simple errand, like running out to the corner market.
  4. But Judah reminds his father of the things that the man in Egypt told them when they left after their first visit.
  5. The only way they would be able to get grain in Egypt again, and the only way their brother Simeon would be released, would be if they brought Benjamin back with them.
  6. Jacob responds to this in frustration, saying that they never should have volunteered such detailed information about their family in the first place.
  7. But the brothers defend themselves by explaining that they had no choice in the matter.

8. They were pinned down by the stern Egyptian official.
  9. They had to be completely truthful with him if they were to have any hope of convincing him that they were not spies.
- C. We noted in the sermon on the previous chapter that God was using these events to work upon the hearts of Joseph's brothers.
1. Here we see how God was also working upon the heart of Jacob.
  2. Jacob had not been able to get over the news of Joseph's alleged death.
  3. For twenty years, he nursed his sorrow and pledged that he would go down to the grave in mourning.
  4. He refused to let go.
  5. But in this chapter the Lord brings Jacob to the point where he sees that he has to stop favoring one of his loved ones at the expense of the rest of his family.
- D. Favoritism was an ongoing problem throughout Jacob's life.
1. His mother's preference for him over his brother Esau led to the deceptive ruse that he and his mother played upon his father.
  2. His preference for Rachel over his other wives created all sorts of trouble for his family.
  3. And his preference for Joseph over his other sons resulted in Joseph being taken away from him.
  4. Now Jacob is compelled to send his favorite son off to a distant land, risking the possibility that he may lose him.

5. This shows us that the Lord will sometimes respond to our persistence in committing a particular sin by bringing us to the point where we have no choice but to deal with it.
  6. When this happens, it is painful.
  7. But God does not do this to bring us harm.
  8. He does it for our good.
  9. He is intent on seeing his children grow up in our faith.
- E. While it was difficult for Jacob to send Benjamin to Egypt, the Lord was about to do something that was beyond anything Jacob could have imagined.
1. This is hinted at in the prayer that Jacob offers in verse 14.
  2. As he sends his sons on their way, he prays, "May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back *your other brother* and Benjamin."
  3. We know what Jacob means when he says, "your other brother."
  4. He means Simeon, who is being held prisoner in Egypt.
  5. But the fact that he refers to Simeon generically rather than by name calls our attention to the fact that God is going to do much more than what Jacob is thinking when he offers this prayer.
  6. God is going to give *Joseph* back to Jacob.
  7. But first, Jacob is going to have to let go of his favorite son and entrust him into God's hands.

8. The fact that he is able to do so bears witness to the gracious work that the Lord is doing in his heart.
- F. Another change that we see in the first part of our text is the change that the Lord worked in the heart of Judah.
1. Recall the things Judah did back in chapter 38, where we were told of his dealings with his daughter-in-law Tamar.
  2. That episode showed Judah to be a dishonest and immoral man.
  3. But as we noted when we studied that chapter, Judah was humbled by what transpired with Tamar.
  4. The Lord worked through those events to open Judah's eyes to see the ugliness of his sin.
  5. Because of this, the Judah we see in chapter 43 is not the same man as the one we saw back in chapter 38.
  6. His actions here reflect a significant degree of heart transformation.
  7. He promises his father that he will take personal responsibility for Benjamin's safety.
  8. And as we will see in the coming chapters, Judah will make good on his promise.

### III. God Grants His People Undeserved Blessings

- A. This brings us to the second part of our text, which emphasizes how God grants his people undeserved blessings.
1. Try to imagine the kinds of questions that would have been going through the brothers' minds as they made their way to Egypt with Benjamin.

2. How is Joseph going to respond to the fact that they had delayed their return for so long?
  3. Would he believe their story about the money?
  4. What condition would Simeon be in?
  5. What would happen to Benjamin?
  6. Because of the guilt that had been awakened in them over what they had done to Joseph, these questions created a sense of foreboding for the brothers.
  7. Though it seemed that they could be headed toward ruin, in reality unexpected blessings lay in store for them.
- B. When the brothers arrive in Egypt and appear before Joseph, they are amazed to find that he invites them to have lunch at his house.
1. Since they know they have done nothing to merit such favor, they are highly suspicious.
  2. They conclude that it must be some kind of a trap, a way for Joseph to enslave them and seize their donkeys.
  3. Given that they are at Joseph's mercy here, they decide to be forthright about the matter of the money from their previous visit.
  4. They go up to the steward, explain what happened, and offer him the money they owed for the grain they got on their earlier visit.
  5. But the steward says something that puzzles them even more.
  6. He tells them, "Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money."

7. This tells us that, while Joseph was the one who gave the order to put the brothers' money back in their sacks, it was the Lord who was behind that order.

C. Why would the Lord do this?

1. The text points to two reasons.
2. First, as we saw by the brothers' response in the previous chapter, God worked through this to strike fear in their hearts.
3. When they saw the money in their sacks, they began to worry that Joseph would accuse them of taking the grain without paying for it.
4. This was one of the things that God used to bring them under conviction for their sin.

D. The second reason why the money was put back in their sacks is conveyed by the words of the steward.

1. God was conferring treasure upon the brothers.
2. He was pouring out blessings that they did not deserve.
3. This is a wonderful picture of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.
4. The only thing that we deserve from God's hand is judgment for our sins.
5. But instead of judgment, he has given us a glorious inheritance in his eternal kingdom.
6. As the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (v. 8).

#### IV. God Teaches His People Grateful Contentment

- A. We turn now to the third part of our text, where we see how the Lord teaches his people grateful contentment.
1. When Joseph meets his brothers at his house, he is once again reminded of his dreams, as his brothers greet him by bowing down before him.
  2. But there is still one thing missing.
  3. In Joseph's dreams, his father also bowed before him.
  4. This prompts him to ask about Jacob's welfare.
  5. Remember what Joseph said back in chapter 41 about how God had made him forget about his father's house during his twenty years in Egypt.
  6. It seemed like another life to him.
  7. Yet now it appears that the Lord is bringing about what he had showed him in his dreams.
  8. Can it really be that, after all those years, he is going to be reunited with his father?
  9. Seeing his brother Benjamin stirs up the love that he still has for his family.
  10. And after blessing Benjamin, he is so overcome by emotion that he has to excuse himself so he can regain his composure.
- B. Try to put yourself in the position of Joseph's brothers at this point.



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1. They must have been wondering whether this was the same man they had met on their previous visit.
  2. On that visit, he accused them of being spies, had them thrown in prison, and held one of them captive while the others were sent off to prove their story.
  3. But this time, this man invites them to dine at his own house, asks about the welfare of their father, pronounces a special blessing upon Benjamin, and is overcome with emotion.
- C. Another thing that Joseph does is make sure that the brothers are seated in their proper birth order.
1. This too is amazing in the brothers' eyes.
  2. They were eleven grown men, and some of them were fairly close in age.
  3. How could Joseph know their exact ages?
  4. This is very strange, and the brothers take note of it.
  5. It gives them the sense that there is much more going on here than meets the eye.
  6. It awakens them to the fact that these events are being orchestrated by the hand of God.
  7. This prepares them for the tests that are about to follow.
- D. The first of these tests comes when they sit down to eat in Joseph's house.
1. When the food is served, Benjamin is given five times as much as the others.

2. Joseph does this for a reason.
  3. He wants to see how his brothers will respond.
  4. By singling out Benjamin for special treatment, Joseph is essentially reenacting what Jacob had done with him so many years before.
  5. Have the brothers changed?
  6. Will they be jealous?
  7. Was the acknowledgement of guilt that Jacob overheard in the previous chapter a sign of genuine repentance?
- E. While there will be further testing through the events that unfold in the next chapter, the test that Joseph administers here suggests that the Lord has indeed worked the grace of repentance in the brothers' hearts.
1. Instead of being jealous of Benjamin, they rejoice in the hospitality that Joseph is extending to them.
  2. As it says in verse 34, "they drank and were merry with him."
  3. The context makes it clear that the "him" here is Benjamin.
  4. This shows us that the Lord has taught the brothers not to be jealous of the one who is given more, but to be gratefully content with what they are given.

## V. Conclusion

- A. God's hand was behind the things that took place in this chapter, though Jacob and his sons could not see what God was doing.
- B. In fact, they did not even know what they needed God to do for them.

- C. If you were able to ask them what they thought they needed God to do for them at that particular moment, they would not have told you that they needed God to do what he ended up doing.
- D. This teaches us a crucial lesson about God's providence.
- E. If we were given the power to order our lives ourselves, we would often order them differently than how God orders them.
- F. But of course, if we were allowed to do that, we would ruin everything.
- G. We do not know what we need God to do for us.
- H. Our perspective is too limited.
- I. But the Lord sees everything.
- J. He knows exactly what needs to happen in order for his gracious purpose to be worked out in the lives of his children.