

**God's Prevailing Grace:
The Beginning of God's Reconciling Work
Genesis 42
August 9, 2023**

Genesis 41 detailed the life-changing events that took Joseph from prison to second-in-command in Egypt.

Joseph declared that God, Elohim, the ruler of all things, would bring to pass seven years of abundance which were to be followed by seven years of famine. Joseph also proposed a plan for gathering grain during the years of abundance to provide for the people during the years of famine. Gen. 41:37-41.

I. The Occasion for God's Reconciling Work (1-5)

In verse 1 as we return to Jacob and his family over twenty years have passed since the events in chapter 37.

- Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers at age 17.
- At 30 Joseph became second-in-command in Egypt.
- Seven years of abundance have passed. Gen. 41:56-57.

Canaan is experiencing the effects of the famine and it seems that word has spread to Canaan that there was grain for sale in Egypt. Think of what the mention of Egypt might have stirred in the brothers.

Ten brothers make the 200-mile, likely 10-day journey, to Egypt to buy grain and Benjamin stays behind because Jacob feared that harm might happen to him.

II. The Confrontational Context of God's Reconciling Work (6-17)

While we know more specifics about the past 20 years of Joseph's life, it is interesting to note that since his promotion to second-in-command of Egypt Scripture never indicates any attempt on his part to find out about the well-being or the whereabouts of his family in Canaan.

The famine is not only the instrument that God uses to bring his brothers to Egypt the famine is also the instrument that God uses to bring Joseph face-to-face with his brothers in order to bring about reconciliation.

How could Joseph have responded when his brothers appeared before him? How did Joseph respond when his brothers appeared before him?

What were the effects of Joseph's response upon his brothers?

After declaring his requirement for their youngest brother to appear before him Joseph puts the brothers into custody for three days.

III. Early Evidence of God's Reconciling Work (18-24a)

After three days in custody Joseph has his brothers appear before him again. When they appear, Joseph adjusts what he previously required of the brothers.

He still required their youngest brother to be brought to him, but only one brother would be held. This adjustment to the requirement was an act of mercy by Joseph toward his family as nine brothers would be able to carry more grain back to Canaan for their households than just one brother returning to Canaan with grain.

Verses 18-24 display the early evidence of God's reconciling work in the hearts of Joseph's brothers, what is this early evidence and how would you characterize this early evidence from a biblical perspective?

As the brothers spoke with each other, not known to them because an interpreter stood between them, was that Joseph understood what they were saying.

IV. Severe Testing as Part of God's Reconciling Work (24b-35)

Despite his emotions Joseph went forward with the plan to keep one of the brothers until Benjamin was brought to him.

Imagine the shock as a moneybag was discovered in one of the brothers' sacks.

Note their response their hearts failed them or literally went out from them, they trembled or literally quaked and asked the question "What is this that God has done to us?"

This marked the first time that God, Elohim, is explicitly mentioned by these brothers.

Note that in recounting the visit that the brothers add to Joseph's words by adding the possibility of trading in the land. Their recounting of the visit took a backseat to their discovery in verse 35 that each of their sacks had their moneybags in the sacks. And at this we're told that both the brothers and Jacob were afraid (Gen. 3:10).

V. (Seemingly) Insurmountable Obstacles to God's Reconciling Work (36-38)

What is displayed about Jacob in his words in verses 36 and 38?

How should the Genesis 42 narrative affect our lives?