

Lesson 6: Life of Joseph, God's Man--Deliverance (Genesis 42-50)

Introduction:

Last week we observed as Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to get grain in midst of the famine. They were confronted by the Prime minister who accused them of being spies who were intent on finding weaknesses in Egypt's defenses.

Twenty years before they had brought sorrow and alienation to their family. One brother is gone and presumed dead, one brother is under the protection of his father at home, and their father is still in mourning.

Joseph could just say, "It's me, it's ok, I forgive you guys." But until they can confess their guilt and repent their guilt forms a barrier to complete reconciliation. It is not his problem but theirs.

They were convicted of their sin against their brother twenty years earlier (42:21-22). They admitted their guilt among themselves but were not yet repentant. The fun part was, *"They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them."* (v 43)

They were terrified but not repentant. They were not yet ready to turn from they sinful attitudes, give up their way for God's way.

But they will. With continued pressure from God through Joseph they will become men of God.

Joseph held Simeon hostage to check out their story. Will they desert Simeon or have they harmed Benjamin like they had deserted and harmed him? He also put their money into their own grain bags. Would they be honest? Had their hearts changed at all?

I. STORY IN THREE ACTS

A. ACT ONE: Meanwhile Back at the Ranch (Chapters 42 and 43)

1. Jacob is upset (42:29-38)

The boys brought the grain and the demands of the Egyptian leader to their father and they also told him about the gold returned to each of their sacks. He was not a happy camper. Why?

Genesis 42:36 records his reaction, *"You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me."*

Even when Rueben offered his own sons as a bond that he will bring Simeon and Ben back (v 36), but his dad replies, *"My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."* (v 37)

2. Jacob has little choice (43:1-10)

The famine continued "severe in the land" (v 1) and the family used up all the grain (v 2). Joseph told his boys to return to Egypt for more but refused to let them take Benjamin.

Judah laid out all the demands of the Egyptian Prime Minister and the results of not complying:

1. We cannot enter Egypt gain.

2. We will never see Simeon again.
3. We will all die.
4. You and your grandchildren will starve.

He also promised to be personally responsible for Benjamin. Are we seeing a change here? First Rueben, then Judah offering to stick their necks out for the family.

3. Jacob relents (43:11-14)

Take money, take gifts, take the original money . . . take Benjamin.

But he still doesn't feel good about it, *"may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."* (v 14)

B. ACT TWO: Back to Egypt (Chapter 43)

1. Joseph receive them with grace and honor (43:15-17)

His brothers brought Benjamin to "the man" and to their surprise he invites them for lunch. How did they react? Genesis 43:18 tells us, *"Now the men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, " {It is} because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys."*

2. Joseph's steward is just like him (43:18-25)

*"And he said, "Be at ease, 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.* (v 23)

3. Joseph wines and dines them (43:26-34)

He asked about their well being and the health of their father and then fed them from his royal table with five portions for Benjamin.

C. ACT THREE: Back to Cana (Chapter 44)

1. Everything is perfect. (44:1)

Joseph's brothers now headed home with Simeon, Benjamin and all the food they could carry. Life is good.

2. What they don't know could kill them. (44:2-13)

Their gold has again been restored to their bags (v 1). This time Joseph's personal cup was placed into Benjamin's sack.

When the steward caught up with them and charged them with theft they answered his charge with this rash promise, *"With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."* (v 9) He responds that slavery will be enough.

"And he searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack." (v 12)

Benjamin now must go back to Joseph as a slave and the boys have to go home to Jacob with the news that will kill their father.

3. Have Joseph's brothers changed? (44:14-34)

They were horrified, not just because of having to tell Jacob, but **because of what had happened to Benjamin.**

They were honest and, even though they thought Ben might have stolen the cup, they took the guilt upon themselves.

Genesis 44:16, *So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found."* (v 16)

They were changed men as exemplified by Judah who responded, *"Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers."* (v 33)

The true repentance was evident because they stopped lying, they stopped thinking about themselves, and they truly cared about their dad and their youngest brother.

LESSONS ON TRUE REPENTANCE:

STEP 1—Recognize sin as sin.

Joseph's brothers finally recognized a relationship between what God was allowing to happen and their sin. God helped them see that what they had done was wrong. God will do whatever is necessary to renew our relationship with him since the problem is with us, not with him.

STEP 2—Confess that sin.

Joseph's brothers finally actually admitted their specific sins and that they deserved punishment. Confession is the real answer to removing true guilt.

STEP 3—Take personal responsibility.

Joseph's brothers finally took responsibility. They said, "We did it." They didn't blame Joseph for being an insufferable brat. They didn't blame Jacob because he favored Joseph. They didn't blame God about being born to the wrong mother.

STEP 4—Express regret and sorrow.

They expressed their sorrow to each other, to a stranger, and to God.

STEP 5—Change behavior.

They changed their behavior. Changed heart attitudes bring action. They stopped lying, they stopped looking out for number one, they were willing to offer themselves.

II. THE REST OF THE STORY

Chapter 44 ended as Judah pled with the Egyptian Prime Minister to release Benjamin and allow him to go back to his father. He explained how his father had lost his favorite son and the Benjamin was the only other special son of his favorite wife. He told him that his father would surely die if Ben didn't return.

He also explained that he, Judah, was to be held responsible and could not bear to see his father's grief increased. And, last of all, he offered himself to be jailed in Benjamin's place. This brings us to chapter 45.

A. Joseph Revealed

Joseph seems to be reached by Judah's concern and to believe that his brothers are truly repentant. Now the dilemma becomes how to tell them. (Tell the cat on the roof story.)

1. He admits who he is. (45:1-4)

Joseph couldn't be subtle or keep the deception up any longer. He broke down, cleared the hall and verse 3 reports, Then Joseph said to his brothers, *"I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"*

But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed (perhaps better translated "terrified") at his presence. Who is this mad Egyptian who is completely out of control, first toying with them, then torturing them, and now claiming to be their dead brother?

Verse 4, Then Joseph said to his brothers, *"Please come closer to me."* And they came closer. And he said, *"I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt."*

2. He deals with his brother's guilt. (45:5-8)

How can Joseph hope to help alleviate their great and deserved guilt? The answer is implied here in verses 5-8, but clearly stated in Genesis 50:20, *"And as for you, you meant evil against me, {but} God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."*

He is teaching them a valuable lesson. Man may spoil our plans . . . but no one can thwart God's ultimate purpose. When man's will clashes with God's will, WHO WINS?

Their plan was limited to getting rid of a bratty little brother, *"And as for you, you meant evil against me,"*. But God's plan was much broader, ". . . **God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.**"

It was important for Joseph to wait for his brother's true repentance, the "changing of their minds to God's way of thinking." Sin clouds vision so they need the mind of God to understand.

Before repentance they might view Joseph's statement as an excuse for their sin. They might say, "It wasn't really sin because it was God's will. God made us do it."

After repentance they could begin to understand how God works.

Disobedience and sin brought guilt that caused them to withdraw from their relationship with God. But God will bring about his ultimate purpose despite their obstinate and disobedient behaviors.

Lesson:

So I asked myself, "*Self, which would you rather be? Like Joseph who suffered abuse but experienced the ongoing excitement of being an active part of God's plan to save his family, nation, and the world OR Joseph's brothers who missed out on all the excitement as God did a great work without them, . . . even despite them?*"

Perhaps the question isn't so much whether we are doing God's work for Him, or the familiar question, "If we don't do it who will," or the belief that God has no hands, feet, or mouth without us.

God can certainly use other people or no people at all to carry out His plan. So again the question isn't so much whether we are doing God's work for Him, but rather are we going to be a part of the work when God does it?

Do we, like Joseph, experience what it is like to be in a right relationship with God every day so that as he does His mighty acts of bringing salvation to the world we are playing a part?

B. Joseph Reunited (45:9-50)

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Joseph story is his restoration to his father.

1. He calls for his family to come under his care. (49:9-15)

Genesis 45:9 *"Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, 'God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay.'"*

Joseph arranged for them to come live near him so he can care for them in the five years of famine yet to come.

In verse 13 he continued, *"Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here." And they did.*

2. The Pharaoh ups the ante.

Genesis 45:16 continued, *"Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants."*

He not only sent supplies back to Canaan but also promised to give the family to best of the land in Egypt. He even told them not to bother bringing their stuff because he would supply the best for them when they arrived. He gave them jobs tending his newly acquired herds of livestock. And to further illustrate his intentions he sent each of them new wardrobes animals loaded with Egyptian goodies.

Our study will end with this account of Jacobs response, but I encourage you to read the rest of the story which includes his families success in Egypt and the deaths of Jacob and finally Joseph as well.

Genesis 45:25-46:1—*"Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. And they told him, saying, 'Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.' But he was stunned, for he did not believe them. When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. Then Israel said, 'It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.' So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac."*

Lesson:

This one last lesson was especially encouraging to me.

There is a great record in Scripture of Abraham being supernaturally led by God. God talked to Abraham.

There is a great record in Scripture of Isaac being supernaturally led by God. God talked to Isaac.

There is a great record in Scripture of Jacob being supernaturally led by God. God talked to Israel.

BUT, there is no record in Scripture of God ever appearing to, walking with, wrestling with Joseph.

Yet Joseph believed God, obeyed God, and was used by God to save much of the known world and to preserve a great nation as a part of God's master plan of salvation. ***Joseph was God's Man!***

REVIEW PRAYER (If there is time)

1. *Even though Joseph had less than ideal family, environment and circumstances he chose to be God's man.*

Lord, help us to follow you without using our background, environment or events as excuses to sin.

2. *Joseph's and his father were unwise as Jacob showed favoritism toward him and he was naïve in dealing with his brothers*

Lord, make us sensitive, wise, and humble.

3. *Jacob modeled a deceptive lifestyle to his children and failed to discipline them when they sinned*

Lord, help us to model integrity to and discipline to our children.

4. *Joseph resisted temptation because he knew who he was, recognized sin as sin, and would not betray the trust of his boss or his Lord.*

Lord, help us to be loyal and to remember that we are your children and that all sin is sin against you.

5. *When Joseph was thrown into prison he did not lose his godliness, become self-centered, or lose his faith.*

Lord, help us to accept difficulties remaining godly, without becoming self-centered, or losing our faith.

6. *Joseph spent 730 extra days waiting in prison, working hard and learning patience.*

Lord, help me to realize you have your own timetable and that waiting is part of your maturing process toward righteousness.

7. *God prepared Joseph against pride, for perseverance, and to perform His purposes.*

Lord, prepare us to be humble, to keep working and to become a part of your kingdom and work.

8. *Joseph helped his brothers to see their sin and confess before God.*

Lord, bring any sin in our lives to our minds through your Spirit so we may confess and repent.

9. *Joseph helped his brothers deal with their guilt by pointing out that God could still work His will despite their sin and any brought by it loss was their loss.*

Lord, build in us a desire to be in fellowship with you so that we are involved in your master plan for our world.

10. *God may have led Joseph more quietly than his ancestors, but he always believed God and obeyed Him day after day.*

Lord, speak to using your still small voice, as you did to Joseph and help us to listen and obey.

MAKE US GOD'S MEN AND WOMEN! AMEN!