



Forgive and Accept!

June 18, 2017

Scripture Reading: Genesis 43: 16-25

Introduction: Happy Father's Day! I pray that God will grant us the wisdom and understanding, that we may become good, good fathers as our Father in Heaven. Jacob's life is a bizarre story. I want all fathers to study it seriously. It will teach what not to do as a father. Jacob was partial to his wife. He showed favoritism to one child over others. His children grew as wild ones. We can see his weakness as a father in the first few verses of chapter 43 also. He had a dysfunctional family. But his family started coming together because of God through Joseph. God used Famine to move them to Egypt. Let us see how Jacob's family fared under the stress of famine! God gives stress test to all of us! It could be famine, lack of money, bad health, a tragedy in the family. Our character indeed must shine during these trials and tribulations. Genesis 43 is a great example of such a stress test!

Genesis 43: 1-5. 1Now the famine was severe in the land. 2So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food." 3Judah spoke to him, however, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, '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 do not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.'"

The famine was very severe now. Jacob had a huge ranch and had to feed many people and the cattle. All their supplies were running out fast. Now they were desperate and forced to go back to Egypt again.

They should have gone back to Egypt much earlier. How could they leave Simeon all by himself in the prison? We could see, the brothers were reluctant to return back to Egypt again. Sometimes we love our lives more than anything. The brothers were unconcerned about the discomfort of Simeon in the prison. They must have left Simeon hanging like that for several months. They probably hoped that rain would come again and they didn't have to go to Egypt at all. Some kind of brothers! Everyone for himself! But Jacob ordered them to go back to Egypt again.

Both father and children never sought God in this matter. God could have provided them miraculously had they only sought Him with a humble heart? Sometimes we forget the most important person in our difficult times - Jesus Christ our Lord!

Young lions may lack food, but His children will not!

Habakkuk 3:17-19. 17Though the fig tree should not blossom



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And there be no fruit on the vines,
 Though the yield of the olive should fail
And the fields produce no food,
 Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
And there be no cattle in the stalls,
18 Yet I will exult in the LORD,
 I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
19 The Lord GOD is my strength,
 And He has made my feet like hinds' feet,
 And makes me walk on my high places.

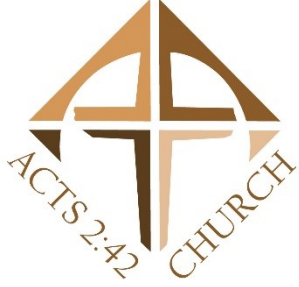
Jacob and his children did not trust God as Habakkuk did!

Judah reminded Jacob about something very important concerning their trip back to Egypt! He said, "The man (Joseph) solemnly warned us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. But if you do not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.'"

Did Judah disobey his father? He was supposed to honor his father by obeying, is it not? Here the father was pushing the sons in the wrong way. Jacob was actually putting them in jeopardy. Judah had to obey Joseph's command so that his brothers could live! Jacob was trying to undermine Joseph's authority unknowingly and Judah was trying to correct his father's plan without Benjamin.

Also, we must keep our word! Our words need to be trusted. Our word is what we are, and we are what our word is.

Genesis 43: 6-10. 6 Then Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had another brother?" 7 But they said, "The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" 8 Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the



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lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. 9“I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever. 10“For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice.”

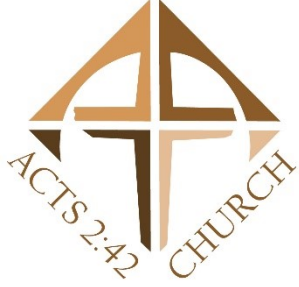
In verse 6 we see something very interesting! Jacob is referred to as Israel! Judah pleaded with his father to send Benjamin with them or else, they might die! He gave his own life as a surety. As I said before, a stress of famine started bringing great character among brothers, especially Judah.

Genesis 43: 11-15. 11Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. 12“Take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake. 13“Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; 14and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.” 15So the men took this present, and they took double the money in their hand, and Benjamin; then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

Jacob was reluctant to let go off Benjamin. He did not trust his own sons. We must all work hard for credibility. Once people lose their trust in us, it is hard to establish that trust. We see that in our politics also. No one wants to believe any politician. Every politician has a nice nick name - Liar!

Jacob knew that if he held onto Benjamin the whole family would die of starvation. He had to send Benjamin now to Egypt in order to get his food supplies. He resigned to God's will: He said, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. In other words, If it happens, it happens. So be it! He resigned to God's will.

Jacob wanted to pacify Joseph's anger through a lot of gifts! He tried to appease Joseph by giving gifts like fragrant oil, honey, pistachio, almond, and of course double the money Joseph gave them! Jacob knows all about the power of showering gifts to his enemy. He actually tried it against his own brother Esau and was successful in pacifying him! But will it work here?



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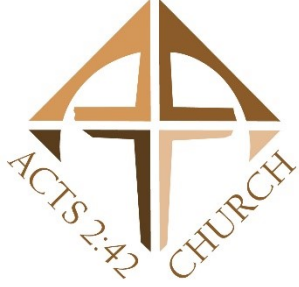
Genesis. 43: 16-18 16When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward, “Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon.” 17So the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph’s house. 18Now the men were afraid, because 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.”

Joseph prepared a huge feast for his brothers and invited them to his own house! But his brothers thought that they were called for investigation about the money that was found in their sacks! They were afraid that Joseph was going to charge them and take them as his slaves and confiscate their donkeys! As we can see, they were constantly gripped by fear.

Gen. 43:19-25. 19So they came near to Joseph’s house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house, 20and said, “Oh, my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food, 21and it came about when we came to the lodging place, that we opened our sacks, and behold, each man’s money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. So we have brought it back in our hand. 22“We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks.” 23He 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. 24Then the man brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder. 25So they prepared the present for Joseph’s coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.

The brothers of Joseph came to Joseph's house steward and confessed about the cash that was found in their sacks and they tried to return it. But the steward said that that cash was from God Himself and that treasure is a gift for them. Now after this confession and acceptance, they were relieved. They were preparing themselves to have a meal with Joseph himself.

Gen. 43:26-30. 26When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him. 27Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, “Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?” 28They said, “Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.” They bowed down in homage. 29As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, he said, “Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?” And he said, “May God be gracious to you, my son.” 30Joseph hurried out for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought a place to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there.



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The brothers of Joseph shared their gifts first and bowed down before Joseph. The first question Joseph asked was, how is your father? Is he still alive? Now Joseph was planning in his heart to bring his dad also later. He wanted to make sure, he was still alive.

Then Joseph saw his own brother Benjamin! He was truly stirred in his spirit, He showed his special affection for him by saying, "May God be gracious to you my son!" As he spoke those words, Joseph started breaking down emotionally. Scripture says, he sought a place to weep, and he went into his chambers and wept bitterly! What a tragedy! Joseph and Benjamin not only lost their loving mother Rachel, but they lost each other's company also because of the other brothers' jealousy and despicable sin! At this time Joseph could not hug Benjamin and kiss him. He had to control his loving emotions toward him!

Gen. 43: 31-34. 31Then he washed his face and came out; and he controlled himself and said, "Serve the meal." 32So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians. 33Now they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment. 34He took portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

We all love the "last supper" picture!

(Show the picture)

You see concern and anxiety in every disciple's face!

I wish someone could draw the picture of Joseph sitting down with his wicked brothers. It would speak volume of Joseph's magnanimity, grace, and self-control over his anger. Also, there must be perplexity and bewilderment in the face of all his brothers!

Just imagine yourself sitting with a murderer who murdered your loved one. Do you think we will sit and eat with such a person? Victim/offender is a huge thing in prisons. Explosive meetings happen at that time. People do not forgive. They actually want to come to that person's execution to see how that person dies. Joseph could have easily taken vengeance on his brothers. Instead, he chose to love, and decided to sit together with them and eat, what great acceptance and forgiveness! Can we forgive and accept our enemies also like that? Christ accepted us and forgave. Why can't we do the same?



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This feast also reminds us of our wedding feast of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will be perplexed also, at the same time joyful! Our Lord will be gracious to us in spite of our despicable sins. While we were yet sinners He died for us. How much more He will do for us since we decided to accept Him and follow Him?

Joseph's invitation to this feast is a real silent symbol of his forgiveness and acceptance of his brothers!

The seating of his brethren was according to their age status. Reuben was first and Benjamin was last. The probability of a stranger calling for that kind of sequence and order is forty million to one. The brothers were astonished at the right order of their sitting arrangement. There were three tables. One for Joseph alone, and one for Egyptians, and one for the Hebrews. The Egyptians did not sit with the Hebrews. They looked down on them and sat separately. Racism is part of human sinful nature. We as Christians must call it out and rebuke it!

Joseph's table was filled with food. He shared that abundant food with his brothers, but with Benjamin, he provided five times more. Thereby he tested the reaction of his jealous brothers. They responded favorably. They enjoyed the dinner and drank with them. Finally, the brothers were forgiven and accepted well by Joseph. What a great spirit. He showed a glimpse of our Lord Jesus' character. Can we become like that? Can we forgive and accept each other? We can pick up so many valuable lessons from this story.

Conclusion:

First, God was fulfilling His prophecy through Joseph. The Israelites would eventually move to Egypt and stay there for over four hundred years! But this prophecy happens in a mysterious way as the drama unfolds in Joseph's and Jacob's life!

Joseph was not tainted by prosperity or power.

We can see the tender heart of Joseph, forgiving spirit, helpful spirit, simplicity, yet firm governing aptitude in this story.

Our family life must enlarge itself to become part of God's plan for His church. When family members and friends join hands together and plant God's church, God's sovereignty is fulfilled in all our lives. This is what happened in my own family, and it attracted my other family members and friends, and eventually, this church was born. Let us keep extending our family members and friends to become part of this kind of family church that honors and glorifies God in every neighborhood. Let us pull our loved ones and friends to God's Kingdom!

It was a test for Joseph's brothers. They could have brought someone else instead of Benjamin and told a lie. But Joseph would have exposed their lies, and the consequence would have been much serious.

On this Father's Day, let us focus on Jacob! He was a very poor father. He was not strict. He showed favoritism. Children became wild. Jacob had no control. He was not able to confront Reuben who slept with Jacob's concubine. Simeon and Levi went out of control. Judah's family was dysfunctional. Jacob's



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children were murderous toward Joseph. Jacob also made poor decision concerning Benjamin. Jacob's story teaches us how not to be as a father,

We have also sinned against our elder brother Jesus Christ our Lord. In spite of His goodness and mercy and His wonderful offer of salvation, we are hesitant to come near Him and be reconciled. He has invited us for His great wedding feast. Will we respond and be part of that wonderful feast? The Spirit of the Lord says come! The Bride says come! Let us run toward Him and embrace Him. He will never leave us nor forsake us. O how He loves us! Won't you come to Him? Come home, sinner! Let us be one in the body of Christ! Let us be one in the Spirit!

Pastor Daniel Israel