

THE SCROLLS

Making Lemonade: Finding Faith When Life Turns Sour | Genesis 43

Life Lesson

God often leads us to the end of our own strength so that we learn to trust Him entirely. Our fears and circumstances can cause us to misinterpret God's intentions, leading us to assume He is against us when He is actually working for our good. This chapter reminds us that God's providence is often unseen, but His purposes are always guided by mercy, wisdom, and covenant love. When we let go of control and trust His character, we find that He is preparing blessings and restoration far beyond what we could imagine.

Examine Scripture

Read Genesis 43

As you read Scripture, slow down and ask these three questions to move from information to transformation:

1. *What does this passage reveal about who God is?*
2. *How is God calling you to grow or change?*
3. *What is God leading you to do or who is He calling you to be in your everyday life?*

-From the Sermon Series Bookmark and Sermon Notes

Correcting Natural Tendencies

Before exploring Genesis 43, we must revisit Genesis 42. In that chapter, God uses a crisis to awaken the brothers' buried guilt. Driven by a severe famine, Jacob sends his ten oldest sons to Egypt to buy grain, keeping Benjamin at home. The brothers bow before the Egyptian governor—unknowingly fulfilling Joseph's childhood dreams. Joseph recognizes them, conceals his identity, and accuses them of being spies. After imprisoning them for three days, Joseph demands that they bring Benjamin to prove their honesty. Trapped and desperate, the brothers admit that their situation is divine punishment for selling Joseph twenty years ago. Joseph overhears this and privately weeps. He keeps Simeon as a hostage and sends the others home with grain, secretly returning their money to their sacks. When they find the silver on the road, they panic, interpreting it as a sign of God's curse. God uses the pressure of the famine and Egyptian imprisonment to soften the brothers' hardened hearts, forcing them to confront their past sins.

We often treat faith like a transaction: if we can just manage the variables and keep our most prized possessions safe, we believe we can survive life's famines. But Genesis 43 confronts us at the very end of our self-sufficiency. In this chapter, Jacob's family is pushed into a corner where their resources are depleted, their strategies have failed, and their only way forward is complete surrender.

As Jacob and his sons face the harsh reality of starvation, they are forced to return to Egypt—convinced they are walking right into an ambush. What they do not realize is that the "angry ruler" controlling their fate is actually the brother who deeply loves them. This chapter offers a glimpse into the mystery of divine providence, showing us that before we can receive the abundant feast of God's grace, we must let go of our illusions of

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control. When we feel most vulnerable to judgment, God is often preparing a table of radical, covenant-based reconciliation behind the scenes. It reminds us of (Rom. 2:4): “Do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”

Vs. 1-14

The opening words of Genesis 43 show how serious the situation is: “Now the famine in the land was severe” (v. 1). As if that is not bad enough, (v. 2) continues: “When they had used up the grain they had brought back from Egypt.” So, Jacob and his family were in trouble. The famine is ongoing, and they have exhausted all their food. There’s no other option. They have to return to Egypt, but this time they must bring Benjamin as instructed.

Jacob’s family has exhausted their resources. Their previous effort to control their fate—buying grain while trying to keep their youngest brother, Benjamin, safe at home—has failed. Jacob initially attempts to send his sons back to Egypt without Benjamin, a subtle way to circumvent the Egyptian ruler’s clear instructions. But as Alistair Begg said, “If you try to run your life on your own terms, you will find that the universe is not built to support your independence from God.”

Judah steps forward as the main voice of realism: “The man specifically warned us, ‘You will not see me again unless your brother is with you.’” (v. 3). This reveals an important theological truth: You cannot access God’s provisions on your own terms. Judah offers himself as a surety—a pledge—for Benjamin’s safety. This marks a major theological shift for Judah, who, only a few chapters earlier, suggested selling Joseph into slavery. Here, we see the early outline of substitutionary atonement. Judah’s willingness to bear the blame forever directly points to his descendant, Jesus Christ, who became our ultimate surety before the Father.

Realizing his human strategies have failed, Jacob finally breaks. He commands his sons to take the best fruits of the land—balm, honey, spices, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds—along with double the money. It is an attempt to appease an angry lord, a natural human instinct when facing judgment. But Jacob’s true transformation happens when he lets go of his ultimate idol: his control over Benjamin. Jacob releases them with a profound cry

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of faith: “May God Almighty (El Shaddai) cause the man to be merciful to you so that he will release your other brother and Benjamin to you. As for me, if I am deprived of my sons, then I am deprived” (v. 14). By invoking “El Shaddai,” the God of all power and the covenant-keeping God of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob shifts his focus from his own protective instincts to the sovereign character of God. True faith often begins where our control ends. Jacob accepts the possibility of total loss, choosing to trust God's covenant loyalty rather than his own ability to preserve his family.

Vs. 15-25

When the brothers arrive in Egypt with Benjamin, they are not thrown into a dungeon. Instead, Joseph instructs his steward to bring them to his personal palace to prepare a large feast. Interestingly, the brothers see this unusual kindness as a trap: “But the men were afraid because they were taken to Joseph's house. They said, ‘We have been brought here because of the silver that was returned in our bags the first time. They intend to overpower us, seize us, make us slaves, and take our donkeys’” (v. 18).

This is a deep psychological look at a guilty conscience. When a heart is weighed down by unconfessed sin and unresolved guilt, acts of grace can seem like acts of war. The brothers expect judgment, so a banquet invitation feels like an ambush. When they try to explain the money to Joseph's steward, the steward gives a surprisingly theological response: “May you be well. Don't be afraid. Your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your bags. I received your silver” (v. 23). Even the Egyptian steward, likely influenced by Joseph, recognizes the unseen hand of God controlling a gift of pure grace.

Vs. 26-34

The chapter concludes with a powerful scene of fellowship. Joseph enters, accepts their gifts, and asks about their father. Even as the Egyptian ruler, a man of great authority, Joseph still shows humility and compassion by remembering and inquiring about their father. Clearly, Joseph cared deeply about his family, but the brothers did not realize that it was him. They should have been astonished that an Egyptian ruler would even care about their family. As in Chapter 42, the brothers “knelt low

Personal Reflection

1. What area of my life am I still trying to control instead of trusting to God? Is there something I am holding too tightly because I fear what might happen if I surrender it to God's care?
2. How have challenging circumstances revealed deeper issues in my heart? In what ways has God used pressure, disappointment, or uncertainty to uncover fears, guilt, pride, or misplaced trust that I need to deal with?
3. Do I tend to see God's kindness with suspicion or gratitude? Are there times when I find it hard to believe that God's grace is truly meant for my good?
4. How has God demonstrated His faithfulness in situations where I couldn't see His purpose at the time?
5. Am I growing in my ability to rejoice in the blessings of others? How should I respond when others receive opportunities, recognition, or blessings that I want for myself?

Commentaries

Expositor's Bible Commentary
(Abridged Edition): New Testament
Edited by Kenneth Barker

New Bible Commentary Edited by D.
A. Carson

NIV Application Commentary:
Genesis by John H. Walton

Mt. Zion's Mission

Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to
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and paid homage to him" (v. 28). Again, this is the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams. It must have been an incredible encouragement to Joseph; it showed that God is truly working in his life.

When Joseph sees Benjamin, his own mother's son, his emotional restraint breaks down under the weight of brotherly love. He hurriedly goes to a private chamber to weep before washing his face to compose himself. Imagine the emotion Joseph must have felt as Benjamin served not just as a reminder of his mother, but also his father and his life before the pit and prison. At this point, perhaps Joseph is finally able to trace the sovereign and providential hands of God at work in his life, even in the darkest moments. As John Piper reminds us, "God is always doing 10,000 things in your life, and you may be aware of three of them."

As the feast continues, Joseph arranges them according to their birthrights, a display of knowledge that surprises them. How could this Egyptian ruler know their ages and birthrights? Then comes the ultimate test of their hearts: Benjamin receives a portion five times as large as anyone else's.

Years ago, favoritism toward Joseph caused deadly jealousy among these men. Now, Joseph is testing whether they have changed. Will they envy Rachel's youngest son, or will they rejoice in his blessing? The text gives us the answer: "They drank and became drunk with Joseph" (v. 34). The long, painful process of divine discipline has begun to mend the divisions of envy in the brothers' hearts. However, a greater test still lies ahead.

Ultimately, Genesis 43 reminds us that our calculations are too small for the greatness of God's mercy. The brothers went to Egypt expecting punishment, but they were invited to a feast. They thought they would be treated as thieves, yet they sat as honored guests. This is the beautiful, repeating pattern of the Gospel: when our guilt makes us think we will face a trial, our Father prepares a banquet instead.

Take courage today, knowing that God's hidden hand is at work behind the scenes of your chaos. He is not setting a trap to break you; He is shaping your self-reliance so He can heal your heart and welcome you into the abundant richness of His presence.