

**Reading:** Genesis 43:1-25

**Theme:** Misplaced things

Last time we saw the first meeting between Joseph and his brothers, noted how Joseph's dealings with them, even though he was unrecognised, were used to bring back to their hearts and minds the wrong they did against him. We saw similarities with the various ways God uses to bring our wrong back to our hearts and minds.

We saw how the brothers were at first imprisoned, then freed, but Simeon was bound for their freedom. We spoke of the Lord Jesus suffering on our behalf, in our place for our wrong against God, so we may be pardoned and set free from our wrong and its consequences. Moving quickly on, and I will summarize events at the end of ch.42v v25ff and then go into ch.43 in more detail. I've 5 headings to help us look at the verses we read:

### **1. Misplaced Dread.**

The brothers, ready to go back home; Joseph orders their money was placed back in their sacks. It seems he didn't want them to suffer any financial hardship. On the way home, one of them opens his sack and finds his money there! This causes them all great fear and dread! It should have been a matter of wonder and rejoicing, but their guilty consciences cause them fear. Very often our consciences cause us great happiness or unhappiness! We may hide away our guilt, our wrong feelings for 10, 20, or 30 years or even a lifetime; but we can be sure, as I said last time - our sin will find us out! Everyone's sin will catch up with them - sometimes in their own lifetime, other times it is when they stand before God and are confronted with it. We noted last time, it is a mercy if God confronts us with our sin before we die, for then there is still hope of forgiveness. Often a troubled conscience is caused by a revived memory of the wrong committed and then fear - often fear at irrational things that happen. Here the brothers were afraid at this money in one of their sacks.

If they had this misplaced dread, fear and discovering money in one of their sacks, imagine their horror on returning to Canaan, on emptying all their sacks and all of them found their money there! Both they and their father were afraid (v 35). No doubt their fear was based on Joseph's harsh words and treatment, which they had already told their father about. Yet all this was a misplaced dread and fear, but affected them, especially Jacob and we see:

## **2. Misplaced Despair.**

Instead of Jacob being pleased at his sons' safe return, at the food they brought, and the money that had appeared in their sacks, he seems to sink into a state of despair and self-pity, even saying *"Everything is against me!"* (v36). Very often the root of self-pity is fear - it was with Jacob as he wallows in self-pity. Sadly, such self-pity results in the desire, subconsciously most often, for punishment - either on self or on others. Jacob accuses his sons and he seeks to hurt them with words and guilt feelings in v36. Self-pity and the desire to strike out at someone are so often the defence mechanisms to bolster our self esteem when we feel helpless or humiliated or hurt.

Jacob is in a downward spiral - sees Simeon gone, also fears Benjamin's death. Self-pity jumps to dark conclusions without evidence; always looking on the dark side, even wanting sympathy *"Everything is against me!"* This often leads to paranoia - people are against us, out to ridicule, humiliate or persecute us and can lead to ignoring good advice – as we see Jacob ignoring Ruben's advice and comfort (v 37) and can cause insensitive things to be said - v 38 *"he is the only one left."* Imagine how his other sons felt!

Jacob seems to lash out at his other sons - basically what he says in v38 - is *"If you do so, then you'll be guilty of killing me!"* He heaps more guilt on the brothers as self-pity tries to make others feel guilty. If we get pleasure in doing so when we are low, then realise it is our desire to punish them - maybe not physically, but by guilt feelings!

If we are feeling low, feeling sorry for ourselves then the best thing we can do is **not** to take it out on others, make them feel some of our misery. Jacob needed to view the situation in a right manner, see the facts of the matter - they had provisions to live on for a while and there would be a need for more provisions coming up. So, we see:

### **3. Misplaced Delay.**

Jacob said Benjamin would not go down to Egypt. He was adamant, but the cold realities, the facts of life, changed his mind. He still had self-pity - see the end of 43:14! Often the cold facts of our situation and life may cause us to snap out of self-pity, our complaining state of mind and life. A basic fact today is that we are all a week nearer the day of our death than a week ago! It is a cold, hard fact - we will all one day die, but then have to give an account to God of our life. How will we fare on that day? The Bible says that we're not to delay putting our trust in Christ for salvation, for today is the day of salvation; now is the time to call upon God to save us. We are never promised tomorrow, nor any number of weeks, or years. Do not delay in trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Saviour, whether it's because of exciting times ahead or because you are waiting for things to get better in your life; we are all to remember now our Creator in the days of our youth - we are all as young as we will ever be! Let's move our attention from Jacob and Co onto Joseph and his dealings with his brothers:

### **4. Misplaced Deeds.**

In 43:15 we are simply told what the brothers did. Yet pause and picture how these men must have felt - 10 very scared men went down to see the governor of Egypt - 9 of them because of the recent memories and 1 from what he'd been told! There must have been some sleepless nights as they travelled to Egypt. Perhaps they were still troubled, concerned as they remembered their treatment of young Joseph, as he had been brought back to their consciences; as they admitted to themselves their guilt. They feared many things as

they went to Egypt. What lay ahead of them? They did not know forgiveness and prosperity waited! The events of recent time were because God would show mercy and Joseph would reveal his own forgiveness too.

Maybe sad and tragic things have happened in your life - strange coincidences and events, causing you to consider God, to consider Christianity after years of dismissing it as rubbish. You may be wondering what is going on in your life, in the world around you. Perhaps many of these events can be traced to the fact that the forgiving God is seeking you. He's getting your attention and is doing it in such a way so you will call upon Him for salvation. Some have said they have known God's hand on their lives in various ways, over long periods and only after they have trusted Him as their Saviour, did they see clearly the way He kept them and brought them to trust in Him. In some cases, it occurred over years and people marvelled at His patience and love for them over such a long period. God loves us so much that He will continue to work over a long time in us to bring us to trust Him.

Joseph's brothers would come to be forgiven and accepted by Joseph. We can ask why? Was it the double money they took? Was it the gift sent by Jacob with his sons? Not at all! All those things were misplaced deeds and were not required. The brothers were received because they came on Joseph's terms, fulfilled the requirements he had set. He told them that they were not to come back to Egypt unless they had their youngest brother, Benjamin, with them (42:20). Yes, they came with double the money, with a present from Jacob and these things probably gave them some confidence, but it was a misplaced confidence in misplaced deeds, because all that the Ruler required was that their younger brother come with them. Joseph wasn't interested in the money or gifts; his concern was with Benjamin and we are told of his reaction – on seeing Benjamin,

immediately they were welcome to his house and duly invited for a meal. (43:15b & 16).

Joseph was interested in only seeing Benjamin, he had no interest in their money or gifts, so too God is not interested in our money, our abilities, achievements, goodness, churchgoing, religion or anything we can bring. They are misplaced deeds. God has a simple, but an inflexible, unchanging condition for mankind. We read of it in John 14:6 "*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me."*" Also Acts 4: 12 "*Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

If you want to see God, be accepted by God, for Him to be at peace with you and you with Him, you cannot exclude the Lord Jesus Christ. Any experience or offer of salvation apart from Him excludes us from God - for He alone is the way, the exclusive way. There is a way, indeed many ways, that seem right to a people, but the end thereof is death - eternal death.

If the brothers had gone without Benjamin, there would have been no acceptance or welcome by Joseph - no matter how much money or how many gifts they brought. We are not welcomed and accepted by God unless we come by the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The brothers misplaced deeds did not make them acceptable to Joseph, but only when he saw Benjamin, did he give the orders for his servants to prepare a meal and welcome them into his home. Only in the Lord Jesus Christ are we received and welcomed by God. He prepares a table before us and a welcome is reserved for us in heaven.

## **5. Misplaced Doubt.**

Joseph accepted the brothers and welcomed them into his house. His servants had been told to prepare for them, to escort them to his home. In v 18 we see their fear, doubts and suspicions; how they try

and please Joseph's steward. They had been given a great honour and privilege - many Egyptians would have dreamt of such a thing, but these ones, having been accepted by Joseph, are filled with fear and doubt and suspected he was going to do them harm!

How many people feel like that about the Lord Jesus? Even if we are Christians, we can still doubt and be suspicious that God is not really going to do us good! Yet our Saviour is going to do us good and He has given orders for His servants to be involved the great work - angels are ministering servants for those who are heirs of His salvation; they are part and parcel of God's care of us, bringing us and receiving us to Himself. They are active throughout all our lives, keeping, guiding and preparing us. We will realise it after we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and one day, we will realise God's care and watching over us throughout our life and His use of His angels in doing so. One day we will sing with the greatest realisation and fullest understanding: *"All the way my Saviour leads me: What have I to ask beside? Can I doubt his tender mercies, Who through life has been my guide?"*

Often we fail to recognise God's hand upon us – true of us before we come to acknowledge Him as our Saviour, as well as after. Often the offer God proclaims, makes to us - of peace, forgiveness and acceptance can cause us to fear and doubt. The brothers did this as Joseph showed them this kindness and they imagined all sorts of things, even down to seizing the donkeys - as if the governor of all Egypt was in desperate need of donkeys!!

Maybe events in our lives have brought us to consider God - we are afraid and can react in different ways, often irrational ways. Many turn over a new leaf, many seek to fool themselves that they are ok; that they need adjust a bit here or there to be perfect and acceptable to God; others make a false peace with their consciences. Yet God hasn't worked the plan of salvation to short-change you, to tease you.

He wants to draw you on to the wonderful, glorious joy of knowing true forgiveness of sins and peace with Him through the Lord Jesus. This is not a false, man-made utopian peace, but a peace the world cannot give - designed, made and offered freely by God Himself.

Martin Luther was terrified in a thunderstorm and asked St Anne to be spared and if so, he would become a monk (*he was training to be a lawyer*). This he did - he was true to his promise made through fear. Many people put on themselves things that God did not require, as did Martin Luther. He tortured his body in seeking peace with God. His conscience felt its guilt, its fear of God made him do things not required by God. Here the brothers feared about the money and offered it back, they assumed that was why they were in Joseph's house. Martin Luther came to see what God required - not penance, or pilgrimage, or fasting, but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ **alone** for salvation and it turned his world upside down and the world was turned upside down as he proclaimed this glorious truth.

The brothers really panicked over the money, they blurted of their explanation and they were given an answer of peace – v23 AV reads "*Peace be unto you*" ("*Don't be afraid*" NIV). This is God's word to every troubled soul "*Peace, don't be afraid*" - whether it's in the storms of life, to troubled hearts and minds, in a Covid pandemic. We may wonder what God's reaction would be to us and we've rehearsed our confession many, many times to try and make ourselves acceptable to God, but we are to realise that if we come to Him with sincere words from the heart that He will greet us with words of peace. No one ever got into trouble with God by making honest confession of sin directly to Him. It is only when we conceal sin that we will not prosper.

The brothers must have been amazed at the steward's answer. Often we feel no one will understand or listen to us; they'll blow their top, but God and His people proclaim acceptance with God and an

acceptance by His people. God's people know what it is to experience His love for themselves and try to show it to others. They will not condone your wrong, but if it is forgiven by God, they will accept you and aim to show God's love in action to you.

The steward treated the brothers with dignity and honour. Perhaps they couldn't get over this. Many Christians cannot understand and get over the love of God to them in giving them new life, forgiving their sins, in giving the joy of knowing this, having heaven as their home, knowing the peace of God rule in their hearts and lives, as well as having peace with God. To them it is a constant source of wonder and amazement. Our prayer as a church is that all listening will know such in our own lives and we will all one day feast, not with the Prime Minister as did the brothers, but with the King of Kings in the glorious heavenly feast in the home of God - which is heaven.

The trouble is that even as Christians we can be plagued with misplaced doubts and fears in our Christian lives and instead of rejoicing, we can fall victim to wave after wave of fears and doubts. Yet if we have trusted the Lord Jesus there is now **no condemnation** and we are currently, and are forever, declared and made righteous and acceptable in Jesus to God and we are not to have any fear about Him taking our "donkeys"! We have such a lovely God and Saviour. Our doubts, fears are misplaced and we should pray for grace to trust Him and love Him more.