

**Joseph slowly brings his family to repentance**

• They are troubled by guilt

• No deep fellowship without admission of needs and guilt

• Joseph puts them at their ease

• Although Jesus (Joseph) holds back from revealing himself to those who feel guilty he is full of love

• Joseph's loving affection and deep concern

Joseph is having some success. His treatment of his family is slowly bringing them to repentance. The brothers return to Egypt with double the money they need and with Benjamin<sup>□1</sup>. Joseph is delighted to see Benjamin. Not only is he glad to see his brother; it is also a sign that his brothers have not treated Benjamin in the way that they treated him. It is a sign that Jacob has been willing to put his trust in God above his favouritism towards Benjamin. He immediately arranges a party to celebrate and feast with his brothers<sup>□2</sup>. The brothers are nervous about being taken to Joseph's house. They feel that God is working against them to bring endless troubles into their lives. **It is the way we all feel when we are troubled with guilt.** Everything that happens we feel is a judgement upon us. We get nervous and anxious in God's world, feeling that everything is against us. 'This man is against us,' they say<sup>□3</sup>. How wrong they are! All the time Joseph is arranging for their blessing, their provision, and their restoration to fellowship with himself. But the way he does it is to bring them to regret what they did. How can he possibly have friendship and fellowship with his brothers if they are plagued by guilt and shame over what they have done. Joseph has no choice. He must get them to break away from their past wickedness before he will be able to have fellowship and friendship with them.

It is the same with God. We often feel bad and nervous in His world and yet all the time the activities of God are not against us; they are designed to bring us to Himself. He has to work in such a way that we admit our needs and our guilt. There can be no deep fellowship otherwise.

They try to explain about the money<sup>□1</sup> but Joseph puts them at their ease<sup>□2</sup>. He is nice to them. He brings Simeon out and cares for their needs<sup>□3</sup>. They hear that they are to have a meal with Joseph<sup>□4</sup>.

Then the meal begins. They give him the gifts they have for him<sup>□1□2</sup>, and he asks them about Jacob<sup>□3</sup> and treats Benjamin his full brother with special affection<sup>□4</sup>. This is the way Jesus is toward us when He wants to bless us. Jesus does not reveal Himself when we are full of guilt as much as He does when we are at liberty and full of faith. He is not ready to reveal Himself to us while we believe that we are condemned. But while Jesus holds back from manifesting Himself to us, He is full of love. He cares about the details of our lives ('He enquired about their welfare,' <sup>□5</sup>).

Joseph is still not quite ready to reveal who he is but is overcome with loving affection for his family. He has to go out and weep because he cannot control himself (43:30). These brothers have sinned terribly against Joseph but Joseph has put all of that aside. He is holding nothing against them. He is so full of affection for them that it is almost overwhelming him. The love of Jesus is like this. We tend to think that He is against us – but that is nothing but guilt and the reflection of the way in which we would be in our dealings with others. Because we get vindictive when others sin against us we tend to feel that God gets vindictive when we have sinned against Him. But Jesus is not like that!

□1 43:15

□2 43:16-17

□3 43:18

□1 43:19-22

□2 43:23

□3 43:24

□4 43:25

□1 43:26

□2 43:11

□3 43:27-28

□4 43:29

□5 43:27

□1 43:30

Although these brothers have treated him so badly in the distant past, Joseph has nothing in his heart except concern for them and a desire to be fully restored to his old family.

• *Detailed knowledge and kindly dealings*

Joseph comes back and the meal begins<sup>□1</sup>. They are amazed to find that the seating arrangements show detailed knowledge of the family<sup>□2</sup>. Jesus is like Joseph. Even at times when we are alienated from Him, the alienation is on our side not on His side. We have sinned against Him; He has not dealt badly with us.

□1 43:31-32

□2 43:33

• *Brotherly love – a picture of Jesus our spiritual brother's love*

Benjamin gets special treatment<sup>□1</sup>. The special treatment arose because Benjamin was Joseph's full brother. The others were half-brothers. Joseph loved them all but Benjamin his full brother, son of Rachel, was special. This is the way Jesus treats us. He is our brother. He is **the** Son of God, but we are adopted sons of God. Not biologically but spiritually we are Jesus' full brothers. We share His human nature; He shares our human nature. We come from the same human family. We have the same Father – God. Jesus treats us as His younger brothers. He is in wealth and glory and power but He is determined to 'bring many sons to glory'<sup>□2</sup>. He plans to bring His brothers to be where He is in glory and wealth, ruling a mighty heavenly kingdom as Joseph was ruling Egypt. He wants to share all His wealth and knowledge and abundance with us.

□1 43:34

□2 Hebr 2:10

### The story shows

• *Rough treatment was for their good*



1. It all shows that his previous rough treatment of them was for their good, not for his revenge. Joseph is far from showing any vindictive spirit.

• *A great deal of patience*

2. It all shows a great deal of patience. Joseph must have been longing to reveal himself to them but they were not yet ready.

• *Great faith*

3. It shows great faith. Joseph is expecting that he will be able to bring them to the experience of God's forgiveness and to a good conscience before God.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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