

Introduction

1. The overarching theme of our passage today is deliverance, and we see it in two different ways:
 - a. First, there is the PHYSICAL deliverance that Joseph's family needed from the severe famine
 - b. Second, there is a more subtle, but far more important SPIRITUAL deliverance that Joseph's brothers needed from their sin and guilt
 - c. Both of these forms of deliverance were necessary for God's redemptive plan:
 - 1) Jacob and his family obviously needed to be delivered from the famine in order to go on living and fulfill God's promise of becoming a great nation
 - 2) But, Joseph's brothers also needed to be delivered from their sin and guilt because God's plan for Israel wasn't just physical; it was spiritual
 - 3) The Bible makes it clear that God requires things like holiness, righteousness and justice from His people, and Joseph's brothers were about as far from these things as the east is from the west; most of them were outright wicked
 - 4) So, what we see in our passage today is that as Joseph's brothers seek deliverance from the famine, God was working to deliver them from their sin and guilt
2. In some ways, we share similarities with Joseph's brothers:
 1. They were seeking physical deliverance from the famine with apparently no thought of their need for spiritual deliverance
 2. Most of the world around us would fit into this category
 3. But, even as Christians, we often get caught up in worrying about and wanting deliverance from our physical, worldly circumstances, but are far less concerned about where we are at spiritually
 4. Because of our faith in Jesus, we may not need to be delivered from the ultimate penalty of our sin and guilt, but we still struggle with the power of sin and temptation in our lives and still need to be delivered from that...on a regular basis!
 5. So as we look at our passage today I believe we will see that some of the same principles that applied to Joseph's brothers, apply to us as we seek to be delivered from the power of sin
3. Outline for today:
 - a. To be delivered, Joseph's brothers had to face the one they had sinned against (42:1-7)
 - b. To be delivered, Joseph's brothers had to be convicted over their sin and guilt (42:8-28)
 - c. To be delivered, Joseph's brothers had to experience a sense of despair (42:29-38)

A. To be delivered, Joseph's brothers had to face the one they had sinned against (READ 42:1-7)

1. Our passage opens with Joseph's brothers sitting around doing nothing to address the crisis faced by their families:
 - a. The severe famine suffered by Egypt also affected Canaan where Jacob's family was and v. 2 tells us that the lack of food had become a matter of life and death
 - b. There was grain available in Egypt but Joseph's brothers had done absolutely nothing and were simply sitting around staring at one another (1): **"Why are you staring at one another?"**—we should interpret this as a stiff rebuke by Jacob
2. Instead of taking it upon themselves, Jacob had to instruct his sons to go to Egypt and buy grain (RE-READ 42:2-4):
 - a. Jacob sent all of Joseph's brothers to Egypt except Benjamin because he didn't want anything to happen to him
 - b. He expressed this same concern again in 42:38 where it reveals that his concern was that as Joseph's only full brother, if he died then both of his sons by Rachel would be dead and none would remain
 - c. Might there have been another reason, though? up in v. 36 Jacob blamed his sons of bereaving him of Joseph and Simeon (left in Egypt); could this indicate that Jacob had suspicions about his sons part in Joseph's death and was concerned that Benjamin, now his favorite, might suffer the same fate???
3. The irony of this passage, however, is what we read in v. 5-6 (RE-READ):
 - a. Their fate—and that of their wives, children and father—now rested in the hands of the very one they sinned against and tried to kill
 - b. Do you remember what they said when they attempted to kill him? (RE-READ Genesis 37:18-20)
 - c. In an ironic twist and a fulfillment of what God had revealed in Jacob's dream they were now bowing before the very one they sinned against and their fate was now in his hands
 - d. They were oblivious to this irony though because even though Joseph recognized them, they didn't recognize him because he had disguised himself (that didn't happen until later and it terrified them)
4. Takeaway: there is no deliverance from sin without facing the One we sinned against:
 - a. This is certainly true when it comes to the need to be delivered from the PENALTY of sin:
 - 1) The Bible says **"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:23) and **"the wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23a)
 - 2) It also says, **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"** (2 Corinthians 5:10)

- 3) But the Bible also says that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)
 - 4) So the only way to be delivered from the PENALTY and consequences of our sins is to face the very One we sinned against
- b. The same is true when it comes to dealing with our ongoing struggle with sin:
- 1) I John 1:8 says, **“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”**—if we are honest, we all know this is true; we still sin!
 - 2) But, John goes on to say, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** (1:9)
 - 3) In other words, in our struggle against sin we need to face the One we sinned against and confess those sins in order to find forgiveness and cleansing
 - 4) There’s also the added benefit that knowing we have to face Jesus when we’ve sinned should serve as a deterrent to sin

<p>B. To be delivered, Joseph’s brothers had to be convicted over their sin and guilt (42:8-28)</p>
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1. The first part of this section involves Joseph accusing his brothers of being spies and them defending themselves as honest men (READ 42:7-17):
 - a. The most common explanation of this event is that it was all a ruse by Joseph—in other words, he knew they weren’t really spies but falsely accused them anyway as part of a plan to confront them over their sin
 - b. However, I think it’s more reasonable to think that Joseph might have considered that his brothers were there under false pretenses (e.g. to steal grain or maybe worse):
 - 1) The NASB and LSB translate Genesis 41:35 to suggest that one of the responsibilities of the overseers put in charge of the grain in each city was to **“guard it”** or **“keep watch over it”**—this would make sense considering the possibility of theft when people got desperate during the seven years of famine
 - 2) The famine was throughout the entire region and Egypt was the only nation to have food stored up—this may have made Egypt a target by other desperate nations or people groups, and it’s not unreasonable to think they might have sent spies into Egypt to see where the grain stores were most vulnerable
 - 3) Joseph knew what his brothers were like—one slept with his father’s concubine, two others murdered an entire city of men out of vengeance, Judah liked living among the Canaanites, married a Canaanite wife and had two wicked sons killed by God, and the last time Joseph saw them they hated him enough to try to kill him, threw him in a pit to die, then sold him into slavery
 - 4) I don’t think it’s unreasonable—and probably more probable—to believe that Joseph didn’t trust his brothers when they showed up in Egypt and could have easily considered that they were spying out the land for some nefarious purpose
 - c. To prove they weren’t spies, Joseph devised a test:

- 1) They claimed they were honest men, 12 sons of the same father, with one dead (Joseph) and another back at home with Jacob
 - 2) So, Jacob said he would test their honesty by keeping nine of them in Egypt while the 10th would go home and return with the youngest son, Benjamin—if he returned with the boy then he would consider their words truthful, but if not he would consider them spies
 - 3) He then locked them all up in prison for three days—apparently to give them time to think about it
2. The second part of this section reveals how God used this event to convict the brothers of their sin (Genesis 42:18-28):
- a. The first sign of conviction came after an act of grace by Joseph (READ 42:18-24):
 - 1) He changed his plans and agreed to let nine of them return home instead of only one, and even gave them grain to take with them
 - 2) Something about this ordeal convicted the brothers of their sin against Joseph:
 - a) They recognized their guilt and realized their current distress was a result of their actions (RE-READ 42:21)
 - b) They knew they had sinned and they were facing the consequences of that sin (RE-READ 42:22)
 - 3) Look at Joseph's response to overhearing their conversation (RE-READ 42:23-24):
 - a) He wept as he watched his brothers struggling with their distress over their sin and guilt
 - b) Isaiah 63:10 says that when Israel rebelled against God it grieved His Holy Spirit
 - c) We saw something similar when Jesus approached Jerusalem during the triumphal entry; the Bible tells us that as He approached the city he wept over it
 - b. We see Joseph's brothers convicted even further after a second act of kindness and grace (READ 42:25-28):
 - 1) Not only did Joseph provide them with grain to take home to their families, but he secretly returned their money and even gave them additional provisions for the journey home
 - 2) Many believe that Joseph returned the money as a trap so that he could accuse them of theft:
 - a) However, Joseph never brought up the money or confronts them about it
 - b) He even did it again when they returned with Benjamin, and he sent them home a second time with more grain
 - c) In fact, he never brought up the money and when the brothers do later in 43:23 Joseph's servant simply says, "**Be well, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks...**"
 - d) Later Joseph does set a trap by hiding his cup in Benjamin's bag, but that was for a different purpose

- e) The context suggests that Joseph's act of returning the money, not once but twice, was an act of kindness and grace
- 3) Once again God used Joseph's actions as a means to convict His brothers of their sin (RE-READ 42:27-28):
 - a) This time, their hearts "**sank**" (lit. "**went out**")
 - b) They started "**trembling**"
 - c) They recognized that God himself was dealing with them: "**What is this that God has done to us?**"
- 3. Takeaway: there is no deliverance from sin without conviction of sin and guilt:
 - a. This is true when it comes to eternal salvation:
 - 1) Jesus said in John 16:8-9 that He sent the Holy Spirit to "**convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment**" and in Luke 13:3, "**I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish**"
 - 2) After Peter's sermon at Pentecost, Acts 2:37 says thousands in the crowd were convicted of their sin, "**pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men, brothers, what shall we do?'**"
 - 3) Peter responded, "**Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**" (Acts 2:38)
 - 4) Unfortunately, many churches preach a false gospel, one of easy-believism where there's no confrontation or conviction over sin, no understanding of guilt, and no demand for repentance; God simply forgives and accepts you for who you are
 - 5) There is no deliverance or salvation found in this kind of gospel
 - b. Likewise, even for us who are saved, we still need to be delivered from our ongoing struggle with sin, but we can't expect deliverance if we are not convicted of our sin:
 - 1) Unfortunately, many who claim to be Christians today are totally oblivious to their own sin, have no sense of conviction or guilt, and see no need to repent
 - 2) Part of the reason for this is they have little exposure to the Word of God, at home or at church
 - 3) God's primary tool to convict believers of their sin and need for repentance is His Word (READ 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2)
 - 4) If we are not spending time in God's Word, then there won't be any conviction, repentance, or ultimately any deliverance from the power of our sin

<p>C. To be delivered, Joseph's brothers had to experience a sense of despair (READ 42:29-38)</p>

- 1. When Joseph's brothers arrived back at home they had to explain to Joseph that their trip hadn't gone as planned:
 - a. The "**lord of the land**" had spoken harshly to them and accused them of being spies
 - b. They were able to acquire some grain, but were forced to leave one of their brothers behind in Egypt

- c. They could not retrieve their brother or purchase additional grain (“**trade in the land**”) in the future unless they brought their youngest brother, Benjamin, back to Egypt
 - d. And, in what seemed to be the nail in the coffin so-to-speak, when they started to unpack they found all of their money still in their sacks which caused not only them but Jacob to fear
- 2. All of this led to a sense of despair for both Jacob and his sons:
 - a. We can hear the desperation in Jacob’s voice:
 - 1) He accused them of “**bereaving**” him of his children (literally making him childless) because both Joseph and Simeon were “**gone**” (he believed Joseph was already dead and Simeon was as good as dead)
 - 2) And now, their only hope of acquiring grain and surviving the famine required that they take his youngest and favorite sone, Benjamin, to Egypt
 - 3) All of this was too much as Jacob proclaimed, “**All of these things are against me!**”
 - 4) In v. 38 he refused to let them take Benjamin and declared that if something were to happen to Benjamin, it would kill him (RE-READ 42:38)
 - b. Jacob wasn’t the only one experiencing a sense of despair; look at the sense of desperation in Reuben’s voice (RE-READ 42:37):
 - 1) Even after Jacob’s refusal, Reuben is still trying to convince Jacob to let them take Benjamin to Egypt
 - 2) He is so desperate that he offers his own children in exchange for Benjamin’s life if anything were to happen to him
 - 3) One of the things we will see coming up is that despair continues to play a role in leading Joseph’s brothers to admit their sin
- 3. Takeaway: sometimes, deliverance from sin doesn’t come until God allows us to experience despair:
 - a. This was certainly the case with me when it came to eternal salvation:
 - 1) You’ve all heard my story: I was miserable, severely depressed, petrified of death but yet suicidal at the same time
 - 2) I was consumed with anxiety and fear of where I would end up after death
 - 3) Nights were the worse because there was something about lying there alone in the dark, engulfed in my thoughts not being able to sleep
 - 4) It was ultimately desperation that led me to place my faith and trust in Jesus because He was the only One who could save me and offer me the hope of eternal life
 - b. Have you ever noticed how sometimes this is true when it comes to dealing with ongoing sin in our lives?
 - 1) Sometimes we don’t deal with our sin until we get called out on it, or have to face the unpleasant side-effects or consequences of it

- 2) Maybe we don't deal with it until God chastises or disciplines us for it
- 3) Or maybe we just finally get sick and tired of the sin and finally reach out in desperation for God to help us
- 4) Either way, it seems God allows us to experience despair in order to ultimately deliver us from our sin

D. Conclusion

1. Deliverance only comes when we face the One we've sinned against
2. Deliverance only comes when we are convicted of our sin and guilt and repent
3. And, sometimes God allows us to experience despair in order to ultimately deliver us from our sin