

Introduction

Treating mean cop with honor and respect after he pulled me over for flashing my brights at him—I needed his mercy to avoid ticket so I did everything I could to speak to him with honor and respect

1. Jacob and his sons (and their families) were in dire straits because there was a “**severe**” famine in the land and they had run out of food (READ Genesis 43:1-2):
 - a. What we know about the famine:
 - 1) We learned back in chapter 42 that about nine years before this God revealed to Pharaoh that there were going to be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine
 - 2) The famine extended from Egypt all the way through Canaan, so pretty much the entire Mediterranean basin
 - 3) According to what we read in later chapters (46-47), they were about two years into the famine at this point, the land was wasting away and there was nothing to plow or harvest, and aside from what was in the storehouses in Egypt there was no food to be found anywhere
 - b. V. 2 tells us that Jacob’s family had eaten all the grain that his sons had brought back from Egypt:
 - 1) Essentially, this means they were out of food because grain was the main staple
 - 2) They faced a real dilemma at this point because of what happened on the brothers’ previous trip:
 - a) Joseph was the second highest official in Egypt and responsible for distribution of grain
 - b) They didn’t recognize Joseph, but he recognized them and accused them of being spies, locked them up in prison for three days, but finally agreed to let all of them return home except Simeon
 - c) The only way they would be allowed to return to Egypt to buy food is if they could prove they were honest men and not spies by returning to Egypt with Benjamin, something Jacob refused to allow
2. One of the things we saw in chapter 42 is that God used Joseph’s actions—both his accusation that his brothers were spies and the grace that he extended to them—to convict his brothers of their sin and guilt
3. This conviction appears to have had an effect on his brothers because there appears to be a change—a transformation—in his brothers that is reflected throughout the rest of the Joseph narrative (rest of the book)
4. We see this transformation reflected in how Joseph’s brothers approach him a second time:

- a) The underlying theme of chapter 43 is compassion:
 - 1) The Hebrew word *racham* which refers to mercy and compassion is used twice
 - 2) It is used v. 14 when Jacob prays that the LORD would grant them compassion in Joseph's sight and in v. 30 when the text says that Joseph was overcome with compassion for Benjamin
 - 3) What the brothers needed from Joseph was compassion/mercy, but they certainly didn't deserve it after the sin they committed against him
- b) However, what we see in Joseph's brothers here in chapter 43 is that they approached him with the reverence and honor that He deserves and this reflects a truth we find throughout the Bible (big idea): those who desire God's compassion/mercy must approach him with the honor He deserves
- c) Outline:
 - 1) Joseph's brothers sought mercy and compassion with obedience (43:1-10)
 - 2) Joseph's brothers sought mercy and compassion with a contrition and honesty (43:11-25)
 - 3) Joseph's brothers sought mercy and compassion with reverence (43:26-29)
 - 4) Joseph's brothers received mercy and compassion with amazement (43:30-34)

<p>A. Joseph's brothers sought mercy and compassion with obedience (43:3-10)</p>
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1. When Jacob called on his sons to go back to Egypt to buy more food, Judah refused to go back without Benjamin:
 - a. The reason he cited is that Joseph warned them not to return without Benjamin (RE-READ 43:3-5)
 - b. At first, Jacob accused Judah of treating him badly because he had mentioned Benjamin to Joseph, but Judah responded that Joseph specifically asked if he had a father and another brother and he had no way of knowing that Joseph would demand they bring Benjamin to him (6-8)—some accuse Judah of lying here and while this conversation isn't recorded in chapter 42, it is confirmed in 44:19-20
 - c. Judah knew their only option to survive the famine was to return to Egypt with Benjamin so they could buy grain; this is what he meant in v. 8: **"that we may live and not die"**
 - d. So, he pledged to personally take responsibility for Benjamin and safely return him home, or he would **"bear the sin before [Jacob] all [his] days"** (9)
2. What we see here is that Judah recognized that the only way he could approach Joseph again was to do so in accordance with Joseph's command; in other words, he could not approach Joseph or seek his mercy or compassion without obedience
3. Takeaway: we shouldn't expect God's mercy and compassion unless we approach Him with obedience:
 - a. One of the most often repeated commands in the Scriptures is that of obedience to God and His commands and it is tied to all kinds of blessings, including God's mercy and compassion

- b. It's often debated which comes first: God's mercy and compassion or our obedience:
 - 1) Some Bible passages like Ephesians 2:1-8 indicate God's mercy and compassion come first and that our obedience is a response (READ)
 - 2) However, other passages reveal God's mercy and blessings are a result of obedience; one example is Deuteronomy 28 where God spelled out for Israel the blessings they would receive for their obedience and cursing they would face for their disobedience
 - 3) Both appear to be true—sometimes God's mercy and compassion come first and encourage our obedience, but at other times our obedience comes first and results in God's mercy and compassion
- c. The most important thing for us to remember is that we cannot separate God's mercy and compassion from obedience—and this is true of the sinner who comes to Christ for the very first time, or those of us who have already placed our faith and trust in Jesus but need His mercy and compassion at a challenging time

<p>B. Joseph's brothers sought mercy and compassion with contrition (43:11-24)</p>

- 1. Contrition is characterized by a sense of humility and remorse for any wrongdoing and a desire to make things right; the Hebrew and Greek words for contrite/contrition refer to something that's been broken or crushed
- 2. I believe this is what we see here in verses 11-24
- 3. Out of desperation, Jacob relented and agreed to let Benjamin accompany his brothers back to Egypt, but he made sure he didn't send them back to Egypt empty handed (READ Genesis 43:11-15):
 - a. He had them return with a present: **"some of the best products of the land"** which included balm, a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds
 - b. He also had them take **"double the money"** with them:
 - 1) The reason for this was so that they would not only be able to buy more grain, but give the original money that was placed back into their sacks
 - 2) This appears to be an act of contrition because Jacob said, **"perhaps it was a mistake"**:
 - a) The primary emphasis of the word Jacob used here is on a sin done inadvertently
 - b) The LXX even translates it using a Greek word meaning a sin which is committed in ignorance
 - c) The implication here is that Joseph's sons might have sinned inadvertently (again, none of them knew Joseph ordered the money to be put in their sacks so as far as they knew it may have been their fault)
 - d) So taking the presents and the original money back to Egypt was an act of contrition, a desire to make things right
- 3) Finally, he had them take the most important thing: Benjamin

- 4) Jacob's hope and prayer by sending his sons back to Joseph with these things was that the LORD would grant them compassion (RE-READ 43:14)
4. When they arrived in Egypt, they attempted to return the money but received an unexpected response (READ 43:16-24):
 - a. When Joseph saw his brothers coming he ordered his servant to prepare a meal and bring them into his house to eat
 - b. Because they didn't know Joseph ordered their money to be put back into their sacks on the previous visit, they were afraid and assumed he was going to accuse them of theft and make them all slaves
 - c. It's However, when they attempted to return the money to the servant, they got an unexpected response:
 - 1) Joseph's servant said, **"Be well, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; your money has come to me"** (43:23)
 - 2) He brought them into the house, gave them water to wash their feet, and even fed their donkeys (43:24)
5. Takeaway: we shouldn't expect God's mercy and compassion unless we approach Him with a contrite spirit:
 - a. Joseph's brothers didn't know how the money ended up back in their sacks, but even so they set out for Egypt with a contrite spirit and a desire to make things right
 - b. God expects the same thing of us when we approach Him: a contrite spirit:
 - 1) Psalm 51:17: **"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."**
 - 2) Isaiah 57:15: **"For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, 'I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.'"**
 - 3) During His sermon on the Mount Jesus said, **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"** (i.e. mourning over their sin)

Stacy telling me that she would argue with God and demand her right to salvation—that just doesn't work with God! He requires a contrite spirit.

C. Joseph's brothers sought mercy and compassion with reverence (READ 43:25-29)

1. When Joseph arrived home, his brothers presented him with the gifts they had prepared, which was a common practice when visiting someone in Joseph's position

2. They also bowed before him with their faces to the ground which was an act of reverence; they did the same thing on their first visit (42:6) and here it records them doing it twice (26, 28)
3. What stands out most to me in these verses, however, is the incredible grace and mercy Joseph displayed to his brothers:
 - a. It began by preparing a meal for them—this wasn't just lunch, but a feast:
 - 1) Back in v. 16 it says that he had an animal slaughtered
 - 2) Coming up in the next section of verses we see that Joseph's servants even joined them
 - 3) He even took them food from his own table (34a; this reads as if he did it himself)
 - 4) Also according to v. 34 **"they feasted and drank freely with him"** which means they were provided with wine
 - b. His grace and compassion is also displayed in how he spoke with them: He not only asked them how Jacob was doing, but about THEIR OWN WELL BEING (RE-READ 43:27)
 - c. Finally, vs. says that he was literally overcome with a sense of compassion when he saw Benjamin (RE-READ 43:29-31)
4. Takeaway: we shouldn't expect God's mercy and compassion unless we approach Him with reverence:
 - a. Psalm 103:13: **"Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."**
 - b. Later in v. 17 it says, **"...the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him..."**
 - c. We've talked about this before but some try to define the fear of the LORD as simply awe and respect, but the Bible reveals that it also involves a certain amount of healthy fear; we see this in Exodus 20:18-20 when the Israelites were at the base of the mountain during the Exodus (READ)
 - d. I don't remember where I read this, or exactly how it was written, but someone once described the fear of God as something that draws us to Him in awe but at the same times makes us want to shrink back and hide ourselves
 - e. Only when we approach God with this kind of reverence should we expect to receive His mercy and compassion

D. Joseph's brothers received mercy and compassion with amazement (READ 43:30-34)

1. So far, our focus has been on how Joseph's brothers approached him when seeking mercy and compassion, but here the focus is on how they responded to his mercy and compassion
2. As I already mentioned, this was more of a feast than just a lunch—it included meat, bread, and wine, and involved not only Joseph and the brothers but Joseph's servants

3. They were apparently arranged at three tables: Joseph at his own table, his brothers at another table in front of him, and finally a table for his servants (it says this was the case because the Egyptians considered it an abomination to eat with Hebrews)
4. According to v. 33, the brothers were sitting from oldest to youngest, but we're not told if Joseph arranged them this way or if they chose to sit this way themselves:
 - a. Those who believe Joseph specifically sat them this way claim this is why the brothers **"looked at one another in astonishment"**—in other words, they were amazed because there was no way Joseph could know their birth order
 - b. However, birth order and hierarchy in the family was important in the ANE and this was often reflected at social events like feasts and meals; so the brothers may have simply sat this way because it was customary
 - c. If this is the case, then their astonishment was likely a reaction to awesome and unexpected circumstances in which they now found themselves
 - d. Think of it—on their first visit they were accused of being spies, locked up in prison for three days, warned not to come back without Joseph, thought they were going to be accused of stealing money and become slaves...but instead they were now sitting at a table in front of the second highest ranking official in the land, sharing a meal and drinking wine, and this official was even bringing them food from HIS table! That is something to be AMAZED at!
5. Takeaway: God's mercy and compassion toward us should astonish and amaze us!
 - a. We need God's mercy and compassion, not just for eternal salvation but each and every day of our lives
 - b. God's mercy and compassion are amazing because we don't deserve them:
 - 1) The Bible says that we all sin and fall short of God's glory
 - 2) It says that we deserve his judgment and wrath for our sin and rebellion
 - 3) But as James wrote in 5:11, **"the Lord is also full of compassion and is merciful"**
 - 4) The LORD Himself told Moses in Exodus 34:6, **"The LORD, the LORD God, [is] compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth"**
 - 5) We see this most profoundly in what Paul wrote in Romans 5:8: **"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."**
 - 6) That's compassion and mercy and may we never forget how truly amazing it is