

# GENESIS 43

## CAUGHT BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

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Life is complicated. It is intricate. Most of us have trouble keeping up with a movie plot let alone all the things that go on from day to day. We tend to cruise when things are going well then we freak out when they take a turn for the worst. The truth is that God is in control whether things are going well or not. We have talked about this a lot in the last few weeks. **God is sovereign.** This study through Genesis ought to really teach us that and it should give us peace and insight as to how God is working even when we can't figure out what He is doing.

We pick up today with Jacob between a rock and a hard place. Watch what happens so you know how to deal with it the next time you are there.

**Gen 43:1** Now the famine *was* severe in the land.

**Gen 43:2** And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."

Once again we see Jacob moved by necessity. He has run out of grain to eat. The famine has lasted longer than he thought it would. The dwindling grain supply did not take Jacob by surprise either. I am sure that he had been praying and maybe even arguing with God leading up to this moment. We can see the anguish in him in the next few verses.

**Gen 43:3** But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.'

**Gen 43:4** If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.

**Gen 43:5** But if you will not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.' "

**Gen 43:6** And Israel said, "Why did you deal *so* wrongfully with me *as* to tell the man whether you had still *another* brother?"

**Gen 43:7** But they said, "The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, '*Is* your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?' And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?"

I am sure that they had had this conversation many times already. In verse 6 Jacob takes it as a personal affront that they even mentioned that they had a little brother. **Jacob has been put in a place in which he does not want to be. He is now being forced to make a decision he does not want to make.**

**Most of us get mad when we are put into this same predicament.** Jacob feels as if he has been backed into a corner. He has already lost two sons, yet he is afraid that if he lets Benjamin go he will lose another. However, if he doesn't let him go the whole family will starve.

Jacob has prayed, I'm sure for the famine to be over but it still lingers. I'm sure he has prayed that his sons will come walking over the hill one day and the family will be one again, but they haven't. On top of that the financial issues that arise on a farmer from the famine are beginning to take a toll on him. **It looks as if his God has abandoned him. Have you ever found yourself in this situation?**

This is Jacob's bleakest moment, but has God really abandoned him or is God just working out His plan? Remember that God is working on something much bigger than just trying to get them through the famine. He is preparing them to become a nation.

**Jacob has not done anything wrong, he isn't being punished, he is just being repositioned and is learning some valuable lessons during the process.**

**Gen 43:8** Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones.

**Gen 43:9** I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

**Gen 43:10** For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time."

**Gen 43:11** And their father Israel said to them, "If *it must be* so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

**Gen 43:12** Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.

**Gen 43:13** Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man.

**Gen 43:14** And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

Judah now steps up to the plate. Remember though, that he is the one that suggested selling Joseph into slavery in the first place. God used his evil intentions to fulfill His plan. **God is in the business of taking lemons and making lemonade.**

In verses 13 and 14 Jacob finally relents and tells them to take Benjamin with them. We see in verse 14 that he places the outcome in the hands of God. This is all he can do. He ends the verse with, "if I am bereaved, I am bereaved." This is way of saying God's will be done. If I lose another son then I lose another son, but it is ultimately up to God.

This is the attitude we should have. When it is all said and done we have to put things in God's hands. This shows us that despite the prayers that seem to have failed during this famine, Jacob is still a man of faith. We simply do not know why some prayers seem to go unanswered, but it is not because God doesn't hear us, or that He hears us and doesn't want to bless us. Most of the time it is because **He has something better in mind.**

**Gen 43:15** So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph.

**Gen 43:16** When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon."

**Gen 43:17** Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

**Gen 43:18** Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, "*It is* because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys."

**A guilty conscience can plague you for years.** They aren't guilty of stealing. They are guilty of selling their brother in to slavery. This has created some paranoia. At this point they think

that they are being set up for a fall or to be more specific, an execution.

When they got to Egypt they were told to go to Joseph's house where they are now waiting. The wait has given them time to reason among themselves as to how much trouble they are now in. They do the best thing. They attempt to come clean.

**Gen 43:19** When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house,

**Gen 43:20** and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food;

**Gen 43:21** but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, *each* man's money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand.

**Gen 43:22** And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks."

**Gen 43:23** But he said, "Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

Joseph told them that God gave them the money in their sacks. But didn't we read that Joseph gave the order to have the money put in the sacks? Yes, we did, but **here we have the ultimate source of the blessing. This is how God works through people.** The Holy Spirit had Joseph give the order. Joseph does the right thing by giving God the glory and not taking credit for it.

We should see God as the ultimate source of our blessings and as the ultimate source of us blessing others. **We should give God the glory when we receive blessings and when we give them.**

**Gen 43:24** So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed.

**Gen 43:25** Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there.

**Gen 43:26** And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth.

**Gen 43:27** Then he asked them about *their* well-being, and said, "*Is* your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? *Is* he still alive?"

**Gen 43:28** And they answered, "Your servant our father *is* in good health; he *is* still alive." And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.

**Gen 43:29** Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "*Is* this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son."

**Gen 43:30** Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought *somewhere* to weep. And he went into *his* chamber and wept there.

**Gen 43:31** Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, "Serve the bread."

Joseph afforded them all the hospitality that social conventions required then asked about his father and little brother. Joseph and Benjamin have the same mother. The others are half-brothers and this is the first time Joseph as seen Benjamin since they were little. He is so moved that he has to leave the room so they don't see him cry.

**Gen 43:32** So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that *is* an abomination to the Egyptians.

a. **The set him a place by himself:** Joseph did not eat with his brothers because at the time, Egypt was one of the most racist societies on earth. They believed that Egyptians came from the gods, and all other peoples came from lesser origins. There was absolutely no social mixing with foreigners in the Egypt of Joseph's day.

b. **And the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves:** The Egyptians would not even eat with Joseph, much less these strangers from Canaan. Even with all his status and power, Joseph could still not eat with "real" Egyptians.

c. **"It is known from Herodotus that Egyptians so abhorred things foreign, that priests, at least, ate and drank nothing that was imported, nor would they use utensils for eating that had been used by Greeks."** (Leupold)

ii. Herein is the wisdom of God. God will bring the entire family of Jacob into Egypt, where they will be isolated from the surrounding people for some 400 years. In that time, they will multiply greatly, increasing to the millions. If God had allowed them to remain in Canaan, they would have simply assimilated into the corrupt and godless peoples of Canaan. The rape of Dinah and its aftermath (Genesis 34) and the sin of Judah's sons and Judah with Tamar (Genesis 38) revealed this danger.

iii. God not only had to take the family of Israel out of the corrupt environment of Canaan, but He had to put them among a racist people who would not intermarry or even mingle with them. God simply sent Joseph on ahead to make the arrangements.

**Gen 43:33** And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another.

a. **The firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth:** No wonder the brothers were filled with **astonishment**. The arrangement of the brothers was so amazing because they sensed it couldn't happen by chance. Statistically, the odds of

placing 11 brothers in their precise order of birth are something like 1 in 40 million.

**b. Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs:** Joseph wanted to see how the brothers reacted when the younger brother (in this case, Benjamin) was favored, because they resented it so much when Joseph was favored by his father.

- i. Joseph wanted to see if there was a change in the hearts of his brothers, or if they were the same men who threw him into a pit and were deaf to his cries for help.
- ii. This may be his whole motivation in asking for Benjamin. He wondered if they would take care of Benjamin on such a journey, as they failed to do with Joseph.
- iii. We should expect if we fail in a test somewhere, God will make arrangements for us to "take the test" again another time. This is a sobering reason to take the test "well" the first time.

Our lives are intricate. I believe it is impossible to know exactly what God has for us at all times. This is why faith has to come into play. We can't see it and it doesn't make sense but in the end we can look back and see God's hand in everything.

Don't get frustrated. Take a step back and watch God work. Your part is to talk with Him daily, make the right decision and trust in Him. This is the key to success. Do His will and put your faith in Him.