

Genesis

Creation. Covenants. All Grace — study 28



GUILT, GRIEF and GRACE

The PATIENCE of PROVIDENCE (42:1-24)

42:1-9 *Though apparently taken by surprise at this turn of events, how does Joseph recognize the hand of Providence? (37:5-11)*

(1) How severe a famine could be in Egypt, which is a thin fertile strip between deserts, is twice indicated by records of its habitants resorting to cannibalism. But because Palestine was watered by rainfall and Egypt by the Nile, the harvest seldom failed simultaneously in both (cf. 12:10; 26:1,2). -- **Derek Kidner**, *Genesis* p.198

(2) If it be asked why, in his prosperity Joseph had not informed his father of his life and success, we answer, that in such a history safety lay in quiet waiting upon God. If Joseph had learned the great lesson of his life, it was this, that all in the past had been of God. Nor would He now interfere with further guidance on His part. -- **Alfred Edersheim**, *Bible History* Vol.1 p.161

(3) Moses begins, in this chapter, to treat of the occasion which drew Jacob with his whole family into Egypt; and thus leaves it to us to consider by what hidden and unexpected methods God may perform whatever he has decreed. Though, therefore, the providence of God is itself a labyrinth; yet when we connect the issue of things with their beginnings, that admirable method of operation shines clearly in our view, which is not generally acknowledged, only because it is far removed from our observation. Also our own indolence hinders us from perceiving God, with the eyes of faith, as holding the government of the world; because we either imagine fortune to be the mistress of events, or else, adhering to near and natural causes, we weave them together, and spread them as veils before our eyes. Whereas, therefore, scarcely any more illustrious representation of Divine Providence is to be found than this history furnishes; let

“... the providence of God is itself a labyrinth” — JOHN CALVIN
What veils we weave over our own eyes by our “indolence”,
mistaking causes we can see for ultimate causes ...

pious readers carefully exercise themselves in meditation upon it, in order that they may acknowledge those things which, in appearance, are fortuitous, to be directed by the hand of God. -- **John Calvin**, *Genesis* Vol.2 p.337

42:10-20 *What does Joseph wish to make THE issue with his brothers?*

(4) The first sight the rough handling which now dominates the scene to the end of chapter 44 has the look of vengefulness. Nothing could be more natural, but nothing further from the truth. Behind the harsh pose there was warm affection (42:24, etc), and after the ordeal overwhelming kindness. Even the threats were tempered with mercy (cf. 42:16-19; 44:9,10), and the shocks that were administered took the form of embarrassments rather than blows. A vindictive Joseph could have dismayed his brothers with worthless sackloads, or tantalized them at his feast as they had tantalized him (37:24,25); his enigmatic gifts were a kinder and more searching test. Just how well-judged was his policy can be seen in the growth of quite new attitudes in the brothers, as the alternating sun and frost broke them open to God. -- **D. Kidner**, *op. cit.*, p.199

Job and Joseph:
2 studies in the
theology of retribution
– ‘ancient orthodoxy’,
but still not dead!

(5) The purpose of his behaviour to them is not to make them atone for a time for the injustice they did him, but to find out, before he becomes to them an actual proof of Divine mercy, whether they regard themselves as deserving of Divine punishment for the crime they committed against him, and to convince himself, before he grants them his own forgiveness, that the other son of Rachel has not experienced like injustice at their hands. -- **Franz Delitzsch**, *Genesis* Vol.2 p.310

42:21-24 *To what realization are the brothers brought unaided, showing God's patience in not allowing Joseph to reveal himself?*

(6) This was probably true in their case, but it does not follow that distress is always retribution for past sins. The medieval idea that God punishes all deviation in the believer is alien to the Word of God. Job's comforters thought that his distress came because of sin, but the New Testament teaches the contrary. The blind man was not blind because of the sin of his parents or his own sins (John 9:3), but for the glory of God. -- **D. G. Barnhouse**, *Genesis* Vol.2 p.190

GUILT and GRIEF (42:25-43:25)

42:25-38 *Who suffers worst from the brothers' sin?*

(7) In all the record, this was the first time that these brothers mentioned the Lord. Seemingly, God was not in all their thoughts through their early years. Violence, murder, envy, the selling of a brother into slavery, lying to their father -- none of these things was modified by one word about God. They used the mark of the covenant as a subterfuge to perpetrate murder (34:15), but the God of the

covenant was absent from their thoughts. Now, with conscience aroused, memory active, and fears large, they saw God in the actions of the unknown Joseph. The goodness of God is used to lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4), and here it was taking effect. -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse**, *op. cit.*, p.192

(8) This was not the language of faith, and yet surely no one can criticise him, for the outlook was dark enough. Had he been a man of simpler faith, perchance he might have been able to say, "all things work together for good." This was actually so, for those things which seemed to be against him were working together for the restoration to him of his long-lost son, and for the moving forward toward completion of those gracious purposes for which he and his father stood. We may surely learn, as we listen to the wail of Jacob, that it is never wise to measure the facts of any hour by the limitations of our own vision. -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *The Analysed Bible: Genesis* p.250



G. CAMPBELL MORGAN

"We may surely learn, as we listen to the wail of Jacob, that it is never wise to measure the facts of any hour by the limitations of our own vision."

(9) But the chief burden of the evil was the temptation which oppressed him, that the promise of God might prove illusory and vain. For he had no hope except from the promised seed; but he seemed to be bringing up devils at home, from whom a blessing was no more to be expected than life from death. He thought Joseph to be dead, Benjamin alone remained to him uncorrupted: how could the salvation of the world proceed from such a vicious offspring? He must, therefore, have been endowed with great constancy, seeing he did not cease to rely upon God. -- **John Calvin**, *ibid* p.349

43:1-10 Like Reuben (42:22,37), how has Judah grown in God's grace? (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12-17)

(10) This was the first time they had ever been honest with their father. Hitherto they had lived lives of violence and deceit. For twenty long years they had lived the lie about Joseph. Now they were completely frank with Jacob, and he had a hard time believing them. Thus sin creates its own environment and deceit brings forth the atmosphere of unbelief. But the only way to overcome years of lying, is by truth. In the end it will prevail. It may be hard at first, for it will bring us, like Reuben, to offer our children as hostages for the truth. -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse**, *op. cit.*, p.192

43:11-14 How is Jacob, unlike his sons, NOT changed? (32:13-21)

(11) Israel's querulously negative attitude is very true to life: his scolding was an escape from the decision he dreaded and a comfort to his self-esteem. But in clutching his advantage over those who had wronged him he was jeopardizing himself and them -- including his beloved Benjamin, whom he must lose in order

to save (*cf.* 27:41-46). It betrays his self-absorption that he still saw the threat to Benjamin primarily in terms of himself: "Why did you treat me so ill ...?" -- **Derek Kidner**, *op. cit.*, p.203

(12) And once again the old spirit manifested itself in his arrangement to send a present, and so to appease the man. If things were against him as he had declared, he had not wholly lost confidence in his own ability to manipulate them to his own advantage. Thus all unconsciously, he was revealing himself by his perpetual method of attempting to deal with men. He always seemed to think that the great end was to gain something, and evidently he believed that this was the motive of the Egyptian governor, and that therefore he might be bribed into complacency. How often we but reveal ourselves in our estimates of others! -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *op.cit.*, p.254

"How often we but reveal ourselves in our estimates of others!"

43:15-25 Despite Joseph's steward's assurance (v.23), what fruit of the spirit is conspicuously absent from the brothers' lives? (Isa. 32:17,18)

(13) Happy the Christian who realizes that there is no true joy and blessing until he surrenders utterly to the will of the Lord. When we bring our beloved Benjamin and place him in the hands of our Joseph, we shall have grain. If we keep back anything from the Lord, He must, in faithfulness, cut off our supply. -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse**, *op. cit.*, p.196