

GENESIS THE FINAL CHAPTERS: PART 63

TESTING IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

Ephesians 4:15 “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...”

At the beginning of Genesis 43 it has been over twenty years since Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. There is a bitter famine in the land that stretches all the way to where Joseph’s family resides. When they can no longer handle their hunger Jacob, Josephs dad, sends all 10 of Josephs brothers, who sold him into slavery, to Egypt to buy food.

Joseph recognizes them, but they don’t recognize him because he is in full Egypt garb and almost forty years old now. He then proceeds to test them.

The difference between forgiveness and reconciliation.

- Forgiveness says, “I love you.” and prays for others...takes one person
- Reconciliation means you can start to become close again. That takes two people and some time.

The writer goes to great lengths in depicting the scene of the banquet in chapter 43. It is, again, another test. Joseph is careful to ask about the well being of the brothers’ father and Benjamin, whom they had brought back with them. As readers we must remind ourselves that the brothers still did not know it was Joseph who was entertaining them. It is only when we see Joseph hurry to another room to hide his tears (v.30) that we are sure his identity was still unknown.

The question that naturally arises out of this passage is what the brothers themselves thought about Joseph’s questions and their treatment in his house. They had come expecting to be made into servants, but it was they who were being served. Did they not suspect something? Did they not have questions about Joseph’s curiosity about their father and his special treatment of Benjamin? The writer answers all such questions by simply stating that the brothers were “dismayed.”

The truth is that they are continuing to be tested.

Joseph blesses the brothers but Benjamin is overly blessed and he is wanting to see their reaction. He is testing his brothers to see if they are still the same. Joseph was the favored son and brother, they responded with jealousy and sold him into

slavery. Joseph is seeing if they will start talking in Hebrew about getting rid of Benjamin.

- *2 Corinthians 2:9* For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything.
- *2 Corinthians 13:5-6* Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.
- *1 Thessalonians 5:21* but test everything; hold fast what is good.
- *1 Peter 4:12* Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

Testing in the Old Testament is unique:

- It is used ONLY in reference to the people of God, never to heathen nations
- It is applied ONLY to people of faith (never to the ungodly).

The biggest place of testing in our lives comes in when someone has wronged us, especially if someone has hurt us deeply. Scripture indicates that we should give it some time to see if people are truly repentant. We forgive so we are not held in bondage to our bitterness, but reconciliation takes trust and time.

Three people in the story:

- Joseph: We serve because we have been forgiven by God for all the garbage we have committed. We bless others and love God and move on.
- Brothers: We have done evil, hurt people, lied, and gossiped; the lesson here is that repentance is the only solution. We cannot get frustrated when people test the waters with you, you must persevere through it and show true change.
- JESUS: Problem in our lives is sin, the answer is Jesus. He is a God of reconciliation and knows what to do with sin.

Psalm 139:3 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me (“test”) and know my thoughts!

When Jesus comes to earth, He is betrayed by His brothers and His friends, He knows what it is like. He forgives us so we can forgive others *Eph 4:32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

WE ARE FIRST reconciled to HIM then to others.