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We're ready now to resume our study in Genesis chapter 42, where after seven years of plenty. Now this, as we think about the seven years of plenty, seven years of famine, was this, I mean if you stop and think about it, this is the whole key, it isn't rocket science, and I'm not giving you a great deep theological insight here, but the whole reason there is a seven years of plenty, and a seven years of famine to be predicted, is that God decided that's how it would be. God decided there would be a famine.

God designed the famine. He designed a worldwide famine. He predicted it ahead of time, and he enabled provision for deliverance, not out of the famine, but through the famine.

And sometimes when you get into the details of the dreams, and Joseph, and the grain, and one thing or another, we forget that this, in a sense, and not to sound bad in saying it, but this is a manufactured crisis. This wasn't inevitable. This is something that God thought out ahead of time, and manufactured.

And so the question is, well, why? Here's this, you can look at the flood and say, well, you can see a reason for the flood. You've got this multiplication of evil, and the thoughts of their hearts are only evil all the day, and you've got all of these people, let's just wipe the slate clean, and start over with Noah and his family. And we don't get the sense that even though God had equal foreknowledge of those things, here, this comes at a certain time, and a certain place, where it has been preceded by events in the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And after the selling of Joseph, and he's a slave, and so forth, God says, now's the time. We're going to have seven years of famine, and Egypt is the nation that's going to be the ark. It's going to be the boat that floats and delivers people through.

Not only will it deliver, like the ark, people inside, but people are going to be able to come to this from the outside, and buy grain, and return to their homelands, as Jacob's sons are about to do. So, we get a different aspect. We know that these things foreshadow God's greatest central work in human history, which is redemption, and salvation made available to all.

But when we studied Noah and the ark, we had the idea, behold, now is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation. Once God shuts the door of the ark, you're out of luck if you belatedly decide, I think I really do want to go in there after all. Here, the same salvation is being foreshadowed, but in the same way that we have many different pictures of the work of Christ, we have many different aspects of Christology, talked about in the law of Moses and Leviticus.

As I've said many times, you can learn so much more about Christ by studying Leviticus,

than you can by studying the Gospels in terms of what He did on the cross. The Gospels give us the record of what took place in fulfilling the work of salvation from a physical point of view. But the spiritual accomplishment of redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, the work of atonement, the basis for forgiveness and cleansing, and all of the other things that are related to the saving work of Christ are really expanded and magnified for study in the Old Testament.

So in the same way, we can see that in this picture of deliverance, God manufactured it in a sense. He brought it about, had Joseph in the right place at the right time, as the right individual to picture the deliverer, the coming prophet, priest, and king, the one who has himself been tested and been found faithful through a lot of unjust suffering. And when we find here this Gentile nation, God had already promised Abraham what? He will make you the father of many nations.

Through you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. But it's another great divine irony that here, all the nations of the earth are going to be blessed by coming to Egypt, which is not the promised land, it's not the land of Israel, future, but the one occupant of the land who is a descendant of Israel, Joseph, is the means by which this pagan nation becomes the means of deliverance. It's the grain grown in Egypt that's going to sustain and deliver, not only the Egyptians, but everyone who is willing to come to Egypt and buy grain.

And we see the picture of Jesus Christ and His relationship to the church in this, don't we? The church as a collection, a heterogeneous collection of both, eventually, Jacob's clan of 70 that comes down, and the pagans, not only Egyptians, but from every nation. The famine was worldwide. It was a worldwide need, and there was a solution available to the world through Joseph, who pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, and His position as head of this non-Israelite, non-Abrahamic covenant nation.

So it's a fascinating picture to dwell on, and to see the grace of God in that situation, and the foreshadowing of God's grace in the situation that we find ourselves in today. So once again, when we get to Genesis chapter, the very end of chapter 41 and the beginning of chapter 42, we find Joseph as the vizier or the governor in Egypt. All of the land of Egypt is famished.

In verse 55, the people cry to Pharaoh for bread. Notice, even though Joseph has been all through the land, it is Pharaoh to whom they go and make their request. And Joseph is the means that the Pharaoh identifies, in the same way that when we go to the Father and cry out, it's the Lord Jesus Christ who embodies our solution.

But they go to the Pharaoh first, and he says, talk to my vizier. Whatever he says to you, do. The famine was over all the face of the earth.

Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. You can probably think,

there are so many passages we could go to. In the interest of time, I will just commend them to your later investigation.

But the Bible talks about storehouses, doesn't it? The Bible talks about all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and about the things that Jesus Christ has for us in the heavenly realms, because of our heavenly citizenship. And that because he has gathered and it has been given to him, he in turn shares with us as the firstborn among many brethren and so on. The famine became severe in the land of Egypt.

Now this is another not so obvious point, but what are the causes of famine? What mechanism, we know that God has brought this famine about, but what mechanism typically induces a famine in a particular region? Drought is one of the most common causes, but it's worth noting here that there is no indication that people lack water, or are unable to obtain water. It's only grain. And there are other reasons for famine.

There can be blight, there can be contamination of the seed with disease that causes the plants not to flower and produce fruit. And this is particularly relevant here because you have two different mechanisms for bringing out crops in this part of the world. What is the mechanism for watering and fertilizing crops in Egypt? It's the Nile.

What is it up in Palestine and in the surrounding nations? It's rainfall. Some irrigation, but primarily rainfall. And so for something to affect both types of crop growing, both the annual flooding of the Nile and the surrounding regions, it is likely that this was something beyond just drought.

You can see where a drought, even in periods of drought the Nile still floods, but a lot of times they don't have crops for other reasons. And this has been documented in ancient Egyptian records and things that they have unearthed, where even though they had the Nile some year, some other agency produced a famine where the crops didn't grow. And there's no mention here made of water.

It's all about grain. And they're famished for bread. And they're not even, you think of an impoverished country like Afghanistan or some of the other places where there have been famines in modern days, and when you look at the people, they seem to be completely without resources.

Here are people who are rich. They've got plenty of money because they've had the seven years of plenty. And in addition to all the surplus that Joseph has stored up, they've done well.

They've had a real wonderful experience as farmers and grain growers. And they're flush. They've got all kinds of cash, but you can't eat hard currency.

And so unlike these destitute, emaciated-looking figures that you see in famine countries, these people seem to be well off, but there's a need that no amount of their

resources can provide for them apart from going and buying from Joseph. And I find it interesting that it doesn't matter what their economic status is, it doesn't matter how rich they are or how fine their house is, they can be the poorest slave in what is now Libya, or they can be some of the highest government officials in any of the lands, including Egypt. They all have the same need.

They have the need for bread. And the only way to get it is to come to Joseph. He's the only one who had the knowledge to have what it takes to deliver them.

You might be able to get by boiling your sandals or scratching around for odd forms of nourishment and get through a year of famine or even two years of famine, but seven years of famine, by the second year we know that people are already really hurting. And so deliverance comes by only one way in this worldwide famine. And we find that up in Palestine the same conditions occur.

Let me also suggest another thought to you at this point. We know that Jacob and his sons are up in Palestine, up in the region north and somewhat east of Egypt. Joseph knows the dreams, right? We've talked about the fact that this was no doubt the object of his faith in sustaining him through his trials.

Who else is in those dreams? Jacob, Leah, and the 11 brothers. You have the sun, the moon, and the 11 stars in the second dream. So as long as Joseph remembers that dream, he cannot help but remember his father's house.

Joseph knows that that dream is going to come true. Joseph interprets the Pharaoh's dream that there's going to be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. When you know a calamity is on the way... We were looking at the TV set last night or the night before where they were showing the weather radar map.

And up in northeast Oklahoma where my parents lived, there was this great big ugly orange heavy storm hail lightning thing right centered on their location. The first thing I thought of when I looked at the map and saw the storm, I said, I've got people living there. I've got loved ones right under that.

Do you think that it is not only likely and probable, but almost certain that as soon as Joseph realized there was going to be a famine, a worldwide famine, he knew that it was going to affect his father and brothers up in the land. This didn't come as a surprise. Joseph has not forgotten.

And with the combination of the Pharaoh's dream and his own dreams, Joseph knows years in advance that he's going to be facing his brothers again. He doesn't have to reflect for more than a few minutes to realize that this famine is going to drive his brothers, just like everyone else, down to Egypt. So does Joseph have time to think out and prepare what he's going to do? What is his response going to be? He has the chance

to muse on this and to form a plan all during the seven years of plenty.

He has a total, we're going to find out, he'll have a total of eight years to get ready for this meeting. So it's not a snap judgment. It's not a knee-jerk reaction.

It's not an inspiration that he has at the moment when he does what he does when he sees his brothers. This is something that he had ample opportunity to anticipate because God revealed it to him through these dreams. So Jacob saw there was grain in Egypt.

Jacob said to his sons, Why are you looking at one another? What are you doing just standing around here wringing your hands? Indeed, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. So Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and he heard that there was grain in Egypt. You might make a light mark around saw and heard there.

Seeing and hearing are going to be some important features in this next chapter. He saw there was grain in Egypt. He says to the brothers, I've heard there is grain in Egypt.

And you'll notice that the eleven are addressed as his sons here. Jacob said to his sons, I've heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down to that place and buy for us there that we may live and not die.

Life depends on this purchase. So in verse 3, we have a transition now. How are these eleven referred to? Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said some calamity might befall him. And this word for calamity is the very same word that was used when the brothers were talking to Jacob, and they said, well, we found this bloody coat and we fear that some calamity has befallen him. And Jacob has the fear that the very same thing that he thinks befell Joseph will befall Benjamin.

So the sons of Israel, now we have a third way of referring to them. They are now the sons of Israel, went to buy grain among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan. It has been suggested by a prominent scholar named Longacre, and there are others who agree with him, that one explanation for the interchange between the use of Jacob and the sons of Jacob versus Israel and the sons of Israel is that Jacob tends to suggest more the human, frail, and suffering side of not only Jacob, but also his descendants, where Israel and the sons of Israel suggest more the destiny, the formal patriarchal status of Jacob, and also the national status of his offspring.

I ran across that this past week, and that goes along with what we had decided back when we studied the naming of Jacob by God, as you will no longer be called a Yaakov, supplanter. You will be Yitzra'el, Prince of God. And that even though the Scripture is unlike Abraham, who is always referred to as Abraham after his renaming, the Scripture switches off, and sometimes calls him Israel, and sometimes calls him Jacob, and the same with his descendants.

And it's an opportunity, of course some scholars say, well, here's evidence that Genesis was written by five different guys and conflated by an editor. But this is the chance for God to give us an additional bit of nuance in the telling of the story. So we begin with Jacob, the human, susceptible side, seeing that there's a famine going on and that there's a solution.

And then the brothers being referred to as Joseph's brothers reminds us of the fractured relationship that they had with him and what they have done to him. And this informs us on Jacob's attitude about letting Benjamin go. Then in verse 5, the sons of Israel went to buy grain.

This is an expedition by the offspring of Jacob, the sons of Israel. This is the future of the nation. It hinges on the success of this mission.

Now Joseph was governor over the land, and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. Do we know this already? We do. Why is it repeated here? I'll suggest an answer here in just a minute.

Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth. Well, shades of the dream. Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth.

Now me, if I had had that dream and I had suffered all the cruelty that Joseph did at his brother's hands, it would have to be the power of God to keep me from standing up and saying, I told you so. Now, what do you think of my dreams? Call me dreamer now, you with your noses in the dust. Even if you have forgiven, even if you're on the other side of that pain and recognizing the Ephraim side of the situation, the joy of reunion.

You haven't seen your brothers in something like 20 years now. Because remember, 13 years between the slavery and kidnapping and so forth and standing before Pharaoh, seven more years of plenty. That's 20 years right there.

And this is like the first year into the second year of the famine. So 20 years, he hasn't seen his brothers. You've seen these reunion commercials for Oprah and some of these others.

We're getting people back together. I mean, people just can't hardly help themselves. But notice, Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them.

He said to them, where do you come from? They said, from the land of Canaan, to buy food. So it tells us again in verse 8, Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. Which word has the most syllables in that sentence? Recognize.

You remember back when the brothers brought the coat? What was the word that was

used? We found this coat in the road, the sons say. See if you recognize it. And it was the coat of Joseph.

Turn back to chapter 37, verse 32. 37-32 They took Joseph's tunic. They killed a kid of the goats and dipped the tunic in the blood.

Then they sent the tunic of many colors and they brought it to their father and said, we have found this. Do you recognize whether it is your son's tunic or not? Very same verb in Hebrew that's used here. In verse 33, he recognized it and said, it is my son's tunic.

Jacob saw and perceived. He saw it and understood and recognized the truth that it was Joseph's. Turn a page over to chapter 38, verse 25.

The story of Judah and Tamar. She waylays him by the side of the road because he won't give her his son as he's supposed to. You remember that story.

When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law. They're about to burn her for getting pregnant out of wedlock. She sent to her father-in-law saying, by the man to whom these belong, I am with child.

And she said, please recognize whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff. In verse 26, Judah recognized them and said, she has been more righteous than I because I did not give her to Shelah, my son. And he never knew her again.

So, this moment of truth recognition is bound up with this word. And so here Joseph recognizes his brothers. His brothers do not recognize him.

And that's, believe it or not, this is one of the keys to understanding this whole situation and why Joseph does what he does. So, they are bowing down to him. He is the ruler.

He is the governor of the land. And the issue of grain comes up. From the land of Canaan we've come to buy food.

And verse 9, Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them. And he said, behold, my brothers you're bowing down just like I told you. No, he says, you are spies.

You have come to see the nakedness of the land. You remember way back when we studied Noah after the flood, there was an issue of seeing nakedness, wasn't there? Right after that great deliverance, Noah plants a vineyard. Noah was uncovered in his tent, it says in that euphemistic language.

And you have Ham seeing the nakedness of his father. Well here, right after this great deliverance, because the deliverance is in place and is underway, you have the accusation that someone is coming to see the nakedness. You remember there was a curse that fell upon Ham, the son of Canaan, or Canaan the son of Ham, I should say,

because of Ham's sin.

And so, we have a situation here. What is going to happen to the brothers? Is Joseph going to punish them for their treatment of him? He remembered the dreams. He remembered that they're bowed down.

He's now in a position, he holds their lives in his hand. And it's almost as though he's toying with them now. You think, this is really cruel.

Joseph is going to sort of get his revenge on them by making them nervous and fear for their lives. Why is he doing this? They said to him, No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food. We are all one man's sons.

We are honest men. Your servants are not spies. There are three declarative statements made here, right? We have come to buy food.

We are all one man's sons. We are honest men. Your servants are not spies.

Four declarative statements. How many of these statements are true? Have they come to buy food? Yes. Are they all one man's sons? Yes.

Not all one woman's sons, but they're all one man's sons. Are they not spies? That's true. Are they honest men? No.

These are the men who betrayed the men of Shechem. Be circumcised and we'll let you have Dinah, our sister. And they rape and pillage and plunder.

These are the men who told their father a calamity has befallen your son. So, three out of four are true. One is not.

We are honest men. Well, they're not honest men, and they're going to own up to it here in just a verse or two. Joseph, and if you count here, verse 9, verse 12, verse 14, verse 15, and verse 25 times, Joseph is going to say, No, you are spies.

He will accuse them five times of being spies. No, you have come to see the nakedness of the land. And so now they amplify even more.

And one of the fruits of Joseph's accusation here is that they start saying more than they really need to. Did he ask them about their antecedents? Did he ask them about their father or their brothers? But every time he accuses them and says, No, you're spies, they start spilling more and more information. This is one of the classic techniques if you've ever studied espionage and disinformation and all these other things.

If you can keep someone talking, they will eventually tell you... They did a demonstration on this once when I was back in my earlier days in the service, where they showed two guys talking, and it was just a real casual conversation. It's one of these loose lips,

sinkships type of things. Very casual conversation, sounds real innocuous, and then afterward they come in and they say, the strangers that just engaged in this conversation now knows.

They ticked off all of the details that he could glean from that conversation that you wouldn't have thought of because it seemed so casual. I saw an email recently about people inadvertently giving information about their children, where they live, what their address is, what their schedule is, how old they are, when they might be left alone and all of this through just very casual conversation because if you keep someone talking, you can glean a lot of information. This is why they've got staffs of people with the CIA scanning newspapers because you glean here a little, there a little, and put it together and you can paint a pretty complete picture.

So one thing this does is it keeps the brothers talking and he doesn't have to ask and they don't get suspicious by him asking specific questions. He just says, no, you're spies. And they say, no we're not.

Let us tell you about ourselves. Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. And in fact, the youngest is with our father today and one is no more.

What's the purpose of this information? Well, they're just, you know how it is, you get under pressure and you just start telling everything you know. Joseph says to them again, it is as I spoke to you saying you are spies. Now verse 15, here's the link to our scripture reading this morning.

In this manner you shall be tested by the life of Pharaoh. This is a statement with an oath. You shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

Send one of you and let him bring your brother and you, the rest of you, the other nine of you, shall be kept in prison that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you or else by the life of Pharaoh, another oath, surely you are spies. So he put them all together in prison three days. Three days, that number three, very significant number.

You remember the testing of Abraham back in Genesis chapter 22 with his son Isaac going up to the mountain. How long did it take Abraham to reach Mount Moriah? Three days. Three days, period of testing, period of challenge, like 40 in other situations.

This word when it says he put them together in prison, he put them in custody, this is the very same word that was used of the butler and the baker when they were put in custody. This is mishmar, M-I-S-H-M-A-R in Hebrew. Not a real common word, but if you go back to chapter 40 verse 3 and verse 4 and verse 7 it talks about the butler and the baker being placed into custody.

What was going on there? Pharaoh became enraged and he wasn't sure who was loyal and who was not, so he took them both and put them into custody. Then they were disposed of. This incarceration like that of the butler and baker is for evaluation.

It is not for punishment. Turn with me quickly to Leviticus chapter 24. Leviticus chapter 24 is a curious little vignette that is given to us here in Leviticus 24 where in the midst of a lot of the regulations and things that are being given, the Lord commands Moses about pure oil of pressed olives and the holy bread and so on, but then look at verse 10 of Leviticus 24.

Now the son of an Israelite woman whose father was an Egyptian went out among the children of Israel and this Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought each other in the camp. And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed and so they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shelemit the daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan.

Then they put him in custody. Same phrase. They put him in Mishmar that the mind of the Lord might be shown to them.

And of course you go out and you find out that the Lord says execute him. Turn over a few more pages to Numbers chapter 15 another section where you have a lot of laws being given. And then in verse 32 after the regulations, after the person who does anything presumptuously be native born or stranger, be cut off from among his people and so forth, despising the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment, that person shall be completely cut off.

His guilt shall be upon him it says in verse 31. Then in 32 of Numbers 15 now while the children of Israel went in the wilderness they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation.

They put him in Mishmar. They put him in custody because it had not been explained what should be done to him. The issue of what should be done is in doubt.

And so you're placed in you can almost say detention. You're in custody. You're not being punished.

Your fate is being decided. Your case is being evaluated. That's what being in Mishmar means.

And that's what Joseph does with his brothers. And this tells us something that the scripture explicitly states in verse 14 and 15. You shall be tested.

You will be weighed in the balance. And so Joseph puts them in custody for three days. Puts them in Mishmar for three days.

And his first statement is he's going to hold nine brothers and send one back to Jacob to retrieve Benjamin. And that's what they think about. That's what they stew over for three days.

Then he brings them out after those three days in verse 18. He said to them the third day, do this and live for I fear God. How many times in the Old Testament? Do this and live.

Do these things and live. Why should you die, O house of Israel? Here is the path of life. I fear God.

And you wonder how they are going to interpret that thinking that he's an Egyptian. If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house. You go and carry the grain for the famine of your houses.

So now nine will go and only one will remain behind. And bring your youngest brother to me so your words will be verified and you shall not die. That's you plural.

And you think, well now wait a minute. It was easier to weigh them when you have nine of them in custody and say if you turn out to be spies I'm going to take your lives. But here he says I'll let nine of you go and only keep one but if your word is not true you will all die.

If you do this you will live. The implication is if you don't do this you will all die. Well in what sense can Joseph have any power over their lives if they go back to Israel? I mean the logic of it isn't quite there unless you think well the only way they can live is to keep coming back to Egypt for grain.

But they don't know what the duration of the famine is going to be. They haven't heard the words of the Pharaoh's dream and its interpretation. So it's interesting that one man will be incarcerated but all of their lives hang in the balance not just his.

So this is what they did. They said to one another we are truly guilty concerning our brother and this brings to mind this sin of twenty years earlier they connect and rightly so that their problems at this point are bringing back to mind the injustice that they committed against their brother that long time ago. We are guilty concerning our brother.

Here's acknowledgement of wrongdoing isn't it? Confession of sin. We saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us and we would not hear. If you go back to chapter 37 there is no record there's no mention made that Joseph pleaded with them but we find that out here.

We saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us and we would not hear. Joseph sees them and recognizes them. They see Joseph and they do not recognize him.

Reuben answered them saying did I not speak to you saying do not sin against the boy and you would not listen. Therefore behold his blood is now required of us. Our lives for his life.

Life for life. Lex Talionis. But they did not know that Joseph understood them for he spoke to them through an interpreter.

He turned himself away from them and wept. And of course this is understandable that it's amazing to me that Joseph held himself together this long. Then he returned to them again and talked with them and he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

Why Simeon? It's been suggested that Simeon when Jacob blesses his sons later on, Simeon and Levi are said to be the two cruelest and most heartless of the two. They are the ones who hamstring the oxen and so forth. But Simeon is also the second son of Leah.

Benjamin for whom he's being held as surety is the second son of Rachel. So second son for second son is another possibility there. But it doesn't say explicitly why Joseph chose Simeon.

But you get the idea that Simeon is probably the least worthy of the brothers and for that reason also and this is my suggestion, probably also the least popular of the brothers. If he is really as selfish and hard hearted as everyone says, he's probably amongst the group the one that might be considered the most expendable. Well, you know, if we had to lose somebody, let's lose Simeon.

Might be the idea here. And this is a test because what's going to happen? Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain to restore every man's money to his sack and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.

So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there. They're going to go back and find that they have everything they came for and more. They've got grain.

They've got nine brothers bringing back grain to the family. Plus they've got silver. They've left a brother behind and got silver in its place just like they did when they sold Joseph into slavery.

Lost a brother gained the silver. That first time they thought that was a good deal. Are they going to think it's a good deal now? They've got grain.

They've got silver. They've got their freedom. The only reason to return is going to be to get Simeon.

So are they being tested by Joseph? They certainly are. This is a period of testing. One of

them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment.

He saw his money and there it was in the mouth of his sack. He said to his brother, My money has been restored and there it is in my sack. And it literally says in the Hebrew, Then their hearts stopped.

It's really comical. It's funny to read in Hebrew. It just makes you smile.

Their hearts stopped. You can imagine this. He goes into one of the bags to feed the animals.

He sees this money sack. He goes and calls his brother and says Look at it. And their hearts stopped.

Notice though, what has this God has done to us? Are they starting to look at their lives and their circumstances in a different light than they did before? This is a process of change of mind, isn't it? They recognize their guilt. They've acknowledged their guilt. They realize that God is dealing with them in terms of their obedience and lack thereof.

This is one of many reasons why Christians suffer. This is one of many reasons why we encounter adversities and difficulties in life. To make us stop and think.

It's a truism that the church has thrived in persecution. Israel did better many times under adversity than they did in prosperity. Our goal should be to be just as diligent to be pleasing in the Lord's sight when we're prosperous and when we have the grain and the money in our sack as when we're in adversity.

Does God have to use adversity to bring us back to repentance? Hopefully not. But it's an exercise in diligence. It's an exercise in faith to take each day and make it a day where we dedicate ourselves to being pure in His sight and availing ourselves of His grace.

Well, this is where we're going to have to stop this morning. Leaving them staring into the sack. Seeing that money.

The choice is there. Do we go back and return the silver? Or do we go on to our Father? Well, you know what they're going to do. And we know for this reason that the test is not yet complete.

The process is not yet complete. But God is at work even in the process of deliverance. Not only are they going to be delivered from the physical nature of the famine, but that which needs to be worked out of their hearts, needs to be brought out into the open and acknowledged is being forced to the surface by these events.

And God knows what He's doing. And Joseph knows what He's doing in delaying the revelation of Himself to His brothers so that this process can take place. And there's

great food for meditation in the Lord Jesus Christ and His relation with His own brothers in Israel speaking to them in parables, manifesting the hardness of their hearts, bringing to the surface the problems that they have in recognizing Him.

He came unto His own and His own received Him not. This metaphor of seeing and not seeing, of recognizing and not recognizing is at work. In the realm of this picture, the brothers should have recognized Joseph, but they didn't.

They didn't know Him well enough. Even after 20 years He can recognize them. But in His role as Vizier of Egypt they do not recognize Him.

But they will. But there's a process they're going to go through just as the nation of Israel is going through. And just as each one of us goes through a process of expunging that which needs to be removed in our souls.

It's wonderful to be in the hands of the Lord God and be the recipients of His grace and mercy, isn't it? Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank You that You are at work in us to will and to do Your good purpose. We pray that the things we've studied this morning will serve as a sharp sword in the hands of the Holy Spirit to divide us, to the splitting asunder of the soul and spirit and joints in the marrow and will show us where we need improvement in the thoughts and intents of our hearts.

We pray that as a result we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work and we will be in that place where we can reflect Your glory and the glory of our Savior. For we ask it in His name. Amen.