

Genesis 41: 53 - 42: 28; "Going to Joseph; Coming to Christ",
Sermon # 104 in the series - "Beginnings", Delivered
by Pastor Paul Rendall
on July 15th, 2007, in the Morning Worship Service.

Joseph has been exalted to Pharaoh's right hand, and all of Egypt knows it; because Pharaoh has made sure that everyone will know that he has appointed him to the task of storing up grain for the coming famine. "Bow the knee" is the command that has been given to everyone in his country. Joseph we have seen, has been faithful to store up grain as the sand on the seashore. He stored up so much that "he stopped counting it, for it was immeasurable," it says in verse 49 of Chapter 41. All this is a picture and type of the ministry, the mission, and the kingdom rule of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw last week that even as Joseph was the Savior of a nation, that even so, that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the World. He was "the grain of wheat which fell into the earth and died." But because He did suffer and die, He bore much fruit; He produced much grain," it says in John 12: 24. He has been exalted to God the Father's right hand. He has been given all authority in heaven and upon the earth. He has been faithful unto the death of the cross, and through that blessed event He has now come to have stored up an abundance of grace which He is ready to bestow upon needy sinners, even those who will come to Him for eternal life. This is what I want to speak to you about this morning; how sinners come to Jesus Christ. How does Christ really deliver us when we come to Him? For the events of Joseph's brethren going down to Egypt to purchase grain, and the way that they were treated by him, give us a good illustration of how Christ receives and treats sinners who come to Him for salvation. Joseph's brothers do not recognize him, but he recognizes them and treats them in a way of mercy, but he does not overlook their sin. Before he gives them what they need to live, he would have them to come to a conviction of their sin. So the question that we are asking this morning is, "How did Joseph, who intended to show his brothers mercy, bring them to the place where they understood that they were sinners needing mercy as well as men who needed food? And how is it then, that Christ does the same, spiritually, for every needy sinner who comes to Him? Well, I believe that Joseph showed his brothers tender mercy, and yet he brought them to conviction of their sin by the following means.

1st of all - He opens all the storehouses and sells to the Egyptians.
(Chapter 41: 54 - Chapter 42: 5)

It says in verse 55, "So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread." "Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.'" Last week we saw that Pharaoh had

appointed Joseph to this good task of storing up grain in accordance with the wisdom given to him by God in relation to the dream which Pharaoh had, that the famine would most certainly come and that it would be severe. Now that time was upon them, and so Pharaoh directs the famished in his land to Joseph. Joseph had labored hard to prepare for this time. He had stored up grain like the sand of the seashore. He stored it up until he stopped counting it, for it was immeasurable. These preparations of the grain are like the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the great interpreter on behalf of God to interpret the purpose and will of God in relation to the salvation of men. God would have a people for His own possession. Pharaoh wanted to save his land and his people and so he directed the people to Joseph who had the answer. God the Father would save His people from sin and eternal death. And so He has appointed Jesus Christ to act on His behalf, in order to make provision for the needs of every man's soul. Our Lord Jesus has labored and suffered far more than Joseph to see that people do not perish eternally. He labored and travailed in the garden of Gethsemane in prayer. He labored there with great cryings and tears until His sweat became great drops of blood. He suffered being scourged and whipped and mocked and mistreated until His face and body were almost unrecognizable. But even more, He bore the wrath of God which was due to our sins, if we are a sinner trusting in Him. If it was important in any generation that people do not perish physically in a famine, how much more important is it that people do not perish eternally because they do not have the gospel? People need the gospel; they need the Lord, even if they do not understand it.

In physical hunger, people understand that they must find food or perish. That is why all the people came to Joseph when they were directed to him by Pharaoh. In spiritual matters, people may be starving and yet not take the right actions to save their souls. In this case of physical hunger, in the famine in Egypt, the people were famished and they were directed to Joseph. Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain. The people came and they purchased grain from no other place than Joseph in Egypt. In the case of spiritual hunger and the feeling of emptiness in your soul; I direct you and all the sinners in the world to Jesus Christ today. I say to you; you may not have a hunger and thirsting in your soul for righteousness or salvation, but you should come to Jesus Christ today and buy. The salvation of your soul is a transaction which you must make with Jesus Christ or you will perish. It is based upon the need that you have as a sinner for the grace of God in Christ. Your soul needs grace to change so that you will be forgiven of your sins and have strength to walk before God and to know God in the land of the living. Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus from Revelation 3: 17 to those who claim to be Christians and think themselves strong enough and sufficient enough to go through this life without grace. "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of

nothing--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked--I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."

To know God and to walk before God in righteousness and truth require provision of grace. To love God and serve God takes provision of grace. To love others and to truly help them will require provision of grace. This fullness of provision is found in Jesus Christ. "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." All who believe in the gospel will receive this provision in an on-going, daily, moment by moment basis. There is immeasurable grace that has been stored up in Jesus Christ for sinners. Will you not come and buy? God the Father says, "Go to My Son, and whatever He says, do." Jesus Christ says, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus says in John 6: 35, "I am the bread of life." "He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." Jesus would bestow this grace upon each one who comes seeking this bread of life. "Man does not live by physical bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." Jesus Christ is the Word of God who will save and feed your famished soul. He opens His storehouses of gospel grace to every sinner who comes to Him.

Any person who is empty, and who knows that gnawing pain of wanting to know the meaning of life, of wanting to be fed spiritually, should come. Do you see the provision that there is in Christ? Then you should come. Jacob was convicted by his hunger and convicted by the provision of grain in Egypt. "Jacob," it says, "saw that there was grain in Egypt," (verse 1 of Chapter 42) and "Jacob said to his sons, 'Why do you look at one another?' " "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die." Sometimes when people think about coming to Christ for salvation, they hesitate. They look at others in their family, wondering what to do. They are waiting wondering whether this coming to Christ will really do something for them. Perhaps they are thinking of the implications of going to Jesus. What will it mean for me to be a Christian? Will I really find provision for my sins, even mine? Will I really find strength and comfort and joy and peace? Hesitate not a moment longer. Jesus will give salvation to you. And all of the implications of what that will mean; leave those with Him. He will supply all of your needs according to His riches. "But Jacob," it says in verse 4, "did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin, for he said, 'Lest some calamity befall him.'" There are some parents who are reluctant to direct their children to go directly and immediately to Jesus because they believe that they are too young and tender to understand and to believe for themselves.

They think that some calamity will befall them if they become a Christian in a sinful world. If they do become a decided Christian, they think, then they will be open to the ridicule and perhaps even persecution of others at school. But these are not good reasons for keeping them back from coming to Christ. God is greater than all of our fears, and will give grace that will bring the strength to face and to overcome opposition and trial. Better this; than a child or young person that does not come, whom you will not direct immediately to Christ. Who knows what may befall them in this life; and without Christ, all is lost. Now God used this reluctance on Jacob's part, in order to fulfill His purposes when the brothers went down to Egypt. And God will work all things together for good as well to the Christian parent who is well-meaning and who would protect their children from a cruel world.

2ndly- Joseph showed His brothers tender mercy and yet brought them to conviction of sin by remembering the dreams that he dreamed about his brothers. (Verses 6-9 of Chapter 42)

It says in verse 6, "Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land." "And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth." "Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them." Verse 9 says, "Then Joseph remembered his dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, 'You are spies!' "You have come to see the nakedness of the land." You say to me, "How is this showing tender mercy?" It is tender mercy because it is in accordance with the dreams that Joseph had. His real and true intention is to show them mercy. But he will do it in accordance with the dreams that he had had so many years before. It is also just as true that the Lord Jesus Christ distributes all of His mercy and grace in relation to Covenant of Grace and the everlasting purpose of the Father in Electing and Predestinating love. "All that the Father has given me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will not cast out." All of the dreams of Joseph were being fulfilled even though the brothers did not know it at this time. So, too, the dreams of Jesus Christ, the predestinating purpose of God for Him to distribute grace to those chosen by Him will be fulfilled in all their particulars. In John 17, in His prayer to the Father before He went to the cross, the Lord Jesus said, "Father, the hour has come." "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." This was the dream of the Son before the foundation of the world, for He prays in verse 24, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold my glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. This love of the Father for the Son was what resulted in the Covenant of Grace whereby we are saved. It was the greatest and most

precious gift of love that the Father would give His Son to a world of lost and dying sinners, and the Son would purchase grace by His sufferings, and that both would do this out of their love for all mankind in a general sense, in the Free Offer of the gospel, and in a particular sense for the Elect. What a great and magnificent Divine "Dream" this is, which has become a reality over a thousand generations and it will continue to be fulfilled until the end of the world. Joseph treated his brothers as strangers and spoke roughly to them in order to bring conviction to their hearts concerning their terrible treatment of himself 20 years before. This is how the Lord Jesus sometimes also deals with sinners who have been hurtful and willful against Him or his people, when yet, all the while he intends to show them mercy and to save them. The Apostle Paul is a good example of this. When Christ brought converting grace and power to bear upon Saul's life to change his heart, he shone such a bright light upon him that he fell to the ground and heard the Lord's voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" "And he said, 'Who are you Lord?' Then the Lord said to him, "I am Jesus who you are persecuting." "Is it hard for you to kick against the goads?" He had to be led by the hand into Damascus because the light had blinded him. After 3 days without sight, the Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to him who laid hands on him and he received his sight. But Ananias had argued about going to do this good work for Saul who was to be renamed Paul. He had said to the Lord, "I have heard about this man how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem." "And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on Your name." This is what I want you to see and understand. The Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." "For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake. I would say that Saul was not an exception, but that a good many persons whom the Lord loves with an everlasting love will express trembling and astonishment in being brought to saving faith. They will at some point in their conversion stand amazed how utterly wrong they had been in resisting the gospel and its preachers. They will be dismayed at how they needed to be "spoken to roughly" in reproof before the life giving grace is bestowed. But the Lord knows what it will take for each one of His chosen ones to be brought to saving faith in Him.

But 3rdly- Joseph showed His brothers tender mercy and yet brought them to conviction of sin by testing them in regard to their sincerity. (Verses 10-17)

Joseph's brothers did not think that they deserved this rough treatment from a man that they barely knew. They protest the accusation by this Egyptian ruler that they are spies. Verse 10 says, "And they said to him, 'No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food.'" "We are all one man's sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies." Little do they know that Joseph

knows exactly who they are, and he knows that they have not been honest men with regard to their treatment of this very man they were speaking to! Joseph keeps asserting that they are spies. He is doing this deliberately for a reason. He knows that they have not been honest men with regard to the way that they had treated him years before . We must understand that the Lord sees all and he knows all in regard to actual state of our hearts and the way that we have thought and acted in the past. We might assert that we are honest, when there are issues from the past in our lives that if they were exposed will prove that we are not. Joseph's brothers keep on asserting their innocence and telling Joseph more and more of the information that he was seeking to obtain. "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." We really must take notice of the fact that Joseph knew how to get the information he wanted, out of their hearts and out on to their lips, so that they would be judged by the very things which they most strongly asserted. He can do the same thing with you and me as well if he so desires. After their strongest protests of innocence Joseph still comes back and says to them, "It is as I spoke to you, saying, 'You are spies.'" "In this manner," he says, "you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother come here."

And here we must admire the divine wisdom given to Joseph to bring these men to a real conviction of sin. He is going to test them to find out whether anything has changed in twenty years, whether their hearts were still hard toward his father and his brother Benjamin. We should learn from this that if we have done things which were wrong in the past, the Lord knows how to bring similar circumstances to bear in order to test us to see if we have learned any lessons at all from the truth that he shows to us. "Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and 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, surely you are spies!" "So he put them all together in prison three days." The Lord knows how to deal with every man and his sins, no matter how grave and complex they are; and no matter how long it has been that they have covered them up. He may indeed patiently wait 20 years or more to teach us lessons related to our sins of the past and bring us to repentance and a different way of living. If we are going to come to know him, or if we do know him, he will bring us to the place that we are thinking of the people whom we have sinned against. He may put us into a prison like situation in our lives where it is impossible for us to get out unless we learn the lessons of what is right and what is wrong. Joseph did this out of love to his brothers. Christ will do it for His brethren and those who are to come to know Him. It is the Lord's mercy if we have come to experience conviction of sin if it leads us to consider our ways and search our hearts, and confess our sins to the Lord.

Because 4thly- Joseph showed his brothers tender mercy, and yet brought them to conviction of sin by preaching the law to them.

(Verses 18-24)

"Then Joseph said to them the third day, 'Do this and live, for I fear God: If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.'" "And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die." Telling the truth is always the best policy that we can take when we are confronted with past sins rising up against. When conviction comes to our hearts concerning any of our sins, whether those sins are in our heart alone or whether they have broken out into our actions, if we will admit the guilt of them, rather than rationalizing them away, we are making progress in the right direction. Listen to what the brothers said to each other. "Then they said to one another, 'We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.'" Notice how this situation that they are in now, brings back the memories of what they did 20 years before. Now they are admitting their guilt in the matter. Now they recount their sins. "We saw the anguish of his soul..." Now they once again here the reproof of their brother Reuben, "Did I not speak to you, saying 'Do not sin against the boy; and you would not listen?' "Therefore, his blood is required of us." But notice the tender mercy of Joseph who knew what they were saying and what they were confessing, even though they thought that he could not understand them. "And Joseph turned himself away from them and wept." "Then he returned to them again, and talked with them." "And he took Simeon," it says, "and bound him before their eyes." Now this is a picture of Christ using the law in the salvation of men. Joseph says, "Do this and live". The law is not of grace, but it has a definite purpose, and that purpose is to show us the righteous requirement of God and to convince us that we are sinners. We cannot use the law to justify ourselves. Romans 10: 5 says, "Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.'" But Christ is "the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes." In Luke 10: 25 when a lawyer came and tested Jesus, saying "Teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law?" "What is your reading of it?" The lawyer answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as your self." Jesus answered him and said, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." Then it says, "But the man wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' And Jesus told him the parable of the Good Samaritan. At the end of it, Jesus said to the man, "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" The man said, "He

who showed mercy on him." "Then Jesus said, "Go and do likewise." It is not as though Joseph's brothers were going to be able to make up for their sins by their own sincerity and by their following Joseph's instructions. But it was their being convicted that they did not show mercy and now desiring it from Joseph that he took notice of. It says that "he turned himself away from them and wept." This is how Christ uses the law with us when we are seeking mercy in salvation. He convicts us that we have not been merciful when we should have been, but then finding us repentant and seeking grace he will show it to us. And this is my last point. An honest man is willing to be bound by the convictions of conscience in regard to the law in order that he might eventually be shown mercy. Perhaps Simeon was the most guilty of all of the brothers in the way that he treated Joseph.

5thly- Joseph showed his brothers tender mercy and yet brought them to conviction by beginning to show them the meaning of grace.

(Verses 25-28)

We will see more of grace as we progress through these chapters, but here Joseph just begins to show these whom he loves, the way that grace operates. "Then 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 grain and departed from there." "But as 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." "So he said to his brothers, 'My money has been restored, and it is in my sack!'" "Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, 'What is this that God has done to us?'" In closing, let us understand that when Joseph wanted to encourage them with his good intentions toward them, that he intended to do them good, that his love and his watch care were over them to provide for them, he did this gracious thing. He restored their money. But they were dismayed and their hearts sank. They were afraid. What was God doing? Were they not in great trouble? They had finally come to see that God was dealing with them; not simply Joseph. And you and I need to see the same today. Salvation comes to us based upon the sheer mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. It comes when we make the transaction with Jesus Christ our greater Joseph. He gives salvation to us, and he does so "without money and without price." He will test us as to our sincerity; whether we will do what is right, and our repentance whether we have turned away from doing wrong, but He will not stop doing us good. This is why going to Joseph is like coming to Christ. But there is much of our story left to tell and many applications of truth yet to consider before Joseph will reveal himself to his brothers. Let us be content to plod along for a few more chapters and learn the lessons of faith and a thorough

repentance. And let us praise the Lord for the mercy that He has shown to us, even though we did not deserve it, through our Lord Jesus Christ.