

Less of Me

Part II: "The Good and Bad"

Genesis 42:18-28, 30 (37:18-36 – His brothers put him in a pit)

2026 Theme - "Christ Alone"
Dr. Paul Cannings

A. Struggles to Strength (vs. 23-25):

1. They did not know – So much time had passed, they believed Joseph to be dead, even though they sold him to the Ishmaelites, they did not recognize Joseph.
2. Joseph understood everything – Joseph gave them his undivided attention and had a full intellectual understanding of all that was said and he must have remembered what Ruben and Judah sought to do to help him.
3. He turned away from them and wept - Joseph did not merely shed tears; he wept deeply and intensely, as though he could hardly stop himself. It was extremely emotional with a strong expression of anguish. It is recorded that Joseph repeated these nine more times (27:38; 33:4; 37:35; 43:30; 45:2, 14, 15; 46:29; 50:1, 17).
 - a) In the course of the conversation, Joseph saw that his brothers were greatly concerned and remorseful. He sensed their loyalty to Jacob and their solid family spirit. He ... wept as he thought of the old days and the suffering the men had caused by their hostility and cruelty, and as he recognized their change of heart.[\[1\]](#)
 - b) At this point, Joseph's pent-up emotions simply had to come out, so he left the room and wept privately. This is the first of six such experiences; for Joseph also wept when he saw his brother Benjamin (43:29–30), when he revealed himself to his brothers (45:2), when he met his father in Egypt (46:29), when his father died (50:1), and when he assured his brothers that they were truly forgiven (v. 17). What makes a person weep is a good test of character. Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). *Be authentic* (pp. 110–111). Chariot Victor Pub.

4. When he returned to them and spoke to them - Joseph must have stepped away while weeping loudly. He returned, seemingly determined to remain engaged in confronting his brothers. Through an interpreter, Joseph continued speaking and addressing them verbally. Although the interpreter conveyed the words, Joseph remained in direct interaction with his brothers throughout the exchange.
5. He took Simeon and bound him - Joseph fully engaged himself in taking Simeon, one of the oldest brothers, into his hands as if he planned to keep him and bound him as if he was not going to be released. It is not entirely clear whether Joseph physically carried this out himself or directed it as part of his authority, but the action clearly served as a decisive demonstration of control within the situation. Jewish tradition says that the reason Joseph picked Simeon was because he was the harshest brother towards him when he was bound and put in a pit. Additionally, Simeon, along with Levi, is earlier seen as taking a leading role in the violent retaliation of Shechem (Gen. 34). Jacob later specifically mentions their fierce anger in Gen. 49:5-7.
 - a) Simeon was also known to be a cruel man (34:25; 49:5-7), and perhaps Joseph hoped to teach him a lesson. We don't know how many family secrets Jacob shared with his favorite son Joseph or what part they played in this decision.[\[2\]](#)
 - b) Jacob's second son (see 29:32-33) is imprisoned instead of the firstborn Reuben, perhaps because the latter had saved Joseph's life years earlier (37:21-22).
6. Then Joseph gave orders - Joseph exercised his position of authority to repeatedly commanding his servants to fill the brothers' sacks with grain and secretly restore each man's money. A strong message that Simeon was remaining and the rest of the brothers must be on their way home.
 - a) He is deeply moved by the signs of their penitence. Joseph's weeping is the harbinger of further tears on their next journey, when he sees Benjamin (43:30), when Judah offers to remain as slave instead of Benjamin and Joseph reveals his identity (45:2), and on the third journey when he is reunited with his father (46:29). For all his apparent harshness toward his brothers, this action proves that he still loves them and that if they continue to show a change of heart, reconciliation will be possible ultimately.[\[3\]](#)

7. And give them provisions for the journey – Despite how highly emotional Joseph is, he did not allow his brothers to depart without food to survive their trip especially since there was a severe famine everywhere.
 - a) The God-fearing man is one who cares for the needy and hungry (cf. Job 29:12–13; Prov 31:20; cf. 30).[\[4\]](#)

8. Was done for them - This verse ends, ‘it was done for them’ (42:9 – ‘Joseph remembered the dream.’) as if to imply Joseph’s disposition was now focused on family restoration (bring your youngest brother to me....;’ 42:20). His initial reaction was well spent, the security blanket of Simeon remaining was established, now it is time to reunite with his family because this was always God’s intent based on his dream (42:9). This is Joseph’s ethical obligation before the Lord whom he feared. No matter what we may experience remember God’s Word and remain in it because this is how we bear fruit (John 15:1-10; Romans 8:28).

B. God is at Work (vs. 28, 30-37):

1. Then they said the money has been returned –Once a good distance from Egypt and the money was discovered to be in the bags all of Joseph’s brothers went into panic mode. They could not speak about it.
 - a) The very fact that the brothers possessed both the grain and their silver potentially confirms the accusation that they are scouts’ intent on stealing grain. Frequently we might see trade in grain or herds, but Jacob’s family has no grain, and the herds are difficult to transport. It is no surprise, then, that they have brought silver with which to trade. Walton, J. H. (2009). Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (Vol. 1, pp. 132–133). Zondervan.
 - b) Why did Joseph put their money back in their sacks? Was it out of brotherly kindness to show they were his guests (von Rad), to make them appear as thieves (cf. 44:1–13), or to reproduce the earlier situation when they were happy to exchange Joseph for money? Would they now decide to hold onto their cash and

leave Simeon in prison (so Sternberg, *Poetics*)? It may not be necessary to choose between these ideas; Joseph may have had multiple motives (so Westermann).^[5]

2. And their hearts sank – All of their deepest, inner most emotions were in constant motion. Their fear, anxiety, their insecurities welled up inside of them as they became completely overwhelmed by the discovery of the money in their bags. The most powerful nation with the most powerful military under the direction of the second most powerful man in the country can come after them and kill them. They have already been told twice they were going to die because they were spies (42:9, 18-20).
 - a) The sense of guilt already aroused made the group quickly see the hand of God in the governor’s action. So the question, What is this that God has done to us? was, as far as it went, a fruitful reaction to trouble. They apparently felt that Joseph would accuse them of theft, which would support his contention that they were spies.^[6]
3. The turned trembling to one another – The tables had turned. They must go back, they are now at the mercy of Joseph, after he was at their mercy and they have no power to change any of it. They were literally shaking in fear. These men, who once appeared invincible, strong, and confident, were now humbled, weakened, and dethroned by circumstances beyond their control. They needed God ‘s mercy even more than Joseph’s favor.
4. God has done to us – Joseph’s brothers recognized that God created and controlled all the circumstances they were experiencing, and they had no answer as to what God would do next. They understood they were not at Joseph’s mercy, but ultimately at the mercy of God Himself. Earlier they had already confessed their guilt concerning Joseph (vs. 21), and that they had sinned against God. Joseph feared God and became blessed. They sinned against God and are now under His judgment.

[1] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#) (Ge 42:21). Moody Press.

[2] Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). [Be authentic](#) (p. 111). Chariot Victor Pub.

[3] Wenham, G. J. (1994). [Genesis 16–50](#) (Vol. 2, p. 409). Word, Incorporated.

[4] Wenham, G. J. (1994). [Genesis 16–50](#) (Vol. 2, p. 408). Word, Incorporated.

[5] Wenham, G. J. (1994). [Genesis 16–50](#) (Vol. 2, p. 409). Word, Incorporated.

[6] Ross, A. P. (1985). [Genesis](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 92–93). Victor Books.