

Genesis 42-43 • Awakening an understanding of sin

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Let's go ahead and get into some scripture tonight from the book of Genesis. We're going to be picking it up in the 42nd chapter. Genesis, chapter 42.

Here on Wednesday night, we're making our way chapter by chapter, verse by verse, through the Book of Genesis. And yeah, so let's pray and let's get into it.

Heavenly Father, this is our prayer. That you would open our hearts, open our spiritual eyes, open our spiritual ears. Lord, let us be able to see and hear tonight all that you desire to speak to us.

We pray for the ministry of your grace, your Holy Spirit to minister among us, and touch our hearts and lives, and speak words of grace and wisdom.

We thank you Father in Jesus name, amen. Amen.

All right, you guys, let me just give you a little quick summary. You remember in the previous chapters, we learned that while Joseph was languishing in prison for a crime he didn't commit, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, remember, had a dream at night. And none of his wise men or counselors could interpret the dream for him, which only troubled Pharaoh further.

And eventually his cup bearer remembered that he had encountered a young Hebrew by the name of Joseph in the prison who had correctly interpreted his own dream. And so Pharaoh sent for Joseph and related the details of his dream. And not only did Joseph interpret that dream which foretold a time of great plenty and abundance that would come upon the land, but which would be immediately followed by a time of great famine. And he told him about that.

And not only about that, but Joseph, you'll remember, went on to give Pharaoh recommendations as far as what to do to prepare for the time of famine so that the people of Egypt might be rescued from their star starvation.

You'll remember that Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph's interpretation abilities, plus his wisdom in knowing what to do, he basically gave him the

second most prominent position in all of Egypt. Made him the governor of the land and gave him the task of carrying out the very recommendations that he had given to Pharaoh in terms of how to save the people from starvation.

And we learned that just as the dream predicted, there were 7 years of plenty, and then they were immediately followed by 7 years of great famine. And the people all over Egypt and so forth came to buy grain when they heard that there was food available.

And chapter 42 begins with the movement of people from even farther out from Egypt. In verse 1 we're told that, *“When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you look at one another?”² And he said, “Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die.”*” (ESV)

Isn't that interesting that the first thing that Jacob would say to his sons is, why are you guys just sitting around looking at each other? And he's not saying, essentially..., well, I don't think Jacob really knows what he's saying or why he's saying it.

But you'll remember that his sons sold their brother into slavery and they knew that the Ishmaelites to whom they sold him were on their way to Egypt. And that's probably where Joseph is living now. And so here they, I'm sure they got the word already. Yeah, there's food in Egypt, are we going to go to Egypt?

I mean, are we really going to go to Egypt? I think that's why they're just sitting around wondering, what are we going to do about this? And that's why Jacob says what he does. Now most of you know the story that we're about to read, so I know I'm not giving out any spoilers here. And you know that Joseph is the means by which his own family is saved from perishing due to famine.

He's going to, he's not only providing food for all of Egypt. He's providing food for his own family as well and many other people as well. And because of the fact that Joseph saves the people from a very real potential for death, many people see in this story that Joseph is a type of Jesus.

I want to, if I may, I want to pause for just a little bit right here and I want to talk to you a little bit about types so that you can understand what we mean. I was having a conversation recently with a brother about this very subject. We were talking about types and shadows. And I think most of you know, what I mean by that. But when we say that someone or something is a type of someone

or something else, we mean that their life or an event exemplifies or symbolizes the character of that person or that event.

For example, when Paul wrote his letter to Romans, believers in Rome, he talked to them about Adam as a symbol. Let me put this one up on the screen for you from Romans chapter 5. Paul writes,

Romans 5:14 (ESV)

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, (and then he goes on to say) who was a type of the one who was to come.

You can see that Paul very clearly says that Adam is a type of Jesus. All right? In other words, a foreshadowing, if you will, a model of one who was to come. Now, the interesting thing is that the Greek word that is translated, type here in the New Testament is the word, *túpos*, which can also be translated, example, form, image, model or pattern, right? Because a type is a pattern of something that is to come.

It was also used to describe the imprint that might be left on a piece of clay. If somebody was maybe using something to stamp their family crest or something like that, that imprint was called a type. It's the same Greek word, *túpos*. All right.

Well, the apostle Paul also used this same word in 1 Corinthians, when he spoke about the people and events of the Old Testament, and he said this. Up on the screen, 1 Corinthians 10.

1 Corinthians 10:11 (ESV)

Now these things happened to them as an example,

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This is the same Greek word, *túpos*. It's just translated, example, here, instead of type. What is he saying? He's saying that the people and events of the Old Testament are a type, an example, a *túpos* of the things which are to come, right? So that had that scripture that I just showed you there from 1 Corinthians,

gives Bible students kind of an excuse to find types where they may not be necessarily clearly identified.

In other words, as I showed you in the previous passage from Romans, Paul clearly identified Adam as a type of Jesus Christ. Well, there's nowhere in the Word that Joseph is referred to as a type of Jesus, and yet that hasn't stopped people from saying he's a type of Jesus. And in a sense, we have freedom to say that because Paul tells us there in 1 Corinthians, that all the things that happened in the Old Testament were given as examples, or types, if you will.

And we do see Jesus in these things. In fact, there are people who have found over 100 connections between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus, so it's pretty interesting. I haven't seen all of those connections myself, but apparently they've been made.

But what I believe that there is a freedom for us to find types and shadows in the old Testament. I also think we have to be careful when we're looking into the Word of God, not to strain for connecting types. Do you know what I mean?

In other words, if a type, if you have to really work hard at it to try to find a type between this Old Testament event and this New Testament event, or this Old Testament person and this New Testament person, then maybe you shouldn't have to, you shouldn't even worry about it. Just drop it because if you're having to strain and you end up by going, I don't know, I don't really see the connection, it's probably best just to leave it and take whatever's happening in the Old Testament at face value.

Now, having said that, I think there are a lot of interesting types between Joseph and Jesus. And I think we'll see those as we move on through the passage.

Let's keep reading. Verse 3. *“So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him.”*

And of course, you guys know what this is all about because Jacob believed that Joseph had been killed when he sent him out to do a job some 20 years earlier. He kept Benjamin on a fairly short leash of protection because he feared that something similar might happen to Benjamin. And you'll remember that Joseph and Benjamin are the only sons that had been born to his beloved Rachel, who had since passed away. They were all he had left of her and he was going to protect them as much as, well, now Benjamin is the only one he thinks is left. And so he's going to protect Benjamin as best he can.

Verse 5 says, *“Thus the sons of Israel came to buy among the others who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.”*

And we're told in verse 6 that, *“... Joseph was governor over the land. (and) He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. (in other words, they got to go through Joseph so this thing is perfectly put together) And (it says) Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground.”*

And the reason I emphasize that is you're going to see here in just a couple of verses that Joseph is going to remember the dream he had, or dreams, plural, as a young man in which the Lord had made it clear to him that his brothers would bow down before him. Now as a 17 year old, he couldn't know exactly how all of that was going to play out and come to pass. But here it is, here it is happening.

Verse 7 says, *“Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. “Where do you come from?” he said. They said, “From the land of Canaan, to buy food.”*

⁸ *And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.”* ⁹ *And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, “You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land.”* That's a rather poetic way of saying, you've come to spy out the weaknesses of Egypt.

And they respond here in verse 10, *“They said to him, “No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food.”*

And then in verse 11, look at this. *“We are all sons of one man. We are honest men.”* I want you to take note of that statement. You have to wonder if their noses grew just a little when they made that statement.

And they said, *“Your servants have never been spies.”* ¹² *He said to them, “No, it is the nakedness of the land that you have come to see.”*

Okay, stop here for just a minute. What's Joseph doing? What's he doing? You can read this and if you don't really think through it a little bit, it's easy to look at this and go, well, he's being pretty mean. And so we have to ask our self the question, is that what Joseph is doing? I mean, is this some sick kind of revenge that he's playing on his brothers?

Is it just a way of watching them squirm, knowing that he now has the upper hand? Because he's in charge of all of the goods that belong to Egypt and the food that they've come so far to purchase. Is he now just leading them on a leash and jerking their chain, as we like to say here modern day and so forth? Is that what's really going on?

Well, let's keep reading and let's find out. And they said, ¹³ *And they said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more."*

¹⁴ *But Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you. You are spies. ¹⁵ By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here.*

¹⁶ *Send one of you, and let him bring your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. Or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." ¹⁷ And he put them all together in custody for three days."*

All right, so at least initially, Joseph demanded of his brothers that 9 of them would be incarcerated while one of them would be allowed to go home. And he was told to fetch their youngest brother so that they might prove their story to be true. Joseph, just to give them a chance to think about this for a while, he locked them all up for 3 days. And you can imagine the conversation that is going on among these brothers while they are incarcerated for 3 days.

Verse 18 says, *"On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: ¹⁹ if you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain confined where you are in custody, and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your households, ²⁰ and bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they did so."*

All right, stop here. Now, the first thing we notice about this passing of 3 days when he goes to talk to them again, is that Joseph changes the terms of the agreement at this particular point by which they are to prove their story. And he says instead now, I'm going to let pretty much all of you go except one. And you have to ask the question, why, why change the terms? Well, what we're seeing here is not, again, this is not some sick idea on his part to exact revenge from his brothers.

What we're seeing is an expression of mercy, an actual expression of compassion that Joseph is showing toward his brothers by keeping just one of them and letting the rest of them make the journey back to Canaan. Because they would need all of those to carry the grain back for their families so that their families would have food to eat. And what really Joseph is doing is he's expressing his concern for their families. They don't see it that way right now. But he's letting all of them go except one.

And now I want you to take note of the following verses because this is really critical. Beginning of verse 21, *“Then they said to one another, “In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.”*

You'll remember that when it told us way back earlier about Joseph being sold, it didn't tell us that he begged his brothers and cried out to them saying, guys, don't do this. Don't do this. But now we hear them talking about this and remembering this event that took place some 20 years prior and they're recalling the details.

And one of the details that they bring up here is, you guys, this has to be because of what we put our brother through. And the distress that was in his voice when he begged us, when he begged us not to do this. That's why this is happening.

“And Reuben (goes on, he speaks now in verse 22 and he says) ..., “Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood.””

And it tells us here in verse 23, *“They did not know that Joseph understood them, (they're saying this in front of Joseph because we're told at the end of verse 23) ...there was an interpreter...”*

All this time, Joseph has been using an interpreter to speak to his brothers and they think he doesn't know their language, so they're speaking freely among themselves, and they're talking about that. The difficulties that the brothers are now facing has obviously forced them to face their guilt and guys, this is so important. I don't want you to miss this. It's important that you don't just read through this story without understanding the gravity of what is happening to these men. They are finally owning what they did, and this is something that previously, even the cries of Joseph 20 years earlier and coupled with the

sorrow and the weeping of their father didn't awaken in them, but now it is being awakened in them.

This sense of their guilt, this understanding of their guilt, and that is what Joseph is doing in case you were wondering. What's all this about? Is he just being cruel?

No, he's forcing them to face their guilt. And he's doing it not for revenge, but he's appealing to their conscience. And so ultimately he's doing them a favor.

And I know that at the outside, when you just read through this, it may seem kind of cruel. It might even seem pointless, but coming to terms with guilt, you guys, is one of the most important things that we can experience in our lives. In terms of the New Testament, we refer to this as having a revelation of sin.

And do you know that not everybody has had a revelation of sin? Not everybody is aware of their sinful condition. Not everybody has come face to face with their guilt. I've heard people say, who were unbelievers, well, you Christians, you're always talking about sin all the time. You're always talking about, I mean, every time I hear you talk, you're mentioning sin. You're always bringing up sin. Why are you such a downer all the time?

Well, without the realization of our sin and the guilt that comes from it, let's face it, there's no reason to reach out to a Savior.

In fact, can I just go off just a second and tell you that we're living in a culture today that is so far away from understanding the Bible, so far away from understanding the truths of the Bible, that when you're sharing Christ with people of the world today, if you're just going around telling people that they need to get saved, you're just going to confuse people more than anything.

Now maybe 50, 50 years ago, 40 years ago, maybe even, I don't know, maybe even 30 years ago, I don't know. You might've been able to get by with just walking up to somebody and saying, you need to be saved and they might understand what you meant, but today they're going to go save from what?

There is such a blank understanding in our culture today, because we've gotten so far away from understanding of the Bible, that when you're skipping over the most important part, what's the most important part? You're a sinner and you're lost.

You see, before somebody can accept the good news, we've said this many times, they have to embrace the bad news, right?

That's one of the reasons why when Paul writes his letter to the Romans, which is an incredible written treatise on the need for a Savior, he spends the first few chapters convincing you, the reader of guilt. That's what the first several chapters of the Book of Romans are about.

He's convincing you, no matter who you are, that you are not only guilty, but you are under condemnation. And so what is that? Well, that's the bad news. You got to embrace it. You got to deal with it.

Before he can begin to talk to you about the Savior who came to bear your guilt on the cross that you might be saved. So you see, the bad news has to be conveyed. That's what Joseph is doing with his brothers. He's getting them to that place of realization.

I remember a number of years ago, I was doing marriage counseling. There was a couple that wanted to, ask me to marry them. That was a long time ago. We were living up in Washington and I knew this couple to be unbelievers because Sue worked with the gal and anyway, they knew that I was ordained.

And so they said, hey, would you marry us? And I said, yeah, okay, I'll do that. But I told him I wanted to go through some marriage counseling. I thought, well, this is a great opportunity to share the Lord with them. I told them, well, we'll probably need to sit down maybe 4 or 5 times. And they were like, cool, all right, fine.

The first 3 times that we sat down, I did nothing but reiterate the bad news. I never even got to the good news. I just kept doing the..., I kept saying the bad news over and over, because I really, because I wanted to make sure they got it. Because, again, if somebody doesn't really understand, we can go around and tell people, you know, you're a sinner and you really need Jesus but if I don't, if that doesn't impact their heart, and I move along to the good news, it's still not going to have any impact on their lives.

Because they have to be..., what does it say in Acts chapter 1 when Peter preached? They were cut to the heart. Remember? That's what has to happen. People have to be cut to the heart and that cutting process is a painful one, it can even sound like a cruel one on the outside, but it is absolutely necessary. And that's why Peter got up there when he preached on the day of Pentecost and said,

Jesus is the Messiah and you put Him to death and you're responsible. (Acts 2:36) And they had to see it.

You can hear what's going on. What Joseph is hearing as his brothers are talking, they don't know that he can understand them. But what he's hearing them doing, is coming to the realization of their guilt. And so what's he going to do? Ah finally, finally, you big jerks are finally learning the gravity of your sinful scumbag condition. Is that what he's doing?

Look at verse 24. And *“Then he (that's Joseph) turned away from them and (he) wept.”*

He went in the other..., he turned away and he cried. Why? His heart was broken. His heart was broken for his brothers so you can see, this is not some sick revenge. He cares about these guys. He cares about them coming to an understanding of their guilt.

And it says, *“...he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. ²⁵ And Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, and to replace every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. This was done for them.”*

Again, what are you seeing here? Joseph doing? Is he exacting a meanful revenge? No, he's showing love for his brothers, isn't he? He's giving them everything they wanted, and yet he's giving it to them for free. He's giving them money back, puts it in their sacks, tied the sack up. They're not even going to see it until later and so you can see here what's going down.

Now, of course, these guys are loaded down with guilt. And do you understand how people interpret grace when they're loaded down with guilt? It just makes their guiltiness worse, and we're going to see that here as we go on. It's a very troubling thing.

Verse 26. *“Then they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed. ²⁷ And as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, (or somewhere along the road) he saw his money in the mouth of his sack. ²⁸ He said to his brothers, “My money has been put back; here it is in the mouth of my sack!” At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?””*

Now, guys, this is very revealing. Again, a guilty conscience cannot understand or embrace grace. When somebody extends grace and you are feeling guilty, you're just going to see it. You can't see it as grace, you're going to see it as punishment. Isn't that funny?

Once you come to terms with grace and you come to terms with the fact that God loves you and His grace comes to you apart from your merit, then you can begin to embrace grace and accept it. And say, Lord I don't deserve this, but I accept it anyway, thank you. Because you're just good and I know this isn't because I deserve it. I know it isn't because I'm a good person. I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything to deserve this and neither did Joseph's brothers do anything deserve this.

These guys are guilty. They are guilty and yet, look what Joseph is doing. He's extending grace to them and their minds are just blown and they can't deal with it.

We go on here. Verse 29, it says, *“When they came to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying,³⁰ “The man, the lord of the land, spoke roughly to us and took us to be spies of the land.³¹ But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we have never been spies.³² We are twelve brothers, sons of our father. One is no more, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.’*

(and)³³ Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain for the famine of your households, and go your way. (they're relating all of this to their dad)³⁴ Bring your youngest brother to me. Then I shall know that you are not spies but honest men, and I will deliver your brother to you, and you shall trade in the land.’”

³⁵ As they emptied their sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid.³⁶ And Jacob their father said to them, “You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me.”

³⁷ Then Reuben said to his father, “Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.”³⁸ But he said, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you

would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.” Or if you will, to the grave.

Chapter 43. “Now the famine was severe in the land. ² And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go again, buy us a little food.” ³ But Judah said to him, “The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’ ⁴ If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. ⁵ But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, ‘You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.’”

⁶ Israel said, “Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?” ⁷ They replied, “The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’ What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down’?”

⁸ And Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. ⁹ I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. ¹⁰ If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice.”

¹¹ Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. ¹² Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight.

¹³ Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man. ¹⁴ May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.” ¹⁵ So the men took this present, and they took double the money with them, and Benjamin. They arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon.” ¹⁷ The man did as Joseph told him and brought the men to Joseph's house.

¹⁸ *And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys." "* Again, there's that guilty conscience talking.

"¹⁹ So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house and spoke with him at the door of the house, ²⁰ and said, "Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food. ²¹ And when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it again with us, ²² and we have brought other money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks."

²³ *He replied, "Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them."*

Can you imagine what they're thinking about this time? They're being told, no, we got your money is fine. You're paid in full. You're all paid up. Yeah, they can't even deal with this.

"²⁴ And when the man had brought the men into Joseph's house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, ²⁵ they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there."

²⁶ *When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground. ²⁷ And he inquired about their welfare and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" ²⁸ They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves."*

²⁹ *And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" ³⁰ Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there. ³¹ Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, "Serve the food."*

³² *They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. ³³ And they sat before*

him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. (in other words, Joseph had them arranged perfectly by age, okay) And the men looked at one another in amazement.” There were shocked that they were put perfectly in their birth order. “³⁴ Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.”

All right, let's talk a little bit about what's going on here, because this appears to be another test. That Joseph is doing for his brothers to see if they're still going to react jealously when someone is shown favoritism. You'll remember that's how this whole thing started. Jacob had showed favoritism to Joseph by, remember, giving him that coat of many colors and the brothers hated him for it.

And so what does Joseph do? He serves them food and he gives Benjamin 5 times as much as the rest of the brothers. He's going to see if they're over this issue. If they're over this issue of jealousy when someone else is treated as the favorite, and so it's a test. And what's interesting about this is that we know also that God tests us, don't we?

I mean, it's something that the Bible talks about, frankly, in a lot of places. One of them is in the Old Testament Book of Proverbs. Let me show you this on the screen from Proverbs chapter 17. It says,

Proverbs 17:3 (ESV)

The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts.

The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts.

You know what a crucible is? It's really the same thing as like a furnace. It's a thing that they would heat up very hot and they would put silver or gold in it and that crucible, that furnace, just by virtue of its heat, would burn away the impurities that were in the silver and the gold leaving just the pure metals. And so what the Lord is even doing in this verse is He's suggesting how the Lord, how He tests our lives.

Many times a test comes through the fires of affliction, doesn't it? Through the fires of difficulty in life. Are you going through a time in your life right now where it's hot, where God has turned up the heat in your life? Well, there's a purification work that goes on and we get tested, and when we get tested, it reveals a lot about what kind of people we are.

How do you respond to testing? How do you respond? Well, you probably aren't even thinking about it as a time of testing. You're just thinking about it as a hard time. How do you respond to hard times? Again, that's going to say a lot about who you are.

Will we see and confess our sin during a time when the heat is being turned up? Or will we say like some, why is this happening to me? God, why are you allowing this to happen in my life? What have I done to deserve this? That's the way some people respond during a time of difficulty when the heat gets turned up. You know that, maybe you've even responded yourself that way in the past. And then it tells a lot about somebody's character, doesn't it?

John the Apostle writes about these issues about just the recognition of sin. You know, we talked about this earlier, the revelation of sin, which many times comes through times of testing. Let me show you this on the screen from 1 John chapter 1. This is verses 8 and 10. He says,

1 John 1:8,10 (ESV)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

If we say we have no sin, (like the person who gets tested and says, what have I done deserve this? I haven't done anything to deserve this. Well,) If we say we have no sin, John says,) we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (in fact, he goes on to say,) If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Why do we call God a liar if we refuse to confess sin? Because He told us in His Word that we're sinners. And the question is, do you believe it? I'm probably preaching to the choir here tonight. I'm sure most, everybody here does, but the point is, sometimes testing brings out what we really believe about that. And testings are often times of humbling and we do get humbled, and that's the benefit of a time of testing.

It's not fun. It's not enjoyable. We hate it. But it's important and we're told in the Bible to consider all difficulty in life as discipline. Like the Lord is testing and disciplining us for the purpose of forming us into the image of His Son.

If you're going through a rough time right now, or there's things in your life that aren't as you would have them to be, and you're stressed out and you're struggling through the midst of it, just know this, God is doing a work in your life. And He has promised that He's going to work it for good in your life.

If you will trust Him, if you will turn it back to Him, and say, Lord, I submit, I submit to your hand of discipline in my life. I don't like it and you don't have to tell God that you like it. You don't have to make it sound like it's an enjoyable time. He knows it's not fun. He knows it's hard and he knows you're not happy about it so don't pretend otherwise.

Just come to Him and say, Lord, form Christ in me, form Jesus in my life. Make me who you want me to be and use this situation to do this work, amen.

We're going to stop there. We're going to close in prayer, but I need to tell you the kids have about another 15 minutes or so let them finish their program because they've got all the stuff they're doing over there and yeah. Let's pray.

Lord, I want to just start off here as we close in prayer, praying for those who are here in this room and even those who are listening to us online this evening who are right now going through a really painful time and you know who they are. You know those whose hearts are heavy. You know those who are dealing with the pain of loss. You know those who are dealing with frustration and just difficult times.

And Lord I lift them up to you in the name of Jesus, your Son. And I pray that you would bring comfort and I pray father God that you would give them the faith to turn all of this pain and difficulty over to you literally to laid at your feet and say Lord I give this to you. And I pray that you would use it in my life to bring about the purpose for which it was intended. That Christ may be formed in me and that this work of holiness might be completed.

Lord, none of us like difficult seasons, and yet we all endure them from time to time. Help us, Father God, to have the right attitude. To lay it up before you, to be humble, to be quick, to confess our sin and to learn the things that we need to learn. Thank you, Lord, for the example that you've given to us here in the scripture of how Joseph responded to his brothers in such a way as to get them to face their guilt.

Lord, we see in the scripture how very important that is and I thank you, Lord God, that once we recognize our guilt, that you are all too eager to take it from us and to remind us that you bore our guilt on the cross through Jesus Christ, our Savior. And we are so grateful that we don't have to live with guilt or condemnation, but we can know that has been paid in full by our Lord and Savior. We thank you and praise you for these reminders. We worship you as our King, our Lord, our returning Redeemer. For it is in the name of Jesus we pray, amen.