

STUDY THIRTY SEVEN

THE KINDNESS AND STERNNESS OF GOD

Genesis 42

Introduction

Famine hits the land of Canaan where Joseph's family lives. It is so severe that there is a real threat of starvation. But there is grain in Egypt and to Egypt the brothers go where they have an encounter with the governor. Joseph had always remembered the dreams that the Lord had given him when he was young. Now they were being fulfilled. But Joseph knew that his brothers must be made to see the seriousness of their sin. So he makes a plan to bring them to see their need for forgiveness.

Questions for Discussion

1. How many years had passed since Joseph was sold into slavery? (See Gen. 37:2 & 41:46, 47 & 53)

2. Read Luke 15:11-20.

a) How did God use physical need in the life of the 'lost son'?

b) How did God use the famine to bring good to Joseph's brothers (Gen. 42:1-5)?

3. Why did Joseph hide his identity from his brothers?

4. Joseph realised that God's words to him in dreams when he was young were being fulfilled (Gen. 37:5-7). Why, then, did he treat his brothers harshly (42:6-16)?

5. Read Romans 11:22.

a) What two aspects of God's character must we consider?

b) Why does God act sternly with people?

c) In what ways was Joseph kind and stern?

d) Could the brothers see both Joseph's sternness and his kindness?

6. In this story the consciences of the brothers is being awakened from a long sleep.

a) What was God using to lead them to repentance?

b) Does God do similar things today?

c) How can we be cleansed from a guilty conscience? (See Heb. 10:19-22)

d) As this part of the story ends have the brothers actually repented of their past sin?

7. In vv.35-38 we see Jacob's reaction to the brothers' news.

a) Was he right to think like this?

b) What events in his life should he have remembered? (See Gen. 28:10-19, 32:22-30 & 35:9-15)

c) What does this tell us about forgetting? (See Dt. 4:9 & 23 & 6:12 & Ps. 103:2)

For Further Thought And Action

Meditate on the lessons you have learned from the difficulties God has brought into your life.

Memory Verse

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

Romans 11:22