

## Have You Changed? (8)

*The Life of Joseph*

By Rev. Garrett Eriks

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Genesis 42  
**Preached on:** Sunday, June 1, 2014

### **Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church**

5101 Beechtree Street  
Hudsonville, MI 49426

**Website:** [www.hudsonvilleprc.org](http://www.hudsonvilleprc.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/hudsonvilleprc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/hudsonvilleprc)

We turn in God's word this morning to Genesis 42. Genesis 42. The entire chapter will be the text this morning, here the record of the first time that Joseph sees his brothers in the land of Egypt.

1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. 3 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. 4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him. 5 And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. 6 And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. 7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. 8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. 9 And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. 10 And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. 11 We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies. 12 And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. 13 And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not. 14 And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: 15 Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. 16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. 17 And he put them all together into ward three days. 18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God: 19 If ye be true men, let one of

your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: 20 But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so. 21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. 22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. 23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. 24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes. 25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. 26 And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. 27 And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. 28 And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us? 29 And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, 30 The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. 31 And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: 32 We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. 33 And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: 34 And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land. 35 And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. 36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me. 37 And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. 38 And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Thus far we read God's word.

Let's pray now God's blessing on the preaching.

*Father in heaven, it's our fervent desire that the preaching of the gospel week by week and also this morning would change us, that it would continue to change us and sanctify us, turning us from our sinful ways and to the ways of thee, our God. That was the desire of Joseph for his brothers, and as we see that this morning, may we see the change that thou art working in us. And if there are those who are not changing now, we pray that through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit that the word would have this effect upon them this morning. Forgive graciously our sins and bless us in this in this preaching today, and give strength to thy servant that he may be faithful in the proclamation of this word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

The theme of the sermon and the important question as we look at this text is this: have you changed? That's what Joseph wanted to know in regard to his brothers. Have you changed? What that sets before us is an important doctrine. We've looked at important doctrines of the Holy Scriptures along the way in the life of Joseph. We've seen the sovereignty of God. We've seen the providence of God as he is doing all things according to his eternal decree. We looked at the revelation of God, how God speaks as he spoke to Joseph. Now here he spoke in dreams, he speaks to us in the Holy Scriptures. We looked at important doctrines. The important doctrine we look at this morning is the doctrine of conversion and that's the question for Joseph in regard to his brothers: are you converted? Are you changed? Though I'm not saying that all of Joseph's brothers were not necessarily converted, and in the sense that they maybe were not or didn't know that they were children of God at this time. That may have been the case, and I said that at the beginning of the series as well as we looked at the dysfunction that was found in Jacob's family. It may be that these boys of Jacob did not know the Lord at this time. They do speak of God even here in the text, but the way in which they were living was not the life of a child of God. We don't have to judge in that for sure, but this we do know in regard to specific sins in their lives they were not changed, they were not converted. When it came to what they did to Joseph, when it came to what they did before they sold Joseph, we know that they hadn't changed and we're going to see that in the text, too, they had not changed, but that tells us that the doctrine that is before us is the doctrine of conversion. You don't find that word in the text, you don't find the Old Testament word for that turning in the text, but that certainly is the idea that you find here. Conversion, remember, is a spiritual turning. It's a spiritual turning from sin, so away from it, to God. It's a spiritual 180-degree turn. And that's the question here for Joseph as he meets his brothers the first time. Have you changed?

But now, again, these doctrines we look at in the life of Joseph, they intersect. They come together. Sovereignty of God is at work here. God's in control. He's providentially ruling over all things, and he's using this to bring these boys of Jacob to conversion, to see their sin, to bring them to repentance for their sin, and that's important and that is necessary because we understand how God works in the line of the covenant. We have to keep the covenant before us as well as we look at this Old Testament passage. God has chosen Israel. He has chosen his people. And we know that not all Israel is of Israel. We've seen that. We've seen that when we looked at Romans 9 in the past. God, of course, chose Abraham, and then after that he chose Isaac and not Ishmael, and then after that he chose Jacob and not Esau. But now there are these 12 sons of Jacob, and these 12 sons of Jacob

are going to be the heads of all of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. And so certainly you can see that it is the plan of God that these boys of Jacob would come to know salvation in the promised Messiah. They may not remain unconverted. They may not remain unrepentant. They may not remain in their sin. And we know that that's the way God works, that's Romans 8:29 and 30, that those who are chosen are called, and those who are called are justified, and those who are justified are glorified, that golden chain of salvation. And so we see how it is that God is bringing these sons of Jacob to be converted, to be repentant for their sins. In this chapter, you don't see it yet but it's coming.

So we keep that in mind this morning as we look at that important question, have you changed? We notice, first, the vital question; secondly, the failed test; and finally, the necessary examination. As I said, the vital question of the text is have you changed? That's the vital question on Joseph's mind as he sees his brothers there in Egypt. No doubt Joseph has been looking for his brothers. He's been expecting they're coming to Egypt because it's the only place in all of the region at that time that grain can be bought.

We want to see how it is, first of all, that God brought Jacob's other sons, Joseph's brothers, to the land of Egypt so that that question is faced then, have you changed? We read in the beginning of Genesis 42 that God used the famine to bring Joseph's brothers to Egypt to fulfill the revelation God gave to Joseph in those first two dreams when he said to his brothers that in those dreams they bowed down to him. Now you have the fulfillment of those dreams. We have to understand that when Joseph's brothers headed off to Egypt, Egypt was the last place in the world they wanted to go at this time. There was famine in the land. They saw and understood that the grain at home was getting very low. The famine especially affected that. It wasn't that they had no food at all. We understand that because when they returned the next time, they brought with them many different things. They brought with them balm and honey and spices and myrrh and nuts and almonds. But they needed grain.

The brothers had heard as well the reports that there was grain to be bought in Egypt. There was plenty there. There was food for sale. It was the only place in the region that they could go to find this grain, but they didn't want to go. They didn't want to go because, first of all, they knew Joseph was there somewhere and, secondly, just the very fact of going brought to the surface the things that they had done to their brother. They felt guilt and we read that in the text, too. They were filled with guilt about what they had done. Their going to Egypt brought that guilt to the surface. For so long they'd been able to repress it, but now it was all back for them.

Well, Jacob, he can't figure out what his sons are thinking. He rebukes them in the beginning of the passage. "Why do you look one upon another? What are you doing just sitting here? You know the grain is running low, you know there's grain in Egypt, why aren't you getting ready to go and to buy grain there?" Of course, Jacob doesn't understand because his sons have been lying to him for years. They needed grain and so Jacob sends his sons, his 10 sons to Egypt to buy grain. All of them but one goes.

Benjamin stays home. It's not because he's too young. It's not because he's too frail. It's because Benjamin is the new favorite son.

So now these 10 sons of Jacob enter into the land of Egypt, and you can imagine that they kept their eyes open, "Are we going to see Joseph? Looking around among the slaves and the servants that were found in the land, are we going to see Joseph?" But they don't see him. They don't think that they see him.

So the brothers go, then, to buy corn. They go to the marketplace where the corn and the grain is sold and there they bow before the ruler of the land of Egypt who is there, and there without knowing it, they fulfill those dreams that Joseph had long ago. And we read here in the text in verse 8 that Joseph recognizes them but they don't recognize Joseph. That's quite something. Now we don't know exactly why that was. The text doesn't tell us. Maybe it was because they weren't expecting Joseph to be the leader there, and then he's dressed in the royal garments of the land of Egypt and he looks much different. He's much older, of course. He was 17 years old when he left and now he's close to 40 years old. Maybe that's part of it. He'd been gone for over 20 years now. But there may be something else that explains this. It may have been part of a wonder of God that he blinded them to Joseph. Even though you may not see someone for 20 some years, 17 years old to 40 years old and there's change that takes place in our facial features, in our bodies and so on, usually you can recognize someone after not seeing them for that long, and in fact it's a greater thing, amazing thing that Joseph recognized his brothers. They were much older and change takes place at a more rapid rate when we get older, no doubt, in the way that we look. But still he recognized them, they did not recognize him. That's the work of God. He's in control of that, too.

But as Joseph sees his brothers, he does not reveal himself to them. Instead, he accuses them of being spies, of course, speaking in the Egyptian language through an interpreter, and the question is why? Why did Joseph do that? Why does he not reveal himself? Why does he not tell them who he is, even especially after they bow down to him, not knowing who he is? Well, the reason is, the question that's our theme this morning: have you changed? The last time Joseph saw them, they were murderers, thieves and liars, and now he wants to know, "Have you changed?" By the way, when you look at that, it's interesting how these 10 sons of Jacob respond to Joseph in verse 11. When he accuses them of being spies, they say to him, "We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies." They're still lying. It's as if they're saying, "Spies, really? We've never been spies." But behind that, just think of that, think of this response, "If you mess with our sister, we'll kill you. If we don't like you, we'll sell you as a slave in Egypt. We did that with our brother." They're, in fact, lying about Joseph right now. "There's one who is not." They don't say what's happened to him, implying, "Well, he's just dead." So it's quite striking their response, "Spies? How could you accuse us of being spies?" Murderers, thieves, liars, but never spies. You see that these men have not changed.

Well, that's Joseph's question: have you changed? Have you repented of your sins? Do you know forgiveness for those sins? Have you changed the way that you live? You see, Joseph is not doing this to torment them. Joseph is not enjoying watching them squirm as

he's this leader in the land of Egypt and he accuses them of being spies. That's not what he's doing. He's not retaliating against them. We know what Joseph is thinking, that's found in Genesis 50:20, that God was in control, "Ye meant it for evil but God meant it for good." I'm not going to retaliate. I'm not going to get you back. Joseph is not saying, "Vengeance is mine," but Joseph is saying, "Vengeance is thine." It's God's. He'll take care of that. So Joseph here is not getting back at his brothers. He wants to know: have you changed? They needed changed hearts. They needed to be converted. The greatest need that they had was salvation. Joseph is willing to forgive them and he loves them, that's evident from the rest of this history where he does that, but he does not want to tell them who he is until he knows this: have you changed? What kind of men are you now? Are you still the same as what you were over 20 years ago?

This change that we're talking about, as I said in the introduction, is conversion. That's the doctrine here. As I said, conversion is a spiritual turning, it's a spiritual 180, turning from sin and to God. Lord's Day 33 of the Heidelberg Catechism explains it this way, it's the mortification of the old man and the quickening of the new man. And then it explains those terms, it's hating sin, it's fleeing from sin. It's true repentance. It's confessing sin and turning from that sin but also with a joy and delight serving God. That's what Joseph wants to know here: do you hate your sin? Do you confess your sin? Are you turning from that sin? Not wondering if they're perfect, but are they turning? Do you delight in serving God now in your lives? You see, conversion is not just a one time thing, he's not interested in a one time thing for people who talk about it in that way today, "Do you accept Christ?" That's not what this is about, and that's not what conversion is either. There can be a radical conversion in one's life like the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus when Jesus appeared to him and there was a radical change that took place on that Road. And certainly Joseph wants to know that, is there a radical change that took place, but is it ongoing? Are you repenting of those specific sins you've committed, the specific things that you have done?

But there's another thing to understand about this conversion. The question could be asked another way and I could have put it another way in the theme. Have you been changed? That's in the passive because this conversion, this change, is something that God works. It's God who works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. He is the one who turns us so that we are turned, the prophet Jeremiah says. A man can only repent of his sin if God makes him to repent of his sin, if God works by his Spirit in a man's heart, in a woman's heart. And so that's part of what Joseph wants to know. He's not taking that work on himself, but has God changed my brothers? Are they different now or are they going to treat me the same way and are they treating Benjamin the same way as well?

That's the question: have you changed? That's a vital question. That's the vital question because conversion is the evidence that one belongs to God. What is the evidence that we belong to God? What's the evidence that you belong to God? People would say today, "Well, have you prayed a certain prayer? Have you accepted Jesus Christ into your heart?" Or we might think, and those are wrong answers, or he might say, "Well, I go to church." Now we have to recognize that there are many people who have gone to church and there are many people who prayed a certain prayer who will end up in hell. That

doesn't mean that one is a child of God. What indicates that we belong to God in this, it's true conversion.

We have to understand what's all part of that. 1 John 5 speaks of that. If you look at 1 John 5, in 1 John 5 you have this: those who are children of God, those who know God, they are those who understand the truth of God. They understand the truth about who Jesus Christ is. They understand propositional truth as it's found in the scriptures. Secondly, they love Christ and his church. And thirdly, they obey him. So you're find in 1 John 5 these are marks of one who is a child of God. And really, what that comes down to is true conversion, knowing God, knowing our sin, turning from that sin, and obeying God because we love Christ and we love his church. So that's what Joseph is getting at with his brothers. Have you changed? God teaches us clearly in the scriptures that those who are in Christ are new creatures. God's people are called out of darkness into light to do what? Well, the purpose of that is that they praise him, that they glorify him in their lives. When God saves us from sin, he not only delivers us from the punishment of sin, he not only forgives our sins, but he changes us. He turns us from our sins.

So this vital question on Joseph's mind as he meets his brothers that first time in Egypt is a vital question for us this morning: have we changed? Have we been changed? We need to examine our own lives and we'll look at that more at the end of the sermon. It's important for all of us to look at this morning. Children, young people, have you been changed? Are you changed in your life? What about us as adults? The question is not are you perfect or are you near perfect? That's not the question. We're not. But when you sin, what do you do with that? Do you confess it? Do you hate it? Are you fighting against it, turning from it in that way that shows the work of God? Are we progressing in our lives?

Graduation is a good time for you children and young people to look back on that. I prayed for that this morning. As we look back upon the past school year, our time for us to reflect back a little bit. It's not only have you learned a lot, we hope that you have, but have you grown? Are you turning? Are you changed? Is God working that in you? Young people, think about that as you in high school maybe, what change has God worked in my life through my years in school? And what amazing things God has done. Do we see progress, though, in our walk with God and in holiness? Those of us who are older too, when we look and see our specific sins, there are specific sins we walk in, the question is in regard to those sins, whatever they may be: are we changed? Are we moving forward or are we going backward? That's the question for us this morning.

Now we turn back to Joseph and his brothers. Joseph is testing his brothers to see if they have changed and they failed this test miserably. They fail it miserably, and we see that really they have not changed. We want to see here in the text that Joseph applies five tests, five tests to his brothers to see if they have changed. There are five of them. I'm going to list them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

The first is this, look at the text: is Benjamin still alive? That's test number 1, is Benjamin still alive? That's verse. 15, "Hereby ye shall be proved." Here's your test, he says. "By

the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither." That's the question, "You say you have a younger brother. You say he's alive. Is he really? And here's the one way you're going to prove it, you bring him to me. You show him to me. I want to see him face-to-face." Why is this a test? Well, it's a test because Joseph's brothers are not trustworthy. They're not believable. Joseph knows that they're lying right to his face. They're lying about that other brother, the one they're speaking to, and they don't realize it. They said, "He is not. He's dead." No, he's not. They're talking to him right now. They're lying right to his face. How can he believe what they say when they say that they have a brother who is alive? So he's saying to them, "I want the proof," and that's the question: are you changed? You were murderers in the past. They were. Remember how they killed the men of Shechem? And their plan was, their plan was to kill Joseph, and even though they didn't, that's still the sin. They hated their brother and in that way they murdered him. And so that's the question: have you changed? In this family there's hatred for certain sons who are the sons of a certain mother. They were to kill Joseph because he was the favorite son. Joseph understands Benjamin now has favorite son status. Have they done the same thing to Benjamin? Have they changed? That's test 1.

Test 2 and there are two parts to this, they really go together. First of all, in verse 16, now will someone volunteer to go get Benjamin while the rest of them remain in prison in the land? That's verse 16, "Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies." Here's the idea of this test: will the nine others trust that the one will return for them? So the test is this: what do they think of each other? Do they trust each other? Do they trust each other? Do they trust that one will go back and return? But now Joseph puts them in prison for three days and then he changes it a bit, he changes it a bit and he says unto them, verse 18 and following, "This do, and live; for I fear God: If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so." So now Joseph changes it but really the same idea is there, do you trust each other? Now you just leave one in prison and the rest of you go home. And the question is: will one volunteer to be the one to stay in prison? And if he does, that means that they trust the other brothers will come back for him. If no one volunteers, that means they don't trust each other yet, and that shows they have not been changed. That's test 2.

Test 3: will they leave Simeon in prison? Joseph chooses Simeon. No one volunteers so Joseph chooses Simeon. We might ask, "Well, why Simeon? Why not Reuben? Reuben's the oldest, after all." But remember this about Reuben: it would not have been wise for Joseph to pick Reuben because Reuben was already disowned by his father. His father hated Reuben because he committed the sin of incest with one of his wives. Reuben was probably already out of the inheritance and the will of his father. So they left Reuben there. There was no chance that Jacob was going to send his sons back with Benjamin for Reuben. So wisely, Joseph chooses Simeon, the next oldest in the line. And so that's the question here, the test is this: will they do the same thing that they did to Joseph to



another? They already left Joseph down in Egypt to rot, will they do that now with Simeon again? Have they changed?

Test 4: Joseph returns all the money in their sacks, have you ever wondered why Joseph put the money back in their sacks? I believe that was part of the test. Will they steal the money or will they return the money? Remember, they sold Joseph for money, they sold them for 20 pieces of silver. Not only that, but they had stolen things in the past. Think of what they did when they killed the men of Shechem and took their slaves and servants and their riches as well out of the land. These men loved money. That was part of their sin, and so the question is: have they changed? When they find the money in their sacks, are they going to turn around and bring the money back to the land of Egypt? That's test 4.

Test 5: does their father trust them? That's part of the test when Joseph calls them to bring Benjamin back to get Simeon out of prison and to do any more buying and selling in the land of Egypt. You see, Joseph knows the famine is not near over. It's probably just a couple of years into the famine. He knows it's going to last for seven years. The brothers don't know that. He knows they're going to have to come back, and so if they're going to want more grain, they're going to have to come back with Benjamin. The question is: does Jacob trust them in this? If Jacob trusts them, that shows they've changed.

As we look at these five tests, we see that Joseph's brothers failed these tests miserably, and it shows that they have not changed. There is one thing that they didn't fail. They failed all of the tests but one, it was the first one, they hadn't killed Benjamin yet. Benjamin was still alive. But no one volunteered to return while the other brothers stayed in prison. No one volunteered to stay in prison while the brothers went or returned home. They did not trust one another. They were planning to leave Simeon there in jail. They weren't ready to go back home and then turn around and go get Simeon out of jail again. They didn't return the money when they found it in their sacks. They certainly were afraid that they had found their money, but that thought didn't cross their mind, "Return with the money," at that time. And Jacob doesn't trust them. He's not going to send Benjamin with them. We see that when they return.

They have not changed, but there's something else in the text that shows us that they hadn't, and we learn from that, too. It's what Joseph overhears them saying when they find themselves in this predicament. Simeon's in jail. This ruler says they have to bring Benjamin back. They know the likelihood of that happening is slim to none. And what do they talk about? They're filled with guilt. Verse 21, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." They don't know forgiveness. They have guilt, they know before God they did what was wrong, but they don't know forgiveness for their sin and they're not repenting yet of their sin. They're not coming clean,. They're not coming clean to this ruler. They're not coming clean even to themselves. And they're not coming clean before God himself. Yes, they're filled with guilt, but that shows that they have not changed yet. God has not changed them at this point in their lives and I believe that that's why in verse 24 Joseph weeps, "And he turned himself about from

them, and wept." This is what hurt his soul more than anything else. They hadn't changed. They were the same men he knew before. He desired that change. What a good desire for him to have. He's not trying to be God but he does desire that his brothers be changed, that they know forgiveness, that they know the goodness of God.

As we look at that concept of change, the other question we should consider here in the text is what about Jacob? Has Jacob changed? That's an important question too, because Jacob had been sinning. His sin was the favoritism that he had showed to Joseph. Remember that he showed favoritism to his sons based on who their mother was. Joseph was his favorite son because his mother was Rachel and he loved Rachel more than his three other wives. Because of that, Jacob promoted Joseph in the family business, which was symbolized by the coat that he wore, not a shepherd's coat, but the coat of one who is in a position of authority. He was promoted above his older brothers, and the question is this: has Jacob learned his lesson? Has he turned from his sin and the mess that he had made in his own family? We'll consider Joseph's response to his sons when they return. What a hard conversation that had to be for those sons when they returned from the land of Egypt. "Simeon's not with us, dad. Here's why, the ruler in the land accused us of being spies. We don't know why. We didn't give them any reason to think that we were spies, we don't think. And so we're trying to defend ourselves and we told them that we have 10 brothers and we are 10 brothers of a family of 12. One is not and the other is at home with our dad. And so this ruler said, 'Prove to me that you're telling me the truth by bringing your youngest brother to Egypt.' And that's the only way we're going to get Simeon out of prison, and that's the only way we're going to be able to buy and sell, buy and sell there in the land of Egypt."

How does Jacob respond to that? Well, he responds by continuing to show favoritism. Look at verse 36, "Me have ye bereaved of my children." So Jacob, again, is very self-focused, he's feeling sorry for himself. "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Notice what he says about Simeon, "He is not." He considers him dead already. Maybe he assumes that he's been put to death, or it could be he's saying, "I'm not sending Benjamin. Simeon's going to die there." In addition to that, verse 38, this this had to hurt his sons. "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone." Joseph is saying, "Benjamin is my only son." He's talking to nine other sons and he says, "Benjamin, Benjamin is my only son. I will not send him down. I will not." That's favoritism. He's doing the same thing all over again. Had Jacob changed? He hadn't changed either. He hadn't learned from this.

Beloved, there's an important word for us to consider this morning and we need to examine ourselves, and so that's where we end this morning: have we changed? God calls his people to be holy and distinct, to be holy and righteous. We know that we are not completely sanctified yet, but when God sanctifies, change takes place. When God changes us, when he turns us, there's a turning that is evident in our lives. And we have to face this question this morning: is change taking place in our lives? There are three questions for us to consider to look at that in our own lives, three questions we need to answer to see whether or not change is taking place.

First of all this: do the sins of the past characterize your life in the present? We say that we are the people of God, that we are washed in the blood of the lamb, and that we're changed by his Spirit, but the question is are we continuing to walk, are we continuing to walk in the sins of the past and do we identify by those sins? That was true of Joseph's brothers/ Murder, lying, stealing. Those past sins, over 20 years ago they were committed, they still characterize their lives at this time. What about for us? It can happen that there are sins that have gone on long ago and they characterize our lives now. Murder. Yes, murder. Fighting. Hatred. It can happen in a home. There's rivalry among siblings and we say, "Oh, that's just part of being kids." Sometimes that continues into adulthood and it can be very childish and immature as well sometimes. What about us? Do we have some of that that's found in us? Does it continue in our marriages, sins that have been committed long ago in our marriages are being repeated right now in our homes and marriages? James 4 speaks of that. Where does fighting come from? Well, remember where it comes from, it comes from our hearts, the selfishness that's found in our hearts. That's part of the question. Not just the outward sins but does that selfishness continue? Am I all about me and what I want?

There are sins that we commit when we're young. Do they continue? Lying. Lust. Drinking too much. Drugs. Bitterness. Envy. And many more. These are things that can start when we're very young and we're children, when we're young people, and they can continue when we're older so that they master us and they control us. Do those sins of the past characterize our lives presently? We need to examine our lives. What sins characterized your lives in the past? And are we still walking in them right now? Is there any one of us this morning who can say, "No. None of them." Is there anyone of us? That's the question: have we changed? Are we identifying ourselves by those past sins? Because we are in Christ, we must not identify ourselves by our past sins. We're not defined by our sin. We're defined by relationship to Jesus Christ. That first of all.

The second question: do you love Christ and his church? Those things go together. Those who love God, those who love Christ, love the brothers and sisters that are found in the church. That's the book of 1 John. If you say that you love God but you hate your brother, you're a liar. You don't love God. That's what we read there in 1 John. So that's why this is so important. It's foolishness to say I love Jesus, but my wife, my husband, my children, I don't love them. It's foolishness to say that I love Jesus but I'm filled with animosity towards others in the church, towards the elders of the church, towards the deacons of the church, towards other members of the church, or other members of my family. You see, we think sometimes when we've been wronged by others we have the right, we have the right to be filled with bitterness and resentment and hatred towards them. No, we don't. Those who love Christ, love his church, love his people even with all of their sins.

Do we love Christ and do we love his people? That love indicates we're changing, that God is changing us because what that indicates is we're not focused on self anymore, but on loving others because I know, I know the love of God in Jesus Christ, that love in which he gave himself to suffer and die for my sins. Then we esteem others better than

ourselves when we know that love and we know the forgiveness of God. Does this characterize our lives, then, not self, not love of self but loving Christ and loving others?

And then this third question: what do the people who are closest to you see in you? That was part of the test that Joseph gave to his brothers. The brothers knew each other and the question was do they trust each other? Then Jacob, Jacob knows his sons, does he trust his sons? The people closest to us know us best. It's true for me. You see me standing on the pulpit. You see me preaching about the Christian life, how a husband is supposed to live towards his wife, how his father is supposed to teach his children, sometimes I worry that you think because I preach that I do that perfectly. I don't and the people who know it are sitting right over there. They know what kind of husband and what kind of father that I am at times. The people who are closest to us know us best. We can put on a good facade on the outside and so that when we're mingling with each other and talking after church, everything looks all great. This family has it all together. This husband and father does, this wife and mother does, these children are great children, they have it all together, but the reality is that people closest to us know what we're like. They know if change is taking place in our lives. What do they see in us? Here's a good way to test ourselves: what does your wife see? What does your husband see? What do your children see? What do your parents see? We live in a day where we can get many opinions about the way in which we're living, we go to different people and ask their opinion, or we can be very guarded about what we tell them, but the people closest to us know. So often I see that. If people want to go outside of that, they want to go to others, they want to get their second, third opinion, what about the people closest to us? What are they seeing in our hearts and lives? They can tell.

Beloved, that's where we have to look at ourselves, are we changing? Life is not about perfection. We know that. Life is about changing. It's about growing in sanctification. And that's true because as we read in 1 Peter 2:9, God secures for himself a holy people, a people that are set apart and they're set apart to praise him, to glorify him. We are to be those who walk in holiness and righteousness. We are to be those who are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, resembling him more and more in our lives, and that's what we are as those who are adopted children of God. We're part of this family. But understand what that means, that adoption is not only that we have a right to be in that family and that we have an inheritance, but more and more we resemble our Father and we resemble our elder brother. That could even be true for children who are adopted in this world. They've been adopted, they don't have the blood, but there are things that they pick up from parents that they begin doing so that it appears that they are. They're part of the culture of that home and that culture of the home in which they grow up is part of their culture of their home later on in life. The same thing is true for us spiritually. The culture of God's home, of belonging to his family, that's part of who we are as God's people and that's evident in our lives, and it's evident in change that takes place, confessing sin, hating sin, fleeing from that sin and walking in God's ways, delighting, delighting to walk in the ways of God.

So how do you answer the question this morning, have you changed? As we go forward in the series, we see amazing change that takes place. The next chapter and the chapter

after that show us change takes place in the lives of these brothers of Joseph. Amazing change. A change that only God can work. But at this point, no change yet. But may we look at ourselves and see the wonderful work of God, the change that's taking place, and if we're not changing in regard to certain sins, the command of God is, change, turn. Don't continue in that way. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Father in heaven, we've been humbled by the word this morning. We've been challenged to examine ourselves and to see change. Father in heaven, we give thanks for change that has taken place and we pray for change to continue so that we would not continue in our sinful ways but we would continue instead in the way of obedience and holiness. Father, forgive us where we have sinned, strengthen us to hate our sin and despise it, and help us to flee and to turn to thee. All these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Introduction**

- I. The doctrine we consider in this text is conversion.
- II. Conversion is necessary in the lives of His people because this is part of our salvation.

**The Life of Joseph  
(8) Have You Changed?**

**I. The Vital Question**

- A. This is the question on Joseph's mind when he sees his brothers in Egypt.

- B. Joseph's question is, have you changed? Have you repented of your sins?

**II. The Failed Test**

- A. Joseph applies five tests to his brothers to see if they have changed.

- B. We see clearly from the text that the brothers fail the tests miserably.

- C. One other question we should consider is this: has Jacob changed? Has God changed him?

**III. The Necessary Examination**

- A. There are three questions we need to answer when we consider if change is taking place in our lives.

- 1. Do the sins of the past characterize your life in the present?

- 2. Do you love Christ and His church?

- 3. Do the people closest to you see God's work in you?

- B. The life is not about perfection, but changing by growing in sanctification.