

**Genesis 42: 29 - 43: 17; "Losing your Life to Find it", Sermon # 105
in the series - "Beginnings", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
July 22nd, 2007, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Last week I preached to you concerning the need of Joseph's brothers to be convicted and convinced of their past sins before they could really be shown mercy in their being given the grain that would sustain their lives. Joseph did this very effectively by speaking to them roughly and accusing them of being spies. The brothers tried to persuade Joseph that they were not spies, and said that they were "honest men". This statement only showed Joseph that they had not really learned the lessons of repentance that they needed to learn before he would reveal himself to them. He loved them very much, and He was fully intending to show them mercy, and would not withhold grain from them even though they had not as yet come to a thorough repentance. But he would continue to interact with them and to work upon them with His words and with His commands to see if they were really learning the lessons of repentance that they needed to learn. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ does with every sinner that comes to Him for salvation. He gives them the grace and provision that they will need to be delivered from eternal death and live the Christian life. Joseph, we have seen, is a good picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and how He deals with needy sinners who come to Him looking for grace. Grace and grain are very comparable in the Scriptures. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain," Jesus says in John 12: 24. Jesus did die as the grain of wheat which fell to the ground. He was crucified, dead, and buried. But out of those sufferings came grace to save a multitude of lost sinners. From one grain of wheat came a multitude of grains of wheat. I said to you, last week, that there is an immeasurable amount of grace which has been stored up by our Joseph, Jesus Christ, for those who will come to Him for it. He may treat you roughly at first, especially if you are an insensitive sinner who has done much to hurt other people, but He will not turn you away. But He will teach you. And after you become a true Christian, He will not cease to work with you, even if you fail Him badly. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 1: 6 - "I am confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus."

When we are coming to Jesus Christ looking for salvation, and when we are trying by His grace to live the life of faith, we must be taught a series of lessons by the Holy Spirit concerning losing our life and finding our life. These lessons were learned by Joseph's brothers and by Jacob himself. We are being shown,

here in these verses, that if we would be saved from our sins, and if we would be sincere Christians, that we have to come to place where we will be willing to give up everything that is most precious to us, if and when the Lord requires it. But the glorious truth of the matter is; that in doing so, we will find that everything we thought that we had lost, and much more, will be given back to us. The question that we want to ask this morning is, " How does the Lord by His Holy Spirit bring us to the place where we are willing to lose our life for Christ's sake? For we will never be able to do it without His grace and His help. The answer is; that by His grace and by His providential ordering of things, He leads us to the place where we become willing to lose our life for Christ's sake. He teaches us to lose our life, that we might find it.

1st of all - He leads us to this place by means of adverse providential circumstances which we complain about and we resist.

(Verses 29-38)

After Joseph had bound Simeon before the eyes of the other brothers and had him put in prison, he instructed them to go back home with the grain. On the way back, one of them discovered that his money, that he had brought with him to purchase the grain, was still in his sack. It says in verse 28, "Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, 'What is this that God has done to us?' They recognized that it was God who had brought them to this place. They were convicted of their sin, and they were wondering in their hearts whether they were sinners in the hands of an angry God. Actually they were sinners in the hands of a loving God and a loving brother, but they could not see this based on their outward circumstances, and their wondering why they were so confusing and difficult. Is this you, dear believer, today? Is this you, O unbelieving person, O sinner who has not come to know Jesus Christ as of yet? God had most certainly done this to these brothers; but they could not really figure out what God was wanting them to see. Perhaps this is the way your life is at this time. But think of how God so wisely used Joseph to teach them; and let your heart take courage. He will teach you as well. God was using Joseph to order these adverse circumstances, and he gave them to them out of love; to bring them to greater sincerity of love within their hearts, and to bring them to repentance over past sins. Joseph was very much then, like to what our Lord Jesus Christ is to us now. He will test our sincerity; He will test our honesty by bringing situations where we will be thwarted in our plans, our strategies, and our desires just to lead what we would call a normal life. He does this with people who are first coming to him for help and salvation; and he does it also for people who have known him for many years.

We will be tested, often, in relation to the people whom we love, or whom we are supposed to love; people who are most precious to us, or should be most

precious to us. This is what happened here. Joseph knew what was most precious to Jacob. He knew also what should be most precious to his brothers. He knew that he, himself, should have been precious to his brothers 20 years before, but they threw him into a pit because they hated him and his dreams. Now his dreams are coming to pass and being fulfilled, and he is wondered if his brothers had changed their tune. Now he will test them to see if anything has changed in 20 years. The sinful brothers needed to be led to the place where they would lose their life that they might find it. The life that we must lose is the life of living according to our own earthly conception of how our life ought to go. Whether it is the unbelieving person or the believing person; they both must lose their life in the sense of losing their sinful desires to hurt or to control other people because they think themselves superior to other people in their judgment. Joseph's brothers thought this way about Joseph and it was sinful. What they needed to realize, and what we need to realize is that God has raised up multitudes of people in this world to fulfill His good purposes. Why should we make fun of those, or look down upon those who are not like us, and do not think like we do? If we have something to teach them and they have something to learn; why can't it be done in Christian love? It cannot be done unless Christian love is in exercise. Why should we consider ourselves to be superior in judgment that we have to force other people to our convictions? The truth itself will have its own force.

People may be Christians or they may not be Christians, but it is very important to God how you behave towards others. He may have given you a brother or a sister in your family who is quite different in their personality and gifts, from what he made you. You despise this about them, and you tell others about their quirks, and you make fun of them to others so that you might be seen as the standard of how things ought to be and your thoughts the standard of how people ought to think. But God notices all this, and he will act over time to correct this sin in you. He will turn the tables in time. If you are His true child, he will teach you the better way. God has created people with different personalities and gifts; not so that you would despise their being different from you. He did this so that you might learn by living in peace with them, something that He would teach you. Listen to what Elihu says about God Himself in Job 36: 5 - "God is mighty but He despises no one, He is mighty in strength of understanding." "He does not preserve the life of the wicked, but gives justice to the oppressed." This is how we lose our life that we might find it. We might think that we have great strength of understanding and judgment. But if we do; if we are like God, we will despise no one. We will attempt to learn from each one, and not to be high and mighty judges of people who are not like us exactly. God has a purpose for them, just as He has a purpose for you. God places each

person you come into contact with, in your life, for a reason. In relation to some of them, you must learn to lay down your life. This is what He is calling you to. You must find this by becoming teachable in God's sight, and not complain about the adverse circumstances that God has placed in your life to teach you.

2ndly - God leads us to the place where we are willing to lose our life by giving us the grace to stand surety for others. (Verses 36-Chapter 43, verse 10)

Jacob, especially, needed to learn this lesson; but I believe that God leads all Christians to learn this lesson. When the brothers came back to Canaan with the grain, and they emptied their sacks, they found "surprisingly, that each man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid," it says in verse 35. Jacob's response is not a response of faith to this. He said to the brothers in verse 36, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin." "All these things are against me." The thing that was most precious to Jacob, at this time, was the life of Benjamin. When Joseph was a young man, it says in Genesis 37: 3, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age." This, by the way, set the stage for all that came after, for it says immediately following in verse 4, "But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him." Partiality and favoritism are very unhealthy qualities if they are found in a parent. Parents take notice of this. Every child wants to feel that they are loved just as much as any other child in the family. It is not wrong necessarily to reward one child for something that they have done well, and not to reward another child because they have not done it. God gives rewards in this way to his children. But it is wrong when you have many children and you single out one of them to have special regard for him because he is "the son of your old age", and you think that you will find comfort more from him than all the rest. This is assuming something that may not be true in relation to all of your children's future. If you pray for all of your children and you see each one of them as a unique gift of God to you, you will not pick out the most gifted or promising, or compliant of your children and show them greater favor. This is in a way, disqualifying the possibility of God's intervention in any of their lives to change them. You pray for them all equally, and your consideration of them individually to teach them and to encourage them on to faith in Christ and to do and to become all they can be by his grace, may be the very thing that will allow them to develop into young people and adults who have the right view of themselves in your sight and in the sight of God. This is the initial principle of learning to stand surety for another. You will lose your life of having strong preferences in regard to your children. You will lose your

life of selfish ambitions for each of their sakes. Jacob was not willing to do this when Joseph was young and his favorite, and he is not willing to do it now, when Benjamin was at stake. He could not bear to lose Benjamin now that Joseph had been lost. From a natural and human standpoint we understand this. He thinks he losing everything. Reuben doesn't really understand the love that is necessary in standing surety. He says in verse 37 to Jacob, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put Benjamin in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." "But Jacob says to him, "My son shall not go down with you., for his brother is dead, and Benjamin is left alone." "If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave." Jacob was right in this sense. Reuben could not be assured of the success of what he wanted to do. And how would it comfort Jacob to know that two of his grandsons would be lost as well as Benjamin? Reuben would have done better to offer himself as surety.

Standing surety for your child, or for any other person, can either be a bad thing or a good thing in their lives. In the book of Proverbs, we find that all of the verses related to surety, relate to its being a bad thing. Turn to Proverbs 6, verse 1. "My son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth." "So do this, my son, and deliver yourself; for you have come into the hand of your friend: Go and humble yourself; plead with your friend." "Give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids, deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler." We are instructed here not to undertake to pay another man's debt, promising to pay it for them if they are unable or unwilling to do so, even if that person is our son or daughter or other close relative. There is a reason that we are to keep away from that kind of an unwise contractual agreement. It encourages the person who has been unfaithful in paying their debt, and unwise in their money management, not to assume responsibility for themselves. "Let every man bear his own burden," it says in Galatians 6: 5.

But two verses before this verse it says, "Bear one another burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." So we see that there is a good type of surety as well, and it is in conjunction with the law of Christ, which is to love one another. We obviously are to do this willingly, freely, and without any compulsion from the one we are helping, or from anyone else. We find the Psalmist in Psalm 119, verses 121 and 122, pleading for help from God in this way. "I have done justice and righteousness; do not leave me to my oppressors." "Be surety for Your servant for good; do not let the proud oppress me." Here, David as king, is feeling oppressed because of some wicked people around him, who did not like the way that he ruled things in Israel. But he had been trying to uphold what

was right and just in the government, and in his own personal life, in the way that he ruled. And now he is praying that God would be surety for him; that God would undertake to defend him, protect him, and deliver him from these oppressions. God, out of love to him, would become his defense and his shield. This very thing is what Jesus Christ undertook to do for us, who are not righteous but rather sinners. David pleads with God to undertake for him because he had been trying to do what is right. But sinners of any sort, or any degree, are not able to make such a plea. And sometimes they are not even willing. In Hebrews 7, verse 22, it says that Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant." He paid the debt which we owed to God in perfect obedience and also bore the punishment which we deserve for not only not obeying God, but for consciously and repeatedly breaking His laws. He did this willingly. He did this out of love to God and to man. This is why you should; this is why you must, believe in Jesus Christ to have eternal life.

This is also what you need to be able to stand surety for others in a good way. The famine still raged in Canaan and in Egypt and in all the world. And Jacob feels it. He says to his sons, "Go back, buy us a little food." "But Judah spoke to him saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, "You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you." "If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food." "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 you." Israel complains about this but there was no way around it. You and I may complain about our having to learn what it means to stand surety for others, but it will avail nothing. It is part of learning the "law of Christ." But Judah had the grace of God working in his life. Certainly he did not deserve it. He was the one who concocted the plan to sell Joseph for twenty shekels of silver to the passing Midianite traders. But now he knows in his heart what he must do. He had sinned before in regard to Joseph, but now he is repenting and in his heart he is asking to be forgiven of these past sins and to learn the way of becoming a loving surety for Benjamin. Verse 8 says, "Then Judah said to Israel his father, 'Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.'" "I myself will be surety for him; 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." Truly this, is losing your life, that you might find it. Oh, that you and I might see the greatness of this Christ-like love. This is the surety-ship of Reuben; "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back." That puts the responsibility and the blame where it should not lie. True surety-ship puts the responsibility and the blame upon ourselves. We have come to see our past sins rightly and what they deserve. And we have come to see that Christ alone can be the perfect surety. But once we believe in

Him, we can become a loving, self-sacrificing surety for others, when the Lord requires it. Is this you dear Christian? Do you see that this is the only way that sinners, who are to be blamed, can ever change to trust and love and obey? It is the only way. 1 John 3: 16 says, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us." "And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

3rdly- God leads us to the place where we are willing to lose our life that we might find it when we are thinking of our obedience as a gift to Christ.

(Verses 11-15)

Obedience to Christ is something that we owe Him for having saved our souls. Anything that we do for Christ either before we are converted or after we are converted is the response of trying to please the One to whom we owe everything. "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." "Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee." Israel now realizes that the Lord was teaching him the surety-ship of losing his life. And he is not only resigned to it, but he does something that shows his faith and hope and love that God would bless him in it. He says in verse 11, "If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man--a little balm and little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds." "Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. True faith, hope, and love, will always be desiring to show its good intentions and it will attempt to restore and make right any wrong that we might have done. Israel was not convinced that his sons had done anything wrong in the transaction with the man in Egypt. But he will attempt to convince him of their good, sincere, and honest intentions. He does this with a present of foods that would be desirable and enjoyable. Let me ask you this morning whether in your obedience to God, you are trying to bring him an obedience that will make Him joyful and that will make Jesus smile and that would make Jesus cry? Do you make a present to Him of obedience in little thoughtful ways that make Him understand that you are thinking of what might bring pleasure and delight to Him. He has said that He "desires mercy and not sacrifice." Do you show others that you are a person full of mercy toward others? He has said in Jeremiah 9: 23, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." "For in these things I delight," says the Lord." To bring delight to the Lord, we should consider how we might give to him the fruits of righteousness in our lives. Jacob did not understand why he and the brothers were being treated so roughly by the man

in Egypt. But they would make the best of it by giving him a present. "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable and gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." This is losing your life that you might find it. Jacob could have sent his sons down there to Egypt with the statement, "Why are you treating us this badly?" "What did we do to deserve this?" Instead he sent a present. He would win this man with kindness. Instead he would send also, his very heart and life; his Benjamin. "Take the gift, take double money, and take Benjamin. Take it all, and bring it to the man. Again, is this you, O Christian? Are you making a present of your obedience to Christ so that He would be pleased and delighted with it? And are you showing your good intentions and good will to the Lord who you might think has treated you roughly and with suspicion? Will you pursue what is good anyway? This is losing your life that you might find it. Will you bring the present to Christ the fruits of righteousness in your life, of your money, and what is most precious to you, your Benjamin; the one who you do not believe that you can live without. This will be pleasing to Christ. This will bring glory to Him who died for you.

And then finally- When we do this, when we lose our life, then He leads us to the place where we see that where we understand why Christ died.

(Verses 16 and 17 of Chapter 43)

It says, "When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for these men will dine with me at noon." "Then the man did as Joseph ordered." Joseph will prepare a feast for them to entertain them and to convince them of his love and good will for them." Joseph, once again, is like our Jesus in this beautiful act. This is why Christ died; so that we could understand how to lose our life for His sake, and how to find it when we are brought to that place. He calls us to come and dine with Him. He calls us to feast with him. He will be glad to see our good sincere intentions, and our strict accountability of all the money that we would give to him. He will be most pleased to see us bring our "Benjamin" to him. He will restore all back, that we give to Him, and give us far more in the future. This is the picture of dining in Joseph's house, and we shall speak more of it next week.