

Repentance to Reconciliation

Text: Genesis 43-44

Introduction:

1. In these two chapters we reach the climax in the drama between Joseph and his estranged brothers. In chapter 42 we saw the awakening of conscience in Joseph's brothers (See 42:21, 28). In these chapters we see a deepening of the work of conviction in their hearts through the tests Joseph wisely orchestrated.
2. Before Joseph attempted reconciliation with his brothers, he clearly wanted to see evidence of a change of mind (repentance) in his brothers' lives. Through this account we are reminded that conviction of sin and confession of sin (a spirit of repentance) are necessary pre-requisites for genuine reconciliation not only in human relationships but most importantly, in the sinner's relationship to God Almighty.
3. Of particular interest in these chapters is the prominence of Judah. Besides Joseph, he is the main character in this part of the narrative. The significance of this should not be missed when we consider that the Messianic line was through the tribe of Judah. Judah shows up in much better light here than he did back in chapter 38 and the Tamar affair.
4. There are three main scenes in these chapters that lead up to the reconciliation that takes place in Genesis 45.
 - Scene 1 – Jacob and his sons in Canaan discussing the need to go back to Egypt to buy more food because of the famine.
 - Scene 2 – Joseph's brothers return to Egypt and invitation to dine at Joseph's house.
 - Scene 3 – Joseph's final test with the cup in Benjamin's sack.
5. We will follow these three scenes in the text with a simple three-point outline.

I. JACOB'S TRUST (43:1-14)

A. The Difficulty of the Famine (Vs. 1-2)

1. The famine was severe and it wasn't long before the food stores they had purchased in Egypt ran out.
2. Jacob then speaks to his sons and request that they return to Egypt to buy more food. Jacob had clearly delayed this decision on account of what had happened during their last trip.
3. Jacob had misinterpreted the events through the eyes of unbelief and exclaimed "All these things are against me" (42:36). In reality, God was sovereignly and providentially working all things for Jacob's good and His own glory! We so often make the same mistake and think that everything is against us in our trials when in actual fact the truth of Romans 8:28 applies – "And we know **that**

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all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.”

B. The Dialogue in the Family (Vs. 3-10)

1. Judah **reminds** his father of the requirement to take Benjamin as stipulated by “the man” (Joseph) in Egypt (Vs. 3-5)
2. Jacob **reprimands** his sons for telling the Egyptian ruler about Benjamin (Vs. 6-7). Their answer was to point out that they were simply answering the direct questions put to them by the ruler and had no way of knowing he would make such a demand. This was all mysterious and confusing for Jacob and his sons on account of the fact they did not know that “the man” they were dealing with in Egypt was none other than Joseph himself.
3. Judah **replies** that he would be surety for Benjamin (Vs. 9-10). This was no empty promise as we will see later in the story. Judah had changed a lot from the time 22 years earlier when he had been instrumental in Joseph being sold into slavery (37:26-28).

C. The Decision of Faith (Vs. 11-14)

1. Jacob **recommends** they return with a gift for the Egyptian ruler (Joseph) (Vs. 11) as well as double money (Vs. 12). The gift of the “best fruits of the land” represented an act of real sacrifice in the midst of a famine. Double money would have been 20 bags of money. Think of it in light of the fact they sold Joseph for 20 pieces of silver.
2. Jacob **returns** to a position of trust in God for the situation (Vs. 13-14). Circumstances were such that he was left with no other choice than to place the whole situation into the hands of God. This is just where God wants us in our lives and often, He uses circumstances to bring us to the end of our own wisdom and resources that we might learn to trust.
3. Note: Jacob is called Israel again in this chapter for the first time since Genesis 37:13. He is living the Israel life rather than the Jacob life. In the previous chapter he is called “Jacob” and is viewing things from the fleshly perspective (Vs. 29-36). Now in this chapter he is called Israel as he returns to the perspective of faith. We are constantly presented with a choice between the Israel life (new nature in Christ) and the Jacob life (old nature in Adam). The one is characterised by faith, the other by fleshly doubt.

II. JOSEPH’S TESTS (VS. 15-44:15)

Joseph’s brothers return to Egypt and Joseph puts them through some further tests in order to see if his brothers’ hearts had changed. Ultimately, God was working through Joseph’s actions to bring Jacob’s sons to repentance and restoration. When circumstances seem against us and out

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of our control, we find out much about where our hearts are truly at. The tests Joseph orchestrated for his brothers centred on Benjamin. Joseph wanted to see if they would respond to Benjamin in a similar way as they had to him or if there had been a change of mind and attitude (repentance). Note the two main tests.

A. Benjamin was Favoured by Joseph (43:15-34)

1. The invitation to Joseph's brothers (Vs. 15-17). It was particularly the presence of Benjamin that prompted this invitation. We get a glimpse of the longing in Joseph's heart to see his full blood brother.
2. The confusion of Joseph's brothers (Vs. 18-23).
 - a. Given their experience with this powerful Egyptian ruler during their last trip, we can well understand the fear of Joseph's brothers. They assumed they were going to be punished for the money that had been returned in their sacks.
 - b. They approach Joseph's steward and discuss the problem of the money that had been mysteriously returned into their sacks. The steward's reply must have added to the mystery of the whole affair. His reply also reveals that Joseph had been a good testimony to this Egyptian man and had imparted a knowledge of the One True God of Israel to him. Joseph was a man full of the Lord; a light shining in a dark place.
3. The interaction with Joseph's brothers (Vs. 24-34)
 - a. Joseph's honour (Vs. 24-28)
 - i. The brothers bow to Joseph and present the gift they had brought to him upon his arrival back at the house.
 - ii. Joseph inquires concerning their father's well-being. They reply that he is still alive and in good health and then bow a second time to Joseph.
 - b. Joseph's heartache (Vs. 29-31).
 - i. This was a tear-soaked time in Joseph's life. Seeing his younger brother Benjamin for the first time in 22 years deeply moved Joseph to the very depth of his being. Benjamin would have only been a baby or toddler when Joseph last saw him (Joseph was 17 when he was sold into slavery. He is now 39 years old). Joseph's tears reflect well on him. They demonstrate that by God's grace his heart had not become hardened, dry and brittle through his trial. Joseph wept, Jesus wept (John 11:35) and so can you in the trials you face!
 - ii. "Can't you picture the scene? All of a sudden, the handsome, bronzed leader of millions has rushed to his bedroom and collapsed in sobs. All those years passed in review. All the loneliness. All the loss. All the seasons

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and birthdays and significant occasions without the family. It was too much to contain, like a rushing river, pouring into a lake, his tears ran and he heaved with great sobs.” (Denis Lyle)

- c. Joseph’s hospitality (Vs. 32-34)
 - i. The feast commences at Joseph’s command. Joseph adds a further touch of mystery by seating his brothers in birth order. Henry Morris comments, “One can easily show (merely by multiplying together all the numbers from one through eleven) that there are no less than 39,917,000 different orders in which eleven individuals could have been seated! Thus, for the servants to select the one correct order by chance was almost impossible. The odds were 40 million to one against it.”
 - ii. Joseph honours Benjamin above the others by giving him five serves of the royal food instead of one. No doubt this was in part due to his great affection for his full blood brother but more importantly as a further test of his brothers to see if they would react to this with envy and hate the same way they had towards him over 22 years earlier.

B. Benjamin was Framed by Joseph (44:1-15)

1. Joseph put his brothers through one final test. He had his steward return the money to each sack like before and also plant his special silver cup in Benjamin’s sack (Vs. 1-2).
2. The brothers are then sent on their way in the early morning light. The brothers travel only a short distance outside the city walls and Joseph commands his steward to pursue after them and accuse them (Vs. 3-11).
3. This would be the ultimate test to see if the brothers had had a change of heart. If they still had the same kind of bitter envy in their hearts, they would think nothing of letting Benjamin be taken prisoner by this powerful man. After all, 22 years earlier, they had even considered murdering Joseph.
4. The immediate reaction of the brothers was a positive sign – they all rent their clothes, indicating they all felt a deep sense of grief over what was happening.

III. JUDAH’S TEARS (VS. 16-34)

Judah takes the position of spokesman on behalf of the brothers – “And **Judah** and his brethren came to Joseph’s house” (Vs. 14) and makes a powerful appeal on Benjamin’s behalf before Joseph. His speech is one of

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the most moving in the Bible with its pathos and passion. Most importantly, it reveals the repentant attitude that Joseph was looking for in his brothers.

A. The Confession in Judah's Appeal (Vs. 14-16)

Judah's first words reveal the attitude of repentance before God.

1. He had a sense of speechlessness – “What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak?” They felt speechless in the face of the incriminating evidence against them. Part of repentance is being so convinced of your guilt your mouth is stopped. Romans 3:19 “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: **that every mouth may be stopped**, and all the world may become **guilty** before God.”
2. He had a sense of guiltiness – “or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants”. There is a clear admission of their guilt before God for their sin. Their sin had “found them out” (Num 32:23). When God exposes our sin, it is because He loves us. Sin stands in the way of reconciliation with God and must be dealt with. God was using this whole occasion in Joseph's brothers' lives to bring them face to face with their sin, particularly in reference to what they had done to Joseph. Genesis 42:21 “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.”
3. He had a sense of humbleness – “behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.” Judah's attitude was that they deserved justice because of their guilt. This is the attitude of genuine repentance.
4. Would you be willing to humble yourself before God in repentance today and confess that you are a guilty sinner deserving of hell? To be saved you must be willing to:
 - a. Confess your sin (1 John 1:9)
 - b. Confess the Saviour (Rom. 10:9-10, 13)

B. The Passion of Judah's Appeal (Vs. 17-32)

Judah's passionate speech before Joseph further highlights how much he had changed by the grace of God. There is one dominant theme in this speech – concern for his father Jacob. What a contrast to his and his brother's previous callous attitude towards their fathers suffering at the loss of Joseph (Gen. 37:34). God is dealing with the big family secret in these men's lives!

1. Judah appeals to Joseph with an overview of the situation including the details of his discussion with their father Jacob (Israel) before they had come to Egypt (Vs. 17-29).
2. Judah appeals to Joseph that if they were to return without Benjamin, their father would die from the grief. He also informs Joseph that he had promised his father to be surety for Benjamin

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(Vs. 30-32). No doubt this must have touched Joseph as he saw further evidence of Judah's change of heart.

C. The Proposition of Judah's Appeal (Vs. 33-34)

1. Judah crowns his speech with an appeal to take Benjamin's place. Judah was willing to become a bondman in Egypt so that Benjamin could go free to his father.
2. Judah's name means "praise". In the earlier part of his life, he had not lived up to the meaning of his name. His conduct had been anything but praiseworthy. He had been a willing participant in the selling of Joseph into slavery and the subsequent cover up. He had been immoral with his daughter in law Tamar, thinking she was a harlot (Genesis 38). Now we see evidence of a different man.
 - a. He had sold Joseph into slavery 22 years ago, now he was willing to become a slave to save Benjamin.
 - b. He had lied to his father about what happened to Joseph, now he can't bear the thought of his father's grief should Benjamin not return.
 - c. Judah was now in the right place to take on the Messianic line. Interestingly it would be he, not Joseph who would be given that high privilege. What a testament Judah's life is to the power of God's grace to restore and repair a broken, sinful life.
3. **Judah as a type of Christ.** Judah is the first man in the Bible who offers his own life to save another. Judah was willing to take Benjamin's place and be separated from his father. Christ, of the tribe of Judah, actually took our place on the cross and was separated from the Heavenly Father so we could go free. The Gospel is that "Christ died **for** our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3), "Christ died **for** us" (Rom. 5:8). 2 Cor. 5:21 "For he hath made him *to be* sin **for** us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Gal. 1:4 "Who gave himself **for** our sins..." 1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, **the just for the unjust**, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"

D. The Reconciliation after Judah's Appeal (45:1-8)

We will study this chapter in greater detail in our next lesson but note the floodtides in this chapter.

1. Floodtides of Tears (Vs. 1-4) Imagine the scene. All of a sudden, this strange Egyptian official barks a sharp order in Egyptian they don't understand and all his servants scurry hurriedly out of the room. Can you see the perplexed looks on the brothers faces? Can you see them weighed down under their guilt and shame? Can you see the fear in their eyes? They are now alone with this powerful ruler. What is going to happen? They watch on in stunned amazement as big tears begin to roll down the man's cheeks and

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his body shakes with audible sobs, so loud and heart rending the Egyptian servants outside can hear it. All of a sudden, they hear the words in their own Hebrew language “Aney Yosef” (I am Joseph). The words go through them like a lightning bolt and they stand in stunned, shocked silence. Joseph calls them closer and says “I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt”

2. Floodtides of Forgiveness (Vs. 5-8)
 - a. Joseph’s words are full of his faith in God and his forgiveness towards his brothers. He has been enabled by the grace of God to see his trial from the Divine perspective.
 - b. Note that the floodgates of forgiveness were opened in response to the brother’s repentance. Repentance led to reconciliation. In like manner, we can experience the floodtides of God’s forgiveness offered to us through Christ if we will repent and turn to Christ in faith.
 - c. That day Joseph’s brothers heard the word “I am Joseph” and it was a life changing experience. Hundreds of years later Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus heard the life changing words “I am Jesus” (Acts 9:5). Will you come to Christ today with contrition and confession and received His forgiveness?

Conclusion: Have you been reconciled to God? Will you repent and receive God’s gift of salvation? How are you viewing your trials (for you or against you)?