

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/29/92  
Genesis 44 "How to Tell if a Person is Really Sorry"

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**Intro:**

Illust: When I was about 4, I popped the neighbor's football...I thought it would be fun. But I felt terrible. Especially when my mother insisted I had to go to my neighbor, face to face, tell them what I did, and say, "I'm sorry."

Q: How can you tell if someone is really sorry? Really repented and changed?

A: That's not always easy to determine.

Illust: As an RD, I was often involved in discipline meetings involving students who had violated the guidelines spelled out in the Student Handbook. Eg-- One of the biggest problems the Deans and RD's had was to determine if the person was really sorry. How can you tell? It's easy to SAY, "I'm sorry." But...

How can you tell if someone is really sorry? That's the very question Joseph sought to answer in his own mind, in Genesis 44. He wondered, of course, about his 10 brothers.

Here's why. When he was 17 years old, he was his father's favorite son, to the bitter dismay of his siblings. His 10 older brothers hated him for it. When an ideal situation opportunity came for them to dispose of him, they did. They actually sold their brother to a band of slave traders heading for Egypt. Then they had the audacity to deceive their own father by making him think his son had been killed by a wild beast.

Nearly 25 years have passed since that cruel deed. God's hand was upon His man Joseph. God elevated Joseph from a forsaken prison to the palace in Egypt. And He sent a famine that devastated the whole Middle East. It was that famine that God used to bring about a reunion between the 10 older brothers, and Joseph.

There's one catch. The brothers don't know that it's Joseph when they see him. But he knows them. What was the one question Joseph needed to have answered most?

Q: Were his brothers really sorry for what they did to him?

How could he tell? He devised one last, great test in Gen 44.

**Proposition: Genesis 44 offers us practical insight in helping us determine if a person is really sorry, if a person has really changed. It's the "case study" of Joseph and his brothers.**

- I. The Test Devised by Joseph (1-13)
- II. The Response Displayed by the Brothers (14-34)
  - A. Personal Guilt (16).
  - B. Personal Responsibility (32).
  - C. Personal Change (33-34)
- III. The Ramifications Discovered about Biblical Repentance
  - A. What Biblical Repentance is NOT:
    1. Repentance is NOT just saying, "I'm sorry."

2. Repentance is NOT merely feeling badly about what you did.
  3. Repentance is NOT Penance.
- B. What Biblical Repentance IS:
1. Admit 2 things...
    - a. Admit that what I did was **WRONG** in God's eyes.
    - b. Admit that I have no intention of doing it again.
  2. Accept 2 things...
    - a. Accept personal responsibility.
    - b. Accept God's unmerited pardon through Christ.

When we left off last week, Joseph had invited his brothers to his house for a gourmet meal. Now it's time for them to go.

### **I. The Test Devised by Joseph (1-13)**

Vv 1-2 "And he commanded...put my cup..."

That's interesting. Unbeknownst to his brothers, Joseph put their money back in their sacks, just like he did the first time. Why? Apparently he refused to accept money from his own family for the food he was able to supply them. He also inserted his "silver cup."

What was Joseph's "silver cup"?

1. His own personal, special cup, from which he drank daily
2. Possibly a "divination cup" (5)

In ancient times, a divination cup was filled with water. Then oil was poured on the water. On the basis of the forms and shapes that the oil took on the surface of the water, the future was predicted. God did not endorse such "divining" for His people. Instead, He revealed His will explicitly. But remember, Joseph is in Egypt, and plays the part of a good Egyptian in testing his unsuspecting brothers.

Watch the test develop. As soon as the brothers left, Joseph sent his steward right on their heels. He told him exactly what to say...

Vv 3-5 "As soon as the morning..."

Here's how the dialogue actually went:

Steward: "You've done evil! You took my master's cup!" (6)

Brothers: "In all due respect, no way!" (7-8)

Brothers: "If what you say is true, that person will die..." (9)

Steward: "OK, so be it!" (10) (note: he lessened the penalty)

Can't you see the humor in this?! You'd think the brothers would check their sacks before sticking their necks on the chopping block, especially after unexpectedly finding their money on the first trip (42:27, 35).

You talk about a spine-tingling drama! Here's what happened. The brothers all opened their packs for inspection (11). The Steward began his search (12) with the oldest brother Reuben. No cup. Then the next to the oldest, Simeon. Then Levi. Then Judah. And right on down the list. I wonder if the brothers didn't start getting a little confident at this point. Until he came to the last brother, the youngest. And horror of horrors, there was the cup, in Benjamin's sack!

Look at the what the brothers did. Two things:

1. Tore their clothes (cultural display of great grief)
2. Returned to the city ("every man")

That's important to the story. They ALL returned. Don't miss that. Instead of saving their own hides, instead of saying, "Tough luck Ben! Hope things work out for you. See you later!," they stuck together.

Q: Why did Joseph "frame" Benjamin? Why did he "set up" his brothers like this? What was the reason for this Test?

A: Joseph wanted to see if his brothers had really changed.

Illust:

Tran: Had the brothers changed? Let's move to episode 2 in the story. Episode 1 was the Test Devised by Joseph.

## **II. The Response Displayed by the Brothers (14-34)**

The caravan retraced its steps back to Joseph's house.

V 14 "...they fell before him on the ground."

You can't help but recall Gen 37 at this point. Remember the dreams Joseph had? Remember how he told his brothers that one day they'd bow down to him? Remember how they hated him, and scorned him, and told him, "No way! We'll never bow down before you!" Famous last words, right?!

eg--Teens, "When I'm a parent, I'll never do to my kids what mine..."

eg--Worker, "If I become a foreman, things will be different! I'll never"

Those are dangerous words, "I'll never!" "I'll never give up my high-paying job to become a missionary." "I'll never forgive him for what he did to me." "I'll never stop being bitter..." "I'll never." Be careful! Learn from the lesson the brothers learned. God has His way!

The brothers did bow before Joseph--4 times so far! (42:6; 43:26, 28; 44:14)

So there they are, on the ground before their brother. He speaks...

V 15 "What deed is this that ye have done?..."

Q: What kind of response did the brothers display?

A: Judah is their spokesman. I see 3 responses displayed by Judah.

### A. Personal Guilt (16).

V 16 "...God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants..."

Q: Was Judah saying they were guilty of the crime of stealing the cup?

A: No. He has in mind another crime, a much greater crime. The crime that he and his brothers committed 25 years earlier. He and his brothers had played cover up for a quarter of a century. But it didn't work. They could fool their dad. They could fool themselves. But they couldn't fool God. "Be sure your sins shall find you out."

Can you hear what Judah's saying to Joseph? "I'm in a real jam. My life's a mess right now. I'm not going to blame my problems on society or on bad luck. My problem is a spiritual problem. My problem is sin. I am guilty. I can hide it no longer. God has uncovered my life."

Response #1--Personal Guilt

Illust:

Q: How do you know if a person is really sorry? Here's where it starts.

Judah said, "We are guilty. Make us all slaves." Then Joseph surprised Judah. V 17 "God forbid..."

Joseph says, "No. I'll be just. The one who had the cup is the one who must become a slave. The rest of you may go free."

Now the plot thickens. Had the brothers really changed? True, they admitted their guilt about what they did to Joseph. But being sorry goes further than that.

### B. Personal Responsibility (32).

Let's listen as Judah rehearses the past to the Governor.

1. The brothers first meeting with the Governor (19-23)
2. Their father's reaction (24-31)
3. Judah's Offer (32)

If you've been with us for the entire study of Joseph, v 32 will shock you. You can't imagine that these words came from the same man who devised the plot to sell his brother Joseph for 20 pieces of silver! 25 years ago all Judah could think of was himself. He was filled with hatred for Joseph because of his egotistic love of himself. He didn't bat an eye when he sold him as a slave. He didn't seem to flinch when he broke his dad's heart.

Here's the point of Joseph's test. Joseph wondered, "Will my brothers dump Benjamin like they dumped me into the hands of the slave traders? Have they learned how to love anyone besides themselves in the past 25 years?"

Let's see...

V 32 "For they servant became surety for the lad..."

God had changed Judah! He was a different man.

What an offer! Listen to Judah, "I am surety. I'll bear the blame. I can't bear the thought of breaking my father's heart."

Turn to Hebrews in the NT. I want you to see what Judah's descendant did.

Heb 7:14 "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah..."

Heb 9:27-28 See 3 things:

1. The Problem (27) = Death and Personal Judgment
2. The Provision (28) = Christ offered to bear the sins of many!
3. The Promise (28) = Christ coming a second time to save!

Listen. Judah's offer was noble. But his offer was only a temporary remedy. He said to Joseph, "My life for Benjamins." But eventually they would both die anyway.

Jesus' offer was matchless. His offer was a Permanent remedy!

Song: "He paid a debt He did not owe..."

Illust:

The brothers' response--Personal Guilt, Personal Responsibility, and...

### C. Personal Change (33-34)

Listen to Judah's incredible offer.

Vv 33-34 "Now therefore, I pray thee..."

When Joseph heard those words, he could not hold back the tears.

45:1 "Then Joseph could not control himself..."

What moved Joseph? He knew his brothers had passed the test! He HAD succeeded in helping them. They WERE sorry. They HAD changed. Their repentance was sincere.

Key: Don't miss the parallel between ch 37 and ch 44.

In ch 37 Judah thought only of himself. In ch 37 Judah violated his brother, and tried to cover up his guilt.

But in ch 44, Judah acknowledged his personal guilt. He accepted personal responsibility for his actions. He gave evidence that he was truly a changed man. He didn't try to save his own neck. He offered to take Benjamin's place as a slave! God had done a work in his heart!

Q: Do you know what happens when a person is truly sorry, when a person truly repents of his sin, when a person truly changes?

Illust: Ad Coors was changed when he became a Christian...

Tran: There's Gen 44--Episode 1 was the Test Devised by Joseph (1-13). Episode 2 was the Response Displayed by the Brothers (14-34). Is there more? I think there is.

### **III. The Ramifications Discovered about Biblical Repentance**

Q: How can you tell if someone's really sorry?

A: The real issue is repentance. Webster says "repent" means "to regret as wrong or mistaken." Repentance is critical. Jesus said you can't have salvation w/o repentance (Lk 15:7). You can't have restoration w/o repentance (Lk 17:3).

Q: But how can you tell if a person has really repented?

A: I think Gen 44 gives us helpful insight.

Problem: We have a deficient view of REPENTANCE.

Q: What is biblical repentance?

First, what it's NOT:

1. Repentance is NOT just saying, "I'm sorry." (though it includes it)
2. Repentance is NOT merely feeling badly about what you did.

Illust: Judas Iscariot felt badly...

3. Repentance is NOT Penance.

Illust: Roman Catholic practices (Dict of Theol, 835)--The Council of Trent accepted Penance as one of the 7 sacraments. The Baltimore Catechism defines as follows, "Penance is the sacrament by which sins committed after baptism are forgiven through the absolution of the priest." (Boetner, 254) In a RC training book, Instructions for Non-Catholics, we read... (Boet, 254-5)

That's not biblical repentance.

What is biblical repentance?

1. Admit 2 things...

--Admit that what I did was WRONG in God's eyes.

--Admit that I have no intention of doing it again.

Key: Given the opportunity, would you do it again?

Illust: Roommate at C'ville my Jr. year--I'd never met him. I found out he'd been expelled the previous year. I wondered what I was getting into. Then I met him. Do you know what I discovered? He'd repented. He'd genuinely admitted he was wrong. In fact, he wanted to grow. I asked him if he'd like to read the Bible and pray with me before we went to bed at night. "Sure!"

2. Accept 2 things...

--Accept personal responsibility ("I deserve the consequences.")

--Accept God's unmerited pardon through Christ.

Is 55:7 "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God; for He will abundantly pardon."

Q: How can you tell if a person is really sorry?

A: The issue is repentance.

Acts 3:19

Acts 17:30

Repentance is saying, "I'm going to stop putting bandaids on my sin problem. I need radical amputation.

Illust: My ingrown toenail in H.S.--Dr. Wise cut it out!