

## SOVEREIGN GRACE TURNS THE SELFISH INTO THE SELF-SACRIFYING

### Genesis 44: 1-34

*Please review this week's catechism question.*

#### INTRODUCTION

Describe the last time you had to admit to someone that you were wrong. What made it difficult to admit you were wrong? Generally, do you find it easy or hard to seek forgiveness from and do good to a person whom has offended you? Why?

There are few things more difficult in life than admitting that you are wrong and willingly accepting the painful consequences of your wrong behavior. To be able to confess your wrongdoing and accept the consequences without resentment, without defensiveness, without blaming is an amazing thing. To do this to a person who offended you, who brought harm to you is even greater. Yet even greater is the ability to gladly sacrifice yourself to meet the needs of the person who offended you. It is the ambition of everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus to "love those who treat us as enemies and to do good to them without expecting anything in return." (Luke 6:36) The salvation that Jesus Christ came to give is not simply escape from hell but is also deliverance from demanding our own way and refusing to admit our guilt and the ability to love those who have offended us. Today, as we consider the ongoing work of God in the lives of Joseph's 10 murderous brothers we are going to carefully observe God's gracious work of turning self-confident, self-centered sinners into humble, self-sacrificing saints.

#### STUDY

1. Review Gen 42: 14-23, 27-28, 43: 1-10, 17-18, & 33. Read 44: 3. What might be some of the emotions that the 11 brothers are experiencing as they leave the city?

*They would have felt relieved and giddy with joy that they had escaped the clutches of the prince of Egypt. Things could not have gone better. They experienced the incomparable hospitality of the prince of Egypt. They had sacks bulging with grain. They had the money that had been returned to them after their first trip to Egypt that the steward refused to take back. But most of all, they had all the brothers together on the way back to Canaan. Simeon was returned to them, unharmed and Benjamin was safe. The sense of dread that hung over them throughout their sojourn was gone and in its place the joy that thieves feel when they have made their getaway with the jewels.*

2. Unknown to them, Joseph has put a plan into motion. In vv. 1-2 & 4-5, what evidences of grace are there in his instructions to his chief steward? What does it appear that he is trying to do with the placing of the cup in Benjamin's sack?

*Joseph graciously gives them as much grain as they can carry, not as much as they can afford. He also gives them back their money. The placing of the cup in Benjamin's sack appears to be an attempt by Joseph to keep his younger brother with him in Egypt. While we may not understand all of his motives it would appear that he still does not trust his brothers. He does not know what kind of men they have become. So he has devised a test to find out if they will abandon Benjamin to slavery in Egypt, like they did him. If they have not changed, he will discover it and he will keep Benjamin safe from them. However, if they have changed then there may be hope of a full reconciliation. However, he does not know what they will do. So regardless of how they respond he will be able to protect Benjamin.*

3. How would you describe the brother's response to Joseph's charge of thievery?

*They exhibit the signs of self-righteousness, just like they did in chapter 43 when they declared their innocence from stealing the money put in their sacks to the steward (vv. 19-22) and their trying to prove to Joseph they should be accepted by him because of their gift (vv. 25-26). In fact, they are so sure that they are innocent; they declare that if any of them is found with the cup that person will die*

*and the other brothers will be slaves. While they know they are guilty of murder, they protest they are not guilty of thievery.*

4. Describe the irony in the steward's response in v. 10 that we can see because we know where the cup is. What does this ironic response tell us about the aim of God through Joseph in these brothers?

*The cup is in the sack of Benjamin, the only one of the brothers who is truly innocent. The steward says that the one who has the cup will be guilty but the other brothers will be innocent, free from blame. This is exactly opposite of what is really true. So we see that the aim of God through this test is to find out if the guilty brothers will acknowledge their guilt or not. Will they admit their guilt and prove the innocence of Benjamin or will they allow the innocent Benjamin to be made a captive while they, the guilty brothers go free?*

5. How would you describe the response of the ten brothers when the cup is found in Benjamin's sack? Compare with Gen 37:33-34.

*As Benjamin is bound and led away, in dismay and panic the men tear their garments and cry out with great, anguished cries, like animals caught in some terrible trap. All they feared has now come upon them. They respond the same way that Jacob responded to Joseph's blood stained coat. They mourn the captivity of Benjamin just as their father mourned the loss of Joseph. This is a good sign that something is happening to these brothers.*

6. How would you describe the brother's return to Joseph and Judah's "confession"? What are their emotions? What tone of voice does Judah use to address Joseph?

*They throw (This is a different word than the one used to describe their bowing before Joseph on the other occasions.) themselves before Joseph in abject submission. They are obviously distraught and imploring Joseph for mercy. Judah and his brothers know that God has uncovered their true sin and is making them pay for what they did to Joseph. They know that he is dealing with them justly. They sent Joseph to live and die in slavery in Egypt and so they deserve to live and die as slaves in Egypt. Their grief is not only concern for*

*Benjamin but a true sorrow over their sin and willing acknowledgement that they deserve to be punished for their sin. Judah is crying out in a voice full of sorrow and shame for the guilt of their sin.*

**God graciously turns self-confident and self-centered sinners into humble, self-sacrificing saints by exposing our guilty heart.**

7. What option does Joseph give them in v. 17? What is ironic about Joseph's use of "peace" (Hebrew: Shalom)?

*He tells the brothers that they do not need to remain in Egypt. They can return in "peace" to their father and leave Benjamin behind in slavery (At least that is what would be happening from their point of view.). He is saying they can return to their father and have "salvation". But it is only a human salvation, a happy life on planet earth. It would not be the true peace that only comes from God.*

8. Why does Joseph make them this offer?

*He is after these men, attempting to find out if they truly want life or if they are content to merely live. The brothers do not know that they are being pursued by love and in love. They are terrified because they know their guilt and they know how right it would be for them to die as slaves in Egypt for what they did to Joseph. Now Joseph puts the test to them to find out if they are truly repentant or only distressed by the trouble he has brought upon them. The choice is clearly put before them. They can abandon another brother to slavery in Egypt, return home with food and money, and live out their days in peace, as Joseph tells them. On the other hand, they can refuse to abandon Benjamin and live out their days in slavery with him. What will they choose?*

9. What would be some reasons for returning to Canaan without Benjamin?

*Their father did play favorites. He did love Joseph and Benjamin's mother more than he did love their mother. He did give more authority to Joseph. Joseph did act as though he had authority over his brothers. They didn't just fantasize these things. For the past 22*

years they have daily faced the preference of Joseph and Benjamin through Jacob's inconsolable grief for Joseph and his inordinate affection for Benjamin. Their hatred had reasons. Additionally, they have wives and children of their own. What will become of them if they remain as slaves in Egypt? What will happen to their father if none of them returns? If they leave Benjamin behind at least they can take care of the families and while the loss of Benjamin might kill their dad, at least he would die in the company of his sons. At least he would die knowing that his grandchildren would be cared for. There are many attractive reasons for leaving Benjamin behind and going on home. After all, it wouldn't be their fault. They didn't steal the goblet. Maybe Benjamin really did steal it. He would be getting what he deserved after all. And if he didn't steal it and they were just being set up by the Egyptians, well how are they supposed to overcome such a plot? How can they be blamed for leaving Benjamin when the second most powerful man in Egypt was against them?

**10.** Have you ever been jealous of someone or hated someone? Did you have reasons for feeling that way?

**11.** What are some ways that God is testing you to find out what is in your heart?

*There is not a day that goes by that God does not test your heart in the same way. He brings some difficulty into your life, some conflict and then he sets before you two ways. You can demand life go your way, that people treat you well and so manipulate circumstances so that your comfort is not impeded. You can protect yourself from those who hurt you, you can repay them, you can avoid them because you have reasons. On the other hand, God gives you another way, a way that will require you to die to all hope of happiness on this earth. You can either abandon your brother, with good reasons of course, and live out your days peacefully in Canaan or you can volunteer for slavery, trusting God to care for you.*

**God graciously turns self-confident and self-centered sinners into humble, self-sacrificing saints by testing our heart's affection.**

**12.** What role did Judah play in the betrayal of Joseph (37:26)?

*Judah was the brother who proposed that they sell Joseph into slavery. He is the one who led the mockery of Joseph as he was dragged away, sobbing hysterically, pleading for mercy. Most likely, he is the one who proposed the cover up, dipped Joseph's coat in lamb's blood, and presented it to their father.*

**13.** What are the ways that Judah's speech to Joseph shows that he has a new heart, that he has been transformed? Compare his language here to what was said and done in chapter 37.

*First, in v. 18 he approaches Joseph, not based upon any merit in himself but casting himself entirely upon Joseph's mercy. He knows that he has no right to draw near to Joseph. He knows that any person who dares to draw near to this monarch deserves to be put to death as he is as great as Pharaoh himself. However, he casts himself upon the mercy of Joseph, trusting in him to grant a hearing. Second, he makes a full and honest confession to Joseph. He does not hide anything from him. He describes accurately, without subterfuge how his father feels about Joseph and Benjamin, how his father responded to the loss of Joseph and his fears over losing Benjamin. In spite of how painful the love of his father for these two brothers has been to him in the past, he fully explains what has happened since the day Joseph was sold into slavery. Third, he submits to the will of God. He has lived most of his life consumed with jealousy and resentment over the preferential treatment of Rachel and her sons by his father Jacob. He has viewed this electing love as wrong and unfair. However, look how he now affirms Jacob's preferential love for Benjamin. In v. 20 he affirms positively that his father loves Benjamin. Then in vv. 27-31 he describes Rachel as Jacob's wife, ignoring the fact that his mother was also the wife of Jacob. He describes with affection, Jacob's preferential love for both Joseph and Benjamin. He views Jacob's grief over the loss of Joseph and his fear at losing Benjamin as proper emotions. The things that fueled his hatred and fed his spite now appear to Judah as good and right. He submits to God's right to deal with people differently. Resentment and bitterness are gone because he fully understands God's right to do as he pleases. He understands that he has never been treated, as he deserves. He knows that God always does what is right and submits to his right to do as he pleases.*

**Fourth**, look at the tender affection he has for his father throughout his speech. He empathizes fully with his father. He sees everything from his father's point of view. He is looking out for his father's needs and concerns, not his own. His heart is full of affection and concern for his father. Here is the infallible sign of a new heart; you are full of love for those whom you believed to be your enemies. **Finally**, look at vv. 32-34. Judah knows the only way that Benjamin, his father and his other brothers can be saved. He must die. He willingly dies so that they can have life. For the joy of seeing his father happy and his brothers safe he embraces the loss of all things. He lays down his life so that his family can be happy and he is happy to do it.

14. What are some ways you see any of these evidences of a new heart in your own life? What are some ways you see them lacking?

15. How does Judah's volunteering for slavery picture the person and work of Jesus Christ? See Mark 10:45, John 15:13 & Phil 2: 5-8.

*Judah stands as a type of Christ who offered himself in our place so that we could be free and enjoy the company of our Father forever. He offered himself in our place.*

16. How is Judah's offer to be a slave a picture of being a Christian? See Luke 9: 23-26 & 1 John 3: 14 & 16.

*Christians have discovered that to know Jesus Christ is the best thing that could ever happen to them and so they delight to pour out love on others. They love what they used to hate and they hate what they used to love. Out of the "joy set before them" Christians sacrifice the pleasures of this world in order to care for others.*

17. What are some ways this story of Joseph's brothers helps you to view and cope with the difficulties in your own life?

*In all the difficulties God is speaking. He is testing our hearts. Infinite love is pursuing us, seeking to help us discover the freedom that belonging to Christ gives us. We are free from the need to defend ourselves, to make others pay for what they do, to justify ourselves, to make sure our rights are not trampled on. We have been confronted*

*with the horror of our own sin and are full of sorrow over it. We have faced the fact that we deserve hell and have cast ourselves upon the mercy of God in Christ. If the life of Jesus is in you, you will die this week, numerous times. You will admit you are wrong. You will refuse to retaliate. You will seek ways to serve and be kind to those who have harmed you. You will confess your sins. You will joyfully submit to God's will for you and his will for others. You will not merely look out for your own interests, you will also look out for the interests of others. You will give up your right to leisure and comfort in order to serve and help others. This is the salvation that Jesus Christ came to give you.*

**God graciously turns self-confident and self-centered sinners into humble, self-sacrificing saints by giving us a new heart.**