



Genesis 44-45

Joseph's brothers have returned to Egypt the second time to buy grain. At the instruction of Joseph they have brought their youngest brother Benjamin with them. Joseph has invited them to his house for lunch and he has seated them around the table according to their age. He is questioning them again concerning the well being of their father. Is he in good health?

Then he asked looking at Benjamin, "Is this the youngest brother you spoke to me about?" Joseph said, "God be gracious unto thee, my son." He yearned so much to go over and grab him and hug him, but, he was still keeping up his little game; so, instead of crying in front of them he went into the other room and wept. Then he washed his face and came out and ordered lunch to be served. Benjamin's plate was piled five times higher than the rest of the brothers.

"And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken." (Gen.44:1-2).

"As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?" (Gen.44:3-4).

"Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing. And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing. Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan; how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words; he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless." (Gen.44:5-10).

Joseph is actually setting up a plot where he can get his brother Benjamin alone. Ordering his steward to fill their sacks with grain, just to the brim, then to put their gold in the mouths of the sacks, but put the silver cup in Benjamin's sack. It was no doubt a very ornate cup.

In the morning as his brother's got up early to begin now their journey back to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob, they bid farewell and took off. As they got approximately to the city limits, Joseph ordered his steward to go out and pursue them and ask why they were returning evil for good.

"Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent..." (tore) "... their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city." (Gen.44:11-13).

"And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there; and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?" (Gen.44:14-15).

Joseph wanted them to realize that he had the power of divination and that is probably why he set them according to their age around the table.

The brothers had told the steward to search their belongings and if the cup was found, that person should die and the rest of them would become slaves to Joseph. They laid down their bags and began to go through them from Reuben the eldest on down until they came to Benjamin. As they poured out Benjamin's sack the silver cup fell out. The steward said only the one who had the cup would be taken back and the rest

would be blameless. They tore their clothes and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

It could be that Joseph is really testing his brothers to see if there has been any real change. These guys are not the most honorable guys in the world. Their history has been pretty bleak. They were a pretty rough bunch of kids growing up and they had dealt extremely treacherously with Joseph.

Yet Joseph is aware of the fact that God is intending to create from these guys a nation. A nation that would be particularly blessed of God. A nation through which God would ultimately bring the Messiah into the world and so, Joseph is putting them to the test. Twenty years have gone by since they sold him, maybe they have changed, grown up. Now that they have families, maybe their attitude has improved. Do they bear the same animosity for Benjamin that they bore for Joseph? Do they want to get rid of him too like they got rid of Joseph? Are they jealous of their father Jacob's preferential treatment of Benjamin? Joseph is really putting them to the test. A test, which incidentally, they passed when they loaded up their sacks and came back to the city.

If they had really wanted to get rid of Benjamin they could have just taken off for home and said, "Well, dad's old, if he dies, he dies. He is going to die before long anyhow. Then we will have the full inheritance even that which belonged to Benjamin." Had they still been jealous and greedy this was a tremendous opportunity for them to be free of Rachel's children. Having gotten rid of Joseph now they can get rid of Benjamin; but, instead of taking off for home they came back to Joseph's house.

"And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found." (Gen.44:16).

"And he said, God forbid that I should do so; but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father. Then Judah came near unto him and said, O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh." (Gen.44:17-18).

What shall we say to my lord? What can we speak? There is no way that we can clear ourselves. God has found out the iniquity of your servants and here we are my lords slaves, both we and him also with whom the cup was found. In other words, we share in this together and we will all be your slaves. Not just Benjamin, but, we are all here and we haven't any defense.

The cup, as evidence, is there. What can we say? Notice, God has found out the iniquity of your servants. No doubt he is referring back to the selling of Joseph as a slave. The guilt has hung on in their minds for over twenty years.

Guilt hangs on like a plague. You may repress it, you may bury it in the inner recesses of the subconsciousness, but, it is still there. Sooner or later it comes out to plague you. "My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die." (Gen.44:19-22).

"And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down; if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us." (Gen.44:23-26).

"And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons. And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since. And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." (Gen.44:27-29)."Now

therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die; and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave." (Gen.44:30-31).

"For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren." (Gen.44:32-33).

Judah is passing the final test here. He is unwilling to forsake Benjamin to his fate and on top of that he is now offering to be a substitute for Benjamin.

Let me take his place, take his guilt and become your slave; but, return him to his father. Here we see that Judah becomes a very beautiful type of Christ in taking the place and penalty of the guilty. Christ, our substitute, took our place and died for our sins. It was from the tribe of Judah that the Messiah was to come. Here he is volunteering to be the substitute for his brother.

"For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father." (Gen.44:34). This beautiful intercession of Judah for his brother Benjamin, volunteering to take his guilt and his place as a slave, was too much for Joseph.

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence." (Gen.45:1-3). The word is also translated "terrified" in his presence. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you, And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." (Gen.45:4).

Here is another place, of many, where Joseph becomes a beautiful type of Christ. Jesus came to his own and his own received him not. He was despised and rejected by His brothers. The nation of Israel rejected Jesus when he came as the Messiah and was not recognized by them.

Joseph's brothers did not recognize him the first time they saw him. The second time he saw his brothers is when he revealed himself to them. Even as Jesus will reveal Himself to Israel when He comes again as their Messiah. Not recognized the first time, but revealed to them the second time. There is that great prophecy of Zechariah, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." (Zech.12:10).

Now it seems that when he first said, "I am Joseph," that they were so stunned that it didn't really sink in and they were terrified. They really didn't know at this point what was going to happen and if this was Joseph, he was probably going to take vengeance on all of them. You know, we did such a dastardly thing to him and now we are totally at his mercy and he, no doubt, is going to really get even.

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." (Gen.45:5-8).

Joseph sees behind the obvious material things and he realizes that his coming to Egypt was providentially ordained by God. It was a part of God's plan for the preservation of the family from this famine that was going to come. Twenty years before the famine, God prepared for the family of Jacob to be preserved by sending Joseph ahead to Egypt.

Joseph had to go through a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, a lot of hardship in order for the purposes of God to be fulfilled. How often the purposes of God are fulfilled through temporary pain, and suffering. I am certain that Joseph did not understand the plan of God when he was being carried away to Egypt, pleading with his brothers and their turning a deaf ear to him. I am certain that Joseph wasn't aware of the plan of God when he was sitting in that Egyptian jail after the false accusation of Potiphar's wife. But now God is completing the cycle; Joseph is over the land and can see that the whole purpose of God was the preservation of Israel.

Psalms 105 has an interesting commentary on this particular portion of the history of Israel. It says, "Moreover He called for a famine upon the land; He brake the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron." (Ps.105:16-18). Joseph's experience in the prison wasn't all pleasant. It wasn't like a lot of prisons today that are like clubhouses. They call Chino prison the country club, but Joseph didn't have that kind of an atmosphere. Joseph's feet were in fetters or irons.

Imagine being there in jail for at least three years not knowing the plan or the purpose of God. What a test of faith in the love of God or the providential care of God for His children. Here is a man who has done nothing wrong, yet was despised and hated by his brethren. He was falsely accused of rape and thrown in the jail, put in irons and fetters and suffered there for three years.

I am afraid that I would not have passed the test as well as Joseph. I am afraid that in prison I would have been praying prayers that expressed my doubt of God's goodness and love and concern for me.

"Until the time that His word came; the word of the LORD tried him." (Ps.105:19). He was in irons until the time that His word came to pass, that is the interpretation of the dream. The word of the Lord tested him. "The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And He increased His people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies." (Ps.105:20-24). Scripture goes on to recount the history of Israel in Psalm 105, but this notation concerning Joseph gives us a further insight into the suffering and testing that Joseph went through.

If I have a trial that lasts a week, I find myself really beginning to chafe and to cry out unto God. Oh Lord, what is going on? Why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from the cry of my roaring? God, I have been crying for a week and you haven't answered. You haven't done anything. Things are still in a mess Lord. Why? Here Joseph was in the fetters, in the chains, tested by God for three years. I see where I have a long way to go in my trusting God, in my confidence that God is in control, that God rules.

This past week the Lord put us to a good test. The fire in Santa Paula destroyed our avocado grove. Fire swept through and flames were 100 feet high, wiping out 75% of the trees and our plastic pipe irrigation system. I am sort of glad we have been in this portion of Genesis because I am anxious to see what the next chapter is, what God has in mind now.

There is a purpose and a plan of God. I thank God that when the news came there was no panic. I was at the conference center, with my grandchildren and Don came in and said, "I just got a telephone call, the farm's been wiped out." Wonder what God has in mind? Wonder what the plan of God is now? Don't know yet. We may not know for a few months, a few years. Who knows? It is definitely in the hand of God and God's control. It was great to experience the peace of God in the midst of evil tidings. There is a scripture speaking of the children of God saying, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD." (Ps.112:7). You don't get wiped out, your trust is in God. Your confidence is in God who is in control.

Just believe and trust that God has a purpose and a plan. Some day he will reveal it. So Joseph realizes that these years of suffering that he went through were all a part of the plan of God. The plan of God to preserve his family during this period of drought and famine that was going to come upon the land. It was

not you that sent me here, it was God. I realize that God's hand is behind it.

I would like to know how many times in the scripture, things intended for evil against the children of God, were part of God's plan and He turned them around for good. So many times we see this happening and here is a classic example. His brothers intended it for evil but God meant it for good. God's plan was being unfolded even in the evil design's that they had against him.

There is a beautiful scripture that says, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." (Isa.54:17). Satan may shoot his arrows at you but God will turn them around for your benefit, for your good. We have to trust in God and believe that He is in control. "Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast." (Gen.45:9-10).

"And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty." (Gen.45:11). The land of Goshen was one of the most fertile areas of Egypt. It was in the Nile delta and it encompassed an area of about 900 square miles, which is roughly twice the size of Los Angeles.

"And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them; and after that his brethren talked with him." (Gen.45:12-15). Now they were rather speechless up to this point. They didn't know who he was, or what was going on. They were totally shocked that this was their little brother Joseph.

"And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come; and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants." (Gen.45:16). Joseph was well loved in Egypt. They realized that he had been the salvation of the nation. If he had not interpreted the dream and set up the store houses of grain, their people would be starving along with the other lands instead of having plenty. They are so appreciative of Joseph and what he has done for them that they are rejoicing at the news that he has been reunited with his family.

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; And take your father and your households, and come unto me; and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land." (Gen.45:17).

"Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours." (Gen.45:19-20). The red carpet is rolled out for Jacob and the family to come down into Egypt.

"And the children of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way." (Gen.45:21-23).

"So he sent his brethren away, and they departed; and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father. And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." (Gen.45:24-26).

He just couldn't believe it. It was just too much of a shock. Joseph the one he loved and mourned for

was still alive and governor of Egypt?

"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die." (Gen.45:27-28).

This is one of the most beautiful, dramatic stories in all of literature. In fact it is so perfect and so beautiful, it could not have been made up. It is one that is so fraught with emotion and beauty that only God could plan such a story.