

# GENESIS 44

## WAVES OF REPENTANCE

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Have you ever noticed that many things seem to come in waves? Some people say things tend to come in threes. We have all heard of heat waves, crime waves, tidal waves and the like. However, if we really think about it, our lives seem to move in a wave-like manner also. What I mean by this is that **we tend to grow in waves** or what some would call spurts. We grow spiritually in the same manner. When we are first born again we are usually on fire. Even the time leading up to our salvation experience tends to build or crescendo as the Holy Spirit draws us to Him. Then at the point of salvation there is a rush of relief, growth and peace. After that we tend to be on fire for a while as we take in this new life. Then things tend to settle down and the euphoria wanes. This is how a wave works. It builds until it reaches the shore and then when its energy is released it moves back into the sea.

Once again our lives are the same way. Things speed up and they slow down. As for me, I go on binges of just drinking in everything I can find, hear and read. My prayer life seems to accelerate and I feel as if I'm drinking out of a fire hose. I can't digest it all at once. Then things settle down and I can process what I have just experienced. We have to have this time in order to process everything. God knows this.

We will see this happening today with Joseph's brothers. **God, through Joseph will bring them to a place of repentance, total repentance.** It is the beginning of the reunion they have all wanted. Past wrongs will be righted and grudges that were harbored as festering sores will be lanced and healed. It is at this point in our lives that we are able to reap the rewards of repentance and reunion.

With this in mind let's look at Genesis 44.

**Gen 44:1** *And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack.*

**Gen 44:2** *Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money." So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.*

Remember that last week all of the brothers were invited to eat at Joseph's house. They were seated according to age and rank. This had awed them. How could the Egyptian know their ages? This had a calming effect overall though as they began to see that they weren't going to be punished for stealing. They didn't even throw a fit when Benjamin got 5 more times the food of the others.

This was all part of a fact finding mission on Joseph's part. He wanted to see if his brothers had changed at all in the twenty years since he had been sold into slavery. Pleasingly they had changed.

In verses 1 and 2 we see that Joseph once again has their money put in their sacks, so the grain is once again free. He goes one step further though having his silver cup placed in the mouth of Benjamin's sack. This is sure to wreak havoc with the brothers once again.

This probably seems like a head-game to most of us or at least a bad joke. Why is Joseph torturing his brothers? He isn't torturing them but they are being tested. Each time they have been brought back to see Joseph, each time they felt they were going to be killed or imprisoned, they came a little closer to a total breakthrough of repentance. Each time this has happened, like we spoke of, they have come closer and closer to shore, if you will.

They leave out for home early the next morning.

**Gen 44:3** *As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.*

**Gen 44:4** *When they had gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?*

**Gen 44:5** *Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.' "*

**Gen 44:6** *So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words.*

**Gen 44:7** *And they said to him, "Why does my lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing.*

**Gen 44:8** *Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?*

**Gen 44:9** *With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."*

**Gen 44:10** *And he said, "Now also let it be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless."*

As we have just read, Joseph waited until they got out of the city limits and then told his steward to chase them down and accuse them of stealing. This is in fact what he did.

Many people at this time ask about the reference in verse 5 as to whether or not Joseph practiced divination. He certainly mentions it and I can't rule it out. He had been raised and educated in Egypt. Some will bring attention to the fact that the Law had yet to be instituted so there was no official rule on divination, therefore Joseph may have practiced it in good conscience. I believe however the people of God knew that this was not to be done although the Law had yet to be instituted.

We see glimmers throughout the OT of the organization and practice of worship of the one true God. I believe Joseph was just playing the role of an Egyptian leader. The Egyptians were known to practice divination with cups. Nostradamus is said to have done the same thing.

At any rate they were appalled at being charged with theft again. In fact they were so sure of their innocence that they swore an oath. Their response was to say that whoever was found with the cup should die and the rest would end up as slaves.

***Mat 5:37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.***

Getting excited and swearing oaths can get you in trouble no matter how innocent you know yourself to be.

It is important to see here that they were unanimous in their declaration of innocence. This means that they had to have trusted each other. This is another sign of their growth over the years.

***Gen 44:11 Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack.***

***Gen 44:12 So he searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.***

***Gen 44:13 Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.***

One of the things we see here if we are paying attention is that there is no ranting and raving among the brothers. They probably don't know exactly what is happening but they do not turn on each other. We still see the trust and love they have for one another has grown. So they return to what seems to be the sure fate of death for Benjamin and slavery for the rest.

***Gen 44:14 So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there; and they fell before him on the ground.***

***Gen 44:15 And Joseph said to them, "What deed is this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?"***

**Gen 44:16** *Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found."*

**Gen 44:17** *But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father."*

In verse 14 we have another fulfillment of Joseph's dream from 20 years prior. In humility the brothers fell down before Joseph and pleaded their innocence.

Judah spoke out and asked, "What can we say? How can we clear ourselves? We have been caught with the goods."

They had no idea how the stuff got there, but they were still caught with their hands in the cookie jar. They made no excuses. They manned up to the charges and essentially pled for mercy throwing themselves on Joseph's mercy.

It worked because Joseph made no mention of the self-imposed death sentence on Benjamin. He would free the others and keep Benjamin alone as a slave.

**And it is at this time that we really see what happens when God softens someone's heart.** Remember, this is the last and largest wave of repentance as God breaks the pride of these men. In total humility Judah makes the speech of a lifetime.

**Gen 44:18** *Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even like Pharaoh."*

**Gen 44:19** *My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'*

**Gen 44:20** *And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, who is young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.'*

**Gen 44:21** *Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'*

**Gen 44:22** *And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.'*

**Gen 44:23** *But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.'*

**Gen 44:24** *"So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord.*

**Gen 44:25** *And our father said, 'Go back and buy us a little food.'*

**Gen 44:26** *But we said, 'We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.'*

**Gen 44:27** *Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons;*

**Gen 44:28** *and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since.*

**Gen 44:29** *But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.'*

**Gen 44:30** *"Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life,*

**Gen 44:31** *it will happen, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave.*

**Gen 44:32** *For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.'*

**Gen 44:33** *Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.*

**Gen 44:34** *For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?"*

I wish we had a visual here. Judah humbly asks to speak to Joseph. He acknowledges Joseph's power and authority. He then proceeds to tell Joseph the entire story from their standpoint without attempting to claim innocence for the cup. **Even if he believed Benjamin had stolen it Judah was going to take his place and bear his punishment.**

Judah recounted how much his father loved the two youngest boys and how one of them had already been lost, (Joseph). He told Joseph how he had agreed to be collateral, so to speak, for his brother and that if they returned without Benjamin, their father would die. Please take me instead and let the rest go home, especially Benjamin.

Please be careful not to just read over what has happened here. We know people like these guys. We know rough and tough guys that are self-assured. They at least want everyone to think that they don't need anyone's help. Whatever the situation they/ we have it figured out or will figure it out.

All of us have committed sins that may still haunt us even to this day. We may have justified or rationalized them to the point that we have formed calluses on our hearts so that at least we aren't bothered in the daytime. **But when we go to sleep the nightmares come and they don't let up as long as there is no repentance.**

These men have lived with the selling of their brother for over twenty years. Through many sleepless, sweaty, restless nights they've had to live with their actions. The only ones they could talk about it with were each other. They couldn't even tell their wives because it might get back to Jacob. They had been tormented for over two decades.

**We see for the first time a real concern for their father's feelings.** They had no concern about them when they got rid of Joseph! **But now, as God worked on them over the years and with each successive trip to Egypt: with each time they found themselves before Joseph fearing for their lives, they came a little closer to the breaking point.**

**For over twenty years it was as if God and Joseph were sitting on the beach waiting for the tide to come in.** With each new wave the water came closer and closer to where they were standing until finally Judah, the one with the idea of selling Joseph in the first place stepped up, repented and asked to be a substitutionary sacrifice for his baby brother. **That is a man!**

**John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.**

**This is what Jesus has done for us.**

If you are at that place today, there is room at the cross for you. If you have yet to reach the beach and you are still floating towards the shore, you can catch a wave and come on in now. If not, we will be praying that God continues to draw you towards Him, softening your heart with one wave after another of conviction from the Holy Spirit. May God bless you!