

February 13-Genesis 44

Experience has a way of changing our thoughts and actions. I'm sure all of us have done something in our past that we thought was a good idea only to realize it wasn't. Sometimes, once we have gone through the consequences of a decision, we change our minds and our hearts about that particular issue. This is certainly shown to be the case in Genesis 44.

Genesis 44 begins with Joseph testing his brothers. He sends them back to their father with the grain they bought as well as the money they brought and Joseph's own personal silver cup (very valuable). All of these items besides the grain were put into the brother's bags without their knowledge and so when they are tracked down by Joseph's steward and accused of stealing they vehemently denied any wrongdoing. Much to their surprise, their youngest brother Benjamin (who they had vowed they would bring back safely to Jacob) is found to have "stolen" the cup and therefore is to be made a permanent servant of Joseph's in Egypt.

This is a major problem for the brothers as they have already seen the effect Joseph's supposed death had on Jacob and now they are facing the possibility of having to go back for a second time to inform Jacob that his youngest son is as good as dead as well. This is the moment in which we see the change. Joseph's brother Judah came to Joseph and pleaded with Joseph to allow him to take the place of his brother Benjamin as his permanent servant. Judah's reason is simple; he doesn't think his father could bear the loss of Benjamin.

The reason why this is so intriguing is because it is directly opposite of what Judah said to his brothers regarding selling Joseph in Genesis 37:26-27 when he said "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come let us sell him to the Ishmaelites." Could you think of a more cold-hearted statement than that? I mean to think so little of your brother's fate than to just consider what the financial benefits of selling him into slavery might be is quite heartless. How in the world could we explain the transformation that has taken place? Well, the simple answer is that Judah has seen the result of his sin. The same young man who saw an opportunity to better his own life at the expense of his brother now has lived through those consequences. He has seen what grief Jacob endured and he knows the effects it has had on his family as a whole.

Sometimes, life teaches us some lessons. Maybe what you think is really good will turn out not so good. The question we must ask is what did we learn? Many of you have gone through terrible consequences because of decisions you have made. I would ask you two questions, first did you learn anything? And second, how will it change your behavior in the future? The Gospel requires everyone who would be saved to repent of their sin. The word repent literally means "to change one's mind". When Christ began His ministry, He called on all people to "repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). In order to find salvation in Christ, we must change our mind about our own sin. Christ showed us through His death that sin has terrible consequences. He demonstrated for us in His teaching and crucifixion that we should not continue to pursue unrighteousness. The question is will we learn from His teaching and example as well as our experience? It is necessary to recognize the consequence and heinous nature of sin if we are going to truly follow Jesus.