

GENESIS 44: JUDAH IS THE SUBSTITUTE

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Substitution can be a positive or negative in our culture
 - i. We all remember having substitute teachers in school
 - a. They were like free days
 - ii. Substitutions when online grocery shopping mean you aren't getting what you want
- B. Judah is going to show the ultimate fruit of his repentance in this chapter
 - i. It results in offering himself as a substitute for his brother

II. OVERVIEW

- A. After lunch, Joseph told his servant to fill his brothers' sacks with food
 - i. And to put his silver cup in the sack of the youngest brother
- B. The next morning the brothers left
 - i. Shortly after they left Joseph told his servant to go after them
- C. The servant caught up to them
 - i. He found the cup in Benjamin's sack
 - ii. So all the men returned to Joseph's house
- D. Joseph confronted his brothers when they returned
 - i. Judah spoke up and admitted guilt for all of the brothers
 - ii. He offered for them to become Joseph's servants
 - iii. But Joseph said the only one who would become his servant would be the one who had the cup
- E. Judah then made the case for why Benjamin could not stay behind as Joseph's servant
 - i. He offered to stay behind in Benjamin's place

III. THEN HE COMMANDED – V. 1

- A. After lunch
 - i. After he saw the brothers celebrate without acknowledging their past sin
- B. He will begin the third test to bring them to repentance
 - i. The first was when he replaced their money in their sacks
 - ii. The second was when he gave Benjamin five times more food

IV. JOSEPH'S THREEFOLD COMMAND – V. 1-2

- A. Joseph told his steward to do three things when packing the brothers' things

- i. Fill the men's sack with food – v. 1
- ii. Put each man's money in the mouth of his sack – v. 1
- iii. Put my cup in the mouth of the sack of the youngest – v. 2

B. This threefold command indicates a test

V. AS MUCH AS THEY CAN CARRY – V. 1

- A. Joseph is showing his generosity again
 - i. He gave them not only the food they bought but for the journey home

VI. EACH MAN'S MONEY – V. 1

- A. The brothers' money is being returned for the second time
 - i. Shows that God is working through Joseph's plan

VII. PUT MY CUP – V. 2

- A. Joseph will now enact part two of his plan
 - i. The first part was to get Benjamin to come to Egypt
 - a. He needed to be away from his father
 - b. Just like Joseph was when he was sold into slavery

VIII. THE MEN WERE SENT AWAY – V. 3

- A. Probably in very high spirits
 - i. They had gotten more grain
 - ii. They weren't arrested for stealing money
 - iii. They had proven they weren't spies
 - iv. They had regained Simeon
 - v. Benjamin was safe
 - vi. They had lunch with the most important man in the world¹

IX. REPAID EVIL FOR GOOD – V. 4

- A. This is a false accusation
 - i. Some say this shows that Joseph was tormenting his brothers out of revenge
 - ii. But the result will show he was guided by God to bring them to repentance
 - a. Joseph had repaid good for evil
 - i. This theme relates to the tree in the garden
 - a. Adam and Eve wanted to take a shortcut to be like God

¹Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be Authentic: Exhibiting Real Faith in the Real World: OT Commentary, Genesis 25-50*. David C. Cook.

- b. But Joseph endured suffering and forgave his persecutors
- B. The general terms of the question leave it open ended
 - i. So that it could include what they did to Joseph when he was a teenager
 - ii. That evil is now being dealt with
 - a. Reminds us that evil will always be dealt with²

X. **PRACTICES DIVINATION – V. 5**

- A. Cups were used in the ancient near east for divination³
 - i. They contained magical inscriptions and were filled with water
 - ii. There is disagreement about how the actual practice took place
 - iii. Several possibilities
 - a. From the rays of light falling on the water
 - b. Melted wax poured into the water and the shapes were given interpretations
 - c. The size, number and position of bubbles when the cup was shaken
 - d. Silver, gold, precious stones were thrown into the water with magical engravings
 - i. Various interpretations given based on the position of the stones
 - e. The diviner gazed onto a specific spot in the cup until entering a trance
 - i. The diviner would then encounter visions
- B. This is intentionally misleading
 - i. Joseph likely does not practice divination
 - a. It's only called a silver cup in verse 2
 - ii. But he is able to appear as one who is able to obtain divine knowledge
 - a. He is able to interpret dreams
 - b. He knew the order of his brothers' birth when he sat them at the table
 - iii. Shows that Joseph isn't perfect even with good intentions
- C. Divination was forbidden under the law
 - i. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 ***There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD.***

² Sailhamer, J. H. (2017). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (T. Longman & D. E. Garland, Eds.). Zondervan.

³ Freeman, J. M. (n.d.). *Manners and Customs of the Bible*. BibleTruthPublishers.com. February 10, 2024, <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/manners-and-customs-of-the-bible/lrc23558-23559>

D. Hebrew *nachash*

- i. Literally, to hiss
- ii. Same as the word for “serpent”
 - a. Previously, a serpent told Adam and Eve that God was repaying evil for good
 - i. In order to get them to reject God
 - b. Now Joseph is pretending to be a serpent
 - i. And telling his brothers they are repaying evil for good
 - ii. In order to get them to return to God

XI. WHEN HE OVERTOOK THEM – V. 6

A. They were probably still inside the city limits

- i. Otherwise eleven men could have easily overpowered the steward

XII. HOW THEN COULD WE STEAL – V. 8

A. Their case was solid

- i. It wouldn't make much sense to bring back 20 sacks of money
- ii. Just to then steal a silver cup

XIII. SHALL DIE – V. 9

A. They are very quick to offer up someone's life for a wrong done

- i. This is how confident they were that none of them had the cup

B. Very similar to when Laban accused Jacob of stealing his gods

- i. Genesis 31:26, 30-32 *And Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done, that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword?... And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?” Jacob answered and said to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen point out what I have that is yours, and take it.” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.*
- ii. Two differences
 - a. The brothers didn't actually steal the cup
 - b. The cup was found when the steward looked for it

XIV. SHALL BE MY SERVANT – V. 10

A. The steward agreed with the brothers' offer

- i. But this is not what they offered

- ii. Being the steward's servant is being compared to death
 - a. Because it would be separation from their father

XV. QUICKLY LOWERED HIS SACK – V. 11

- A. Because they were so confident they were innocent
 - i. They forgot last time they left Egypt someone put money in their sacks before they left

XVI. BEGINNING WITH THE ELDEST – V. 12

- A. Because he didn't want the brothers to know that he knew where the cup was
- B. This is the second reference to the oldest to the youngest
 - i. Genesis 43:33 ***And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement.***

XVII. BENJAMIN'S SACK – V. 12

- A. The hatred they had for Joseph is now at risk of being put on display for Benjamin
 - i. They could have blamed him for stealing and getting them all in trouble
 - a. They could have been glad at getting rid of another of Jacob's favorite sons
 - ii. Instead they tore their clothes in solidarity with him

XVIII. TORE THEIR CLOTHES – V. 13

- A. Just like Jacob tore his clothes when he heard about Joseph
 - i. Genesis 37:34 ***Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.***
 - ii. The sorrow they had caused for Jacob had now been returned to them⁴

XIX. RETURNED TO THE CITY – V. 13

- A. They could have returned home and left Benjamin to slavery
 - i. Instead they returned to face their brother's fate with him

XX. THEY FELL BEFORE HIM – V. 14

- A. The third time they had bowed before Joseph
 - i. Indicating their test is nearly over
- B. They didn't insist on their innocence and stood for justice
 - i. Instead they came with humility and bowed down⁵

XXI. A MAN LIKE ME – V. 15

⁴ Sailhamer

⁵ Guzik, D. (2018). *Genesis 44 - Joseph Tests His Brothers*. Enduring Word. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-44/>

- A. Joseph chooses his words carefully
 - i. He doesn't specifically say he practices divination
 - ii. But he implies that he does
 - a. Gives his brothers the impression they can't hide anything from him⁶

XXII. WHAT SHALL WE SAY – V. 16

- A. Judah had no defense

XXIII. GOD HAS FOUND OUT – V. 16

- A. But they weren't guilty of stealing the cup
 - i. So Judah is clearly talking about something else
 - ii. He is acknowledging the guilt of their hidden sin

XXIV. WE ARE MY LORD'S SERVANTS – V. 16

- A. All the brothers except Benjamin could have left
 - i. But they chose to stay with him in slavery
 - a. Reveals their changed hearts
 - i. They were a wealthy and privileged family but they chose slavery⁷
 - ii. Judah was the one who spoke but they were all there together

XXV. GO UP IN PEACE – V. 17

- A. Joseph was testing them to see if they would leave Benjamin behind

XXVI. JUDAH'S SPEECH TO JOSEPH – V. 18-34

- A. Give me permission to speak
- B. Judah retells two conversations
 - i. You asked if we have a father or brother
 - a. We replied that we have both a father and a younger brother, our father's favorite
 - ii. You asked us to bring our brother down that you may see him
 - a. We said our father will die if the boy leaves him
 - iii. You said we will not see you if you do not bring him
 - a. We told our father what you said
 - iv. He told us to go buy food
 - a. We reminded him that we can't go unless Benjamin is with us

⁶ Armstrong, S. (2013, April 28). Genesis 2011 - Lesson 44. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
https://versebyversem ministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_44

⁷ Guzik

- v. He said he will die if we bring Benjamin to Egypt
- C. Judah shows concern for how his father would deal with the loss of Benjamin
 - i. He describes the promise he made to his father
 - ii. Then he offers his life in exchange for Benjamin

XXVII. LET NOT YOUR ANGER BURN – V. 18

- A. Judah is speaking to Joseph the way Abraham spoke to God about Sodom
 - i. Genesis 18:30 *Then he said, “Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there.” He answered, “I will not do it, if I find thirty there.”*
 - ii. He is about to intercede for his brother Benjamin

XXVIII. MY LORD ASKED HIS SERVANTS – V. 19

- A. Judah wasn't trying to blame Joseph
 - i. But pointing out their intention was never to bring Benjamin
 - ii. And never to steal anything
- B. The tenor of Judah's speech gives the impression they feel cornered into this situation
 - i. As if it has spiraled out of their control
 - ii. Which is exactly what God intended

XXIX. HIS BROTHER IS DEAD – V. 20

- A. Reveals the brothers' intent with Joseph rather than their actions⁸
 - i. They didn't know for sure that he is dead
 - ii. Previously they described him as being “no more”
 - iii. But it was what they intended when they sold him to slavery

XXX. WE SAID TO MY LORD – V. 22

- A. This response is not recorded in Genesis 42

XXXI. YOU SHALL NOT SEE MY FACE AGAIN – V. 23

- A. Joseph didn't say this in chapter 42
 - i. Genesis 42:20 *“... and bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die.” And they did so.*
- B. Also not what they told their father the first time

⁸ Sailhamer

- i. Genesis 42:34 "**Bring your youngest brother to me. Then I shall know that you are not spies but honest men, and I will deliver your brother to you, and you shall trade in the land.**"
- C. But it's what they told their father the second time
 - i. Genesis 43:5 "**But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.'**"
- D. The story keeps changing
 - i. They are telling the essence or the meaning of the conversations
 - ii. Not necessarily how they occurred word-for-word

XXXII. IF YOU TAKE THIS ONE ALSO – V. 29

- A. Jacob may have blamed himself for losing Joseph
 - i. He sent Joseph to find his brothers
 - ii. So he likely did not want to do the same with Benjamin

XXXIII. HE WILL DIE – V. 31

- A. Judah is showing that he cares about what happens to his father
 - i. Unlike when they sold Joseph into slavery
 - a. Genesis 37:31-35 **Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not." And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father wept for him.**

XXXIV. BEAR THE BLAME – V. 32

- A. Or, miss the mark
 - i. Another word for sin
 - ii. Judah would bear the sin of losing Benjamin for the rest of his life

XXXV. LET YOUR SERVANT REMAIN – V. 33

- A. Now we finally see repentance
 - i. Jacob is still playing favorites with the youngest brother
 - a. The conditions are the same as when Joseph was young

- ii. The opportunity is there to give up their father's favorite to save themselves
 - a. But instead Judah offers up his own life for Benjamin's life
- B. Notice they didn't apologize to Joseph for what they did to him
 - i. That's not what repentance is
 - ii. Repentance is taking a different action or a different path
 - iii. So the brothers didn't have to say they repented because they showed it
 - a. We must do the same

XXXVI. AS A SERVANT – V. 33

- A. Previously, Judah went down from his brothers
 - i. Genesis 38:1 ***It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.***
 - ii. Symbolized his moral descent
- B. Now Judah is lowering himself for his brothers
 - i. Philippians 2:3-10 ***Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***

XXXVII. I FEAR TO SEE THE EVIL – V. 34

- A. That never stopped Judah before
 - i. Shows a true change of heart
- B. Jacob has seen enough evil in his life
 - i. Genesis 47:8-9 ***And Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How many are the days of the years of your life?” And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning.”***

XXXVIII. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. Judah was willing to become a substitute for his brother
 - i. We have been looking for someone like him throughout Genesis
 - ii. Later, Jesus would be born from the line of Judah
 - a. He would become the perfect substitute
 - b. Romans 4:22-25 ***That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.***

XXXIX. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- A. Should Joseph have lied to his brothers about being able to practice divination? Is it okay for us to tell “white lies” in order to produce a positive response from others?

- B. What are the various ways you see self-sacrificial love on display in this chapter?

- C. What are some ways in which you can show this same self-sacrificial love to others?

- D. Why do you think Judah refused to defend himself? What would you do in that situation?

- E. Why does God call us to intercede on behalf of others? What are some ways that we can do this other than prayer?

F. Describe a time when you had to repent to someone or when someone had to repent to you. What did that look like? What did it involve?

G. Is repentance necessary to become part of God's family? Why or why not?

XL. FURTHER STUDY

A. How did Jesus command us to love others (John 13:34)? How does Judah model this love in this chapter?

B. Does intercession always include prayer? What else does this chapter and 1 Samuel 19:1-6 teach us about intercession?

C. How did Zacchaeus model repentance in Luke 19:1-10?

D. What was Jesus and the apostles' view on repentance (Matthew 4:17; Mark 6:12; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; Revelation 2:4-5)?

E. To what extent was Paul willing to substitute himself for others (Romans 9:3; Philemon 1:18-19)? How can we learn from his example?
