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Let's return now to our study in Genesis chapter 42 and entering into chapter 43. And I am really excited to be covering this material because it has been a puzzle to me for a long time. And we touched on this in asking ourselves the question, why does Joseph put his brothers through this mill? Well, when they come and they're asking for food and he recognizes them, it would have been so easy for him to say, here I am, it's me, Joseph, your worries are over.

And he doesn't do that. And asking that question is exactly what we're supposed to do when we hear this story. And you can probably already, you've probably already formed some ideas about why this is.

But Joseph hasn't seen his brothers in 21 years. He was 17 when he was thrown in the pit and sold into slavery. He was 30 when he was made vizier in Egypt.

There were 7 years of plenty, which made him 37. And then this is the first year of the famine. And the first year of the famine, Jacob and his family run out of food.

So Joseph's now 38, so it's been 21 years since he has last seen his brothers. What is the status of that family? What is the nature of their thinking and their attitudes? Joseph doesn't know. And Joseph wants to know.

And in order to find out, Joseph creates a situation that tests them. And the tests are in the exact areas that they manifested failure and manifested evil hearts and evil intent. In his case, Joseph doesn't just assume that they are the same men that threw him into the pit 21 years before.

Nor does he just ask them, Oh, by the way, do you still feel the same about me that you did a couple of decades ago when you sold me into slavery? The only way Joseph can know for sure is to put them in a situation similar to what they had before and force them to choose and see how they choose. Have they made any progress? Has there been any growth? Did they learn anything from their first set of failures? So what does Joseph do? How can he do this? And you can imagine, Joseph is a very, very wise man. One of the wisest men that scripture records.

He had a lot of time to figure out. Did Joseph know that he would see his brothers again? Absolutely. He absolutely knew that.

From the day that he got thrown in the pit, he knew that he would see them again. And he knew that he would be in a position of authority because God had given him the dreams. And the dreams portrayed his brother's sheaves bowing down to him.

And for Joseph, this isn't happy land of promise over in the great beyond. This is a true fact. For Joseph, it is a certainty that he's going to see, he's going to survive.

He's going to be elevated and his brothers are going to be subservient to him. So he's got plenty of time to think, now what am I going to do when this situation arises? So Joseph is not caught without a plan. Joseph doesn't extemporize and just sort of come up with this treatment of his brothers off the cuff.

This is well thought out and it has a purpose. Its purpose, just like God's weaving of these things together, is not for their punishment. It is just like the testing that we undergo that we've studied in the New Testament.

The Greek word, testing for the purpose of approval. This is what the refiner does when he looks down at the silver. He's examining it, he's purifying it, and he's looking at it to see if it's ready, to see if it's fit.

This is what God does when he looks at our hearts. When Jesus said, I have not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Actually John says that about Jesus, and Jesus says it about himself.

He talks about himself in the third person and says, the Son of Man has not come into the world to condemn the world. But you nevertheless have to look at what's wrong with the world because how are you going to deliver them if you don't pay attention to what it is that put them in a bind. So Joseph is testing his brothers for the purpose of approval.

He can't fulfill his responsibilities and the trust that has been given to him by the Pharaoh by bringing in a bunch of nefarious, self-centered, thieving, evil, lying sons of Belial, if you will. Even as his responsibility to Pharaoh and to his office in Egypt would supersede loyalty to his brothers if his brothers are bad news, he can't bring them in and ensconce them in the land because that will be bringing evil in. He has to know not only for his own sake, but also to properly execute his responsibilities what kind of men they are before he brings them into the fold, so to speak.

So what does Joseph do? First of all, he accuses them of not being what they say they are, of not being honest men. And they say we are honest men. But he puts them in incarceration.

He puts them under guard. He imprisons them for three days. Three days.

And you can imagine what eleven or ten in this case, in the first case, these ten brothers are going to be talking about for three solid days in prison. Three days, as we know, is significant. We've talked about the fact that it was three days that it took Abraham to get to Mount Moriah.

Three days is a period of trial. It's a period of testing. It's a period to see if you're going to stick with something through to the end.

After that, he brings them back out and tells them what we have here in chapter 42. And

so after they have been all together in prison for three days, in verse 17, then we have the conversation we just reviewed, and they go back to their father and they tell him about the conversation with the leading man of the land, the Lord of the country. And then, after having talked about everything that happened, they knew that one brother had opened up his grain and found his money inside.

But then, in verse 35, it happened as they emptied their sacks that, surprisingly, each man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. Now, let me tell you, this fear is not your normal kind of fear.

This is the kind of fear that you have in warfare. If you look over in Exodus 15.15, we'll just take a couple of quick examples. Because this is important.

It's kind of like they say in the, I haven't seen all that much live court, but in the lawyer shows on TV when they try to bring something up and they say, well, this goes to the defendant's state of mind or this goes to somebody's state of mind. Well, this evidence that we're about to look up goes to the state of mind of Jacob's sons. Exodus 15.15, in the song of Moses celebrating God's deliverance, which makes up much of chapter 15, the first half of it anyway, talks about God's mercy leading forth His people and redeeming them, guiding them in strength through His habitation.

The people will hear and be afraid. In verse 14, sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be dismayed.

The mighty men of Moab, trembling, will take hold of them. All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. And you remember the supernatural workings of God in delivering Israel, and one of the reasons they had a relatively easy task in cleaning out the land is so many of the people were already melting with fear by the time they got there because they had heard of the supernatural deliverance of God on their behalf.

Well, this is the order of fear that Jacob and his sons feel when they see this money in the sack. Now, do you think Joseph anticipated that there would be a reaction when they found their money in their sack, that he put it in there for a reason? If he just wanted to give them the gold back, he could have said, Here, keep your gold. I'm just going to give you the grain gratis.

And you can pay me when you come back with your brother or some such thing. But instead, he hides the money in the sack, knowing that they're not going to find it until later. And he can imagine the reaction they're going to have.

Well, how does this bear on his motive in testing his brothers? Well, the coming along of the caravan when they sold Joseph into slavery was a happenstance. They didn't really have a plan for his disposition, although they had talked about killing him. But they sold him for money and kept the money.

Here, they have a brother in, what am I trying to say? Not in captivity. He's imprisoned in Egypt. And they've got this money that they weren't looking for.

Are they willing to trade a brother for the money as well as the grain? Very similar situation to what they had with Joseph, isn't it? You keep the money or go back and get the brother. How awkward is it going to be to go back with this money and try to explain how they got it? Did they steal it and then have second thoughts? How can they possibly explain? Nobody in their right mind is going to put their money in their sack on the Egyptian side, so how can they explain this? This is why they say, God has brought this on us. God has supernaturally transferred this money.

If we go back to Egypt, the jig is up. It's going to be all over for us. So this heightens the pressure and sharpens the point of this test.

Simeon is probably not the favorite brother. We know from other passages he was kind of a ne'er-do-well and was violent. Are they willing to sacrifice a brother for personal safety, personal wealth? That's the question.

Well, here's the answer. They are not filled with joy, saying, well, we got rid of that cranky old Simeon and look at all the gold. We've got grain and gold.

Let's have a feast. They're petrified because they're thinking about Simeon and they're thinking about the fact that this isn't right and they're going to have to go back and face Joseph. And this is good.

This is the reflection of a heart that has some integrity, a thinking that has some merit. You should feel bad in a situation like this. You should be wondering how it happened and what you need to do.

And the fact that this distresses them is a good thing. Now, do we have things that come into our lives that distress us? Do we have things that happen and we can't explain how the chain of circumstances has brought us to the point where we are? We do. It happens to us a lot.

And we begin to question, is God really keeping an eye on my situation here? I know He's got a lot of people to keep track of and there's probably a lot of people that are spiritually advanced that He's really more concerned about. And here I am and I've kind of painted myself into a corner or I'm sinking in the quicksand here. And it doesn't seem, it's just going from bad to worse.

Well, keep in mind, when you think about that type of situation, here's the brothers and God put them in this situation through Joseph. To do what? It outs what's inside. It brings out what sort of soul they have.

They've had 20 years to think about what they did with Joseph. Has it made any change?

Have their priorities shifted? Do they have a different view of life now than they had before? Well, here's the first clue. Winding up with extra silver and minus a brother doesn't satisfy them.

They're distressed. They are afraid. It's a bad situation.

They seemed pretty comfortable with it the first time. When they brought it about here, it's not even their doing and they feel terrible about it. So that's a good thing.

We could go to other passages that demonstrate the nature of this fear, but let me just give you one other in Judges 20, verse 41. I don't always get to go to Judges very often, so I like to take those opportunities. Judges 20, verse 41.

Here, this is over in Benjamin, where the civil war, we've been through that story somewhat in the past. But in verse 38, the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city, whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. So they're luring the Benjamites out here.

So the Benjamites had begun to strike and kill about 30 of the men of Israel, for they said, Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle. But when the cloud of smoke began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, and the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city going up in smoke to heaven, when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them. You remember, we've studied this in a not-too-distant past, how they're lured out with sort of a, you know, this is a classic military tactic, where you present a weakness and allow somebody to attack and overextend themselves and then pincher them and flank them and come in from behind.

And when the Benjamites realized that this is what has happened to them, they just panicked. They're out there thinking they're winning a great victory. They look around and see their city and their houses going up in smoke and see that they're surrounded by the Israelites.

It's just, you can't feel any worse than that. Well, that's the same word. It's the same expression for the way the brothers feel.

So this, while stressful for the brothers, is actually a good thing because it manifests their nature. It tells the world something about them. So, back now in Genesis chapter 42, when they go to Jacob and they tell him all these things, they open the sacks.

Verse 35, they find the bundles of money. They are afraid. And look at what Jacob says in verse 36.

Jacob their father said to them, You have bereaved me. You have made me childless, is

what it literally means. You have made me childless.

Joseph is no more. Simeon is no more. And you want to take Benjamin.

All these things are against me. Jacob is thinking, How can we possibly go face this man? I've already lost Joseph. Simeon, there's no chance of getting him back now in this situation.

And you want to take Benjamin into the heart of the disaster here? No way. Not going to happen. Now here's where we also have the hearts of the father and the brothers brought to light because what should response be in crisis for a believer? Faith.

Does it say, And Jacob fell on his face on the ground before the Lord and cried out to God and said, Lord, help. While there is distress and there is grief, especially on the part of the brothers here, you also find out that Jacob isn't really turning to the Lord in this and saying, Lord, things are going from bad to worse. And so you get a gauge that while there's been some progress on the part of the brothers, they don't get 100% on the test.

All these things are against me. This is that self-centered view we get in times of trial, isn't it? All these things are against me. Look at the circumstances.

Look how hopeless. Look how impossible. Look how fruitless my efforts are going to be.

Look at the lack of resources, the impossibility. There's no options. There's no good answer.

Well, there's always a good answer for believers, but when we are so busy looking at circumstances and looking at ourselves, we're not going to see it and we're going to miss the grace of God. And, of course, we find out that this is really self-induced misery and needless distress because in reality, from the perspective that we have from Genesis, we know that there is no danger here. There is nothing but good things down the road, but it doesn't look that way to Jacob and it doesn't look that way to the brothers.

And so we can go through the story as the omniscient observer and be sort of calm and say, well, just wait, don't panic. Well, would that we could remember that when we are the people being viewed, when we are going through the crisis, to remember that from an omniscient point of view, don't sweat it. God is in control.

God has good things in store for those who love him. And we don't want to fail the way Jacob does here and get so caught up in the moment that we forget that there is a loving, sovereign, omniscient God at work, all things working together for good to accomplish his purpose. And if his purpose is our purpose, we have nothing to fear.

It may not make sense, but patience is a virtue. We studied that Friday night. So Reuben spoke to his father saying, kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you.

Well, now this is no comfort since we've already lost three. Let's lose a few more. If we can't bring him back and we lose Benjamin, Simeon, and Joseph's already gone.

Well, let's knock off a couple of the grandkids and that'll really help out. So it's probably just as well that Reuben didn't often assume a leadership role in the family. Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you.

Put him in my hands and I will bring him back to you. This does not reassure Jacob. Jacob says, my son shall not go down with you for his brother is dead and he is left alone.

Notice, he is left alone. How many sons does Jacob have? He has 12. How many sons does he act like he has? Two.

One is gone and I've only got one left. And if you take him, you will make me childless, he says. This is a pretty heavy dose of favoritism and partiality for the brothers to absorb.

This is one of the things that rankled them so badly and caused them to send Joseph into slavery. It was their father's complete lack of objectivity when it came to his sons. Joseph and Benjamin are among the last.

Benjamin is the last of Jacob's sons. They were there first. Their mother was married first, Leah.

Even at this late date, Jacob is still looking at things from this viewpoint. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave. He doesn't even say that for Simeon.

If something should happen to you, if he keeps a few more of you, you'll bring down my gray hair. It's all Benjamin. So Jacob's partiality and favoritism toward Benjamin is at least as great as toward Joseph, if not greater.

How do the brothers deal with this? Well, chapter 43. So nobody goes. And Simeon is supposedly languishing in prison in Egypt.

He's probably actually kind of living it up and saying, well, you know, for prison, if you've got to go to prison, this is the way to go. But the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt.

And this took about a year. Their father said to them, go back and buy us a little food. Well, this is kind of a change of tack.

And Jacob doesn't exactly bring up all of the previous conditions and problems and so forth. He sort of is disingenuous here when he acts like, well, run down to the corner market and bring us back a little food. This is going to be a pretty big deal.

So Judah spoke to him. You get the idea that Reuben, suitably abashed, has kind of receded into the distance and he's not going to really speak up much anymore. Judah spoke to him saying, The man solemnly warned us, saying, You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.

If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. 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.

Israel said, Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother? This is sort of petulant on Jacob's part. And he's called Israel here, which just heightens the contrast. He's supposed to be the patriarch.

He's supposed to be the spiritual leader of the household. He's the one that's supposed to be reflecting and inculcating divine viewpoint into his sons, even though they're adults. And you get a contrast here.

Israel says, What did you go and tell him you had another brother for? If you had kept your mouth shut, this would all be fine. That's the ultimate in human viewpoint. Blame it on somebody's bad judgment.

But they said, The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, Is your father still alive? Have you another brother? And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, Bring your brother down? Then Judah said, Notice that Judah is taking the leadership role here. There's a reason why Judah is the leadership tribe in the nation of Israel.

Judah said to Israel, His father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and our little ones. Judah's got a better perspective on this now than Jacob does, because if they don't go, they will all die. Three generations will die.

I myself will be surety for him. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

I will ensure the safety of your favorite son. Who was it that came up with the idea to sell Joseph to the caravan? It was Judah. Judah was the one that said, Here's an opportunity to get rid of our brother.

Let's sell him away. What were his priorities regarding the favorite brother and the father at that point? Oh, Jacob will get over it and we'll be rid of Joseph. Now they've got a very similar situation.

Benjamin is just as much the spoiled brat in their view, just as much the favored son of Jacob. But what does he say? I will put my life on the line to make sure that you keep

your favorite son. I will be surety for him.

I will make sure he comes back. Is this a change in Judah's thinking and Judah's attitude? It very much is. Instead of taking the leadership and making sure the brother goes away, he is now taking leadership to make sure the brother comes back.

And he's putting his life on the line for the sake of his father. So their father Israel said to them, If it must be so, then do this. Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down a present for the man, a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

Take double money in your hands, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sack. This is going to be triple payment. They're going to double the payment that they made last time, plus they're going to take the original money back.

They're taking three times. This tells you, by the way, that God has blessed Jacob in the land, and it isn't lack of money that is the problem. It's lack of food.

You can't find anything to buy up in the land. He's got gold aplenty, and he's got non-staple items, luxury items. Where are these items coming from? The honey and spices and myrrh and pistachio nuts and almonds.

These are the delicacies of the land, but it's the grain. And this is another thing that makes you think that perhaps this famine is not the result so much of drought as of blight, that something has affected the crops and the staples specifically, because these other things seem to be available. They're not worried about water.

They're worried about grain. Perhaps it was an oversight. Take your brother also and arise.

Go back to the man, and may God Almighty give you mercy before the man that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved. So now Jacob's taking kind of a fatalistic attitude.

We really have no choice. We can die in place, or we can take a chance that the man will accept you and release your brothers, and if not, I'm going to be bereaved one way or another. So the men took the present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand and arose and went down to Egypt, and they stood before Joseph.

When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, Take these men to my home and slaughter an animal and make ready, for these men will dine with me at noon. Notice Joseph's warm reaction to his brothers when he sees Benjamin. Why? Not just because he loves his brother Benjamin, who's his full brother and all the others are half.

It's because his brothers returned with Benjamin. Benjamin didn't perish on the way. Benjamin didn't stay in the land.

They didn't sacrifice Simeon. His brothers have already given strong evidence that there's been a change from their attitudes and their priorities of 20 years ago. They safely delivered the favored son after a long journey, and they've put themselves on the line.

Joseph knows what they think about how risky this is for them and how disastrous it could be if on a whim he decided to execute them all, but they have come for the sake of Simeon and for the sake of their families, and so there's quite a different attitude in the family. So Joseph's men did as he ordered and brought the men into Joseph's house. They were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house.

They said it's because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time that we were brought in, so that he can make a case against us and seize us to take us as slaves with our donkeys. They drew near to the steward. They talked with him at the door of the house.

They said, Sir, let me explain. We came down the first time to buy food, but it happened when we came to the encampment. We opened our sacks, and there each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight, so we have brought it back in our hand.

If you go back to the account, it's not strictly the way it happened. They've summarized, haven't they? One man found it in his sack at the encampment. The rest of them found it when they got back home, but they've just distilled this down, and the Bible does this sometimes, and it isn't an untruth.

This is an illustration of the way Hebrews think and talk. They will consolidate something like the garrison demoniac. If you look in some accounts, it's one guy.

If you look in another account, it's two demon-possessed men. Is one of them wrong? No. Sometimes in the Hebrew mind, in the Semitic mind, you can consolidate things down and give a condensed version, and it's true.

So they say we stopped at the encampment. We all found our money. Well, there's no need to go into the details.

The gist of it is there. They were anxious to bring it back. We've brought down other money in our hands to buy food.

We do not know who put the money in our sacks. He said, Peace be with you. Do not be afraid.

Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money. I've got your payment.

Whatever you got in your sack must be something God gave you, because I've got your payment. We didn't come up short in the books here, so whatever you got, your God gave you. So the man brought them in into Joseph's house, gave them water, washed their feet, gave their donkeys to feed.

They made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon. They heard that they would eat bread there. Joseph came home.

They brought in the present, which was in their hand, into the house. They bowed down before him to the earth. Verse 27, he asked them about their well-being and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive? They answered, Your servant, our father, is in good health.

He is still alive. They bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves. Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin.

You remember that flag waving in the midst of this forest of verses here. When somebody lifts their eyes and looks, pay attention. Something big is about to happen.

He lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me? And he said, God be gracious to you, my son. And this term, my son, is later on it's going to talk about Joseph being a father to Pharaoh. It's somebody to whom he can be beneficial.

Now his heart yearned for his brother, so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep. You can imagine the stress that this is putting on Joseph going through this process. It isn't just all calmness and still waters for Joseph.

In testing his brothers, it's putting him to the test as well. So he went somewhere to weep. He went into his chamber and wept there.

Then he washed his face and came out, and he restrained himself and said, Serve the bread. Kind of reminds me of Mess Night in the Marine Corps. Parade the beef.

He says, Serve the bread. So they set him a place by himself and by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with them by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. And they eat in separate places.

Is Joseph an Egyptian? No. Does he look like an Egyptian to them? Yes. They sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked in astonishment at one another.

Now see, there have been clues along here of who Joseph is that they have not been able to piece together in their minds. And partly because of the stress that they're under, in calm circumstances, they might begin to think, you know, there's something really, there needs to be an explanation for this favoritism that we're receiving. We get our money back.

We get treated in the house and so forth. But they don't piece it together. They don't recognize their brother, even when they're getting strong clues.

Somebody paying attention, who else but their brother would know the birth order? These men are all in their 30s and 40s, and how would they know otherwise? That should have opened their eyes, but it didn't. That has implications when you think about the Jews, when Christ is among them. They should have recognized him, and they didn't, even in the face of strong clues.

He took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him. Just make a note of that, five times as much.

Chapter 44. He commanded the steward of his house, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry. Put each man's money in the mouth of his sack.

Put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money. Did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.

When they had gone out of the city and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, Get up and follow these men. He's not going to wait for them to go all the way back to the night encampment, and then all the way back to Jacob. Joseph is beginning to sense that he has the answers that he needs, but this is one more test for his brothers.

Not only does he put the money back in their sacks, but he puts his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. What is he up to? Get up, follow the men. When you overtake them, say to them, Why have you repaid evil for good? Is not this the one from which my Lord drinks and with which he indeed practices divination? You've done evil in so doing.

Once again, putting Joseph forward as an Egyptian, it was very commonplace to, you know, what we would call reading tea leaves and so forth. This is his favorite cup. In other words, this cup has special significance, and the easiest way to impress that upon their minds is to say this is his divining cup.

Does Joseph actually divine with this cup? No, he does not. Joseph doesn't need a divining cup. He's got the spirit of the Lord.

So he overtook them. He spoke to them these same words. They said to him, Why does

my Lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing.

Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your Lord's house? With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my Lord's slaves. When's the last time we heard this kind of language, this sort of offer being made? Search, and if you find it, you can kill the one that holds it.

Remember when Jacob left Laban's house, Rachel stole the teraphim, and she sat on top of them and said, It's the way of women with me when Laban came in. But Jacob was so sure of his innocence and the innocence of all who were with him, he said, Search my stuff, and if you find your teraphim, it's death for the person that has them, little knowing that it was actually present in the camp. Well, here you have the sons of Jacob making the very same offer in the very same circumstances.

The only difference is none of them knows that they actually do have the cup. And whose sack is it in? The son of Rachel, Benjamin. He will die, we will be my Lord's slaves.

And he said, Let it be according to your words. He with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless. So he says, Let it be according to your words, but he reduces the penalty by one notch.

The one that's found will be the slave, everybody else will go free. Each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack. So he searched, he began with the oldest, and left off with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

You'll notice it doesn't even mention the fact that their money is in the top of each one of these sacks. Each man hastens and says, We're innocent, no problem. They open their sacks, and here the money bag comes tumbling out.

You can just see, like Spock on the old Star Trek, where the steward goes by and his eyebrow just goes up. Like, innocent, eh? He goes from the oldest down to the youngest, and as each one unleashes his sack, here comes the grain, and there's the bag of money in the top. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten bags full of money in the top of each of these sacks.

And they get to Benjamin, and you can imagine the suspense of the brothers by the time they get to Benjamin's sack. Open up the sack, out comes the money, and on top of it all, out comes the cup. And look at the reaction in verse 13.

They tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city. You remember when Joseph was sold into slavery, and they went back to Jacob, and they showed him the bloody coat. What did Jacob do? Tore his clothes, went into mourning, could not be consoled.

Here, the prospect of Benjamin being made a slave, what does it do to the brothers? Well, he's that favored son anyway, good riddance. Now we got rid of the both of them. We won't have to put up with Jacob's infernal, intolerable doting on this kid anymore.

Now they have the same attitude that Jacob had. They're tearing their clothes at losing Benjamin. Has there been a change? Has something happened in the course of the last 20 years? It absolutely has.

They don't say, fine, take Benjamin, we're going home with the grain. They all return. They're going to all stick up for their brother, the son of Rachel, the favored one, the pampered one, the doted on one.

They will all put themselves and their families, because they're taking the grain back with them. They loaded their donkeys and returned to the city. Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there, and they fell before him on the ground.

You can tell they hadn't gotten very far out of the city. They fell before him on the ground. 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, that I would know if you had stolen something? And of course, they having done no wrong in this case, can't imagine.

So Judah says, What shall we say to my Lord? What shall we speak? And this is one of the greatest turning points in seeing what's in the souls of the brothers, because Judah doesn't even try to explain. He doesn't even make an excuse. They are, in fact, innocent, and there is nothing more inspiring to the production of vocabulary than being accused of a wrong when you're not guilty.

This just brings forth the wellsprings of your explanations and vocabulary. We are all experts at self-vindication, especially when we are actually not guilty. But look at what Judah does.

He says, What shall we say to my Lord? What shall we speak? How shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants. Here we are, my Lord's slaves. What iniquity is he talking about? Judah says, We're not guilty of this, but this is just.

This is what we deserve. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a slave for a slave. We sold our brother into slavery.

Now we're going to be made slaves, and it's right. There's no point in even trying to defend ourselves. This is God's justice, and it's right.

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. They just... Judah recognizes it as the hand of God and recognizes the justice of it.

This is what we deserve for what we have done. He acknowledges the wrong, and he acknowledges that the punishment that he thinks he's about to receive is just. That's a big change from the Judah that said, Hey, here comes a caravan.

Let's sell him. Then beginning in verse 18, we have the longest and the most impassioned speech in Genesis. And that we're going to have to save for next time.

But keep in mind that here, just when everything seems the darkest, and at the point of acknowledging both the wrong and the justness of God's penalty, this is going to be the turning point where the greatest of God's blessings and grace are about to be revealed. And it is the same for us. We serve the same God.

He loves us with the same love. There is nothing we have ever done. There is no circumstance or failure that we have ever fallen into that God cannot work together for good.

It all depends on our attitude. Do we cleanse our hearts? Do we claim His grace? That's the issue. Psalm 66.

Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank You for the wonderful, gracious hands that You hold us and guide us with. We thank You for the opportunity that we have in this life to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to have the opportunity to be restored to Your image because of the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

We thank You that even in the trials of life, even when pressure is the greatest, it is Your hand upon us for benefit, for blessing, and to fulfill Your perfect purposes in the history of the human race as well as in our individual lives. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will continue to impress these things on our souls when it counts the most, when we're living our daily existence, when we are making our routine decisions, partaking and participating in the routine things of life, that we will remember who we are and why we're here, and that in so doing, we will be enabled and empowered that You will be at work in us to do Your good purpose. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.