

Now the famine was still severe in the land. <sup>2</sup> So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little more food.”

<sup>3</sup> But Judah said to him, “The man warned us solemnly, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ <sup>4</sup> If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. <sup>5</sup> But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’”

<sup>6</sup> Israel asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?”

<sup>7</sup> They replied, “The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. ‘Is your father still living?’ he asked us. ‘Do you have another brother?’ We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here?’”

<sup>8</sup> Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. <sup>9</sup> I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. <sup>10</sup> As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.”

<sup>11</sup> Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. <sup>12</sup> Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. <sup>13</sup> Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. <sup>14</sup> And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

<sup>15</sup> So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. <sup>16</sup> When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner; they are to eat with me at noon.”

<sup>17</sup> The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph’s house. <sup>18</sup> Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, “We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.”

<sup>19</sup> So they went up to Joseph’s steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. <sup>20</sup> “Please, sir,” they said, “we came down here the first time to buy food. <sup>21</sup> But at the place where

*we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. <sup>22</sup> We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks.”*

<sup>23</sup> *“It's all right,” he said. “Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.” Then he brought Simeon out to them.*

<sup>24</sup> *The steward took the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. <sup>25</sup> They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.*

<sup>26</sup> *When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. <sup>27</sup> He asked them how they were, and then he said, “How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?”*

<sup>28</sup> *They replied, “Your servant our father is still alive and well.” And they bowed low to pay him honor.*

<sup>29</sup> *As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” And he said, “God be gracious to you, my son.” <sup>30</sup> Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.*

<sup>31</sup> *After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, “Serve the food.”*

<sup>32</sup> *They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians.*

<sup>33</sup> *The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. <sup>34</sup> When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him.*

What is repentance? Please take thirty seconds and write down your own definition of repentance. Last week we asked a similar question—what is forgiveness? As we saw last week, these two are inseparable from one another. I told you how I changed my mind after studying forgiveness. I used to believe that we are commanded to forgive whether or not the other person has repented. I no longer believe that. Our forgiveness toward others is always conditioned upon their genuine repentance. If that is not clear to you, please read or listen to last Sunday's message or talk to me some time. But this is our starting point for this message. God forgives us when we repent and we are commanded to forgive others if they repent. But what is repentance?

My premise is that Joseph put his brothers through the ringer, as it were, not to enact revenge on them but rather to lead them toward genuine repentance. This morning we will see how their repentance develops over the three chapters. But as we do that, I want to examine the full meaning of repentance.

If you recall from last week, there are three main Greek words for forgiveness and collectively they have about five different meanings. However, none of them have anything to do with our emotions. That is why we need to separate our bitterness and anger from the actual act of forgiveness. The definition of repentance does include an emotional reaction but that is a small part of the definition. There are two Greek words for repentance and the one that is far more common means “to change one's mind”<sup>1</sup> and the less common word means “to heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins.”<sup>2</sup>

We can see how the less common word is used in Matthew 27:1-5 in the KJV.

<sup>1</sup> *When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:* <sup>2</sup> *And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.* <sup>3</sup> *Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, **repented** himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,* <sup>4</sup> *Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.* <sup>5</sup> *And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.* Instead of the word “repent,” the NIV translates that Greek word as “seized with remorse.”

Do you think that Judas experienced genuine repentance? It is interesting that Judas knew that he sinned. Moreover, he very specifically defined his sin—“I have betrayed innocent blood.” Generally, if someone experienced genuine remorse as well as an acute awareness of their sin, we would call that repentance. If you didn’t know his story and you just happened upon Judas at that moment, most of us would have probably called it repentance but I think we all know that it was not. But what was Judas missing? It is too obvious to say that he was not genuinely repentant because he committed suicide. Something else was missing from his experience.

This will become more evident as we look at 2 Cor. 7:8

<sup>8</sup> *Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it (KJV—I do not repent). Though I did regret it (KJV—I did repent)—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—<sup>9</sup> yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.*

The first thing to notice is that in verse eight, the word translated as “regret” in the NIV is translated as ‘repent’ in the KJV. This is the less common word for repentance and as you can see from Judas’ experience and from this verse, it definitely has an emotional component to it. Judas was seized with remorse and Paul had a type of regret. But the regret that Paul experienced was due to the fact that the sternness of his previous letter made an emotional impact on his readers. They were hurt by his words, they were made sorrowful by his words, but in a good way. Their sorrow led them in a particular direction—it led them to repentance.

But we ask again, what is this repentance and how is it different from the repentance practiced by Judas which led only to despair and suicide? Paul continues in verse ten. *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.* Paul lays out a clear comparison between what he calls godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation but worldly sorrow does not bring about the same result. But why? What is godly sorrow and how does it differ from worldly sorrow? Let me demonstrate the difference by looking further at Judas’ “repentance.”

As we already said, Judas had a recognition of his own sin. “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood,” he said. That was very clear admission of a very serious sin. Second, Judas had great sorrow—he was “seized with remorse” (NIV). But what good did his recognition of sin and great remorse do him? But here is the challenge for us, because would you not agree that genuine repentance also has a recognition of sin and a sorrow for sin? Can a person be repentance

without either of these things? One could argue that there are various levels of sorrow over sin. We usually don't break down and cry before others or before the Lord every time we sin, but if we recognize it is a true sin—a violation of God's laws and commands—then we will have some sorrow. If we put Judas' repentance side by side with genuine repentance, they would look exactly the same.

Judas' Repentance	Genuine Repentance
Recognition of sin	Recognition of sin
Sorrow	Sorrow

So what is the difference between these two? How does one lead to salvation that leaves no regret and the other brings death? In Judas' case, his so-called repentance led to physical death and then it sent him to Hell. What are we missing? I think one of the key differences is that genuine repentance is produced by godly sorrow while the Judas' type repentance is merely worldly sorrow. But that doesn't help unless we understand the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. The difference is that godly sorrow seeks to be pardoned of their burden of sin while worldly sorrow does not seek to be pardoned. Judas recognized his sin and felt great remorse, but he didn't do anything about these burdens. He could have taken them to his master with him he had live and learned for three and a half years, but instead he chose to keep them to himself.

Judas' Repentance	Genuine Repentance
Recognition of sin	Recognition of sin
Sorrow	Sorrow
Not seeking to be pardoned	Seeking to be pardoned

What I call "seeking to be pardoned" is equivalent to the traditional definition of repentance—a change of mind. The truly repentant person changes his mind about his sin and sorrow in such a way that it leads him to seek forgiveness from those whom he offended. It is the direction of the person's sorrow, then, which makes it either godly sorrow or worldly sorrow. If the sorrow is directed at God in a desire for pardon, then it is godly sorrow but if the sorrow is not directed at god, the sorrow has no outlet.



Let me give you an illustration reminiscent of Houdini. One of Houdini's most famous tricks was called the *water torture cell of death* where he was submerged in a tank of water while hanging upside down. I am going to put you in the tank right side up and then I am going to slowly begin to fill the tank with water. The rising water in the tank represents sorrow and regret over past sin. If we let the water run into the tank, eventually you will drown. This is a picture of worldly sorrow that eventually leads to death. Now let's say that you see a valve near the bottom of the tank and you hold your breath for a few seconds, dive down to the bottom and release the valve. All of the water will quickly drain out and you will be saved. Turning the water valve is like

seeking to be pardoned—it is your way of escape. Like all analogies, this one is far from perfect because who in their right mind would choose not to turn the valve and release the water? Well, we could equally ask who in their right mind would not want to be released from the burden of guilt and sin? That question probably needs to be reserved for another sermon altogether.

We see once again that forgiveness is not for the one offering the forgiveness but for the one who seeks forgiveness, which goes against the traditional understanding of forgiveness that is held by most Christians. The genuinely repentance person will seek to be pardoned by the one he offended. That is his only way of escape from his burden and sorrow. With this understanding of repentance, let's go back to the Matthew 27 passage.

*Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, **repented** himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, <sup>4</sup> Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.* Now we can understand that the word the KJV translates as *repentance* is not genuine repentance but rather a type of regret. Judas had a powerful recognition of sin and great remorse but he did not seek to be pardoned. This is probably why every other translation does not use the word repentance. It is not a good translation because it confuses the topic of repentance. As Paul said, genuine repentance does not leave any regret because such a person seeks out and receives pardon for their offense.

I can't teach about repentance without bringing 2 Tim. 2:24-26 into the conversation.

<sup>24</sup> *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.* <sup>25</sup> *Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,* <sup>26</sup> *and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

There are two points I want to highlight from this passage. The first is that we have a responsibility to help others come to a point of genuine repentance. We are to “gently instruct” others in the offense of their sin in order that they could come to repentance. This is what the process in Matthew 18 is all about.

*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.* <sup>16</sup> *But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

Why would you show a brother his or her fault? You don't do it so that you can gloat or abuse the other person—“do you see what you did to me? What are you going to do about this sin of yours?!” No, you go to the person so that they can clearly understand their sin and have the opportunity to repent. This is because the goal of all forgiveness and repentance and reconciliation between the two parties. We will talk about reconciliation next week.

From the timothy passage we see that our responsibility is to help lead others to genuine repentance. But the other thing Paul is teaching here is that God also “grants repentance.” There is a very real sense in which repentance is a gift from God, which may also be related to the godly sorrow from 2 Corinthians.

This far we have established two principles—we know that genuine repentance has three parts to it—recognition of sin, sorrow for sin and a seeking to be pardoned. We also know that it is the

responsibility of the person who has been offended to help the other person come to a place of repentance. With these two things in mind we will see that this is exactly what Joseph was doing in these three chapters. He had already let go of his bitterness and anger—he had “forgotten” them. He takes it a step further by showing love to his brothers through the process of helping to bring them to repentance. I want to show you how the brothers progress to genuine repentance in these three chapters.

Last week I focused on 42:21-23

<sup>21</sup> *They said to one another, “Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come upon us.”*

<sup>22</sup> *Reuben replied, “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.”* <sup>23</sup> *They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.*

Based on this conversation among the brothers, what point in the process leading to genuine repentance do you think they were at? They most definitely recognized their sin against Joseph and they seem to have real sorrow but even here we can’t be sure. Do they have real sorrow or are they just upset because they feel they are being punished by this Egyptian ruler for what they did to Joseph? Actually, they are engaged in a fraternal argument with Reuben blaming everyone else. Even if we give them the benefit of the doubt on point #2, they clearly are not seeking pardon for their sin. They do not have what Paul calls Godly sorrow.

<b>Genuine Repentance</b>
Recognition of sin
Sorrow
Seeking to be pardoned

The brothers go back to Canaan with grain for their starving families. They explained the situation to Jacob—if they want to buy more food and rescue Simeon from prison, they will have to bring Benjamin with them on the next journey. Jacob responded with characteristic self-pity. *“You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!”* Being the oldest brother, Reuben threw out a solution to the dilemma. *“You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.”* Based on Reuben’s plan, have the grown any closer to genuine repentance? Reuben may have thought he was exhibiting mature leadership but offering to put your two sons to death was neither wise nor just. Do you think Jacob would have wanted to kill his grandsons? Jacob’s response to Reuben was firm. *My son will not go down there with you.*

When the first cache of food began to run out they reminded Jacob that Benjamin must return to Egypt if they want to buy grain and rescue Simeon. This time Judah had his own plan.

*“Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. <sup>9</sup> I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.”* (43:8-9)

What do you think of Judah's plan? Does he seem to be moving toward genuine repentance? Unlike Reuben, Judah did not offer to kill his own two sons if he failed to bring back Benjamin but instead promised to take the blame upon himself. We see a hint of Judah's attitude in the Jacob's response to his plan. *Take your brother also and go back to the man at once.*<sup>14</sup> *And may God Almighty<sup>a</sup> grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.*" It seems clear that Jacob trusted Judah more than he trusted Reuben.

The events of chapter 44 play out. When the brothers try to leave home a second time having rescued Simeon, Joseph places his own silver cup in Benjamin's sack. This is yet another set up. Joseph was testing them to their breaking point. How would they respond if they knew Benjamin was going to be a prisoner? And we must not think for a moment that Joseph got some perverse pleasure by torturing his family. The first time he saw them he had to turn away from them because he began to weep and now in chapter 44 he had to leave the room because of his uncontrolled sobbing. Most of the story is told from the perspective of the brothers, their journeys and their conversations back home with Jacob, but we must consider how this must have affected Joseph. He wanted desperately to be reconciled with his brothers but the timing was not right. Since he had let go of his bitterness, every day that did not bring reconciliation was painful for him. Moreover, every week and month that passed made it that more likely that Jacob could die in Canaan and Joseph would never see him again. In the short term, it would have been so much easier for Joseph to have revealed himself when the brothers first arrived. He could have told them the story of his life and immediately sent for his father and the rest of the family to come to Egypt. But such a short term plan would have been a short cut that would have prevented genuine repentance and reconciliation.

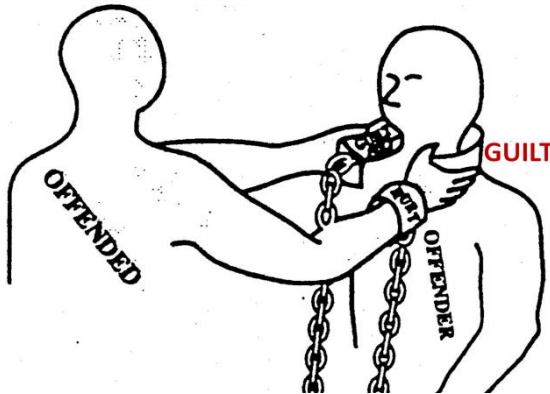
This is yet another reason why we should not be too quick to forgive. If we take short cuts in this process of repentance and forgiveness, then reconciliation will not be possible. Granted, many offenses can be overlooked. Others are relatively small and can be worked through relatively quickly when loving and humble attitudes are present, but you must not take a short cut with more serious offenses.

When Joseph declared that Benjamin was to be his prisoner, the brothers all threw themselves to the ground before him. This was the third time they bowed down to Joseph thereby fulfilling his original dreams about them. Judah demonstrated real leadership in this crisis and took charge. Look at this stark admission in verse 16. *God has uncovered your servants' guilt.* This is the first time that any of the brothers has brought the Lord into the conversation. Judah and the brothers had already admitted their guilt and their sorrow and now they demonstrate their guilt before a holy God.

When all else seems to fail, Judah makes good on his promise to Jacob. *Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.*<sup>34</sup> *How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father (44:33-34).*

This is the point of full and genuine repentance. Judah was asking for pardon/mercy for Benjamin but not for himself. This step was the completion of repentance by asking to be

pardoned and forgiven. In doing so, he was willing to become a substitute for Benjamin, as substitutionary slave. This is a type of Christ's substitutionary atonement, especially in light of the fact that Christ came from the tribe of Judah. Now compare Judah's response in chapter 44 with his actions in chapter 37. *Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?"<sup>27</sup> Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood."* His brothers agreed.



What we have before us at the end of chapter 44 is this picture of repentance and forgiveness. Joseph bows before the second most powerful man in Egypt and by extension, the world and asks for mercy and pardon for his youngest brother. Do you see how powerful this scene would have been? Judah hated Joseph and wanted to profit from his misery by selling him into slavery. Now 22 years later, Judah was willing to sell *himself* into slavery in order to save his brother. Judah was not only repentant, but in a sense he was making restitution for his sins against

Joseph. Judah could not erase the pain he had caused to Joseph but he could offer himself as a slave. Now don't mistake this offer as a type of payment. Judah is begging for mercy and he does not have anything to offer Joseph. Judah's request to substitute himself in place of Benjamin is a fruit of his repentance.

Through Judah's leadership, finally the brothers had come to genuine repentance. And the reason we know that Joseph accepted their request for mercy is because of what happened in the next chapter—Joseph finally revealed himself. Let's recount the steps which brought Joseph to this place. First, Joseph dealt with his anger and bitterness. He didn't know if he would ever see his family again but he knew he had to be rid of that emotional pain. Second, he was ready and willing to forgive as evidenced by his patience with his brothers. Had he not been willing to forgive, he could have easily sent them home with food like any other traveler's buying grain from Egypt. He could have let go of his pain but not have been willing to forgive. Moreover, not only was he willing to forgive, he wanted to help his brothers reach a point of genuine repentance. This third step took up the majority of the story in these three chapters. Based upon their repentance, Joseph was finally able to forgive his brothers and then begin the process of reconciliation. We could summarize Genesis 42-44 in this way.

1. Joseph dealt with his own anger and bitterness
2. Joseph was willing to forgive his brothers
3. Joseph assisted in their genuine repentance
  - The brothers recognized their sin
  - The brothers felt remorse for their sin
  - The brothers sought pardon for their sin
4. Joseph forgave/pardoned his brothers
5. They all began the process of reconciliation



Next week we will answer the question, what is reconciliation? But before we are done, let me ask you a pointed question—are you stuck at any of these steps? Are you stuck at the point of letting go of your anger and bitterness? Maybe you have worked through your anger but are not yet willing to offer forgiveness. Perhaps you are on the other end of the situation—you know you need to repent but you cannot humble yourself and ask for pardon from the one you offended. I can't count the number of problems we bring on ourselves when we get stuck in one of these areas. Holding onto these things can cause all kinds of health problems. It causes all manner of relationship problems—between parents and children, husbands and wives, etc. I am going to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where we may be stuck and to give us the courage to move forward in obedience.

Rich Maurer  
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<sup>1</sup>Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. H0

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>a</sup> Hebrew *El-Shaddai*