

LESSON 9



JUDAH PLEADS FOR BENJAMIN

Scripture Text: *Genesis 44:18-34*

Again Joseph's brothers fell before him as the dreams revealed they would. Joseph tested his brothers. God tests us. The brothers accounted to Joseph. We must all give account to Christ. The brothers confessed to Joseph that they were sinners. We must confess to God (Proverbs 28:13).

Conviction led the brothers to confess to Joseph. Conviction is a step toward salvation, leading one to confess to God (1 John 1:9). They yielded to Joseph to serve him. To be saved, we yield ourselves to serve God (Romans 6:13).

MEMORY VERSE: *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* *Proverbs 28:13*

Sin's Reaping Time

Joseph awaited the brothers' response. What kind of men were they? Had they repented of abandoning Joseph years before? He did not have long to wait.

Genesis 44:18-23 Then Judah came near unto him. He drew nearer than ever before and spoke with deep feeling and surrender. He begged to be heard without anger. He first reminded Joseph that his own questioning had let him know of Benjamin. Joseph's own exacting demand had brought Benjamin here. He pointed out seven facts to touch Joseph's heart with pity. Their father was **an old man**. Benjamin was **a child of his old age**. He was **a little one**, or young. **His brother is dead**. (He meant Joseph, Benjamin's only full brother. Jacob believed him to be dead.) Benjamin **alone is left of his mother** (of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife). **His father loveth him**. (Judah remembered with pain his sudden realization of his father's love for Joseph when they came home without him.) If he should leave his father, **his father would die**. (He could see again his father bowed in grief for Joseph.)

Genesis 44:24-29 Now Judah told of the discussion at home—the need to go for more food, the demand that Benjamin be brought, and their father's objection because of the former loss of Joseph. The added loss of Benjamin would cause his death. Judah did not say what had happened to Joseph, but quoted his father's supposition that **he is torn in pieces**.

What was it that gave urgency to Judah's passionate plea? Was it not the pain of the guilty consciences the brothers had carried for over twenty years? The memory of their sin of selling Joseph and the resulting grief to their father gave them a fear of ever repeating such a wrong. The sin was done in a few hours, but the reaping lasted their lifetimes. It is always so. Thank God, sin can be forgiven, but it leaves scars that can never be removed, and spreads seeds that bring forth many a bitter harvest. If we could only realize this when young as we will when older! If we would heed the Bible and remember our Creator in the days of our youth, we would avoid many sins with their dreadful consequences. Let us sow to the Spirit and reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:7-8).

Judah Hands in the Test Paper

Genesis 44:30-32 Judah explained his own position. His father's life was so **bound up in the lad's life** that should the brothers return without Benjamin they would be guilty of bringing his **gray hairs . . . with sorrow to**

the grave. He did not say this would be the second time of bringing such sorrow to him, but we can rest assured that this thought was heavy in his own heart and mind. Judah told how he had bound himself to bring Benjamin safely home to his father or **bear the blame to him for ever.**

Genesis 44:33-34 Judah begged to stay instead of Benjamin. He would be a **bondman**, or a slave, to Joseph. He asked that Benjamin be allowed to go home with his brothers. **For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?** It would be easier for him to be a slave than to see the grief of his father again.

The test was over. The brothers did better the second time in their stewardship than they did in the first. Joseph they had hated and sold. Benjamin they cared for and protected. Joseph could see the kind of men his brothers were. Not only that, but he had given them opportunity to meet temptation and have victory over it. Now they could have more courage and confidence to go forward. They had faced the temptation to sacrifice a brother to their own benefit as once before. They had refused, choosing rather to suffer themselves. What will Joseph answer? Will they pass the test?

Did this faithfulness wipe out the previous unfaithfulness? No, God does not balance good deeds against bad ones and count the person on the side of the most. No amount of goodness can cancel one sin. The only way to wipe it out is by repentance and the washing of the blood of Christ.

Parental Stewardship

Children are an heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3). We do not own them. They are entrusted to us from God. Each one is a soul that must return to Him. We are to care for them as the most precious trust we have. In our hands is the preparing of them to return to Him. We cannot choose for them, but we have a great influence in their choice (Proverbs 22:6). The training is much more important than the teaching. First we teach. We say, "Be honest, do not steal." Then we watch over them to train them in honesty. If one slips a piece of candy from his brother or a friend, we see that he returns it or repays it with some of his own. So with all the virtues. From earliest babyhood we take them on our laps and talk and sing and read and pray. We teach them in daily family worship. We train them by seeing that they put all else aside and listen quietly. We train them to follow the instructions they have learned. We train them by turning with them to the Bible for answers to their problems. This is the plan for all who would be successful parents. It is not one that can be done through babysitters. It is one for love and care and watchfulness and prayer and trust in God. Judah said, "**How shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?** How shall we go up to God, our Father, without our children?"

JUST A THOUGHT

**"When a man tries himself, the verdict
is usually in his favor."**

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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