

Introduction

1. Last week in chapter 43 we began to see evidence of a transformation taking place in Joseph's brothers as they were confronted by their sin and guilt:
 - a. When we first met the brothers at the beginning of Joseph's story, they were filled with hate and jealousy, sought to kill him, and then sold him into slavery
 - b. But last week we saw them seek mercy and compassion from Joseph with obedience, contrition, and reverence, and when they received it they expressed a sense of amazement
 - c. What this suggests is that God was at work confronting their sin and transforming them into Who He wanted them to become as part of His redemptive plan
 - d. They were to become the foundation for the nation of Israel, not just physically but by carrying on the spiritual legacy of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob
 - e. But, in order for that to happen, they needed to experience transformation
2. Big Idea: those who are part of God's redemptive plan must be transformed by Him:
 - a. Romans 12:2: **"and do not be conformed to this world, but be TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."**
 - b. 1 Corinthians 3:18: **"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being TRANSFORMED into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."**
3. Most of the passage today focuses on Joseph's brother Judah, and his transformation is nothing short of remarkable and serves as a good example for us:
 - a. Most of what we know about Judah isn't good; in fact, it's pretty wicked:
 - 1) The first thing we learned about him was that he was consumed by hatred and jealousy toward Joseph (37:4, 5, 11)
 - 2) He participated with his brothers when they intended to kill him by throwing him into a pit and leaving him to die
 - 3) He was the one who came up with the plan to sell Joseph into slavery (35:26-27)
 - 4) He also joined his brothers in lying to Jacob about Joseph's demise (37:29-35)
 - 5) After this, he moved to a Canaanite city, became best friends with a Canaanite, married a Canaanite woman, had at least two sons who were so wicked God decided to kill them, he refused to full the Levirate obligation to his daughter-in-law, and finally sought out what he thought was a temple prostitute and impregnated her
 - b. What we in our passage today is a very different Judah; He had been transformed and we see that today in three ways (outline):
 - 1) Judah's transformation was characterized by admission of sin (44:14-16)
 - 2) Judah's transformation was characterized by empathy and compassion (44:17-31)

- 3) Judah's transformation was characterized by sacrificial love (44:32-34)
4. Before we get to Judah, though, we need to understand what led up to the main portion of our passage (Genesis 44:1-13):
 1. Joseph had already tested his brothers once:
 - a. On their first trip to Egypt, Joseph recognized his brothers but didn't trust them (for obvious reasons) so he questioned their honesty and assumed they were there to spy out the land
 - b. To test them and prove they were there simply to buy grain, he sent them home with orders to return with Benjamin, their youngest brother
 - c. They did just as he ordered, but apparently Joseph still wasn't convinced that His brothers could be trusted, or that they had changed
 2. So, Joseph tested his brothers a second time (READ Genesis 44:1-2):
 - a. As the brother's sacks of grain were being loaded up, Joseph told his servant to place his silver cup just inside the opening to Benjamin's sack:
 - 1) In v. 5 Joseph's servant said that Joseph used this cup both for drinking and **"divination"** and Joseph alluded to the same thing in v. 15 saying, **"...do you not know that such a man as I can indeed interpret omens?"**
 - a) These are difficult and troubling statements since the Bible condemns divination because it generally involves seeking secret knowledge through demonic means; in fact, the root of the Hebrew word is the same as that for serpent
 - b) Practicing divination would be out of character for Joseph so there are a number of possible ways to understand this:
 - He might have only been claiming to use divination as part of the test, since divination was common and stealing such a valuable and important object would have been a serious offense
 - He might have actually used the cup, not to summon demonic knowledge but in much the same way the casting of lots or the Urim and Thummin of the priests was used to determine God's will
 - We also have to remember that this was before God had directly prohibited divination in the Law
 - c) The most important thing about the cup was that it was an important and valuable possession of Joseph's, and thereby a serious offense if they were found with it in their possession
 - 2) It's also important to consider why Joseph chose to hide the cup in Benjamin's sack:
 - a) The text doesn't tell us outright, but one possibility is that it likely would have had to most meaningful and devastating effect on the brothers, considering Benjamin was Jacob's favorite and the one he seemed most concerned about losing

- b) Another possibility is that part of Joseph's test might have been to see how they would respond when the youngest, most vulnerable brother was accused—would they treat him like they treated Joseph? Would they throw him under the bus to save their own skin? Would they stand up and defend him?
- b. When they left just after daybreak and were just outside the city, Joseph sent his servant to confront them over stealing the cup (READ Genesis 44:3-13):
 - 1) When the servant accuses them of stealing Joseph's cup, they obviously denied it
 - 2) They argued that it would make no sense for them to silver or gold since they were honest enough to return the money they found in their sacks
 - 3) They also proposed that if one of the brothers did steal it, he should be killed and the rest made slaves
 - 4) They were even eager to show the servant their sacks to prove their innocence; v. 11 says **"then they hurried, each man brought his sack down to the ground and each man opened his sack."**
- c. Just as Joseph planned, the cup was **"found"** in Benjamin's sack, the brother's shock led them to tear their clothes, and they traveled back to the city

<p>A. Judah's transformation was characterized by admission of sin (READ 44:14-16)</p>
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- 1. As soon as Judah and his brother's entered Joseph's house they **"fell to the ground before him"**:
 - a. This wasn't bowing in reverence like they had done when they met Joseph for the first two times (42:6; 43:26, 28)
 - b. They were afraid, and rightly so (they also fell before Joseph after Jacob died because they were afraid; Genesis 50:18-19)
- 2. From this point on, Judah did all of the talking for his brothers and it's where we see the first sign that something had changed in Judah:
 - a. The first sign of Judah's transformation was that he expressed remorse over their sin (his and his brothers)
 - b. As far as Judah knew, they were guilty (it didn't know it was a trap), and look at how he responded when Joseph confronted him:
 - 1) He didn't make excuses or try to justify their sin (44:16a): **"What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves?"**
 - 2) He attributed the discovery of their sin to God (44:16b): **"God has found out the iniquity of your servants..."**; this isn't the first time the brother's admitting God's role in revealing their sin (SEE 42:28)
 - 3) He accepted the consequences of their sin (44:16c): **"behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found."**

- c. This is a very different Judah than we've seen up to this point and his transformation seems to have begun when God began to convict him and his brothers of their sin and guilt after their first visit with Joseph back in chapter 42
- 3. Takeaway: one evidence that we are part of God's plan and have been transformed by Him is that we admit our sin, followed by a desire to walk in obedience (READ 1 John 1:5-2:6)

<p>B. Judah's transformation was characterized by empathy and compassion (READ 44:17-31)</p>

- 1. To make them all slaves as a result of Benjamin's supposed sin would be unjust so Joseph stated that he would only make Benjamin a slave and allow the rest of the brothers to return home
- 2. However, knowing what this would do to Jacob, Judah approached Joseph and began to plead with him:
 - a. We see here another transformation in Judah and one that involves empathy and compassion:
 - 1) Empathy refers to the ability to understand what someone is going through and thereby share their feelings and emotions
 - 2) Compassion, on the other hand, refers to acting on someone's behalf to help alleviate their suffering
 - 3) It's generally empathy that leads to compassion, and we see that here with Judah
 - b. Did you notice how many times he mentioned his father in these 18 verses, and the concern he had for Jacob if he didn't return home with Benjamin? (the answer is 14)
 - 1) Prior to making this second trip to Egypt, the only thing we've seen from Joseph was the complete opposite of empathy and compassion:
 - a) There was no empathy and compassion when he joined his brothers in first trying to kill Joseph
 - b) There was no empathy and compassion when he came up with the plan sell Joseph into slavery, and then followed through with it
 - c) Where was his empathy and compassion when Jacob wept and mourned over Joseph's supposed death? Sure, he feigned these when he and his brothers deceitfully tried to comfort Jacob, but it was all for show
 - d) Where was his empathy and compassion for his daughter-in-law when she lost both of her husbands, lied to her about giving her his final son, and ultimately failing to fulfill the levirate expectation?
 - e) Where was his empathy and compassion for his family in the midst of the famine when he had to be confronted by Jacob for just sitting around staring at his brothers?
 - 2) However, what we see here in his conversation with Joseph is that it oozes with empathy and compassion:

- a) He understood how important Benjamin was to Jacob—saying in v. 20 that Jacob **“loves”** him and in v. 30 that Jacob’s life was **“bound up”** in Benjamin
 - b) He recognized the concern and fear Jacob had over losing another son—he mentioned this twice, first in v. 20 and then repeating Jacob’s own words in v. 27-29 (RE-READ)
 - c) He believed that losing Benjamin would cause so much sorrow for Jacob that he would die—he mentioned this four times in the passage (22, 29, 31)
- 3. I believe this reveals a significant transformation in Judah because his words and behavior here contrast drastically with what we saw earlier in his life:
 - a. Consider this: originally, his sin against Joseph was motivated by his anger and jealousy over Joseph being Jacob’s favorite
 - b. But this time, his empathy and compassion were being motivated by Benjamin being Jacob’s favorite
 - c. If that doesn’t reveal a transformation nothing will
- 4. Takeaway: a second evidence that we are part of God’s plan and have been transformed by Him is that we express empathy and compassion:
 - a. This is one of God’s amazing attributes; He is empathetic and compassionate:
 - 1) We know God is empathetic because we have the Biblical record of Jesus grieving and weeping on multiple occasions (when he saw the people mourning Lazareth’s death, when He upon unrepentant Israel at the Triumphal Entry, and in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion; Hebrews 5:7)
 - 2) Likewise, we know God is compassionate because it’s a major theme repeated throughout the Bible:
 - a) Psalm 103:8 says, **“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness”**
 - b) Psalm 72:12-14 says, **“For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help, the afflicted also, and him who has no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save. He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, and their blood will be precious in his sight”**
 - b. As Christians, we are called to no less:
 - 1) Romans 12:15 says we are to **“rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep”**
 - 2) Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:8 that we are to be **“...sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted...”**
 - 3) 1 John 3:17 says, **“if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”**

C. Judah’s transformation was characterized by sacrificial love (READ 44:32-34)

1. Judah's empathy and compassion for Jacob, and likely Benjamin as well, led him to make a sacrificial choice:
 - a. He promised Jacob that he would return Benjamin home safely and offered to bear the guilt if he didn't, even referring to a failure to bring Benjamin back as **"sin"**
 - b. So, he pleaded with Joseph to take him as a slave instead and let Benjamin go home with his brothers:
 - 1) It's important to note this wasn't some half-hearted offer
 - 2) It was a plea: **"Now, therefore, please (lit. I pray) let your servant remain instead of the lad..."** (33)
 - 3) He couldn't bear the thought of returning home to Jacob without Benjamin knowing the **"evil"** (likely distress or grief) it would cause him
2. Judah could have thought of himself, let Benjamin take the blame and punishment, returned home to his family, and said Jacob's distress wasn't his problem, but instead he chose an act of sacrificial love
3. Takeaway: another evidence that we are part of God's plan and have been transformed by him is that we demonstrate sacrificial love:
 - a. The greatest example of God's sacrificial love is His willingness to sacrifice His own Son to save us from sin and condemnation (John 3:16): **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."**
 - b. And here's the thing: God's sacrificial love toward us is the model we are to follow, and it's not an option but a command (READ 1 John 4:19-21)
 - c. According to what the Bible says here, the proof that we are part of God's plan and have been transformed by Him is that we love others just as He loves us—if we don't, it says here that we are liars

Conclusion

Those who are part of God's redemptive plan must be transformed by Him and this will be characterized by admitting our sin, expressing empathy and compassion, and demonstrating sacrificial love