

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

4-1-20

Genesis 44

The Missing Cup - Verses 1-17

¹Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: "Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. ² Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain." And he did as Joseph said. ³ As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. ⁴ They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil? ⁵ Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done.'" ⁶ When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. ⁷ But they said to him, "Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! ⁸ We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? ⁹ If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves." ¹⁰ "Very well, then," he said, "let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame." ¹¹ Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. ¹² Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³ At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city. ¹⁴ Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?" ¹⁶ "What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup." ¹⁷ But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace."

44:2 Joseph's silver cup was a symbol of his authority. It was thought to have supernatural powers, and to steal it would be a serious crime. Such goblets were used for predicting the future. A person poured water into the cup and interpreted the reflections, ripples, and bubbles. Joseph wouldn't have needed his cup, since God told him everything he needed to know about the future.

44:13 Tearing clothes was an expression of deep sorrow, a customary manner of showing grief. The brothers were terrified that Benjamin might be harmed.

Judah Pleads for Benjamin Verses 18-34

18 Then Judah went up to him and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. **19** My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' **20** And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.' **21** "Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.' **22** And we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.' **23** But you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.' **24** When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said. **25** "Then our father said, 'Go back and buy a little more food.' **26** But we said, 'We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' **27** "Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. **28** One of them went away from me, and I said, "He has surely been torn to pieces." And I have not seen him since. **29** If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.' **30** "So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, **31** sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. **32** Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!' **33** "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. **34** 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 on my father."

44:16-34 When Judah was younger, he had showed no regard for his brother Joseph or his father, Jacob. First he had convinced his brothers to sell Joseph as a slave (37:27); then he had joined his brothers in lying to his father about Joseph's fate (37:32). But what a change had taken place in Judah! The man who had sold one favored little brother into slavery now offered to become a slave himself to save another favored little brother. He was so concerned for his father and younger brother that he was willing to die for them. When you are ready to give up hope on yourself or someone else, remember that God can work a complete change in even the most selfish personality.

44:18-34 Judah finally could take no more and stepped forward to plead their case. This was risky because Joseph could have had him killed. But Judah courageously defended himself and his brothers and pleaded for mercy. And he offered to put himself in Benjamin's place. At times we should be silent, but at times we should speak up, even if there could be serious repercussions.

When faced with a situation that needs a strong voice and courageous action, remember Judah, and speak up.

44:32-33 Judah had promised Jacob that he would guarantee young Benjamin's safety (43:9). Now Judah had a chance to keep that promise. Becoming a slave was a terrible fate, but Judah was determined to keep his word to his father. He showed great courage in carrying out his promise. Accepting a responsibility means carrying it out with determination and courage, regardless of the personal sacrifice.

44:33 Joseph wanted to see if his brothers' attitudes had changed for the better, so he tested the way they treated each other. Judah, the brother who had stepped forward with the plan to sell Joseph (37:27), now stepped forward to take Benjamin's punishment so that Benjamin could return to their father. This courageous act convinced Joseph that his brothers had dramatically changed for the better.