

Genesis 44

Verses 1- 5

Then he commanded his house steward, saying, “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the opening of his sack. ² And put my cup, the silver cup, in the opening of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain.” And he did as Joseph had told *him*. ³ As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys. ⁴ They had *just* left the city, *and* were not far away, when Joseph said to his house steward, “Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil for good? ⁵ Is this not *that* from which my lord drinks, and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this!’”

Then he commanded his house steward, saying, “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the opening of his sack.

This time Joseph had the steward put every man’s money in the opening of their sacks. You would think at least one of them would have checked his bag before they left regardless of the positive outcome from the first trip.

² And put my cup, the silver cup, in the opening of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain.” And he did as Joseph had told *him*.

Joseph may have done this to find out if his brothers hatred Benjamin like they had hated him. If given the opportunity, would they abandon Benjamin? The partiality shown to Benjamin at the banquet may have been part of this test.

⁴ They had *just* left the city, *and* were not far away, when Joseph said to his house steward, “Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil for good? ⁵ Is this not *that* from which my lord drinks, and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this!’”

We don’t know for sure if Joseph really practiced divination or if this was just a ploy but it seems unlikely since he told the baker and cupbearer that the interpretation of dreams belongs to God.

Verses 6 - 13

⁶ So he overtook them and spoke these words to them. ⁷ And they said to him, “Why does my lord say such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing! ⁸ Behold, the money which we found in the opening of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord’s house? ⁹ With whomever of your servants it is found, he shall die, and we also shall be my lord’s slaves.” ¹⁰ So he said, “Now let it indeed be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, but *the rest of you shall be considered innocent.*” ¹¹ Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. ¹² And he searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. ¹³ Then they tore their clothes *in grief*, and when each man had loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.

⁹ With whomever of your servants it is found, he shall die, and we also shall be my lord’s slaves.”

Joseph wanted to test his brothers to see if they hated Benjamin like they had hated him so he provided them with an opportunity to abandon Benjamin. However, they saw themselves as a family and gave a judgment that would fall on all of them.

¹⁰ So he said, “Now let it indeed be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, but *the rest of you shall be considered innocent.*”

What the steward said was not according to their words but he wanted to give them any and every opportunity to abandon Benjamin. His offer was also better for Benjamin giving them even more cause to agree but it still involved an opportunity for them to abandon their brother.

¹³ Then they tore their clothes *in grief*, and when each man had loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.

The brothers had passed part of the test with flying colors by not returning home without Benjamin. Instead they went back to the city, to defend and support Benjamin.

Verses 14 - 17

¹⁴ When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell down to the ground before him. ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, "What is this thing that you have done? Do you not know that a man who is like me can indeed practice divination?" ¹⁶ So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What *words* can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found." ¹⁷ But he said, "Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father."

¹⁵ Joseph said to them, "What is this thing that you have done? Do you not know that a man who is like me can indeed practice divination?"

If that were the case then He could have determined their innocence but Jacob's sons did not think about that in the pressure of the moment.

¹⁶ So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What *words* can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found."

Judah had the leadership role so he spoke for all of them.

It is difficult to prove you didn't steal something when the evidence is found in your possession. However, if you know you are innocent then there is only one conclusion you can come to. It had to be planted on you. But how do you prove that.

Did Judah just confess that this crime was the result of a plan agreed upon by all of the brothers and they all deserve the same punishment? It doesn't seem so because in the next paragraph he will try to get Benjamin released by taking his place for the crime.

So what did he mean by saying "God has found out the guilt of your servants"? Maybe he was confessing that the rest of them were guilty of a previous crime (selling Joseph as a slave) and they should become his slaves for that crime and Benjamin should be found guilty for this crime. However, this scenario has the same problem as the one above. A guilty person cannot take the place for another guilty person.

Perhaps he saw the flaw in his own argument and decided to try another approach.

Verses 18-34

¹⁸ Then Judah approached him and said, “Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord’s ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are equal to Pharaoh. ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father or a brother?’ ²⁰ And we said to my lord, ‘We have an old father and a little boy *born in our father’s* old age. Now his brother is dead, so he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.’ ²¹ Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me so that I may set my eyes on him.’ ²² But we said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’ ²³ You said to your servants, however, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.’ ²⁴ So it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. ²⁵ And our father said, ‘Go back, buy us a little food.’ ²⁶ But we said, ‘We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’ ²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons; ²⁸ and the one left me, and I said, “Surely he is torn to pieces,” and I have not seen him since. ²⁹ If you also take this one from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.’ ³⁰ So now, when I come to your servant, my father, and the boy is not with us—since our father’s life is so attached to the boy’s life— ³¹ when he sees that the boy is not *with us*, he will die. So your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant, our father, down to Sheol in sorrow. ³² For your servant accepted responsibility for the boy from my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him *back* to you, then my father can let me take the blame forever.’ ³³ So now, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go up with his brothers. ³⁴ For how shall I go up to my father if the boy is not with me? *I fear that I may see the evil that would overtake my father.*”

Most of this is repetition but the overall message is quite amazing. Years earlier Judah had suggested selling Joseph for money.

See Genesis 37:26-27

²⁶ And Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷ Come, and let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our *own* flesh.” And his brothers listened to *him*.

Now he is willing to give his own life in place of his brother's. This is the kind of transformation that God is looking for in all of his children. This is exactly what Christ has done for each one of us but in His case He was without sin or guilt.