

Hello, my name is Matthew Monroe.

The title of my message is: **Joseph's Brother's Repent.**

Genesis chapters 42-44.

Key Verse: 44:33, "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."

Since the fall God has been concerned with man's salvation. Because God is righteous he can not ignore sin. He has to judge us as sinners and destroy us or produce a way for us to repent and come back to God in forgiveness. God chose to forgive us through Christ. Joseph resembles Christ in several ways. In these chapters God uses Joseph to save the lives of his brothers. Not only physically, but bring them to a new life in God through repentance.

Part One: Distress.

At the time there was a famine throughout region. It wasn't just in Egypt, but also in the land of Canaan. Jacob's family ran out of supplies so he told his sons, "I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die." Jacob's ten oldest sons went to Egypt, but not Benjamin, because Jacob was afraid of losing him. Joseph was the governor of the land and in charge of the grain, so Joseph's brothers had to come to him. They did not recognize him but Joseph did, and decided to treat them harshly like a stranger. Joseph still remembered his dreams. He chose to call them spies and had them imprisoned in for three days.

At first it seems like Joseph was trying to get back at his brothers, but he was actually trying to help them repent. Look at chapter 42 verses 21-22, "They said to one another, 'Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded for with us for his life, but we would not listen: that's why this distress has come upon us.' 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.'" Joseph wept when he heard this. Clearly he was concerned for them, otherwise he would be angry instead of being sad. The brothers never forgot what they did to Joseph, and the situation they created by selling Joseph into slavery had made their father miserable for years. Everybody had suffered.

Although Joseph was sorry for them, he knew they needed something more to help them repent. Joseph told them in verse 42:15, "And this how you will be tested: As surely as pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth." Joseph was focusing on their sin against him. He used to be their youngest brother. Now Benjamin was, and he was putting them in a similar situation when they decided to lose Joseph. In the end Joseph only kept one prisoner, Simeon, and let the other 9 go back home. They were able to buy some grain, but when they came home to their father they found that all their money had been returned. This frightened them because they thought they would be accused of being thieves. When they explained the situation to their father, Jacob refused let them take Benjamin back with them. Look at verse 42:36, "Their father Jacob said to them. '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!'" When Jacob heard that Simeon was still imprisoned in Egypt he lost all hope. He considered Simeon dead and thought the whole world was against him.

Sin made everyone miserable. Jacob was hopeless, the brothers were guilt-racked, and Joseph sad. When I think of sin it's easy to understand how it affects certain people. It makes me worse by spiritually damaging me, and some sin can harm others, like theft, murder, adultery, and what not. But in Joseph's situation sin made it bad for everyone. Most of the time I think of sin as being only my problem, and not anyone else's, but Joseph took it upon himself to help his brothers' with their sin problem. He was like Jesus. Although we've all sinned against Jesus, Jesus didn't decide to get back at us, but decided to help us by dying for our sins. For Jesus' sacrifice to cover our sins we must repent, which brings us to:

Part Two: Repentance.

The food Joseph's brothers bought didn't last very long. Look at chapter 43 verses 1-2, "The famine was still severe in the land. 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.'" The 9 brothers refused to return to Egypt without Benjamin. After pressuring Jacob he finally conceded in chapter 43 verse 13 and 14, "Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved." By bereaved Jacob was saying he would die of sorrow. Judah tried to assure Jacob by

saying he would be responsible for Benjamin. In order to please Joseph the brothers took gifts and twice as much money to repay for their grain and purchase new grain.

It had been months between trips, since they could have gone to Egypt and back twice. When the brothers arrived with Benjamin, Joseph decided to reward them by having them over for dinner. He even returned Simeon to them. The brothers, however, didn't see this as grace but as a trap. Look at chapter 43 verse 18, "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.'" They tried to return their silver, but Joseph's steward said he had gotten the money. Joseph did accept their other gifts, and when he saw Benjamin he had to flee to his room to cry. Although Joseph's brothers had kept up their end of the bargain, Joseph wasn't satisfied yet and decided to institute another test of repentance. Joseph said in chapter 44 verse 2, "'Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack with the silver for his grain.' And he did as Joseph said." He then had his servant catch his brothers on the way out. At first the brothers found the servant's accusation ridiculous and even agreed when the servant said in chapter 44 verse 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.'" When the bags were searched the cup was found in Benjamin's bag. To this the brothers tore their clothes in anguish.

When the brothers returned to Joseph they told him in chapter 44 verse 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.'" They could have let Joseph take only Benjamin, but instead they offered themselves to Joseph. Judah made a bold step in chapter 44 verse 33 by telling Joseph, "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." Judah himself decided to take responsibility. He had been the one who suggested selling Joseph as a slave. Later on they blamed wild animals for Joseph's disappearance. Now Judah said it would be his fault if Benjamin did not return. When the moment of truth arrived, Judah offered himself as a slave in Benjamin's place. Judah was now the opposite of what he had been all those years ago. He had made a 180 degree turn.

Joseph was successful in leading his brothers to repentance. Although it took months, his brothers finally took responsibility. They realized all the distress they had caused themselves and their father and no longer wanted to harm others with their sin. By repenting Joseph's brothers could

become the ancestors of the tribes of Israel. Even Judah could be the ancestor of Jesus. It might have taken awhile for Joseph's brothers to repent, but Joseph was patient. God too is patient. He could destroy us for being sinners, but chooses instead to wait for us to come to repentance and accept Christ Jesus. It took me two decades before I truly repented in Christ Jesus. All my life I've heard the word of God around me, but I never applied it, and couldn't truly repent. I thank God that he was patient with me, and I thank God for sending Jesus who could save me from my sins.

Like Judah I have to show some responsibility for God's ministry. I repent that I don't take too much responsibility with the work of God, and decide to be like Judah and offer myself up for my Lord's service. I'm a proud person, so this is a difficult thing for me. I want to be my own master. As a graduate student in music composition I'm in charge of my music, and as a gamer I'm in control when I play video games, but I need to learn how to open these up to God so he can work through them. I repent that I'm getting in the way of God and decide to offer my fields of expertise to him so he can bless others and myself with them. I also pray that God can teach me how to serve others instead of always keeping to myself.

In this passage we saw Joseph set aside any feelings for revenge in order to help his brothers repent. We can tell he loved them through his patience and redemptive work towards them. Sometimes people are stubborn and it takes awhile for them to repent, and sometimes we have to suffer along with them. I pray that we can all have real love for others by helping them to come to God and repent and live in a right relationship with God.

Let's look at the key verse again, chapter 44 verse 33 and read it all together, "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."

One Word: Joseph's Brothers Repent.