

# Genesis Ch44v1-Ch45v15 - Changed Lives

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[ 0 : 00 ] 22 years ago, the brothers had sold their brother Joseph into slavery. Not only that, they had tricked their father into thinking he had been killed by a wild animal.

It was a horrendous crime, one the brothers had kept hidden and had kept buried deep in their life. Unbeknownst to them, throughout those years, Joseph becomes ruler of all of Egypt at the time of great famine.

And he's given the title or the job of selling food to all the other people. And the brothers are sent down to Egypt to buy food.

And on their arrival, they encounter Joseph. Joseph immediately recognises his brothers, but the brothers don't recognise Joseph.

Now here's the question. How would you respond if you were Joseph? With all the power that you had, being ruler over all, after all the brothers had done to you, what would you want to do to them?

[ 1 : 22 ] Well, I would want my pound of flesh. I would want revenge. Get even. Make them pay. Make them suffer.

Well, surprisingly, Joseph doesn't demand justice at all. Instead, Joseph treats them with mercy and grace. In chapter 42, on their first visit down to Egypt to get food, Joseph doesn't punish them, but he provides for them.

He doesn't treat them as their sins deserve. He shows them mercy. And then in chapter 43, on their second visit down to Egypt to get more food, Joseph amazingly gives them their money back.

And then he invites them to dinner. He gives them what they do not deserve. That's grace. Grace. Grace. After all the brothers had done to Joseph, he doesn't respond with justice, but with mercy and grace.

[ 2 : 36 ] It's an extraordinary response of love and kindness. And now in chapter 44, still keeping his identity from them, it seems that grace and mercy have been put to one side.

And now it's all bubbled to the surface, and he is out to get revenge. Verse 2, look with me. Joseph gives instructions for his silver cup to be hidden in the youngest brother, Benjamin's sack.

Why would he do this? After all that had happened, why? Why would he want to try and trick them? What's Joseph up to? Well, I think there's two reasons.

The first one is, it seems Joseph is testing his brothers to see if they have changed. Has the mercy and grace they received had any effect or any impact in their life?

And second, he chooses Benjamin because he's the youngest. When they're confronted with the stolen cup, are they going to treat Benjamin the same way in which they treated young Joseph all those years before?

[ 4 : 08 ] You see, the big question is, has mercy and grace made any difference to their life?

Now that's a great question to ask ourselves. Because God has shown us grace and mercy that is immeasurable.

Every day, God is good and kind to us. This is how Psalm 145 puts it.

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, rich in love. The Lord is good to all.

And he has compassion on all he has made. That all includes you and I today. Justice is what we deserve for our rebellion against God and for pushing God out of our lives.

[ 5 : 16 ] But yet he's good to us. He shows us mercy and grace. Now the big question for us is the same.

What difference has grace and mercy made to your life? You see, mercy and grace doesn't mean, well, I can live however I please.

Sure, God is merciful and God is gracious. Sure, that's his job, isn't it? He forgives people. No, the reason is to change us and to transform us.

To make us different kinds of people. So three things we're going to see. That when we look at mercy and grace, it leads to true repentance, loving sacrifice, and humble acceptance. So first, mercy and grace leads to true repentance for our sin. Look at verse 3, chapter 44, verse 3. [ 6 : 24 ] As morning dawned, the brothers were sent on their way with their donkeys, or if you like in modern terms, in their four-wheel jeeps as they headed out across the desert.

Verse 4, they had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, quick, go after them at once. Catch them. You see, there they are, driving along, minding their own business, when all of a sudden they hear the sirens and see flashing blue lights.

Pull over. It's Joseph's chief of police. Someone has stolen the master's silver cup.

verse 7, but they said to him, why does my Lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that.

We wouldn't dream of it. Verse 9, if any of your servants is found to have the cup, he will die and the rest of us will become my Lord's slaves.

[ 7 : 34 ] Well, very well then, said the chief of police, let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave.

The rest of you, well, you can carry on your way. So there, verse 11, a search was conducted all the way, verse 12, from the youngest, from the eldest down to the youngest.

There they are, all lined up with their bags before them and the police go searching one by one.

Nothing here, nothing here. Ah! And then finally, Benjamin's sack is opened and there's the cup.

Verse 13, at this they tore their clothes and they loaded up their donkeys and they returned to the city. So there they are, under guard, taken back to face the master of Egypt, Joseph himself.

They couldn't believe it. Verse 15, Joseph said to them, what is this you have done? Don't you know what a man like me can find, how we can find things out by divination?

[ 9 : 02 ] What can we say to you, my Lord, Judah replied? What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? You see, the brothers know that they didn't steal any cup.

They know it's a set-up. They know it's been planted. They aren't trying to come up with an excuse for something they didn't do. In fact, the chief of police back in verse 10 told them that those who didn't have the cup, well, they were free from blame.

No, this is much bigger than that. Look at what he says in the middle of verse 16. Judah cries out, God has uncovered your servant's guilt.

We are now my Lord's slaves. we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup. You see, for the first time in their lives, they are admitting to their guilt and shame.

Yes, they are innocent of stealing the cup, but he's still saying, we're guilty. But what are they guilty of? Well, it's the sin of selling their brother and telling lies to their father.

[ 10 : 19 ] All these years, that sin that has been hidden and pressed down, no longer are they hiding it. They are taking ownership of it and they admit to it.

Of course, they don't know who Joseph is, but God has been making things known to them. Verse 16, God has uncovered your servant's guilt.

You see, that's the effect that grace and mercy has on people's lives. It slowly softens hardened hearts. And people begin to admit as God shines the light into their heart and reveals what is going on inside.

You see, without the work of God in our life, we would never admit to anything unless God uncovers our guilt.

Well, we would continue to keep it covered and pushed down. None of us by ourselves are rushing to repent before God. If we were, well, our new Taoiseach Simon Harris, well, that would be the first thing on his agenda, to call the whole country to repentance because we all need to turn to God.

[ 11 : 44 ] it's not on his agenda and it's not on our country's agenda. Left to ourselves, we would always keep our sin and our guilt and our shame covered up.

We don't want anyone to know. But it's only because of God's mercy and grace at work within our life that exposes the truth that we eventually come clean and we repent of our sin.

Have you ever wondered why God is so kind to us? Why he continues to pour out grace and mercy on us day after day?

Well, it's not so that we can go on living as we please and do whatever we like. No, it's to lead us to own our sin and to confess our sin.

Listen to what scripture says. Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

[13:04] Well, today is a day of God's rich kindness. The God who reveals and uncovers our sin not to squash us and squish us, but so that we can freely come before God in repentance and be covered over by his forgiveness.

God is kind to us. He is so very kind. So first, mercy and grace leads to true repentance of all of our sins.

There's a second change. Mercy and grace lead us to loving sacrifice for each other. Now, as we read this account, some will see Judah's repentance as a confession in a crisis.

You know those kinds of confessions. We get found out. Somebody's ratted on us. Oh, we say sorry, but after a while we're back to our usual self.

The old routine, the same old habits. But not for Judah. You see, as we look at his life, we see true repentance which is seen in a changed life, a transformed life, because that's what mercy and grace do.

[14:39] It changes us from the inside. Look at how Judah responds to the charge that Benjamin is now going to become a slave.

We'll pick it up in verse 17. Joseph said, far be it from me to do such a thing. I'm not going to make all of you slaves.

Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, well, you're free to go back to your father in peace.

Well, in days gone by, Judah would have accepted that deal without a second thought, wouldn't he? It was survival is the strongest as far as he was concerned.

But now his sincerity shines through, that he genuinely has repented. Look at verse 18.

[15:38] Then Judah went up to Joseph 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.

And what follows is a retelling of how much Benjamin means to his father Jacob, and the climax of that comes to us in verse 30.

Let's pick it up in verse 30. Joseph, or Judah says to Joseph, 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, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die, it will break his heart, it will kill him.

Your servants will bring the grey head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. 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.

[16:55] Well, words are cheap, aren't they? Anyone can say that. But Judah not only remembers his promise, he is now ready to fulfil it.

Look at what happens, verse 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.

What a transformation of life. Judah, who had instigated the whole selling of his brother Joseph as a slave, is now willing to become a substitute for his brother Benjamin.

In this instance, as far as the cup is concerned, Judah is innocent. Joseph has declared him free to go home. And Judah could have easily have taken off home and made up some story about Benjamin finding a wife and wanting to stay in Egypt.

He could have returned home and had an easy and comfortable life. But no, his life has been changed. Judah is willing to exchange himself with his brother.

[18:23] Judah will become a slave to Joseph so that his brother can go free. You see, mercy and grace lead to a changed life, a life of loving sacrifice towards other.

isn't that what we're called to if we claim we are disciples of Jesus Christ? Listen again to what scripture says.

This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

sisters. That's talking about the church family. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother or sister cannot love God.

You see, God has shown us such mercy and grace. God has given us the Lord Jesus Christ who laid down his life for us, who lovingly sacrificed his life for you and for me.

[ 19 : 45 ] Jesus became a slave. He became a servant so that we could be set free. Although innocent of any sin, he became our sin so that we could now live a new kind of life, a life that puts others before ourselves, a life that is willing to take the cost so that others can be blessed.

So second, mercy and grace lead to loving sacrifice towards others. So repentance, sacrifice, and then third, mercy and grace lead to humble acceptance of God's salvation.

Look at chapter 45. Verse 1, Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, Get out!

All of you, out! so there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers, and he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

An outpouring of emotion built up over 22 years. finally the plug is released and it all comes out.

[ 21 : 28 ] All that Joseph had gone through, all that had happened to him, and now before his brothers and to see them changed. Verse 3, Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph.

Is my father still living? But his brothers were not able to answer him because they were terrified at his presence. Now, why are they terrified?

Well, I am sure they are terrified of what Joseph might do to them. After all that has happened, well, I think there is another reason for why they are terrified.

I think their fear is different. You see, Joseph could have done whatever he wanted to his brothers. He has had umpteen opportunities.

However, instead of justice, he continued to show mercy and grace. And that's what terrifies the brothers. They are faced with mercy and grace and they realise there is nothing they can do.

[ 22 : 50 ] It's as if with inside they are crying out, how could we ever repay the kindness you have shown to us? They feel the weight and the burden of somehow having to pay it all back and they're crushed.

They are in complete despair. Look at verse 5 verse 4 Joseph said to the brothers come close to me and when they had done so he said I am your brother Joseph the one you sold into Egypt and now don't be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

Do you see what Joseph is saying? You can never pay it back. There's nothing you can do. Don't be distressed. Don't be angry with yourself.

God has been at work to save you verse 6. For two years now there's been a famine in the land and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping.

But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

[ 24 : 15 ] So then it was not you who sent me here but God. 22 years of guilt and shame and it's all been met by mercy and grace.

This they do not deserve but more than that the brothers are finally beginning to see that God and his sovereignty has been in control of all that has been going on.

He's been at work in their sin and through their sin to achieve their salvation. The end of verse 7 to save your lives by a great deliverance.

grace. You see if we think that God's mercy and grace is something we have to pay off it will crush you.

You will be terrified. It will leave you in desperate despair. Not even a lifetime can be enough to pay off God's mercy and grace.

[ 25 : 22 ] The debt we owe is immeasurable. the only way for us to experience God's mercy and grace is to humbly accept that it is God's work of salvation in you.

It's not what we have done that saves us but despite what we have done. And if we could look back over every aspect of our life we could say the same that God has been at work in and through our sin to achieve our salvation.

You see once we grasp this once we see how great and awesome God is to bring about our salvation it changes our relationship with him forever.

Look at how the brothers respond to Joseph or how Joseph responds to the brothers. verse 14 it's a beautiful picture of how God the Father responds to those who accept his salvation.

Verse 14 then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept and Benjamin embraced him weeping and he kissed all his brothers and wept over them and afterwards his brothers talked with him.

[ 26 : 52 ] Do you see the mercy and grace leads to an embrace of one another. And so as we turn to God in true repentance as we humbly accept his work in our life he weeps over us he embraces us and one day we will see Christ he will be revealed to us in all his glory and he will throw his arms around you restored forgiven and welcomed and we will talk to him for an eternity.

What's mercy and grace done in your life? It changes us it changes us to freely repent of our sin knowing that he will cover it all.

It leads to a change of life where we love others sacrificially and it leads us to humble acceptance of God's amazing gift of salvation.

Let's pray together.