

Series: after the beginning
“The Amazing Power of True Forgiveness”
Part Five: What True and Authentic Forgiveness Looks Like -
Confrontation and Confession
Genesis 44:1-34

MBC:AM; 09-11-11; 0180

S1 Introduction: Do you remember where you were on September 11th, 2001? I do. We were all together as an extended family in Colorado Springs, Colorado. That day was the day we were to take our daughter Elizabeth to Ravencrest Bible School in Estes Park and drop her off for a two year study program. It was hard enough, with that thought on our minds, as we awoke that morning, but then to walk into the living room of my brother in laws home to hear that Saturday morning cartoons were preempted for urgent news bulletins, was on an emotional level I hope never to have to see or witness again in my life time.

S2 On that dreadful morning 19 terrorists from the Islamist militant group al-Qaeda hijacked four passenger jets and intentionally flew them into the World Trade Center in NYC; both massive towers collapsing in just under two hours. The third plane crashed into the Pentagon and the fourth plane, United Airlines flight 93, crashed into a field in Shanksville. PA. Many of the passengers hearing what was going on in NYC and Washington attempted to take back control of the plane and died in the attempt. The plane never reached its intended target of Washington, DC. That day, ten years ago today, nearly 3000 innocent Americans paid the ultimate sacrifice. They awoke on that day thinking it was like every other day, off to work, meetings, appointments, time at home with family, a nice meal, a good night's sleep. Who would have thought that America and Americans would never again be the same? And now on this historic day we hear prayers banned from the 911 memorial, first responders shunned, all because we've forgotten to remember. Part of the truth, heritage and legacy of our founding fathers died that day.

I still remember the raw emotions of unbelief, panic, anger, fear and the need for retribution. I still remember the raw and broken emotions of having to take our first born daughter and leave her on such a black and horrible day. I still remember the agonizing trip home not only feeling the loss of our daughter leaving home but of the loss of what had happened to us as a nation. I still remember flags proudly flying over bridges, houses and public buildings on our way home to Kingman. I still remember hearing churches filled to overflowing on that day and on the following Sunday, of spontaneous prayer gatherings and calls for national revival. I still remember how quickly we forgot to remember what happened on that day and quickly went back to our old ways, hating one another, striving over money, success, pleasure, power and fame. And I still remember the emptiness of the American dream hang over our nation from the White House to the State house to all of our houses as we turned away once again from our God and Creator to follow the American dream without Him.

This morning we want to commemorate that day and remember not to forget. We want to try and understand the meaning and significance of the message God allowed to be sent to us on that day. We want to seek before all else God's forgiveness, for we have sinned as a nation, as a people and as churches who have been called to be salt and light in a very dark and broken world.

We pick up the story coincidentally... NO. Correction: providentially! of the story of Joseph and his eleven brothers. It is in this chapter we see Joseph's brothers finally broken. This study is a primer

- From the perspective of the offenders: The brothers of Joseph.
- Our society has rejected the notion of absolute truth. We not only have abandoned that notion as unbelievers but even as believers we no longer feel like we are beholden to that truth about truth. We have become Christian atheists. Saying we believe in God but choosing not to really believe what He has to say. We not only have rejected truth; we've also rejected the idea of consequences to those truths. We no longer are responsible. Our God is a God of love and grace after all. He wouldn't punish the sin or the sinner; He loves us too much to do that. The Bible tells us in Num. 32:23 "Be sure your sin will find you out."

- For 22 years Joseph's brothers had followed this notion of truth and consequences. They had seemed to get away with their sin, betrayal, lies and deceit. They actually profited, monetarily from selling their own brother into slavery. They had lived with this guilt all this time and seemed to be good with it. They really weren't afraid of exposure of their sin because they were the only witnesses, or so they thought. God was a witness on that day, as He is every day. We may think we get away with our sin but until it is covered with the cleansing blood of Jesus it stays with us like a millstone wrapped around our necks.

S3 1. CONFRONTATION: (Confront Your Sin.) False Confidence Destroyed. Genesis 44:1-13

S4 A. Overjoyed. 43:26-44:1 Read.

- These eleven brothers were elated. They had just come from a party given in their honor. They were completely oblivious to the nature of that party, who was giving it and who was behind it. They were on a high. They had gotten away with their sin. No one was the wiser. They hadn't been arrested for the "misunderstanding" of the money being put in their sacks after they had already paid for the grain. In fact they were rather proud of themselves; they actually thought themselves to be men of integrity. They had told their father and had brought the money back and enough money for another supply.

B. Overtaken. 44:1b-6

- God has a way of overtaking us just when we think the coast is clear. Imagine how surprised these brothers must have been when they saw the white dust cloud behind them in hot pursuit and then realized it was Joseph's men. Imagine how incensed they must have been to be accused of stealing Joseph's silver cup. After all hadn't they brought the money back and brought their younger brother Benjamin just as the Prime Minister had instructed? O the injustice? O the irony? O the hypocrisy!

C. Overconfident. 44:7-12

- Let's admit it folks these guys were a bit cocky in their attitudes. They were wrongly accused. They were innocent of the crime. They had nothing to fear. They were overly confident because they felt they had a right to be. They actually went so far as to offer a suggestion to the guards, why not kill the guilty party and place the rest of us in chains if this is true.... AND IT'S NOT! Once again the servants of Joseph searched the brothers' packs from the oldest to the youngest. You can only imagine the looks on their faces of overconfidence as they went from one to the other down the line. "Nothing to worry about brothers of mine!" And then, like 9/11 their life was turned upside down. No-where to run, to hide, to feel safe. Busted! Their life was over, done, finished, caput!
- Simeon doesn't have the silver cup, here is Judah, proud of his integrity, he doesn't have it, Reuben and Levi and Dan are confident they will be vindicated, Naphtali, Gad and Asher; Issachar and Zebulon are innocent, this is really a waste of time! At last the steward comes to Benjamin's sack, anybody worried? I don't think so? we all know Bennie wouldn't ever do something like this. The sack is opened; the servant digs his hand into the grain and comes out with Joseph's silver cup. You could hear a pin drop in the desert. Speechless.

D. Overwhelmed. 44:13

- Now the drama begins as the brothers authentically weep and tear their garments as a symbol of their utter brokenness and inability to save themselves. Any self-defense was useless. They had no defense. They were trapped and they knew it. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack!

S5 God's Grace Slide: These are the tools that God had to use in Joseph's brother's life to cause them to come to a place of brokenness and surrender to the will and ways of God. O that God would not have to use these extreme measures in our lives to get our attention and cause us to hunger for Him and not fill up on that which will not satisfy.

1. God brings famine into our lives. 2. Severe Famine. 3. Harsh Words. 4. Harsher circumstances.

5. Solitary Confinement / Prison. 6. The Squeeze Play: Forced Obedience. 7. Brokenness: The Purge of Self-Confidence.

These are the steps God took the brothers through to bring them to a place of surrender and brokenness. Charles W. Colson, author of the best seller, *Loving God*, Special counsel to President Nixon tells of sitting on a platform in the crowded Delaware State Prison, where he had come to address the inmates, and thinking over a life that had brought him to high government service, followed by arrest, conviction, and imprisonment in connection with the Watergate scandal. He thought of the scholarships and honors earned, the legal cases argued and won, the discussions made from high government offices. Then he realized as he writes, "It was not my success God had used to enable me to help those in this prison, or in hundreds of others just like it. All my achievements meant nothing in God's economy.. No, the real legacy of my life was my biggest failure – that I was an ex-convict. My greatest humiliation, being sent to prison, was the beginning of God's greatest use of my life."

S6,7 **Defeat Is Victory Slide:** The brothers of Joseph went from saying in 42:28, "What is this that God has done to us!" to now an attitude of submission and confession. God has uncovered our sin and He has won the victory! There is a change in the brothers relationship with others. Instead of abandoning Benjamin as they had with their brother Joseph they are now ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their brother.

S8 **The Purge of Self-Confidence Slide:** These ten brothers may have rationalized they were good men, after-all their father was a spiritual man and knew God personally. Their intentions were honorable. Didn't they return the money in their sacks? Their money was just as good as any other person's. Their integrity, or so they thought was impeccable and their self-confidence was over the top. For these reasons God had to chop them down to their own size.

S9 **2. CONFESSION: (Confess Your Sin.) True Contrition Manifest. Genesis 44:14-17 Read.**

- From the perspective of the offenders and the offended: The brothers of Joseph and Joseph.
- Judah is now the spokesman for family, verse 14. There is no other alternative but submission to the plan and will of God. This time as they come before Joseph, they don't bow but they prostrate themselves the third time on the ground before their brother. Their mouths are shut. They stand condemned and guilty before the judge. One moment they were rejoicing, partying, celebrating; the next: broken men with no hope of salvation. This is where God wants us, beloved! **A broken and a contrite spirit God will not despise.**
- All of us can put ourselves in these eleven brother's shoes. We feel vindicated, falsely accused, unduly picked on and over by God. We are practical atheists: we say we believe the Word but don't expect me to practice it or apply it to my life. And do you know what's really, truly, sadly tragic? We condone their behavior because we do it ourselves, and God forbid someone actually hear the Word and do it, "That person is a true nut job, a raging lunatic, a dogmatic right wing extremist, a gun toting, flag waving, bible thumping, pulpit pounding, constitution screaming, freedom raging, home school toting, against women's reproductive rights stomping, white supremacist racist, anti-government, anti-poverty, anti-free thinking progressive moron."
- Imagine the people in the twin towers, in the Pentagon, on flight 93: one moment on their way to their individual destinations, and in a moment hi-jacked and on their way to eternity. Fools that we are! Listen: none of us know what today will bring, or for that matter tomorrow or ten years from now. How dare we make our plans thinking God cannot invade them in just a heart-beat. We are all one heart-beat away from eternity.

S10 **Contrition Definition Slide:** to bind, bruise or rub raw, to grieve to show penitence for sin or shortcoming, to repent. Are we sorry for our sin? Sorry enough to confess it and plead for forgiveness before the righteous judge? Can we at least admit that before we cast a stone against our brother or sister that we need to consider where we have failed before god and others and readily admit it. Like we said last week, when was the last time you heard yourself say, "I'm sorry!" and mean it!

- A preacher of the gospel was once speaking to an old Scotswoman, who was commonly regarded as one of the most devout and respectable people in her part of the country. He was impressing on her, her need for Christ. At last she said with tears in her eyes, in great exasperation, ‘O sir, I have never missed a Sabbath at the church, and I have read my Bible every-day; and I have prayed and done good deeds to my neighbors; and I have done all I knew I ought to. And now do you mean to tell me that it must all go for nothing?’ He answered, “Well, you have to choose between trusting in these and trusting in the redemption which God offers in Christ. You cannot have both. If you are content to part company with your own righteousness, the Lord will give you His; but if you cling to your Bible reading and Sabbath keeping and good deeds, the Lord’s righteousness cannot be yours.” For some time she sat in silence and then came the tears of brokenness as she clasped her hands and cried out for mercy and salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ.

S11 Moment of Decision / Welcome to the Table of the Lord / Come individually and write the name of those forgiven or needing forgiveness: (Extend invitation to the concert of prayer for our beloved nation after the service.)

PRAYER.

(Outline revised from Warren Wiersbe’s, *Be Authentic*, pp. 121-132)

Confrontation / Confession

Genesis 44:1-18

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Introduction:

- From the perspective of the offenders: The brothers of Joseph.

1. CONFRONTATION: (Confront your sin.) False confidence destroyed. Genesis 44:1-13

2. CONFESSION: (Confess your sin.) True contrition manifest. Genesis 44:14-18

- From the perspective of the offenders and the offended: The brothers of Joseph and Joseph himself.

Moment of Decision:

(Outline revised from Warren Wiersbe's, *Be Authentic*, pp. 121-132)