# Judge and Intercessor

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[0:00] Now as we come to this 44th chapter in Genesis, we saw at the end of the previous chapter 43, the things for the brothers would have seemed extremely happy.

Everything seemed to be fine, you know, here they were being loyally entertained in the house of the governor of Egypt. They had brought Benjamin with them as they had been asked.
They had been well received, and whatever may have happened before with regard to the money in their sacks, it was all sorted out now. Everything seemed all fine.
Admittedly, it might have seemed a bit creepy that the governor knew so much about them, arranging their places at the table in order of seniority and age and so on, but perhaps he had just done his homework, perhaps he had just made it his business to find out.
All was well, or so it seemed at the beginning of this chapter. And in verse 3 we see, as soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, and their asses there, their asses.
[0:59] So everything seems fine, setting out on the way back to Cairn, and blissfully unaware that the worst was about to drop on them like a thunderbolt from heaven.

Now, obviously, obviously, the brothers are not guilty of the theft with which Joseph is now basically framing them.
It's not too harsh a word to say. He's framing them for it. And despite all that he had suffered in the past, some commentators struggle to excuse Joseph's actions here.
They think, well, you know, this is deception. This is lies, you know, because they're not guilty of what they're accused of here. And clearly he has instructed his steward very, very closely.
And remember, the steward has only seen these men on two occasions so far. Yes, they've eaten the night before, but he's unlikely to have been able to memorize, for example, you know, the age order of all 12 or all 11 of them.
[2:03] And yet he begins to search at the elders and works all the way down to the youngest.
And, you know, it's not exactly clear how they must have somehow identified or marked which of the brothers were the elders and went all the way down to the youngest.

But this would certainly heighten the sense of fear and the sense of a build-up of suspense as their bags were searched in the Fools of Time.
But, as I say, people have struggled with some sort of, you know, explanation as to why Joseph has done what he's done. Clearly there's been a discussion beforehand because, you know, when their brothers say, well, whoever you find it with, they're so confident of their innocence.
Whoever you find it with, well, he'll die. And we'll all become, I know it's bonding. We'll all become enslaved. No bother. And they're so confident. They make this for both. But he says, no, no, no, only for that.
Whoever we find it with, he'll become my Lord's servant. And the rest of you can go free. Now, clearly he already has authority from Joseph to say this. Clearly he already has a prepared speech.
[3:10] He knows what they're going to come out with probably. And he knows what his response is going to be. So this is a well-planned, well-rehearsed set up in a sense.

And it's difficult for some people to be able to say, well, Joseph's really going a bit far. Before we say anything else, we have to recognize, before we can explore one or two possible motivations, we have to recognize that in giving them back all their money and specifying that they were to have court as much as they can carry, you know, verse 1, and fill them in sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sacks mouth.
He's giving them back the money. He's loading them with the bursting point, all that they can carry of food. You don't do that if you intend to bring them all back again and make slaves of them all.

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He knows what he's going to do. He knows what he intends to do. He possibly doesn't reckon on Judah's intercessory speech there and he's pleading for Benjamin, but he knows what his plan is. He plans to send the rest to them all. He plans that there should be food for his family. He plans that they should have only as much as they can carry. Joseph's actions, whatever we might think of them, are tennished with an overall generosity and kindness to them and to his father's family, whom he obviously intends to benefit, regardless of the level his plans are in respect of Benjamin. [4:43] But with regard to Benjamin, there seem to be three possible motives. Firstly, it might be for his own personal wish.

He just wants to keep Benjamin with him. He hasn't seen him all of his life until now, until the previous day. Now he just wants to have Benjamin with him. That's his only full brother, remember. He's the only one who's a full-blood brother of his mother and his father. All the others are half-brothers to them, but Benjamin is his full brother. He wants to keep him with him.
There's that possible motivation. And perhaps, no doubt, once he had him to unload him with all the benefits of Joseph's now exalted position, the idea that he would keep Benjamin and make a scrubbing little slave of him is, you know, we can rule that out safely.
Even if he sent the brothers home and he kept Benjamin with him, he would have a privileged position in Joseph's household. So it might have been for his own personal wishes. Secondly, given that Judah's explanation when it comes later on in the chapter is a lot fuller and more precise than the original account we have in chapter 42, you know, I don't think it specifies in chapter 42, oh no, the boy can't leave his father.
[6:01] No, he's got to say, break his father's heart and so on if he goes with him. They don't spell all that out to Joseph the first time. Maybe it was said, but not recorded for posterity.

But the way that Judah puts it, it implies that Joseph would already have known this. It's unlikely that he knew just how desperate Jacob was not to lose Benjamin.
Obviously, he would have known that he was reluctant to let him go, but he probably hadn't realised just how acute the heartbreak for his father would be and why. And that that heartbreak was bound up with his own apparent loss 22 years earlier.
So given that Judah's explanation is a lot fuller than the original account, Joseph may have intended deliberately to put the brothers into an impossible situation with their father.
You know, the ultimate payback. Send them home, yes. Give them all the food they want, but send them home without Benjamin. And then their father is going to hate them.
[7:06] He's going to hate them for the rest of his life. He would hate all his other sons. And, you know, things would never be the same. And that could be his ultimate revenge on them all.

That's possible. Given Joseph's character and what we see of him previously and also subsequently, this is possibly the least likely, but still a possible motivation.
Most likely, perhaps, is what some have suggested, is that Joseph, in putting Benjamin into a position of difficulty or danger, because he is the accused one, and he is the one with whom the cop is found, with whom the evidence is found, that he is intending to test how far his brother's feelings of protection or sympathy with Benjamin's condition might go.
Just how sympathetic will they be to little Benjamin? Just how protective will they be of their little brother? Is it now very different from how they felt about Joseph more than 20 years ago?
Have they changed? Have they gone away contentedly? And he said, no, no, the one with my cop is found, and he'll be my servant, and the rest of you can go home with all the food.
[8:23] And they said, okay, that's fine. Thanks very much. We're heading back. Anybody can stay here. Bye. And if they'd done that quite contentedly, then the likelihood is he would have been kind enough to Benjamin.

He'd have treated him very well, and in due course, he probably had sent to his father and said, look, Benjamin's okay. He's actually in my house. By the way, I'm Joseph. I'm the ruler of the government of Egypt now, so everything's okay.
And he would have let him know he might even have brought Jacob down to Egypt with blessing and with riches and honor, and just left the brothers to stew in their own juice. That's impossible. That's impossible. But the likelihood is he was testing. Testing to see how they would react if their little brother, whose protection was their particular responsibility, if they would respond in the best way or if they would just lead to it in the way that they sold Joseph before.

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But whilst the idea of a test is the most likely thing, Joseph is right to at least give the brothers a chance to prove themselves.
[9:35] You know, by doing this, by setting this test, he is sort of almost testing himself. Whether his bad feelings about the brothers are justified or whether they've changed, he has to set this kind of test.

It's not wrong of him to do so, albeit the way he's done it, you could say, is deceptive and perhaps untruthful. Okay, certainly untruthful. But his methods may be questionable, but his purpose he's probably entitled to do because he's asking the question of himself as much as of them.
He's giving them a chance to prove themselves. As the commentator Matthew Henry says this with great generosity of spirit, I would have to say, he says, we cannot judge what men are by what they have been formerly.
We cannot judge what men are by what they have been formerly, nor what they will do by what they have done. Age and experience may make men wiser and better.
Those who had sold Joseph would not now abandon Benjamin. The worst may mend in time.
[10:49] Now, of course, that's very generous of spirit. Most of us probably would tend to make our assessments of people exactly on what we had experienced of them in the past.

If they had consistently proved themselves to be deceptive or unkind or untruthful, we'd think, oh, that's what they are. That's what they've always been. That's what they're definitely always going to be. And we do tend to judge, perhaps overhistory.
Jesus said, of course, judge not that ye be not judged. But, as he said, Matthew Henry says, we cannot judge what men are by what they have been formerly, nor what they will do by what they have done.
And it is entirely possible, of course, that both their own experiences or things that have happened to them, or just the general maturity of use, may cause people to change.
The only person, of course, who does not change is the Lord. And we can know absolutely that because he has always been consistent in justice, in mercy, in kindness, in truthfulness, in reliability, in keeping to his word and his promise, as he has always been, so he will always be.
[11:56] Because he is the unchanging God. We, as human beings, are not unchanging. We are very, very changeable. And sometimes we change for the worse. But it is also possible that people may change for the better.

And Joseph, whatever his methodology may be, is not jumping to the conclusion of how bad his brothers are. He is, in a sense, giving them a chance to prove themselves now, after 20-plus years.
Now, there's a weak question mark over at verse 5, and again at verse 15. It says, is not this it in which my Lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?
Ye have done evil in so doing. And then at verse 15. What do you know that such a man as I can certainly be vined? Now, this was a superstition, a pagan practice, which in ancient Egypt, some of the noble families were the priestly families.
And remember that Joseph would have been married into the priestly family, the priest of On. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, the priest of On, was his wife. And now he was connected with the priestly families.
[13:08] And it was not uncommon for some of the nobility of Egypt to do this practice of that. When they'd emptied a wine glass, you'd see the certain dregs of the wine at the bottom. And to sort of pretend that by reading the dregs, people used to sometimes pretend to read tea leaves.

You know, in the past, they could see, oh yes, what the future is, or what's happening, or what this person or that person will do. And the ability to have supernatural powers, to divine, to understand the future of what men will do.
This is what is being claimed. Don't you understand? This is the cup in which my Lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth. Ye have done evil in so doing. And when he says, you know, didn't you realize that such a man as I can certainly divine, I can tell the future, I can see things.
He's claiming something which, of course, he doesn't have. But all the evidence would suggest that he did know things about them, supernaturally. How did he know who they all were and where their age was in the family?
How did he know when their sacks were searched? How did he know that his cup was missing? Well, of course, the steward is effectively charging them, not only with a crime, but with sheer stupidity.

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[14:19] You know, this is my Lord's cup. You know, it was set out in full view. You know, he uses it every day. He divines in it. How could you imagine it wouldn't be missed? Of course it's going to be missed.

You're not only criminals, but you're unbelievably stupid to take away something that he's going to miss within a day. And he's going to know, well, who has been in the house that isn't normally in the house.
Oh, yes, the Hebrews, they must have taken it. So, just sheer stupidity. If they had been guilty of that. What do you know? This is that cup in which my Lord drinketh, whereby indeed he divineth, ye have done evil in so doing.
So, this is a practice that ancient Egyptian nobility sometimes, a superstition in which they engaged. And some have taken it that in verse 5, when he says, this in which wherein indeed he divineth, that it was simply, you know, he was testing you.
It was a divinative to make a test of you, of your honesty, to see if it was left in plain sight, would you be honest enough just to leave it alone? Or would you say, well, come on, we'll just take the cup as well.
[15:31] And there's also one reason why, in some cases it's suggested that put in Benjamin's sack, because anybody who was a grown man would realise, look, you don't touch that. That's the master's special cup.

Everybody will know it was us. Everybody will know that we must have taken it. Don't be so stupid. But a child might not think like that. A child might think, oh, yes, nice pretty cup. I'll just take that. I'll take it for myself. But of course he hadn't done that. But that's part of the emphasis. Only a childish mind would think they could get away with it. Now, as we say, it is suggested it might have been, oh, he was testing you, testing your honesty by leaving it out in plain sight after the meal that you had.
Now, this is perhaps a possible use of or understanding of the text here. When my grandmother was very young, back at the end of the 19th century, she worked for a time in service as a housemaid, as a lot of young girls did in those days.
And when she was doing her cleaning and so on, she came across, under one of the carpets, a 10-shilling note, which, of course, some of you will be old enough to remember, a lot of money, especially for poorly paid young housemaids.
[16:47] And, of course, she put it on the desk, reported it to her mistress and so on. And when she got home, she told her father what had happened. And he immediately took her out of that house.

He immediately ended her employment there, took her out and said she could go and work somewhere else. Why did he do that? Because it was, what had happened was a sort of slightly disreputable practice that was practiced by some wealthy households to test the honesty of their household staff.
Particularly the little maids who wouldn't have much money would be comparatively poor and perhaps not very well educated. But if they came across, you know, a piece of jewellery or a piece of money under a carpet or hidden down behind a dresser or something, then the test was to see if they would bring it to their mistress and say, look, I found this.
So that if they didn't bring it, then either they hadn't been doing their job properly, they hadn't swept under the carpets, they hadn't gone down behind the dress, they hadn't been dusting where they should have been, they hadn't found it.
In which case they were unsatisfactory and would be dismissed. Or else they had been doing their job and they'd seen it and thought, nobody's going to find this, but obviously I'm missing it and just pocketed it. And so they were dishonest and so they would be dismissed.
[18:03] And sort of dangling this kind of temptation in front of those who were poor and those who were at the bottom end of the scale. Not every household did it.

It was good for God. It was not quite a decent thing to do, but some people did it in order to test the honesty of their housemates. And this is why my great-grandfather reacted so violently against it. If they were the kind of household that was going to try and dangle this in front of his daughter's nose, he didn't want her working there anymore. He took her away from it instantly. But that's the sort of thing that is being perhaps implied here.

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They left the cup out within easy reach of the brothers. Very valuable silver cup. The easiest thing they wanted just to lift it, just to put it in their baggage. But of course, everyone would know who had taken if they were so stupid, if they were so guilty.
Now, of course, of course, the brothers are not guilty of any of this. They're not guilty of having stolen the money.
[19:09] They're not guilty of having stolen the cup. And the presence of the money in their sacks would underline that. Benjamin was just as innocent as any of themselves. They would know that they didn't put the double money back into their sacks.

They didn't do it the first time. They certainly didn't do it the second time. Verse 1 almost suggests that they didn't have the charge of their sacks. You know, he commanded the steward of his house, saying, fill the men's sacks with boots.
Who's doing it? Well, the steward won't be doing it himself. He'll be commanding other Egyptian servants to do it. So the brothers don't have the filling of their sacks as part of their responsibility. They don't get to see how much they give themselves. They're not the ones filling the sacks. They don't have the chance to put the money in it, much less that they have the chance to hide the silver cup in the sacks.
So they don't have an opportunity to do it. They didn't actually have the responsibility of their own bags. But faced with the indisputable evidence, there was just no point saying, wait a minute, we didn't do that.
[20:10] We didn't make that cup. Of course we didn't. Because there it is. There it is in their little brother's bag. How can they deny? Faced with the indisputable evidence, they didn't even attempt to possess their, in this case, genuine innocence.

But rather, as we see in verse 16, Judah said, what shall we say unto my Lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clean ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.
Behold, we are my Lord's servants, both we and he also, with whom the cup is found. Now maybe to Judah, this was a better solution that Jacob at least would see.
If you're not coming back with Benjamin, you're not coming back at all. Fair enough, we can't come back with Benjamin. None of us are coming back at all. That was probably more palatable to them. They don't even attempt to pretend to innocence now with the evidence in front of them.
Because there's no point. All they can do is plead for Joseph's mercy. It's like what Job says in chapter 9. If God, if God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him, how much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him?
[21:27] Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge. Even if we thought we were innocent.

Before God, we cannot plead any innocence. The evidence is all against us. Even if we think, but wait a minute, I didn't do this. Here we are in front of the Lord, in his sight, in his presence.
All we can do is plead for his mercy. So now, what Judah pours out now, as the mouthpiece on behalf of his brothers, and as the intercessor for little Benjamin, is, however, a confession of true guilt.
He's not now just saying, wait a minute, we're going to do this. He's saying, you know, God hath found out the iniquity of his servants. In other words, we might not be guilty of this, but we're guilty of plenty of else.
There's no point in pretending that we're innocent. Not guilty of this crime, certainly, but guilty of much else, which seemed to have been both God away with and forgotten.
[22:37] Now, a couple of weeks ago, remember how we said that sin does not go away simply by the passage of time. Use the illustration, remember, of dirty dishes, piping up.

You know, if you pile up the dirty dishes, you have a big meal, whatever. You leave all the pots and pans and dishes in the sink, and you go away, you slip the night out. You hope that when you come down in the morning, it won't be magically done. It'll all go away, and you put the cupboard, and be washed and dried.
It won't be. It'll still be there. You can go away to work, and go away on holiday for a month, and come back, and it'll still be there. Getting dirty and grimy and full of bacteria and getting worse and worse the longer you leave it.
It will not go away by itself. Sin will not go away by itself. No matter how much you switch off the light and shut the door and ignore it and hope it will go away, it will not go away.

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The consequences of what we have done and of what we are guilty of in the past, we cannot wash away simply by the passage of time. Something has to be done.
[23:38] Somebody has to go in and cleanse it. Somebody has to apply some kind of cleansing agent to our filthy souls. We have to be cleansed by somebody with far more power than we have.

You can't just leave it all the years and hope it will go away. It didn't work for the brothers, and it won't work for us. And all the sins we have accumulated over the years of our lives, we need somebody to wash away those sins.
We need someone to intervene. And all these sins of the past, this crime they weren't guilty of. But there was plenty of s which they seemed to have both got away with.
And it seemed as if it had been forgotten. When in fact, the one who stood before them now, or more likely sat in splendid judgment as they cowered and trembled in front of them, the one who said it was in fact the wronged one.
They were still perhaps trying to pretend, oh yes, he's dead. Wild beasts told him, no they didn't. He knew exactly what they had done to their other brother because he was the wronged one.
[24:52] There he was sitting in front of them. Unbeknown to them, he was the wronged one. The person before whom now they stood or bowed and trembled.

No longer the helpless young victim. Pleading with them for mercy. Whom they were deaf in their ears to his pleas for mercy. But clothed now with what, to all intents and purposes, was absolute power over their lives, their bodies, and the future of all their families.
If he had bind them all up in prison. If he had made them all his slaves, they wouldn't be able to go home. They wouldn't be able to take food to their families. Jacob and all his household would starve to death.
Everybody would die. And his brothers would all be slaves. He would all be able to have them executed. You know, that kind of absolute power was in the hand of Pharaoh and of his chief ministers easily.
He could even have said, well I'll spare six of you, but six of you are going to die. Or I'll spare so many of you, but two or three of you are going to die. Just like that. He could have absolute power over them.
[26:01] Now it probably doesn't need spelling out. But you know, let's do it anyway. In case you didn't get it. This is exactly how it is with Christ.

Whom we have so robbed and often despised and set lightly by. Before whom we shall with certainty appear at the last.
That is what scripture tells us. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 10 and 11. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.
That everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.
But we are made manifest unto God. We are clearly visible to God. And I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. There is no escaping.
[27:06] We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. You know, remember Psalm 51. And what David says, you know there. Verse 4. And there is Joseph sitting in front of them in splendid dictatorial authority.

Second only to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. And as far as they are concerned, they have stolen from this man who had only been kind to them.
And in his great power it showed mercy to them. And here they are pleading for their lives. If ever their bowing down before him before when they just come to buy food was a fulfillment of his dreams.
Then this is all his dream come to pass. Then bowing down before him in absolute terror with him holding literally absolute power over their lives.
We may protest our innocence before God on some things. But Christ has seen everything in our lives. And his ultimate purpose in causing us to see our sinfulness.
[28:25] It's causing us to recognize that ultimately whoever we think we've sinned against, it's against God that we've sinned. Ultimately it's against Christ that we have sinned. But his ultimate purpose is not cruelty.

It is to bring us humbly and helplessly to himself. Joseph here does not have a heart of cruelty towards his brothers. Christ does not have a heart of cruelty towards sinners.

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That is why he has gone to the cross. That is why he has died there, that they might have life, that they might be forgiven, that they might be saved. But ultimately every sin we have ever committed, and you and I both know what's been cruelty on now.
Every sin we have ever committed has been against God. Every sin we have ever committed has been against Christ. And it is before his judgment throne that we will ultimately bow and be judged. So in Joseph we see a vision of Christ as judge. Compassionate, but all-knowing, all-seeing.
[29:31] The brothers don't even realize how much he actually knows. And how much he has endured at their hands. So in Joseph we see Christ as judge and us guilty before him.

But in Judah, as he makes this plea to Joseph, we also see something of a kind of picture of Christ as intercessor.
Here he is pleading on behalf of his brethren. It says of Christ in the book of Hebrews, he is not ashamed to be called their brethren. He makes intercession for the saints. He pleads for them. He's pleading for all his brothers, but he's pleading ultimately for little Benjamin. Judah pours forth such a plea as would almost break a hard stone.
And would move anyone who was, as they thought this governor of Egypt was, you know, removed and indifferent to their personal circumstances. But what Judah offers is not just a clever display of words to get them off the hook.
[30:37] It is a costly intercession. Which, at its most pragmatic, satisfies all parties. Judah keeps his word to his father.

Because he said, look, if I don't come back with little Benjamin, if I don't come back with the lad, then, you know, you can require it in my hand. And if he stays as a slave in Benjamin's place, when Benjamin goes home free, he will have fulfilled and discharged his promise to his father.
Justice, honor will be satisfied there. There will be also a lawful price. A crime has been committed. Some price has to be paid. Servitude for life is what Joseph is requiring.
And Judah is saying, okay, that's fine. But just not him. Not Benjamin. I will go in his place. Again, the parallels with our Lord Jesus ought to be clear enough.
He goes in his place. He pays the price in full. He satisfies the debt. But more than that, if we're talking in practical terms, he would know, like Joseph would know, that if all you're talking about is two respective slaves, then a full-grown man is going to be able to do far more work for you than a little boy.
[31:50] The only way in which a little boy might be more valuable is if you were going to set him on for all manner of hideous purposes. But a full-grown man is a far more capable, effective, experienced, able to do more hard physical work than a little boy is.

He's getting a good deal. Getting a full-grown man is the slave in place of Benjamin. And so all parties are satisfied. Benjamin is young.
Remember that he has described, verse 20, we have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one. And his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother.
And his father loveth him. Repeatedly, he's referred to as the lad. The lad be not with us. The lad be not with me. Now that is a term used of a young boy.
Maybe not an infant, but a young boy. Anything from little boy all the way through to perhaps teenager. But nobody older than that. It's not a man. It's not even a young man.
[32:53] It's the lad. A youngster. A little child, probably, at this stage. And he treats for him. So we see Christ in his position as judge in the person of Joseph.

We see Christ in his position as intercessor in the person of Judah. And all this while, remember, the brothers would be just standing there, sort of open mouth, probably struck dumb with terror in their situation.
But Judah takes the initiative here. In pleading for Benjamin, it's perhaps worth remembering that, you know, in subsequent years, when the rest of Israel, the tribes, split from the tribe of Judah, the one tribe that stayed loyal to Judah, was the tribe of Benjamin, and stayed with the southern kingdom of Judah, and stayed bonded to them forever.
Now, we can't say, oh, it's because of this action. But it is, in fact, the case that all the descendants of Benjamin never forgot their debt of loyalty to Judah here, who interceded for him.
When he came to die, Jacob said he blessed all his individual sons. And of Judah, he said, chapter 49, verse 8, Remember that when he was born, his mother Leah said, now will I praise God.

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[34:19] And here we have Judah showing us the vision of Christ, showing us the intercessory position of Christ, pleading at the cost of his own life, his own freedom, his substituting place of those who appear to be guilty, but who he was determined should go free at the cost of his own freedom.

It is a Christ-like intercession. Such a plea would break a heart of stone, as we said. It would move anyone who's completely disconnected with the family.
But for Joseph, who still loved his family, and his father, and even his brethren, it would prove the end of all deception. We'll go on into chapter 45.
We'll see Joseph, he couldn't refrain himself. And he told everybody to go out, and he wept. He made himself known to his brethren, and he wept aloud, and the Egyptians in the house of Pharaoh heard him.
And Joseph said to his brethren, I am Joseph, that my father yet lived. Now, just in case you were wondering, and thinking, you know, oh, can you not just make them squirm a bit more, and say, look, everybody, I am Joseph, you can all tremble now.
[35:29] He didn't do it that way. He made himself known in humility and in tears. And we still read verse 3 of chapter 45. His brethren could not answer them, for they were troubled at his presence.

A beautiful understatement of Scripture here again. They must have been absolutely terrified when he made himself known to them.
But at this stage, Judah's intercession, unbeknown to them, has proved an end of all deception, and all harsh judgment, and all danger for them.
Joseph did not even need to make them squirm any longer. They were already terrified in his presence. It was frightening enough simply to know that he had power over them before they even knew that he was Joseph.
But with the final act of intercession, this pleading of Judah, as we come to the end of chapter 44, Joseph has not yet laid himself known.
[36:37] We're sort of poised on the brink of this ultimate great deliverance. All that we see here is the offering up of Judah, of himself, and wondering, will it be enough?

Will it be okay? Will he be able to get Benjamin out of slavery? Will the brothers be able to go home all right? What will the governor of Egypt do? And here it is, sort of trembling in advance.
But the reality is that he has already broken Joseph's heart of love with his plea, with his intercession. It is already an end of all deception.
It is an end of all harsh judgment. The judgment is effectively over. And unbeknown to the brothers, their freedom, their life, their well-being is already secure with this act of intercession.
In one sense, what seems to be the worst stage ever in their entire lives. And yet unbeknown to them, because of the pleading of the intercessor, the worst is already over.
[37:48] Friends, the parallels should be steady us in the face. We have such an intercessor. We have such an intermediary. There is one and only one mediator between God and man.

The man Christ Jesus. But the fact that we have such an intermediary, the fact that we have such an intercessor at the Father's right hand, means that although his pleas could break a heart of stone, although he could move one who is completely disconnected with us, the person with whom he is pleading is his own beloved Father.
God the Son cannot but fail to receive the petitions he asks from God the Father. The persons of the Trinity cannot be at loggerheads with each other.
They cannot be inconsistent with each other. They cannot be against each other. So if the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is pleading with his Father for the souls whom he himself has purchased with his own blood, the Father is not going to say no to him.
He is not going to deny his own beloved Son. If we have such a mediator, the worst is already over. The harshness of the judgment is already past.
[39:10] Yes, we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Jacob himself and all the family would come down and see Joseph in all his splendor. But it was no longer a fearful prospect. It was a reunion.

We have such a mediator. Such an offer is there for us. Yes, if we will but receive it. Now, of course, they could have gone purely on a legalistic response.
And they could have said, yep, okay, fair enough. You're absolutely right. We'll all be slaves. Okay, Benjamin, right, you be the slave. We'll all go home. It's not our fault. That's what the man said.

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That's what he said he wanted. That's what we had to do.
Sorry, Jacob. We had no choice. This is what we had to do. That's legalism. That's it. Right? Fulfill the letter of the law. Do what we can. And you will still have destroyed everything.
You will still have destroyed the relationship between Jacob and his sons. You will still have broken his heart. You will still have broken Joseph's heart. You will still have destroyed the relationship and the family. This self-giving intercession.
[40:09] This plea by Judah changes everything. Just as the intercession of Christ, which is itself so costly, changes everything between the sinner and God.

But without such a mediation, there is only one way this story can end. And it is not good. How can we fail to lay halt upon such an offer of grace?
How shall we escape, as Hebrews says, if we neglect so great a salvation? Because of this intercession, the harshness of judgment is already past.
The reception is already over. And all that remains is joyful and tearful reunion. And all that remains for the saved and redeemed Christian is to look forward to reunion with their father and all the saints in glory.
To depart and be with Christ, which is far better. And all the years that are left here are years spent in Christ and with Christ. It can't get bad for the believer.
[41:18] This world is as bad as it gets. But if we choose to reject our hope, if we choose to reject our intercession, there is only one way that it can go.

We do not have the power to redeem ourselves. Because whatever else we may be innocent of, as Joseph's brothers are innocent of this crime, there is so much else of which we are guilty, for which the judgment has not yet even begun to fall.
You and I need a savior. Thank God. He has provided one. Let us pray.

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