

“What is This That You Have Done?”

Genesis 44

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July 9, 2023

Sunday Morning Sermon

#43370

Glad to be with you and grateful for the opportunity to be with God's people here and to open the Word to you. Hope that you know and will take some comfort in the many prayers and thoughts from not only me personally, but even more so from Christ Covenant. Really, every week we hear more stories, and people there....we have so many connections between the two churches and so many people that are go back and forth between the two, and this church, of course, helped start Christ Covenant. And we just want you to know of our great love and affection, especially in this time of grief and transition. And I do have to share just one story that was shared with me in the greeting line at Christ Covenant just a few weeks ago. So I had, when I was, I usually take the month of July off, and several summers ago I had Harry and Cindy come and asked Harry if he would preach when I was gone. And of course, that was a great delight for the people at Christ Covenant. As you know, Harry was their founding pastor and was there for 16 years and so it was a great excitement and enthusiasm and wonderful message. I wasn't there because that's the whole reason why I had Harry there. Well, I just heard, someone had shared with me that that Sunday they were there and they said, “Oh, Pastor Reeder, it was a wonderful message and it must be, what a what a blessing for you to be able to be here in Kevin DeYoung's pulpit.” So he had, I was told, just a little gleam in his eye and said, “It was, but I think you mean what a blessing for Kevin DeYoung to be in Harry Reeder's pulpit.” And it is and has been and is again this morning.

Direct your attention to Genesis chapter 44. It's a long passage. I'm going to read the whole chapter, so I'll have you remain seated and just to remind you, or perhaps you're new to this church are new to the Christian faith, and all these stories are new to you, but to remind you, we're right in the middle here, jumping into this story of Joseph. There's 50 chapters in Genesis, the first book in the Bible, and fully the last third of the book almost has to do with Joseph and his brothers. He's the favorite of his father, Jacob. He's given the coat of many colors, and his brothers are jealous and so they have a plan to kill him. But then they decide, okay, let's not kill him. Let's throw him into this pit and they sell him off to Ishmaelite traders who then sell him off and he becomes a slave in Potiphar's house. His brothers go back, and they lie and they tell their father, Jacob, “Oh, here's his cloak and it's covered in blood, he must have been torn apart by wild animals.” His father is distraught. But in God's providence, as you know, he works his way up in part of his house, only to be betrayed by Potiphar's wife. And then he's thrown into prison. He works his way up once again. And here we are, there's famine in the land and he has been given great gifts, great insight. He has risen to second in command, only second to Pharaoh himself, and because there's famine in the region, the people have come from Canaan down to Egypt now for the second time. And Joseph is testing them, as you'll see, it's not that he's just testing them because he wants to twist the knife. You got me, now I'm going to get you. He has a method to his seeming madness. And now as he sends them off again, he's going to trick them and he's laying a trap to test them and see what they will do.

Chapter 44. “‘And he commanded the steward of his house, ‘Fill the men’s sacks with food as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack and put my cup, the silver cup in the mouth of the sack of the youngest with his money for the grain.’ And he did as Joseph told him. As soon as the morning was light the men were sent away with their donkeys. They had gone only a short distance from the city. Now, Joseph said to his steward, ‘Up, follow after the men, and when you overtake them, say to them, why have you repaid evil for good? Is it not from this that my Lord drinks? And by this that he practices divination? You have done evil in doing this.’ When he overtook them, he spoke to them these words. They said to him, ‘Why does my Lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing. Behold the money that we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then, could we steal silver or gold from your Lord's house? Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die. And we also will be my Lord servants.’ He said, ‘Let it be as you say, he who is found with it shall be my servant and the rest of you shall be innocent.’ Then each man quickly lowered his sack to the ground and each man opened his sack and he searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they tore their clothes and every man loaded his donkeys and they returned to the city. When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground. Joseph said to them, ‘What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?’ And Judah said, ‘What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants. Behold, we are my lord’s servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found.’ But he said, ‘Far be it from me that I should do so. Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you go up in peace to your father.’ Then Judah went up to him and said, ‘Oh my Lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s ears and let not your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself. My lord, asked your servant, saying, have you a father or a brother? And we said to my lord, we have a father, an old man and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead and he alone is left of his mother's children and his father loves him. Then you said to your servants, bring him down to me that I may set my eyes on him. We said to my lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die. Then you said to your servants, unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again. When we went back to your servant, my father, we told him the words of my lord, and when our father said, go again, buy us a little food, we said, we cannot go down. If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down. For we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us. Then your servant, my father said to us, you know that my wife bore me two sons, one left me, and I said, surely he has been torn to pieces and I've never seen him since. If you take this one also from me and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol. Now, therefore, as soon as I come to your servant, my father and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father, with sorrow to Sheol, for your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father saying, if I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life. Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father.’”

We've just been through graduation season, and I imagine at some point in May or June you went to a graduation. Maybe some of you graduated. You certainly had some card invite you to somebody's graduation. And as you come to the end of a school year, one of the highlights in my family with my kids is that they get the annual yearbook and being humble children, the first thing they do is they look to the back to the index and see how many times they're mentioned or listed or pictured in the yearbook. I won't tell you whether I do that sometimes when a friend of mine will write a book and I'll say, "Oh, I wonder if you found any reference?" Okay, but I don't do that. I don't know if people do this anymore with yearbooks. But way back these many years ago when I was a student, the thing to do was to get your yearbook the last few weeks of class and then bring it and have your friends sign your yearbook. I don't know if anyone still does this, is it just a midwestern thing? But everyone signed your yearbook, but oh, let me tell you, if you could dig up (please don't) if you could dig up my high school yearbook, the pearls of great wisdom you would find written there from my high school friends. "Have a great summer." Very profound. "Stay in touch," usually written by the people you will never stay in touch with. "Friends forever." "It was great sitting next to you" and, you know, inside jokes. And then here's the one. Here's the one that really gets me. "Don't ever change." Now I love you teenagers, I have four myself, but of all the ridiculous things to tell an 18 year old, "Don't ever change." That is not good life advice when you're a teenager. Please change in some ways! Of course, don't change in other ways. We all change, we can try to prevent it, but you will. Your hair... I like to ask my kids, is this just... I just prefer to call it sandy gray. They said, "Nope, just gray." Your hair changes, your weight changes, your looks change, you learn new things, you meet new people, you go to different places. Beloved friends and family pass on. New children are born. You experience different things. Hopefully you change for the better. Some people change for the worse. But as Christians, we know that we're supposed to change to become more and more like Christ, to grow in knowledge and virtue and holiness, to add to your faith all of these Christlike characteristics. It's increasingly questioned whether people even do change. There's whole classes on it, you go to the bookstore, there's a whole self-help section on it, helping people to change. But now many people are wondering, "Is that even possible?" I googled just to see what was out there, "How do people change?" And on the first page were all sorts of links questioning whether it was even possible. One website said, "Can people change or is someone stuck?" Another website, "Can people change? A look at what's realistic." Another website, "Can people really change, or do they simply modify their behavior to suit certain situations?" It may be that some of you have begun to doubt whether you can really change. Now, let me encourage you to, before you listen to this sermon for someone else, listen to this for yourself, because you're already thinking, well, let me send this link on to somebody. Okay? You can do that. Make sure you hear what God has to say for you in this sermon. You may feel like, "You don't know what my life is really like, you don't know how hard it's been, and I've given up on change." Well, it is true that there are all sorts of ways of sanctification that will only be finally brought to the at end glorification, but if we are Bible Christians, we must believe that at the heart of our faith is that God is making us into new people. He's renewing us into His image from one degree of glory to the next. We put to death the deeds of the flesh. We put off the old self. We put on what is new. We are a people being changed. So how do you and I change as Christians? There's a lot of ways to answer that question. We could talk about the power of the gospel, of course, about our union with Christ, about the operation of the Holy Spirit in our life, about the need for fellowship,

for church, for the ordinary means of grace. All of those are essential answers to the question. What I want to do is to give you one very concrete step, and we'll come back to this passage and see where it is. One very concrete step you must take if you are to change to become more like Christ. Here it is. You and I must own our mistakes. Or to put it in Christian vocabulary, you and I must own our sins. The Book of Genesis is about a number of different things. It's about blessing, promise, providence, but it's also about how people change. And some of what we're meant to see here is Joseph is testing his brothers. Have they changed? Have you ever noticed that the Book of Genesis, if you said the first three chapters, creation and fall, and then get into the rest of it, that the Book of Genesis begins and ends with fraternal conflict. It's a book about family fighting, and this is the chosen family. Think about it, chapter four, you have brothers in conflict, Cain and Abel. Here at the end of the book, the last third of the book, you have brothers in conflict with the 12 Sons of Jacob. That first conflict in chapter four, Cain and Abel, ended in murder and Cain's banishment. This brotherly conflict, however, is going to end in reconciliation and forgiveness. So part of what Genesis is trying to teach us is in this conflict, here's how you don't do it...here's how you do it. There is an even more elaborate pattern that I believe we are meant to see in the Book of Genesis and to give credit where credit is due, I first saw this in an article by Alex Lee and Jeffrey Harper in an academic journal called the Tyndale Bulletin in 2019. And after we walk through it, I think you'll agree that it's not just smart people with too much time on their hands, it's really in there. Here's the pattern. 8 times in the Book of Genesis, we have this Hebrew formula, מַה־זָּאת עָשִׂיתָ. It's translated, "What have you done?" or "What is this thing that you have done?" 8 times we have that exact formula. מַה־זָּאת עָשִׂיתָ. And the first 7 times God's people respond to that inquiry incorrectly, and then the 8th time which occurs here in chapter 44, we see the right answer to the question. 8 times. Now, I don't know if it's deliberate or not, but 8 is one of those important numbers in the Bible. You've probably heard before about 7 being the number of perfection or completion. It's not that the Bible's written in code, but every culture has certain numbers and so 13 is considered unlucky. 7 was that number to represent perfection. And so 8 in the Bible is often the number of new creation. 7 days in a week, 7 days of creation. 8 is the number of rebirth, new creation, regeneration. The sons in the Old Testament were circumcised on what? On the 8th day. How many people were in the ark when God was wiping away the world that was and he was bringing about a new kind of creation? There were 8 people in the ark. Jesus was resurrected and the gospel writers are very deliberate with this. They reference it as the "sabbaton plus one," the week plus one. Jesus was raised, as it were, on the 8th day of the week. So 8 is this number. Perhaps it's here deliberately, 7 times God's people are asked this question and 7 times they fail, and then the 8th time is different.

So turn to Genesis chapter 3. I want to walk through these passages with you. Unless you think, wow, this is taking a long time and you haven't even got back to chapter 44. Yes, I know, I know. I've planned that we're going to land there, but I want you to see this pattern for yourself. Here's the thing about the Bible. The Bible knows you better than you know yourself. God knows you better than you know yourself. And we're going to find in these 7 instances, the typical ways that you and I respond when we don't want to deal with our sin. So look at the first one in Genesis 3:13. Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" There's the Hebrew מַה־זָּאת עָשִׂיתָ. What is this that you have done? And notice blame shifting. The woman said, "The serpent deceived me." And lest you think that it's just the woman's problem, the man has just done that in the previous verse. "Who told you

you were naked? How did you eat?" The man says, what? "What food you gave me...it's the woman you gave me." And then when God comes to the woman to Eve and says, "What is this you have done?" She says, "It's the serpent who deceived me." Isn't this the way of the human heart? Quickly disperse blame. Someone else let me down, someone else treated me poorly, someone else took me down this path. Now it is true, let me make an important caveat here, it is true that there are real victims in life. It is true that people do mistreat us. It is true that we are both sinners and sufferers and the experiences we have in life do shape us. So it's not that these things are irrelevant or they have no effect on us, but so often we take those circumstances or those people in our lives and we make them to blame. And we think to ourselves, "If you only knew the parents I had to endure." Maybe. Or some parents are saying, "If you only knew the kids that I had." You notice what Eve does, she is presenting herself as one who is simply put upon almost as a victim. "How did I eat? Well, the serpent did." It shifts the blame.

Look at the second example. Turn to chapter 4 verse 10. Here the Lord approaches Cain after he's murdered his brother. Chapter 4, verse 10, the Lord said, "What have you done?" There's the phrase again. "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground." Cain has already lied, saying, "I don't know where my brother is. I'm not my brother's keeper." Cain had an opportunity, you look back up at verse 7 and "If you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." See, there was that moment that happens in the human heart. He was angry and the Lord says, "Okay, it's right there. What are you going to do with this?" You've sinned in the heart and now are you going to turn from that sin or is that sin going to break forth into sinful action and in itself, death. It's crouching at the door. And it may be for some of you this morning, it's such a poignant phrase, like a lion, like a tiger just there ready to pounce if you open the door. So Cain had an opportunity, but he was overcome by his anger. He raged and committed murder. And now when the Lord comes and asks him, "What is this you have done?" notice what he does, he complains. Verse 13, Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground and from the face, your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. And whoever finds me will kill me." Isn't this what we are apt to do when someone confronts us with our sin? "It's your fault." The Lord says, "Cain, what's going on here?" And Cain turns around and says, "You're being too hard on me, God." We see it with children. We can see it obviously with children. They don't like that they have consequences for wrong behavior. And so when they have negative consequences for sinful behavior, they often turn and say, "How dare you?" to the parents, and we can sort of shake our head and say, "You know, that what kids are like. I've seen that my well, not my grandkids, your grandkids, I've seen that." It's amazing how we saw it in our kids and somehow not in our grandkids. But notice what Cain does, he turns around and he complains to the Lord, "No, you shouldn't have done this to me." Sometimes we present this to our friends, to our family members. "You must affirm me. You must affirm all the choices I make and if you don't affirm the decisions I'm making then you are responsible for the way I feel. You're responsible even for the harm that I commit to myself." Suddenly, I become entirely passive. I have no agency of my own. Cain complains.

Turn to chapter 12, verse 18. This is the first of three instances in the Book of Genesis, where the patriarchs lie about their sisters, their wives, that they pass off as a sister. Abraham does it twice. Isaac does it once. Here, Abraham, chapter 12, verse 18 is being confronted. Pharaoh

called Abraham and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?” And notice, Abraham does not confess. He does not return the dowry. He's gotten rich off of this lie. He simply leaves. We have no record of him doing anything except walking away rich from his deception. You ever do that when you're confronted with your sin? “I'm not going to deal with this. I'm not listening to this anymore. I'm through.” Now let me say again, sometimes it is the better part of wisdom. Christians simply can't see eye to eye. Paul and Barnabas famously had to split over John Mark. They just couldn't agree and they had to agree to disagree. So it is possible in this life that sometimes you just have to turn away. And it's also possible that you can be wrongly accused. We need to keep that in mind in this whole sermon. The devil is an accuser. Other people can make accusations that are knowingly false or unknowingly false. But this was a true accusation. Abraham had lied. He had deceived. And when he's confronted with his sin, rather than dealing with it, owning up to it, he just walks away.

Turn to chapter 20. Here's the fourth example. Again, it's one of these sister stories, this time not Abraham and Pharaoh, but Abraham and Abimelech. Look at verse 9, chapter 20, verse nine. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “מה־זאת עָשִׂיתָ, what have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.” Notice what Abraham does. This is so like me. You. He rationalizes. You see what he says in verse 11? Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, there is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.” So first he rationalizes. You know what these people are like. I thought to myself, you know, the regular way of doing things, God's way of doing things, telling the truth, dealing with people kindly.....great, that doesn't work anymore. Maybe you've thought that about your political opponents or people on the other side of some issue. Or maybe you say, “Pastor you don't know what my wife is like. You don't know what my husband is really like. You don't know what my boss is like. I can't treat them with this kind of honesty.” You know what they're like. He rationalizes. And you see what he does in verse 12. He rationalizes is in his head based on a technicality. “Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, though not the daughter of my mother and she became my wife.” We all do this. We're saying something and we know how the other person is hearing it. We know Abraham knew what he was doing. He was deceiving Pharaoh. He was deceiving Abimelech. That's the whole reason he did it. He was afraid. He didn't want them to know this was his wife because he thought they'd kill him to get to her and so he said it was a sister. He knew he was deceiving, but somewhere deep in his conscience, he held out this rationalization. Well, technically, she is my half-sister and we do this all the time as we talk to people. We know how to tell stories in such a way that we hold out all of the dumb things we said and we pass on with maybe a little exaggeration, all of the hurtful things someone else said, or we spin things in such a way that we know how people are reading it and we keep yet in our mind the rationalization, “Technically, that's not what I said.” We rationalize.

You see in chapter 26, verse 10, here's the 5th example. It's met with simple silence. This is where Isaac has done the same thing, lying about his wife. These patriarchs had beautiful wives, take some encouragement, they were, you know, 70 or 80 years old, and they were still beautiful. They had to lie about them. Wow. That's an encouragement for today. Look at verse 10, Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife and you would have brought guilt upon us.” And the very next thing

we read about Isaac, it is in verse 12, Isaac sowed in the land. In other words, silence. Gives the appearance, perhaps, of listening. Have you ever done that? You're nodding. Yeah, Yeah. Good point. In your heart you're saying, "I do not agree with any of this." Someone who seems to be tracking with you, they go out, they're never changed.

Chapter 29, verse 25...almost done with the 7. Laban has cheated Jacob in the matter of his daughters. And we read in verse 25, "In the morning, behold, it was Leah. I thought it was Rachel, but it was Leah. And Jacob said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then did you deceive me?'" Notice Laban meets this question with excuses. You see, in verse 26, Laban said, "It is not so done in our country to give the younger before the firstborn." See what he's doing? He's appealing to local custom. He's appealing to the way everyone else does it. You may think that I've deceived you, but really, it's just the way we do things. Mom, Dad, these are the movies everyone sees. These are the clothes that everyone wears. You understand? This is how you get ahead. This is how you get a promotion. No, this is just how we do things in politics. No, this is just how we do things in our family. This is just how we do things down here. That's what Laban says. He makes excuses.

And then a final instance in chapter 31:26, as Jacob is confronted with his deception on the other side as he leaves his father-in-law, he manages to swindle him out of his flock. We read in verse 26, "Laban said to Jacob, 'What have you done that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword?'" Notice what Jacob does. He, when accused, he makes a counter accusation. Verse 31, "Jacob answer to Laban, 'Because I was afraid for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force.'" You know how people do. They quickly turn it. You got something against me? Well, I got 3 things against you. You may be calling me out for my deception, but have you thought about, I was afraid. Now, here's the thing. There's honesty in what Jacob said. He was afraid. And it's true that Laban had deceived him and that may explain the situation he's in, but it doesn't excuse his sin. So often we think that my sin doesn't really count if someone else was a worse sinner. Yeah, I might have done this, but Laban, pops, you're a lot worse than I am. And that justifies it in our own mind. I was afraid. Well, it's not irrelevant to be aware of what we're feeling but so often we think that just by naming what we're feeling or by naming our circumstances, we've excused ourselves. You don't understand. I was scared. You don't understand. I was young. You don't understand. I was intimidated. You don't understand. I was insecure. We appealed to our emotional state, to justify the sins that we have committed.

7 times God's people are presented with this question. "What is this you have done?" And 7 times they answer poorly. And as I've said already several times, it's true, you can be wrongly accused. This question could be brought to you and perhaps the answer is to claim your righteousness. The Bible does that at times, but I do want you to consider is it possible, is it possible that the Lord has been trying to get your attention to see something in your life? When is the last time that any of us have really owned to our sin? Because you're not batting a thousand, you're not getting on base every time, you strike out sometimes. And if all of the instances of owning our sin are long in the past, then well, you're doing a lot better at not sinning than everybody else is.

Notice what happens in chapter 44. For the 8th time this question is asked, and this time the answer is different. Verse 15, Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done?"

7 times in the book that question has been asked and 7 times God's people, they make excuses, they rationalize, they blame, they put their fingers in their ears, they walk away. Now, the 8th time it's asked, listen to what Judah says. Verse 16, and Judah said, "What shall say, my lord, what shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants." Now notice what he says there...the guilt of your servants. We don't know at this point. Does Judah think that Benjamin really did this, or does he know that somehow this is all a big mistake? You would think if anyone has an opportunity, Judah, to say, "Time out, I don't think Benjamin really did this." But when he says, "Your servants have been found out," why is he speaking for all of them? He doesn't quite know what's going on with Benjamin in the silver cup in his sack, but as far as he's concerned, he knows that their sins as a family have been found out. Maybe it was by some supernatural instance that a silver chalice was placed in their sack. He doesn't know. What he knows is they have been guilty of sin all of these years for what they did to Joseph and now their sins have found them out. When is the last time you and I said something like, "God has found out the guilt of your servant?" You know, when you see the apologies that famous people usually make, you say, "I'm sorry if..." or you can tell that they're written by the legal team and I'm sure, there's good lawyers here, and thank you for helping us. But don't you just you just want you want someone to own it, to say, "I have no one to blame. I'm not protesting, I will not accuse, I will not rationalize, I will not make excuses. What I did was wrong and I'm guilty." So many people in the church, they want a halfway house, they want a relationship with God, they want to go to Heaven, but they want to manage their sin. They don't want to confess their sin. They want to manage it, hope people don't see it, it'd be better to have some good habits in life, but they don't come and say, "God against You only have I sinned."

What does it mean to own your sin? It means 2 things. You acknowledge you're wrong. That's what Judah does. We're guilty. You know, one of the reasons why we don't like to acknowledge a wrong, this happens in marriages for example, you feel like okay, I know I have something I'm... rarely is human conflict 100% / 0%. Sometimes, I suppose. But you think, "Well, it's 85% their fault and maybe it's 15%? You know, when I feel that and I'm, you know, I'm the 85%, I'm sure with my wife, but if I feel like I'm the 15% and I think, "I should say something, I should say I'm sorry." You know what I've tried before is I say, "Honey, I forgive you for sinning against me." That usually isn't the best lead in. But I think, "It's really mostly her fault! Yeah, it's a little bit my fault, but it's mostly it's"...so she should come first. You can't control what the other person does. You can't control if they see it. You can't control if they walk away and they say, "Yep, I always knew that I was the righteous one here." They may do that. That's between them and the Lord. You've got your 15% of the problem. God, I sinned. He owns it and then he makes it right. That's what this long speech is about. It's Judah saying, "What can I do to make this right? Please, Joseph, don't take Benjamin, my father, Jacob will die if Benjamin doesn't come back. Let Benjamin go and keep me."

If you're going to change as a Christian, you have to own your sin. And you have to make it right. It has to be more than words. If there is someone in this church you need to repay, you need to repay them. If there are consequences you need to face, you need to face them. If there's a hard conversation you need to have, you need to have it. It may be someone that you simply need to say "I'm sorry." You need to say, "I forgive you." Judah was willing to make things right at a great cost to himself. Way back in chapter 37, it was Judah's idea to sell Joseph off to the traders, which ended up putting Joseph in slavery. Now he offers to be

Joseph's slave that Benjamin might go free. Do you see what Joseph is doing? Joseph has engineered this whole thing not because he wants to...you hurt me, I hurt you. No, there is a method to the seeming madness. "Years ago, you sold your brother into slavery. Now what will you do when Benjamin is threatened with slavery again?" That's what Joseph wants him to see, right plain in front of their face. "You sold your brother into slavery once. What are you going to do again?" And Judah is a changed man, and he offers himself. The brothers who had been envious and spiteful are now at least contrite and generous.

And so, starting in verse 16, Judah gives the longest speech in the Book of Genesis. Of all the speeches in Genesis, this is the longest. It's a masterful speech. He owns a sin, and he also asks for mercy. Because when you own your sin, there's grace. God doesn't promise to change every part of your personality, he doesn't promise that you'll lose weight, doesn't promise that you'll run a four minute mile...there's a lot of things that we might want He doesn't promise, but He does promise to forgive you of your sin and to help you become more and more like Christ.

There are two key words in this speech. One is servant...he uses it 10 times, and the other is father, which he uses 14 times. And it's a brilliant speech. Judah starts the speech by mentioning his father. He ends the speech by mentioning his father. He appeals to Joseph's charity, his mercy. That's why he says 10 times, "Servant, I'm my father's servant. I'm your servant. I'm lowly, I'm humble, I'm contrite, I'm a servant." That's appealing to his mercy. Then he also mentions his father. "But I have a father. My father will die if Benjamin doesn't come back to him." He's acknowledging his sin before Joseph and also appealing for mercy. "I'm your servant. Think about my father."

And here's where we'll close. If you haven't seen the connection yet, see it now. The connection between Judah and the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This is the first time in the Bible where one person offers his life as a substitute for another. You have Judah, who is in fact, guilty, who says I will be a substitute for my brother. And if that appeal is made, how much more effective must it be when Jesus, who was not guilty, says about his brothers and sisters, "Father, let me be their substitutes." Jesus was made like his brothers in every respect except for sin. And if Judah could offer himself as a substitute for Benjamin, how much more can Christ be a substitute for you? This is the seeming, the glorious paradox of Christianity. If you pretend your sin doesn't exist, it will haunt you. Now you may learn how to ignore your conscience and go along your merry way, but at some point or another your sins will find you out. "Whatsoever a man reaps that he will also sow." These brothers had to deal with the fallout and the conscience and the stricken afflicted nature of their sin all of these years. You can pretend you don't have sin and it will haunt you, or you can own it and be free. But you really have to repent. You know, the Puritans, you know, they defined repentance as the vomit of the soul. Think about that not too carefully but think about that. I hate I mean, there's nothing worse than...ugh, throwing up, your whole body is....it's not natural. Your body is saying, "I don't like this. This isn't the way I want things to be. Food is supposed to go this way not this way." Repentance feels like that to the our indwelling sin. I don't like this. It's painful. But you know, when you have some of those illnesses, until you get that out, you're not going to feel better. Repentance is that way, and it just may be some of you in this room, you're holding on to it, you're trying to manage it. You've convinced yourself it really wasn't sin. It wasn't sin. Nope, nope. I got it. I got an excuse for it. Nobody will see it. It was a long time ago. I don't really have to own it. And the Holy Spirit wants to do a work in your heart

right now. Hey, you can be free, you can be forgiven, but you have to own your sin. Repent of your sin. Turn from your sin and run to Christ because he died on that cross to be a substitute. The righteous for the unrighteous, tugging, as it were, like Judah on Joseph's cloak to say, "Let Benjamin go free." And so his bleeding wounds plead for us that we would go free if we would say, like Judah says, "God has found out the guilt of your servant."

Let's pray. Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for your many kindnesses to us. It is your kindness which leads us to repentance, a mercy to show us our sin. So do a work in my heart, in the hearts of your people here, to see our sin and then to see our Savior. Thank you for His blood, for His sacrifice, for His substitution in His name, we pray.