

Introduction

These men were brothers by birth, all sons of the same father. They seemed to love their father; but for twenty years they had been lying to him about their relationship to Joseph.

If you have been born-again by God the Holy Spirit, you and I are brothers and sisters by spiritual birth, all sons and daughters of the same heavenly Father. We seem to love our Father; but if we do not love one another, the Bible says we are liars:

1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

Brotherly love is an important evidence that we have the Father's love in our hearts! If we do not love one another as brothers and sisters there is reason to doubt our love for our Father.

What is brotherly love? Brotherly love is not a *feeling*; it is *faithfulness* in the family of God. Rather than being indifferent towards one another, we commit to becoming and remaining involved with one another as we are instructed by our Father.

The Scriptures frequently exhort you to love your brothers and sisters. Here in Genesis Forty three and Forty four you have an example as well.

These men, with Judah as their spokesman, proved their brotherly love for Benjamin. They first made a commitment to their father to be faithful towards him. Then, given the opportunity to be indifferent towards him, they remained involved as they were instructed by their father.

You learn from their example three things about *your* love for your brothers and sisters in the family of believers: Your love has terms, it has tests, and it has triumphs.

#1 The *Terms* Of Your Love For Your Brothers And Sisters (43:1-14)

Brotherly love is a matter of faithfulness, not feelings; it is a commitment to your heavenly Father to become and to remain involved with your brothers and sisters and to follow his instructions in your relationships with them. In these opening verses of Chapter Forty three, Judah spoke for himself and for his brothers as he committed to his father that he would be faithful towards Benjamin.

Genesis 43:1 Now the famine *was* severe in the land.

Genesis 43:2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."

Genesis 43:3 But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.'"

Genesis 43:4 "If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.

Genesis 43:5 "But if you will not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.'"

These men were not to return to Egypt without their youngest brother, Benjamin. The reason why becomes clear as the story unfolds. They had shown no brotherly love towards Joseph, having sold him into slavery to Egypt twenty years earlier. They would face a similar decision with Benjamin. Would they abandon him to slavery in Egypt as well? The answer was "No," and the reason is the commitment they made to their father.

Genesis 43:6 And Israel said, "Why did you deal *so* wrongfully with me *as* to tell the man whether you had still *another* brother?"

Jacob had his named changed by God to Israel way back in Chapter Thirty two. He is sometimes called Jacob, sometimes Israel. I have heard all kinds of reasons as to why one name is used, then the other. For instance, some have suggested that when he is walking in the flesh, he is called Jacob, but when he is walking in the Spirit he is called Israel. I confess that I haven't figured it out yet!

Genesis 43:7 But they said, "The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?' And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'"

Genesis 43:8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones.

Genesis 43:9 "I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

Genesis 43:10 "For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time."

Judah made a real commitment to his father to care for Benjamin. It was not based on any special feelings he had for his brother; it was based, as you see later, on his relationship to his father.

This is an important point to establish when speaking of brotherly love in the family of believers. You may not have feelings towards all of your brothers and sisters. That's OK! Your love for them flows from your relationship to your heavenly Father. Your love for them is a commitment to *Him* to be faithful towards *them*. You can't rely on your feelings, but you can remain faithful. When you would rather be indifferent, you instead become involved. You follow the instruction given you in the Word.

A contemporary Christian recording group has a song titled, *Love Is A Verb*. Love is something you do. What do you do? You obey the fifty or sixty exhortations in the New Testament to "love one another." The many "one another's" can be reduced to fourteen:

Members of one another, prefer one another, admonish one another, greet one another, serve one another, bear with one another, forgive one another, submit to one another, edify one another, exhort one another, confess to one another, consider one another, have compassion for one another, and show hospitality to one another.

As you see, these things do not depend on feelings. In fact many of them are *contrary* to your feelings! You are instructed to do them, empowered by the indwelling Spirit of God.

Genesis 43:11 And their father Israel said to them, "If *it must be* so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man; a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

Genesis 43:12 "Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.

Genesis 43:13 "Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man.

Genesis 43:14 "And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

With this charge from their father the brothers, including Benjamin, headed forward into God's providence.

In these verses you see the terms of your brotherly love. Two things stand out: Unity and Surety.

^ Unity...

God desired unity among these men. He sets things up so that they would all be together in Egypt. When Joseph finally reveals himself in Chapter Forty five, all twelve of them are together rejoicing in the Lord.

God desires unity among brothers and sisters in His family today. In Ephesians 4:3 you are told "... to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Unity is something you already have when you are born into God's family. God is building a Temple, and we are each living stones; He is giving life to a Body, and we are each members of it. It is up to us to endeavor to preserve and maintain unity.

Pastor Warren Wiersbe has three helpful, and biblical, suggestions for preserving and maintaining unity:

First, there is the grace of unity. Unity comes from within and is a spiritual grace. If you are going to preserve and maintain unity you must cultivate the necessary Christian graces. Ephesians mentions six: humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing, and peace.

Second, there is the ground of unity. While not all Christians agree on finer points of doctrine, there must be agreement on the foundational truths of the faith. Unity must be grounded in truth.

Third, there are the gifts for unity. God has given each believer at least one spiritual gift and this gift is to be used to build up others. As the gifts are properly exercised, they help preserve and maintain the unity God desires among believers.

%o Unity is important; so is Surety.
Judah said, in verse nine, "I will be surety for him..." Judah promised that he would see to it that his brother would return safely to his father's house.

You and I are obligated to do everything we can to see to it that our brothers and sisters *arrive* safely at our Father's house!

What are you obligated to do for your brothers and sisters? You are obligated to serve them, to seek after them, and to not stumble them.

^ Serve your brothers and sisters...
Jesus said that He came to serve, not to be served. One writer said that the true symbol of Christianity is not the Cross or the Crown, but the Towel! While I think he goes to far, I understand his point. Jesus, the night before He was crucified, took a towel and washed His disciples feet. Then He told them, and us,

John 13:14 "If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

John 13:15 "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

You are to be a spiritual "foot washer."

%o Seek after your brothers and sisters...
The Bible reminds us time and again of our obligation to seek after brothers and sisters who are showing signs of spiritual regression:

{ James 5:19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

James 5:20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

{ Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

{ Matthew 18:15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Matthew 18:16 "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

Matthew 18:17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

You are under a definite obligation to seek after your brothers and sisters, for their own spiritual welfare. It is part of the terms you agreed to when you were born again.

^ Don't Stumble your brothers and sisters...

You need to be cautious not to do anything that would cause your brother or sister to sin:

{ Matthew 18:6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

{ 1 Corinthians 8:9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

1 Corinthians 8:10 For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?

1 Corinthians 8:11 And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

1 Corinthians 8:12 But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

You are to *serve*, *seek* after, and not *stumble* your brothers and sisters. In so doing you help them to arrive safely at our Father's house!

#2 The Tests Of Your Love For Your Brothers And Sisters (43:15-44:8)

Having established the terms of their commitment toward Benjamin, the brothers quickly found themselves tested as to their faithfulness. They were twice subtly tested at the feast, and then severely tested on the road home.

In verses fifteen through thirty four of Chapter Forty three, they were tested at the feast. The tests are subtle, but real. Their brother Benjamin is given special *recognition*, and special *reward*.

^ Recognition...

Look at verses twenty nine and thirty:

Genesis 43:29 Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son."

Genesis 43:30 Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought *somewhere* to weep. And he went into *his* chamber and wept there.

Benjamin was singled out for special recognition. When Jacob had done this toward Joseph, the ten brothers had grown envious. When God had given Joseph special dreams, they had hated him for it. Special recognition was a test of their brotherly love that they had once before failed. This time they remain faithful towards their brother; look at the last words of the Chapter - "So they drank and were merry with him."

When your brother or sister receives special recognition, it can test your brotherly love. Recognition can come from God, in the form of gifts or position. It can come from men. When it comes to others it can discourage you; it is a test to overcome. Remain faithful; be merry with them!

‰ Reward...

Joseph's brothers had once hated him because his portion was greater than theirs. He had been appointed steward and had been given the long tunic; he was the one who would inherit Jacob's wealth and position. Would they treat Benjamin the same way?

At feasts like the one described here, all the food would first be set on the host's table. He personally would instruct the servants what portions to give each guest. Benjamin's portion was five times greater than the others. Yet his brothers didn't envy him.

As with recognition, rewards that come from God or men to others can discourage you. It is a test to overcome. Remain faithful; be merry with your brothers and sisters!

These were subtle tests; a severe test followed in Chapter Forty four.

Genesis 44:1 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "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.

Genesis 44:2 "Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money." So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

Genesis 44:3 As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.

Genesis 44:4 When they had gone out of the city, *and* were not *yet* far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?

Genesis 44:5 *'Is not this the one* from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.'"

Genesis 44:6 So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words.

Genesis 44:7 And they said to him, "Why does my lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing.

Genesis 44:8 "Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?"

Let's say a word about Joseph's "cup of divination." He did not practice divination. He gave glory to God for the ability to interpret the future. The cup was a symbol of the decadent, pagan culture that he either couldn't or didn't do anything about. Before we criticize Joseph, we ought to recognize that Christians who live in a decadent, pagan culture have great difficulties. Some things they can and do try to do something about; other things they can't or don't do something about. When we visited China

several years ago, we learned that many believers kept their commitment to Christ somewhat secret. Were they wrong? In sin? No...

Rather than criticize Joseph for the cup, look at his conversation: his servant, back in Chapter Forty three, had spoken freely to the brothers of "your God and the God of your father." Joseph had evidently shared with him. Joseph was doing what he could in a very difficult situation to be a witness.

The brothers had faced and passed two subtle tests; now they faced a severe test. They were being reproached as a family. Someone among them was accused of stealing the cup. The actions of one of them were reflecting on all of them.

In this most severe test you see the triumph of their brotherly love...

#3 The Triumphs Of Your Love
For Your Brothers And Sisters
(44:9-34)

^ The first triumph of brotherly love is that love believes all things. You see that in verses nine through eleven:

Genesis 44:9 "With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

Genesis 44:10 And he said, "Now also *let it be* according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless."

Genesis 44:11 Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack.

Each man believed the best of his brother. There was no suspicion that the Egyptian might be telling the truth - that one of them might have actually taken the cup.

"Love believes all things" is a phrase in 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter. It means you always make every effort to believe the best about your brothers and sisters. When they do let you down, "love believes all things" by keeping the matter confidential until you can speak to them personally.

‰ In verses thirteen through sixteen you see the triumph of brotherly love as they bear one another's burden:

Genesis 44:13 Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

Genesis 44:14 So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he *was* still there; and they fell before him on the ground.

Genesis 44:15 And Joseph said to them, "What deed *is* this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?"

Genesis 44:16 Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and *he* also with whom the cup was found."

The Egyptian steward was willing to let them all go except for Benjamin. The brothers refused, going back with him to help him bear his burden. Joseph was willing to let them all go except for Benjamin. The brothers refused, offering to serve with him as slaves to help Benjamin bear his burden.

It is a triumph of your love for your brothers and sisters when you are willing to bear their burdens.

^ In verses eighteen through thirty two their love for their brother triumphs as Judah intercedes for Benjamin.

Do you intercede for your brothers and sisters? Bring their cause and their case before the throne; plead and press God to have tender mercy upon them.

% In the greatest triumph of brotherly love, Judah identifies with Benjamin - offering to substitute himself for his brother.

Genesis 44:33 "Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

Genesis 44:34 "For how shall I go up to my father if the lad *is* not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?"

What happens to your brothers and sisters affects you. You should identify with them, in their joys and especially in their sorrows. When one member suffers, all suffer.

Sometimes you can actually take the place of your brother or sister. Most often you are only called upon to support, through prayer and resources.

For example, Scripture in Hebrews 13:3 says,

Hebrews 13:3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them; those who are mistreated; since you yourselves are in the body also.

You can't take their place, but you can minister to them or to their families. The same principle applies to missionaries...

It also applies right here in the fellowship!

Conclusion

Judah's closing remarks, in verses eighteen through thirty four, speak volumes to us about ministering to one another in brotherly love. They also reveal the motive for doing so.

Fourteen times Judah mentions his father, giving insight into his father's heart. It is because of his love for his father that he walks in love towards his brother Benjamin.

Many, many times the Scriptures reveal our Father's heart towards even the least of His children. It is because of your love for your heavenly Father that you ought to walk in love towards your brothers and sisters in the family of believers.

Judah, knowing he would have to give an account to Jacob, says, "How shall I go up to my father...?"

You will one day give an account before your Father. In Romans you read,

Romans 14:10 ...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...
Romans 14:12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

If brotherly love triumphs today, it will do so then as well! How shall you "go up to the Father?"