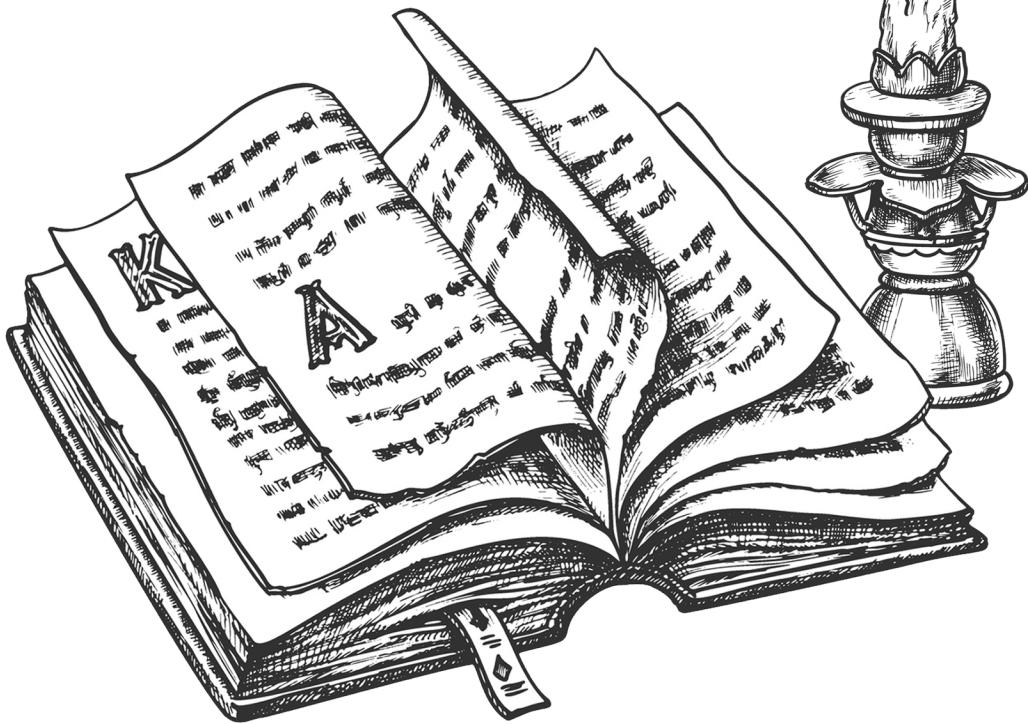


GOD IS GOD. BECAUSE HE IS GOD,
HE IS WORTHY OF MY TRUST AND OBEDIENCE.

I WILL FIND REST NOWHERE BUT IN
HIS HOLY WILL THAT IS UNSPEAKABLY
BEYOND MY LARGEST NOTIONS OF
WHAT HE IS UP TO.

- ELISABETH ELLIOT -



To Love the Unlovable

Genesis Chapter 43

I've often said that it's easy to love those who love us, but the challenge lies in our ability to love the unlovable. The ones who cut us off in traffic, the co-workers who talk behind our back, the people who treat us as "less than," the women who question our parenting skills, the father that left us, the family that hurts us... These situations call for grace.

It must be said often. We need to understand grace, because there's a mindset around us that doesn't. We're taught and we're told that kindness is only for those who deserve it. The familiar phrase, "It must go both ways," doesn't consider merciful grace.

Kindness doesn't sit around analyzing a situation to determine whether this person is right or that person is wrong. Grace is a gift. It doesn't reach out to those who deserve it, grace simply reaches out.

To love the lovely—that's natural. To love the unlovely—that's supernatural. - Skip Heitzig

This wasn't a nice family. These weren't kind and loving brothers by any stretch of the imagination. They were wicked and malicious men who sold their brother like a useless piece of trash. They really didn't care if he had lived or died, and yet, Joseph had compassion for them.

There was an opportunity for justice here—a chance to take revenge—but instead of seizing it, we see a tender-hearted Joseph who found a quiet place to weep. (v.30) They didn't deserve the kindness he bestowed upon them, which again showed his Christ-like character.

The Bible tells us that God showed His love for us while we were yet sinners. He died for the unrighteous that through Him they would be made righteous and have eternal life. "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:7-8, NIV)



I can only imagine that Joseph must have been waiting for the brothers' return. Like the father who anxiously waited for his Prodigal Son. Filled with nothing but love and compassion, forgiveness and grace, he welcomed them home with a feast.

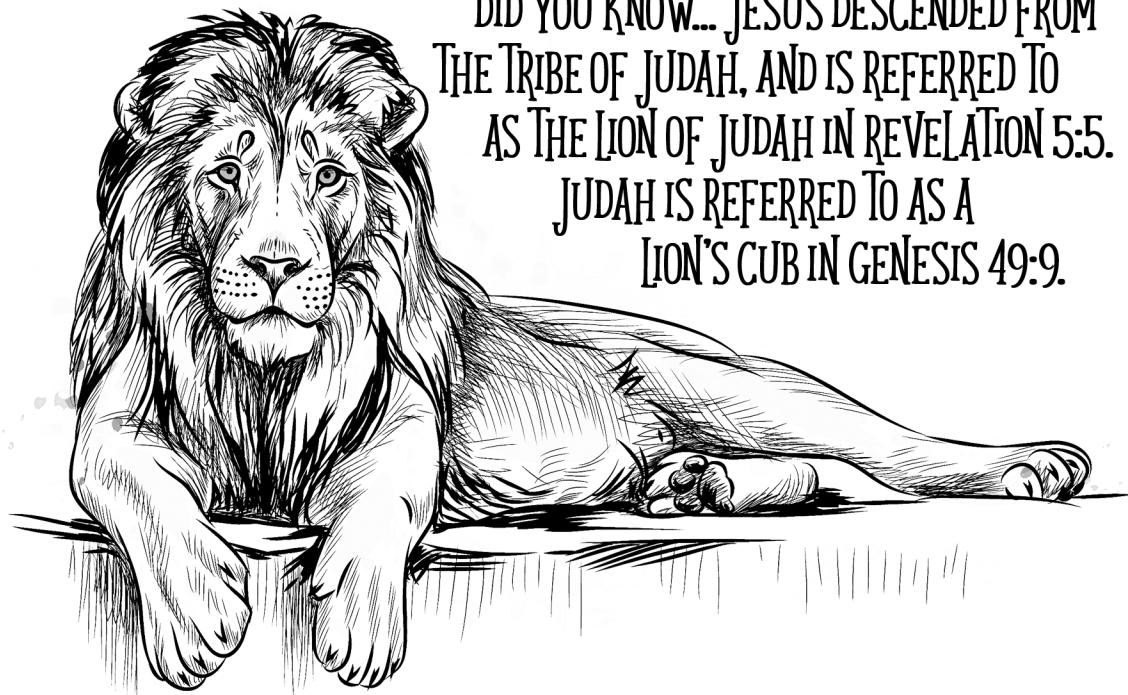
Grace has long been defined as "the unmerited favor of God to mankind." It reaches down to the sinner. It gives far more than it's given. It loves the unlovable and forgives without question. It's a gift that can't be earned and isn't measured by the good behavior of others. It's undeserved, yet freely given.

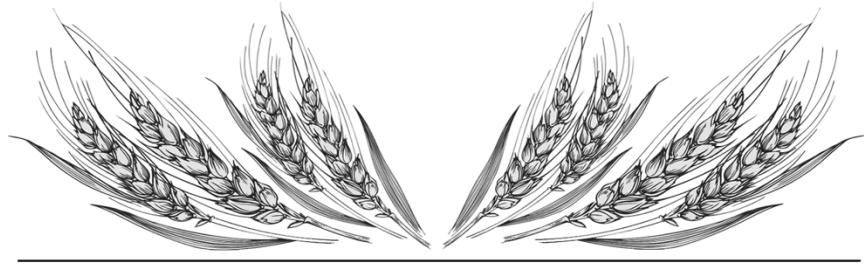
Grace is at the core of every gift that we have from the earth that we walk on to each breath that we take. He makes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust in the same way He gives grace to all.

We can't understand the depth of God's grace until we truly understand the depth of our sin. That's why this story must be observed. There's a stark contrast here between the malicious actions of the brothers and the tender compassion of Joseph. God wants us to see something here. He wants us to understand incomparable gift of grace, and what it really means to love as He loves.

We see a type of the Messiah in this chapter as Joseph is recognized by the brothers the second time they see him. In the same way, John Chapter 1 tells us that Jesus came unto His own and His own received Him not. (v. 11) In other words, the Jews didn't recognize Jesus as their Savior the first time, but when He returns the second time, they will. Zechariah Chapter 12 tells us that they will mourn for the one that they pierced.

DID YOU KNOW... JESUS DESCENDED FROM
THE TRIBE OF JUDAH, AND IS REFERRED TO
AS THE LION OF JUDAH IN REVELATION 5:5.
JUDAH IS REFERRED TO AS A
LION'S CUB IN GENESIS 49:9.





Pause and Reflect

If we compare Verse 37 of the last chapter with Verses 8-11 of this chapter, we see that Jacob was willing to trust Judah, but not as willing to trust Reuben. Why might that be? Also see Genesis 35:22 and Genesis 49:3-4

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 lists the characteristics of love. What are they?

Love is:

Love is not:

We see a parallel to Zechariah 12:10 in this chapter. What does that verse say?

Are there people in your life that you feel don't deserve your love? If so, why not?

What does Matthew 5:44 teach us about living with difficult people?

What did Jesus say about the people who tortured and crucified Him? See Luke 23:34.

7 Ways to Love the Unlovable

1. **Pray for them.** Ask God to love them through you.
2. **Exercise compassion.** We might not agree with people, trust them, or favor their company, but sometimes understanding the root of their difficulty makes it a little easier to accept and understand them.
3. **Love because God loves.** You don't have to love others because they are great people, love them because God cared enough to die for them. His desire is that they come to repentance.
4. **Set limits and boundaries.** Some difficult people are dangerous people, and so there are times when it's wise to keep a safe distance (and perhaps seek help). Be kind and loving, yet be wise and safe.
5. **Exercise patience.** We're all growing at a different pace, and perhaps some people aren't growing at all. Remember all of the times that God has been patient with you? Start exercising that virtue.
6. **Lower your expectations.** People don't change because you want them to. Lower your expectations and let them grow at their own pace.
7. **Don't look to them for a reward.** If we love others expecting a reward, payback, or response, we'll be met with disappointment time and again. Look to God, for your reward—His goodness never fails.



Prayer To Love the Unlovable

Dear Heavenly Father,

I might say they're unlovable, I might feel that way too, but the truth is that no one's unlovable really. You died for the sinner. You sent Your own Son to save them just as You did for me. Help me to love them.

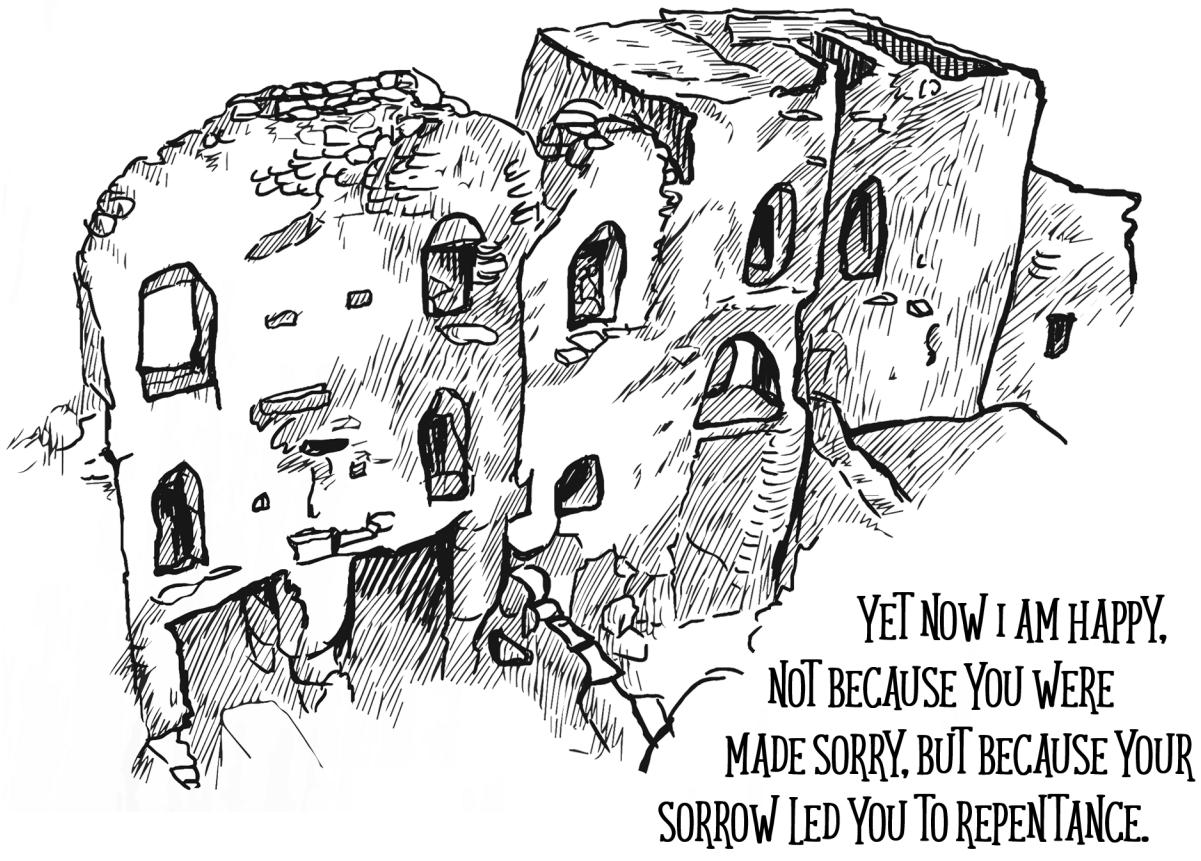
Give me compassion as I seek to understand them. Soften my heart, according to Your perfect will.

Teach me to set wise boundaries. To pull back when I must and reach out as You lead.

Teach me patience and kindness. Give me the strength to control my thoughts as I bring them into submission.

Thank You for Your kindness and love.
Thank You for your unfailing grace.

In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.



YET NOW I AM HAPPY.
NOT BECAUSE YOU WERE
MADE SORRY, BUT BECAUSE YOUR
SORROW LED YOU TO REPENTANCE.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:9, NIV

The Heart of Repentance

Genesis Chapter 44

As Christians, we often hear the word “repent.” Unfortunately for many, the idea of repentance is little more than saying a prayer and walking away unchanged. The heart of repentance, however, is *change*. In fact, the Greek word for repentance, “metanoeo” (Strong’s G3340) literally means “to change one’s mind.”

Repentance is more than just lip service. It’s a deep sorrow that moves us to turn away from our sin as we turn our hearts toward God.

Repentance was the first thing Jesus preached when He went into ministry (Matthew 4:17) and the first thing that John the Baptist preached too (Matthew 3:2).

Notice what Judah says in Verse 16, “God has uncovered your servants’ guilt.” He’s not just talking about this one incident here. We’re looking at a series of events that God used to bring these men to repentance. It’s also interesting to note that God has brought these men full circle by mirroring the event that took place in Genesis Chapter 37. It’s clear that Jacob still preferred one son over the others, perhaps even more so now that his brother Joseph was gone. Were they still the same jealous men they once were? They had an opportunity here to either repeat the same sin of abandoning their brother and leaving him back in Egypt, or giving up their lives for his.

Remember, Judah and Ruben spoke up before. A part of them wanted to do what was right when the other brothers devised a plan to kill Joseph, but neither one of them were willing to make the sacrifice that comes with true repentance until now.

What we’re seeing in these chapters are a series of tests that Joseph was bringing them through: jealousy, honesty, integrity, sacrifice... had these men changed or were they simply the same evil men they once were?



The final test is presented to them when a silver cup is secretly placed in Benjamin's sack. More than 20 years had passed since that incident in the desert with Joseph. So much had changed, but the question was: had they? Would they let their brother take the fall? Or would they protect him?

Those who have truly repented recognize their sin. So grieved by it, they turn away from their sin. Sometimes this turning away isn't easy. Some temptations revisit again and again, which is why we need God's strength to renounce it. Charles Spurgeon writes, "Repentance is a hatred of sin; it is a turning from sin and a determination in the strength of God to forsake it."

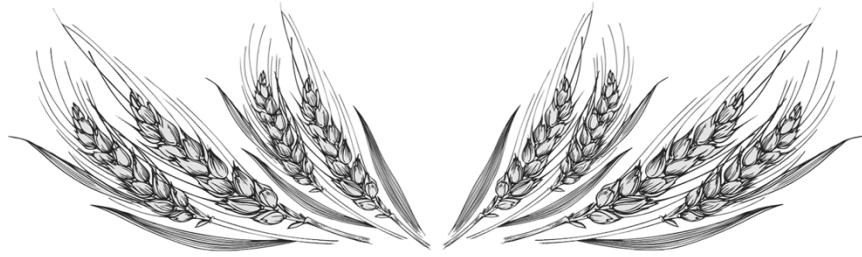
Throughout scripture we see God calling men to repentance. We see holy men of God leaving everything behind to follow Him. We see Abraham willing to sacrifice his beloved son on the altar. We see Hannah giving up her son Samuel in service to God. We see Ruth giving up her land and her people to follow Naomi and her God. We see James and John "The Sons of Thunder" dropping their nets and leaving their lives behind to follow Christ. And here we see Judah ready to give up his life for his brother. We see a heart that's truly been changed and ready to serve.

Now, let's take a closer look at the silver cup. The cup has been seen as a symbol of suffering in the Bible. To partake of the cup is to partake in the suffering of Christ according to the measure you're given. Jesus asked his disciples, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38, KJV).

The figure [of the cup of suffering] is derived from the ancient custom at feasts, by which the ruler of the feast tempered the wine according to his own will, and appointed to each guest his own portion, which it was his duty to drink. Our Lord then proceeds to describe his passion, which he had already spoken of as his cup, as his baptism. (Pulpit Commentary)

And so, this final test, symbolized by the cup, called them to the altar of sacrifice. Would they partake of the cup? Would they lay down their lives for their brother, or return to their sin? As we see by Judah's response, they were ready to leave their lives of sin and corruption in the past. They were willing to give up their own lives for the life of their brother.

You might have noticed earlier on that we skipped over Genesis 38. Why? Because this is the story of Joseph—or so I thought. Chapter 38 is the story of Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. What did any of this have to do with the story of Joseph? Much. Because the story of Joseph isn't merely an account of forgiveness and grace, it's a story of grace that leads men to repentance. Chapter 38 is an important part of this story as we see where Judah was and how far he came by God's grace. If we're going to talk about Judah's repentance doesn't it only make sense that we acknowledge his sin? And so, we're going to do that in the next chapter. We're going back to look at the story of Judah and Tamar to gain a better understanding of this man's life and where God was taking him.



Pause and Reflect

Do you struggle with accepting the grace and forgiveness of God? If so, why?

Is there anyone you haven't forgiven in your life? If so, what is holding you back?

What is the difference between acknowledging sin and repentance?

How are sins forgiven? See Romans 5:8-10.

What is the difference between godly sorrow and earthly sorrow? See 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.

What do we see in this chapter that signifies Judah's repentance?

4 Marks of True Repentance:

1. **Acknowledgment of your sin.** You come to understand that what you have done is not in line with God's will.
2. **A sorrow (mourning) over sin.** If you acknowledge your sin but you're only sorry you got caught, you're missing the mark. True repentance is sorrowful regret for the sin you've committed.
3. **Confession of sin.** If we know we have sinned, we must be willing to seek God's forgiveness by confessing our sin.
4. **Hatred of sin.** If we truly love God, we hate anything that stands in the way of our relationship with Him.
5. **Turning away from our sin.** Repentance is not only a change of mind, it's also a change of behavior. If we're truly repentant, we must walk away changed.

Did you know...

When Judah (the forefather in the line of Christ) offered to himself up as ransom in the place of his younger brother Benjamin, he foreshadowed the substitutionary atonement that would come thousands of years later when Jesus gave himself up on the cross.



Prayer of Repentance

Dear Heavenly Father,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner, saved only by Your goodness and grace. I see all of the times I've done wrong and stepped out of Your will.

I'm sorry for my sin, Lord, and I ask for your forgiveness. Cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Remove any thought that might spring up to tempt me.

I detest the idea that even a thought could stand in the way of my relationship with You.

Help me to follow Your voice and tune out the whispers of the enemy. Help me turn my back on anything that is not in line with Your will or draws me away from my faith. Renew Your spirit within me, bring me to a place of restoration and strength.

Thank You always for Your unfailing goodness and grace.

In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.