

Passing Spiritual Tests

Genesis 44, 45:1-3

Having passed a series of tests about whether or not they have changed, Joseph's brothers will now face their most difficult challenge.

It is significant that this most difficult trial comes immediately after a night of rich fellowship (43:34). It reminds us of the saying that we're either "in the fire, just out of the fire, or about to go into the fire." Life has its ups and downs.

Tests are important for spiritual growth.

Few enjoy examinations, but they are necessary to evaluate whether or not there is maturity. We only know the strength of our faith when we come to a period of testing. We know Job's faith was tested (Job 1). We also know that Jesus' faith was tested (Matthew 4:1-11). We read several passages about the purification process as passing through fire (1 Peter 1:6-7). We should expect tests.

Joseph decides to make a false accusation against the brothers to see what comes out of them. The steward knows exactly where the cup is but draws out the action for tension. This is a well-planned plot in which Joseph gives the brothers every opportunity to fail (44:17).

Maturity is demonstrated in selflessness (44:33).

When we have a transgression, why does someone have to pay?

Failure to make a compensation for immorality is to have no morality at all. Almost every culture has a system of obligations and punishments.

When immorality does not burden us, we want forgiveness by fiat. People say things like "well, God wouldn't do that because God is love." The problem is that this pits God's love against His justice.

Substitution and/or sacrifice is at the center of atonement. Judah's speech points forward to another Son, the Lord Jesus, who would take our place and conquer sin and death (Rev. 5:5).

Judah shows his maturity by dying to himself. This is not the same as the kind of self-denial that is championed in the Eastern religions, but rather a daily submission to the causes of God.

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

This need not be physical death, but rather a yielding to the mission of the Lord Jesus.

We also see maturity in increasing compassion for others. Judah is now concerned for his father, Jacob (Gen. 44:34).

Spiritual obedience opens new doors (45:1-3)

There is a wonderful moment of revelation. Judah’s willingness to sacrifice moves Joseph to make himself known.

Key Take-Away: Spiritual tests can change our hearts.

Application Questions:

It what ways have we been tested in our faith?

How do we understand Scripture’s call to selflessness?

How do these passages give us motivation to never give up on someone?

It what ways can we be more compassionate towards others?