

Gen. 43:1-10; 44:18-34; Heb. 7:22  
Christ Our Surety

The story of Joseph provides us with some of the richest truths pertaining to God's plan of redemption found anywhere in the Bible. A.W. Pink in his studies in Genesis draws some 45 spiritual analogies between the character, Joseph, and the Lord Jesus Christ. These analogies, however, are not restricted to Joseph.

This morning I want to direct your attention to another character in the narrative of Joseph – I want to direct your attention to Judah. Throughout the narrative Judah stands out in most instances in complete contrast to Joseph. If you remember the story of Joseph you may recall that it was Judah who first put forth the notion that Joseph be sold as a slave. *And Judah said to his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content (37:26,27).*

How compassionate of Judah! You may also recall from the story that there is an interlude – so to speak – between chp. 37 & chp. 39. Chapter 38 interrupts the narrative about Joseph and is entirely devoted to Judah – describing his immoral conduct. He stands in stark contrast to Joseph who displays a fear of God and lives a righteous life even in the midst of provocative temptations and bleak circumstances – being first a slave, and then a prisoner committed to Pharaoh's dungeon.

It's ironic to think that Judah represented the line through which Christ would come. And when you think of the contrast between Judah's sinfulness and Joseph's righteousness it magnifies the truth that Christ truly has identified with sinners. His lineage is filled with those who have sinned – some who have committed terrible sins.

I think of Rahab – a harlot, found in the Messianic lineage. I think of Ruth, a pagan Moabite – one whose line originated in a sinful act of incest. Then of course you had many of the progenitors of David – some of whom were exceedingly sinful. And David himself, the man of faith he was – nevertheless had instances of terrible sin. Through this line of sinful men Christ came – being born of man, but free from sin. You can see at once the need of a supernatural birth – the virgin birth of Christ. He took on our humanity but without taking on our sin. (We're to remember this truth as we partake of the bread in our communion).

Now in spite of his sinful character – we find Judah in the passages we have read this morning acting out of character – as it were. The situation had become desperate for Jacob and his sons. They had used up the grain from their first trip to Egypt and now in order to buy more grain they had to return with their youngest brother – Benjamin. They would not gain an audience with this austere ruler in Egypt, who – unknown to them happened to be their brother Joseph.

At first Jacob refuses – but when the famine forces his hand – it is Judah who steps up and says to his father *I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever* (43:9).

Judah was making himself personally responsible for the safety of his brother Benjamin. This turned out to be a difficult challenge for Judah to meet. When they returned to Egypt to buy grain everything seemed to be going well. They were received well and were even invited to dine with Joseph. But upon their departure – by Joseph's instructions, his silver cup was placed in Benjamin's sack.

The sons of Jacob were soon after overtaken by Joseph's servant. And when the cup is found in Benjamin's sack it appears that Benjamin must become a slave. Now remember that it was Judah's idea, initially to sell Joseph as a slave. Now when it appears that Benjamin will also become a slave we find a different attitude in Judah. This was the test Joseph saw fit to put his brothers through and so we find Judah strenuously attempting to fulfill his obligation to be the surety for Benjamin.

And the way we find him striving to fulfill that obligation is to make intercession for Benjamin – to plead for Benjamin's release – to beg Joseph to take him instead. What I want to call your attention to this morning is the fact that in this activity of fulfilling his role as the surety for Benjamin we can find a very vivid picture of Christ as our surety.

This is why we read that verse from Heb. 7:22 – *By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament (or covenant)*. And in our consideration of this truth we'll narrow the scope of our study to the activity of the one who is our surety. In Gen. 44 we see clearly what that activity consists of – It's the activity of intercession. And so I want you to think with me on:

### Christ Our Surety – Pleading for His People

And I want to note 3 things that we can find Christ pleading for His people:

#### I. He Pleads the Covenant for His People

Look with me at 44:32 – *For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.*

Judah is referring to the pledge, the contract, the covenant that he had entered into with his father Jacob. He took upon himself the complete responsibility for taking Benjamin with him and bringing him safely home again.

His failure to meet that obligation would bring blame upon him. The word blame is the word that is most often translated by the word *sin*. *I shall bear the sin to my father for ever*. It means *I shall incur the guilt of sin*. Judah is saying, then, that his failure to fulfill this obligation would amount to sin and would leave him guilty of a sin of failure. And the force of this guilt is magnified all the more when you look at his actual statement to Jacob

in 43:9 – *Let me bear the blame (the sin, the guilt) for ever.* He invites eternal damnation upon his own soul should he fail to bring Benjamin safely home.

Now by looking at the binding nature of this covenant and being impressed with the force of the obligation of Judah to his father – we can gain an appreciation for the obligation that Christ took upon Himself when he became our surety. *By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.* He took to Himself a binding obligation to bring His people safely to glory. It is His responsibility by covenant. Aren't you glad it's His responsibility rather than yours?

How could you possibly take on the responsibility yourself of landing in heaven? If it depends on your holiness, or if it depends on your righteousness, or if it depends on your success in overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil then there's simply no way that you'll ever make it heaven. You were born in sin and you've lived with a sinful nature even up to this present hour. The very notion that it depends on you becomes a form of bondage, the very bondage that Martin Luther knew so well when he thought it did depend on him. The more he strived the more he realized how far short he came of being able to please God.

But when you look to Christ and see Him as your surety – you see Him as the one who is responsible for bringing you to heaven then you can have confidence that you will indeed make it to heaven – because it depends on Christ's ability to meet the obligations of the covenant rather than your ability.

Now we should note a distinction between the obligation Judah took to himself and the obligation Christ took to Himself. Judah invites the guilt of sin to be laid to his charge should he fail. In a sense you could say that Christ (were it possible) would have accrued guilt to His charge had He failed – but on the other hand – in order for Christ to succeed in meeting His obligation He had to have the guilt of your sins and mine laid to His charge. He had to bear our guilt in order to meet His obligation. The blame that Judah would take – Christ in fact did take in order to fulfill the covenant.

Now I said we would focus on the activity involved in meeting the obligation of the covenant. In Gen. 44 we find Judah pleading for Benjamin. In his plea he is making known to Joseph the fact that he pledged himself to be the surety for Benjamin. You can feel the tension and the passion behind Judah's plea when you read the narrative – because in a sense his ability to meet his obligation was wholly at the disposal of Joseph. Had Joseph been so inclined – Judah could have been released and Benjamin kept as a slave and Judah would have borne the blame for his failure. It all depended on Joseph.

When it comes to Christ being our Surety, however, it's important for us to recognize that the grounds for His plea is undeniable. I don't know how many Christians realize this. Some Christians may even have an altogether wrong notion about Christ's intercession. They may have the impression that Christ pleads with His Father the same way that Judah pleaded with Joseph – the whole thing being left up to the sole discretion of the Father.

This is definitely not the case. And the reason it's not the case is because the covenant of redemption is between Christ and His Father. Judah, you might say, is pleading a covenant that had nothing to do with Joseph. It was between Judah and Jacob – not Judah and Joseph. But in redemption the covenant is between Christ and His Father.

Christ's plea is that those that were **given to Him** by the Father might have everlasting life (Jn. 17:3). His plea is that those **given Him** by His Father might be kept – *Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me* – Jn. 17:11.

And the grounds for Christ's plea is not to be found merely in the hope that His heavenly Father would be benevolent and merciful – (the way Judah was hoping Joseph would be) but rather the grounds for Christ's plea is the blood. *The blood of the everlasting covenant* – we read in Heb. 13:20.

The blood – which speaks to us of the value and virtue of Christ's life which was poured out in His atoning death for the remission of your sins and mine – this is our hope and this is why our hope is a sure hope. The blood cannot and will not be denied. God could not deny the blood without denying Himself. He could not deny the blood without compromising His justice.

It's good to know, isn't it, that when Christ entered into the temple not made with hands – He entered in not with the blood of bulls and goats *but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us* (Heb. 9:12). He obtained our redemption. He didn't merely make it possible or even probable – He obtained it – He made it certain. He met the obligation as our Surety and He pleads that blood for us even now.

This is why we remember the blood – our hope and assurance is grounded in His blood. So Christ pleads the covenant for His people – specifically the blood of the everlasting covenant. But we can also note that:

## II. He Pleads Substitution –

We're reminded of this when we read of Judah's plea in 44:33 – *Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.*

What a change of heart for Judah – who earlier had been willing to sell a brother into slavery. Now he would take his brother's place in slavery and pleads that this stern ruler in Egypt, who happened to be that brother sold into slavery, might allow it. It's no wonder that this passionate plea had the effect it did upon Joseph. Had we read into chp. 45 we would have read how Joseph could refrain himself no longer and he would reveal himself to his brothers.

This plea by Judah that he might be received as a substitute instead of Benjamin at once reminds us that as our Surety Christ took our place. He was and is our substitute. This is a point of emphasis in the Bible. You find several verses that bring out this truth:

- Isaiah 53:5 *But he [was] wounded for our transgressions, [he was] bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.*
- 1 Peter 3:18 *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.*
- Romans 5:6 *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*
- Romans 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Each of these verses brings out the truth of substitution. The very words of institution in the Lord's supper bring out the same truth: *This is my body, which is broken for you. This is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you* (Lk. 22:21).

And in 1Pet. 3:18 we see how great the contrast is between the substitute and the ones being substituted. We read how He died *the just for the unjust*. The one who knew no sin was the substitute for sinners. The one who stayed close to God and knew the Spirit's fullness in a way that couldn't be measured was the substitute for those who were ungodly.

In each of the New Testament texts I've cited the preposition *for* comes from a Greek preposition which means *instead of*. And so we have a strong emphasis on the truth of Christ being our substitute.

Now a point we have touched upon often in our times around the communion table is the point that in the shedding of His blood Christ was engaged in the activity of the priest – i.e. He was pleading for those He represented while He hung suspended between heaven and earth on a cross.

And His plea amounted to a plea that He be received in place of those that He represented. *Let my merit be substituted for them – for they have no merit. And let my death be substituted for theirs. Let the shedding of my blood be substituted for their death.*

We find a picture of Christ's plea for substitution in John 18. All 4 gospels contain the account of Christ being apprehended in the garden. But only John's gospel supplies the detail that when Christ was apprehended He asked those who took Him into custody – *Whom seek ye?* And when they told Him that they sought *Jesus of Nazareth* Christ replied to them – *I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way* (Jn. 18:8).

He would submit to the hour of darkness – but His followers must be released. I say we can see a picture of Christ's priestly intercession in that statement for when the law of God exposes our sins – Christ's plea for His people is *take me and let them go free*. And when the law of God shows us how far short we come of measuring up to it's demands – Christ's plea for His people is *take me – measure me by the demands of the law and let my people go free*.

And so as Judah pleaded the covenant before Joseph – telling Joseph that he (i.e. Judah) had become surety for Benjamin, we're reminded that Christ pleads the covenant for us.

He is our surety. And in meeting the obligation of being a surety we find Judah pleading with Joseph that he might become Joseph's slave instead of Benjamin. He is pleading that he might be substituted for Benjamin. As our surety Christ meets His obligations the same way. As our covenant Head He became our substitute. And so He can plead His merit to be substituted for our lack of merit. And He can plead that the penalty He paid be substituted for the penalty we would otherwise have to pay.

The bread and the cup remind us of these things. In order to be our Surety and Substitute He must identify with us. The bread reminds us that He has identified with us by taking to Himself our flesh. The cup reminds us that He died in our place – shed His blood for our sins – gave Himself in our place, that we might be freed from the penalty and power of sin.

There is one more element to Judah's intercession as Benjamin's surety that we shouldn't overlook before we come to the table of the Lord. One of the arguments that Judah pleads before Joseph is found in 44:30 – *Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life –*

In this statement by Judah we see how:

### III. He Pleads Union –

Now in a physical sense there was a family union between Jacob and all his sons. But in a special sense there was an even stronger bond between Jacob and Benjamin. Benjamin was the youngest. He was also the only other son, beside Joseph, that Rachel had borne to him. You might recall that Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin. And now believing, as Jacob did, that Joseph had been slain by a beast, and knowing that Rachel had died giving birth to Benjamin – we understand the statement of Judah that Jacob's life was bound up in the lad's life. There was a unique and special union between Jacob and his youngest son, Benjamin. And Judah is pleading this bond before Joseph. It's a plea of his father's love for his youngest son.

As our Surety – Christ pleads the same way for His people. *I pray for them* He says in Jn. 17:9 – *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.* You could say that Christ has His life bound up in the lives of those that were given to Him. How He loves them. And the evidence of that love is seen in that He became one of them and He shed His blood for them.

William Gouge: *We count it a great evidence of love for a friend to be surety for us, when we intend no damage to him thereupon. If a friend be surety for that which he knoweth the principal debtor is not able to pay, and thereupon proposeth to pay it himself, this is an extraordinary evidence of love. What is it then if he engage his person and life for his friend? "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life," (Job 2:4).*

If a friend, to free a captive, or one condemned to death, do put himself into the state and condition of him whom he freeth, that would be an evidence of love beyond all comparison. But if the dignity of Christ's person and our unworthiness, if the greatness of

the debt and kind of payment, and if the benefit which we reap thereby, be duly weighed, we shall find these evidences of love to come as much behind the love of Christ as the light of a candle cometh short of the light of the sun.

Paul expresses the same truth more concisely when he says simply – *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* (Rom. 5:7,8).

And so our time around this table this morning should be a time of great assurance. Christ is our Surety. He pleads the covenant which has been ratified in His blood. He stands forth as our substitute – meeting the obligations of the law as our Surety by His life and death and then pleading His life and death as the grounds for our salvation.

And He does so because His life is bound up in His people. We were given to Him. We are constantly on His mind and heart. He orders all things for our good. He provides and protects and prospers and accompanies us in all our trials and tribulations because of this matchless love.

The proof is in His incarnation. He left heaven's glory to become one of us that He might also be the Surety for us. And the proof is in His blood which He shed freely on your behalf and mine. This is why we remember Him around this table. I trust that in so doing you'll be drawn to Him, you'll be assured of His love and grace to your soul, and your heart will be filled to overflowing at the remembrance of His love which is steadfast and sure.