

CONSCIENCE REMINDERS! | GENESIS 42 | PASTOR MARK BOFILL | 5/5/2024

*I. Troubled Consciousness (1-5) | II. Testing Consciences (6-24) | III. Trembling Consciences (25-28) | IV. Tragic Consequences (29-38)

INTRO: The stage has been set; Joseph is now Prime Minister of Egypt, placed there by God for His divine purposes. In this next chapter, God now moves to reunite Joseph with his family, so as to save all Israel. – But in order to do so, **God had to arouse the consciences of the Joseph's brothers**, so that they can be forgiven of their sin and reconciled to their brother. However, this is easier said than done, because like an impacted tooth, a Guilty Conscience is hard to remove! – The title of this sermon is therefore called: **CONSCIENCE REMINDERS! (Genesis 42)** *

Q: Do you care about having a “good conscience” before God? – What exactly is a “Guilty Conscience?”

TERMS:

- **Conscience** = Is a noun that refers to a person's inner (MORAL) sense of right and wrong that guides their behavior.
- **Guilt** = Is a feeling of having committed wrong; An immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law or against a person. *Combined...*
- **A Guilty Conscience** is a sign of our need for God and how we are still disobeying him. He uses our feelings of guilt to bring us back to our knees in submission and back to Scripture, so we can learn how to obey. – **Conscience then, can be a trustworthy guide only when it is informed and ruled by God!**

FACT of SIN: Many choose to IGNORE the Warning Signs of a Guilty Conscience (Rom 2:15) says that ... the law is written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them! (Do you excuse it?)

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I. TROUBLED CONSCIOUSNESS (1-5) – **Conscious** is an adjective meaning aware or more literally, awake. As we see here with Jacob – **God allowed troublesome times to move his people!** – I want to point out in the Bible, God often used troubling circumstances: i.e., a royal beauty contest (Esther 2), A plague (Joel 1), or even a government census (Luke 2:1-7).

A. Directions from Jacob (1-3) – Just a few years into the famine, it started to affect the land of Canaan. Both Jacob and his sons were affected by the food shortage! – He learned of Grain in Egypt and also saw his son's Inactivity – So Jacob said... **[Do something!] Why do you look upon one another?** Go to Egypt... Jacob commanded, so they did. *But Why did they delay?*

- Perhaps Joseph brothers dreaded the 250-mile journey or quite possibly they remembered that Egypt is where they “sent their brother,” so many years ago. – Conscience has a way of digging up the pass and arousing doubts and fears within us! – Wiersbe

B. Denial of Benjamin (4) – Jacob's refused to allow Benjamin to go with them, which hints of his suspicion of Joseph's disappearance years earlier. – **Benjamin... was his only living link to his beloved wife Rachel,** so he kept him close by so no harm would befall him.

C. Duty to Buy Grain (5) – So, the brothers went on a six-week journey, to Egypt to get grain, i.e., **BREAD** if you will. – This bread would soon be depleted, but Paul tells us that “...Jesus will supply all of our needs according to his riches”... (Phil 4:19) Amen!

P/A – *When considering our own circumstances*, we too can have a Troubled Consciousness! – Maybe it’s a food shortage, a war, or a pandemic. News of Current Events: The Attack on Israel, College Campuses, etc. ... they cause us to have a “troubled spirit.” – How do you respond during troubled times? – Who do you run to? – **Don’t WATCH the News... READ the NEWS!** i.e., **the GOOD NEWS!** – *Be aware of what he is doing and Trust in His Processes!*

II. TESTING CONSCIENCES (6-24) – It had been over **22 years** since Joseph’s brothers last saw him, so they may have written him off as dead. They thought their trip would be a quick turn-around journey, but they were in for the surprise of their lives... a time of reckoning!

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A. Their Confrontation (6-14) – In (v.6) we first learn of **Joseph’s Position**, who was the *Governor responsible for selling food to the people of the land*. – By divine prominence, the **10 brothers arrived and found themselves unwittingly bowing before Joseph!** – Later, we will see that **ALL ELEVEN** will do so, in fulfillment of Joseph’s dream as a youth (37:5,9)

- **Joseph’s Questioning (7-8)** – *Joseph recognized his brothers*, but they did not recognize him! – **He spoke harshly to the brothers!** Using the Egyptian language, he spoke through an interpreter (23), probably sharp and direct. – His body language also communicating a austerity about him!

- **Joseph’s Accusations (9-14)** – As Governor, he accuses his brothers three times of being spies who had a secret plan to scope out the land for military advantage (9,14,16).

- In the exchange, *Joseph’s dream flashed before his mind*. He then pressed them harder, saying *“you have come to see the barrenness of the Land.”*
- Their response exposed more information of their family status (13), which he would use to his advantage. – The mention of “the one who is no more,” seemed to have moved Joseph!
- Their response as being *“Honest Men”* also upset Joseph! – They somehow forgot to include the devious act of human trafficking years ago! // – P/A – *Doesn’t every man claim to be honest and righteous, and true!* – The Bible says *“there is none righteous...” we are all guilty of having evil hearts! (Gen 6:5; Jer 17:9), some will say, but I’m not that bad.*

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B. Their Confinement (15-20) – Enough with the claims...**Prove it!** Joseph presents them with **the opportunity to prove themselves (15)**. – If you’re really telling the truth, **PROVE IT by bringing your youngest brother here (16)**.

- **SECRETLY HOPING** to save his father and the whole family by bringing them to Egypt.
- In (v.17), **Joseph imprisoned his brothers for three days, to give them time to think of their statements and actions**, also allowing Joseph time to think about his plan more.
- In (vv.18-20) Joseph altered his first judgment on his brothers, **mentioning his reasons**, because *“He too feared God!” (Elohim)* – His plan allowed only ONE BROTHER to remain, so that all can carry grain back to his father’s house. (*A better plan for safety*).
 - **WHY DID JOSEPH CHOOSE THIS WAY?** B/C **Joseph knew that TRUTH must be VERIFIED!**

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C. Their Consciences (21-24) – These circumstances sparked a **CONSCIENCE REMINDER** for each of the brothers as they spoke to one another in Hebrew. – **Without even knowing it they exposed their 22-year-old guilty conscience's before Joseph.** – **How must they have felt at this moment?** Maybe we should ask how Joseph felt as he heard the utterance.

P/A – A Guilty Conscience will continually haunt a person for the sin, until it's made right!

Just like the world, they reclassified the guilt, calling it **DISTRESS!** (21) – Know that **Sin is SIN...**and *it will find you out!* – In (v.22), the eldest brother **Reuben** reminded them then that **there were consequences to such actions!** – Even though no law was written yet, they knew that the BLOOD of Joseph was required of them. (According to what God pronounced on Cain! 4:10-15)

- **The Concealment of Joseph (23-24)** – Joseph spoke through an Interpreter (23), but upon hearing this news, **Joseph had to remove himself to weep over the ordeal.** He was trying to hold it together, but his emotions got the best of him! **He also needed healing!**
- **The Confiscation of Simeon (24b)** – Joseph then returned and selected Simeon to remain under arrest as the rest would return back to Canaan. – Because **Reuben** stated that he stood up for Joseph, he was probably set-free. Simeon, who was second-in-line, was selected to be detained.

P/A – Wow...what an ordeal! – He acted as a stranger to them (7) and then accused them of being Spies! (9), and **now he charges them all with a DAUNTING TEST!** – **Why didn't Joseph just reveal himself to his brothers so they could be reconciled?** B/C, **TRUE RECONCILIATION** requires repentance, and Joseph was testing his brothers to see if their hearts had changed. – Paul makes this clear in (2 Cor 7:10) For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

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III. TREMBLING CONSCIENCES (25-28) – **Joseph wasn't done yet!** He conspired with his servants to execute his plan which would **cause trembling amongst them (25-26), All to assure that they tell their father the TRUTH!** (He knew of his brothers deceptive ways!) – He supplied his brothers with abundant amount of grain, because he knew his family would need it. But he also had a servant **secretly return the money to each ones sack.** And they departed.

- Somewhere along the journey (27), **one of them discovered his money in his sack. And their hearts failed them... NO WAY!** – I can understand the shock of the discovery, but **what shocks me** is that **THEY BLAMED GOD for their predicament!** (I used to ask why people blamed God when things go wrong... **NOW I know WHY! Because they all have a Guilty Consciences!**)
- Joseph's brothers **REALIZED** God was not going to let them get away with what they had done to Joseph. *And so they headed back home, ready to face the...*

IV. TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES (29-38) – By now we should have learned that **our SIN affects more than just ourselves, but others also... especially those we love!** – Joseph's brothers now had to **tell their father Jacob** about the trouble they had in Egypt, and **they knew it would break his heart!**

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A. Re-telling the Truth! (29-35) – In (v.29), the brothers explained that “a man” spoke roughly to them and took them as “spies” (30). – It wasn’t just a man; it was Joseph their supposed dead brother, who actually rose to become DAH MAN! – Before their father (31), they told him they claimed that they were “honest men” and not spies! **Hardly an honest assessment.** (As I read this, I thought, can you hear yourself right now!)

- They also revealed (32), that they provided valuable family information which included both Jacob and Benjamin – Later, in (43:9) Jacob rebukes them for providing too much information
- Probably the HARDEST thing for them to report (33-34), was that the man required the presence of the youngest brother to prove that they were honest men... **Yikes!** – Then they would be free to trade in the land. – *And if that was not a lot to take in, there is one more thing...*
- **The Money! (35)** – Their **guilty consciences** and **fear of God’s vengeance PEAKED** when they discovered that ALL their money was RESTORED as they explained it to Jacob., which caused an overwhelming reaction of FEAR! (*Eeh Gad! - Seemingly Tragic Consequences!*)

P/A – Like peeling layers off of an ONION, each detail caused greater tears! **But the Truth had to come out!** This is why we cannot let sin go unchecked in our lives! Now let’s see Jacob’s...

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B. Regretful Response (36-39) – Jacob’s response was that of **MOURNING (36)**. – He was minus two sons, which **tortured Jacob!** Yet later we’ll find that, yet these statements were not true! Not only was Joseph alive, and Jacob would see him soon. – Notice also, that **his statements reveal only his personal concern of status**, concluding that “*everything was against him.*” – True at the moment, but God was working out His plan! A plan even though Jacob couldn’t see it or feel it (*cf. Rom 8:29*). – “If you drink of the river of affliction near its outfall, it is brackish and offensive to the taste, but if you will trace it to its source, where it rises at the foot of the throne of God, you will find its waters to be sweet and health-giving” – **Spurgeon**

- In (v.37) we see that **Reuben attempts to step-up once again**, to help ease the situation. But his very words were ridiculous and **would have made the situation even worse if followed through.** (*Killing Jacob’s grandsons is a preposterous thought!*). In *Tragic Situations*, sometimes it’s best to **SAY NOTHING!**
- **Lastly, in (v.38)** – Jacob replied emphatically that **Benjamin would not go with Reuben!** – **The reason** he would not go was because his brother (Joseph) was dead, and he had no full brother. – If things were to go sour, Jacob would have sorrow at his death!

P/A – Notice that the name Jacob is used instead of Israel. – Notice also that Jacob claimed that *everything was against him!* – Yes, the situation seemed dire and there were tragic consequences, but he made it worse because he was looking at his circumstances, and not looking to the Lord in faith!

CONCLUSION & COMMUNION: Many of us here today need a **CONSCIENCE REMINDER** that A clear conscience is to **CONTINUALLY** be **SOUGHT OUT!** – (Heb 10:22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

COMMUNION: LET'S DO THAT NOW...

- We need to ASK the Lord to search our hearts (**Ps. 139:23**).
- Then we need to CONFESS and FORSAKE our sin (**Ps. 51:2-7**).
- We need to TRAIN our consciences with the Word of God (**Ps 119:5-6**)
- We need to walk in holiness so we will have a **blameless conscience!**

You can ignore sin, but not sin consciousness. the blood of Jesus wash away all your sins so that you will have no more consciousness of sins!

The blood of Christ ultimately makes us clean (**Heb 9:14**), therefore... (**Rom 8:1**) *there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ!*

(**Psalm 103:12**) tells us that Sin, Guilt, and Shame can be ultimately removed from us— *As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*