

Joseph's Brothers – How to Face Your Past

Genesis 42:1-8

Nine years have passed since Joseph became prime minister of Egypt. Everything has happened exactly as he said. The seven good years were very good indeed. We are now two years into the seven lean years, and they are very bad indeed. Joseph is now 39 years old. A vast famine grips the Middle East. In Canaan Jacob hears there is food in Egypt. The story before us in Genesis 42-43 reveal a series of tests God uses to awaken the guilty conscience of Joseph's brothers. Here's a list that will help us see them clearly:

First, the loss of prosperity in the famine (Genesis 42:1-5).
Second, the harsh treatment by Joseph (Genesis 42:6-14).
Third, the three days the brothers spent in prison (Genesis 42:15-17).
Fourth, breaking up of the family-Simeon is left behind (Genesis 42:18-24).
Fifth, the demand to bring Benjamin to Egypt (Genesis 42:20).
Sixth, the strange case of the returned money (Genesis 42:25-38).

The loss of prosperity strips them of their self-sufficiency. The harsh treatment reminds them of how they treated Joseph. The three days in jail mirrors the pit into which they threw Joseph. Keeping Simeon in Egypt reminds them of how the family was divided by their treachery. The demand to bring Benjamin tests their honesty after years of lying about their sin. The returned money forces them to admit their guilt to each other.

There are two key turning points in these two chapters:

First, The Confession of Sin - (Genesis 42:21) - If you want to get better, the first step is always to stop blaming others and start saying, "I was wrong."

Second, The Recognition of God's Hand - (Genesis 42:28) - "What is this that God has done to us?" This is the first time the brothers ever mention God's name.

Why did it take so long for the brothers to come to their senses? First, God orchestrated the events so that Joseph was in the right place at the right time. Second, the brothers weren't ready until now to face the consequences of their own sin.

Conclusion:

What if, like Joseph, you have been the victim of mistreatment at the hands of others? Do what Joseph did. Serve the Lord where you are. Bloom where you are planted. Wait on the Lord. Give God time to deal with those who have hurt you. Let go of the past and move forward with God.

What if you, like Joseph's brothers, are burdened with a guilty conscience? Hear the Good News of the Gospel! Christ came to save sinners. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. The door is open in the Father's house and the lights are on. You will not be turned away.