

The Life of Joseph

Week 5 - Softening a Seared Conscience

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WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. Read Genesis 42:1-28. Why did Jacob have to send his sons to Egypt for grain?
2. How did Joseph serve Pharaoh? How did he greet his brothers? What did Joseph accuse his brother of doing?
3. What parallels can you see between the way Joseph's brothers treated him, and how Joseph treats them in our text?
4. What two ways did Joseph test his brothers to see if they were honest men? How did Joseph's brothers respond to the test?

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CATECHISM CORNER

CANONS OF DORT

Fifth Main Point of Doctrine

Article 4: The Danger of True Believers' Falling into Serious Sins

The power of God strengthening and preserving true believers in grace is more than a match for the flesh. Yet those converted are not always so activated and motivated by God that in certain specific actions they cannot by their own fault depart from the leading of grace, be led astray by the desires of the flesh, and give in to them. For this reason they must constantly watch and pray that they may not be led into temptations. When they fail to do this, not only can they be carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan into sins, even serious and outrageous ones, but also by God's just permission they sometimes are so carried away-witness the sad cases, described in Scripture, of David, Peter, and other saints falling into sins.

Article 5: The Effects of Such Serious Sins

By such monstrous sins, however, they greatly offend God, deserve the sentence of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, severely wound the conscience, and sometimes lose the awareness of grace for a time - until, after they have returned to the right way by genuine repentance, God's fatherly face again shines upon them.

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GOD SPEAKS TO US

1. Did Joseph punish his brothers? Did God punish Joseph's brothers? Explain your answer.

2. How does God prick our conscience? How has God pricked your conscience?

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GOD SPEAKS TO OUR FAMILY

1. Joseph's brothers listened as Joseph cried for help at the bottom of a pit, and did nothing. When have you (or someone in your family) ignored the emotional pain or pleas of a sibling, spouse, or child? How does failing to listen to a family member's distress affect your conscience over time?

2. What can we do to ensure our conscience is sensitive to the hurts of our family?

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NOTES ON GENESIS

"This is the first time ever in the narrative that the brothers mention the Lord. But because of their raging guilt, they were quick to see God in this. They were traumatized, shocked, and terrified by a fresh and fearful awareness of the divine. However, this was not mere fear-it was godly fear. Joseph's brothers realized that their sins were against God. Fear is one thing, but godly fear comes from sensing that a holy God is the hand behind the circumstances of your life to bring you to where you ought to be. The brothers trembled in their awesome awareness. Godly fear is a grace because the fearer knows where he or she must turn to have the fear assuaged. Fear alone (like guilt alone) is of little use. In fact, it can be debilitating. But godly fear is a fear that God blesses, for he comes to those who fear him. Good things were happening to those brothers. A godly fear is precisely what every child of God needs. Those who live with awed reverence find that God orders all their life to his glory and, ultimately, to his children's glory."

Hughes, R. K. (2004). Genesis: beginning and blessing (p. 498). Crossway Books.

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DREAMER OF DREAMS

"Joseph sets up a test for the brothers (vv. 15-16). This test has a national and a family purpose. In terms of national self-interest this test purports to determine whether the brothers are spies. This reason for the test Joseph makes public. However, as such it would have proven little if Joseph had not already known them. Spies could have easily passed the test. The family elements of the test, Joseph kept to himself. The test might have been motivated by revenge-Joseph might have thrown the brothers in the pit/ prison as they had done to him. Or Joseph might have been testing their fraternal bond. Would they act like brothers this time? Apparently the test was not designed to serve any of those ends. Joseph eliminates revenge as a motivating factor when he subsequently changes the rules of the test so that only one, Simeon, goes to prison (v. 19). Clearly, the brothers can pass the test out of self-preservation need for food-rather than fraternal loyalty, as Judah later tells Jacob (43:3-6). The test proves inadequate to see if the brothers are spies, to get revenge, or to check

their family loyalty. The test works well only to bring Benjamin to Joseph. That is its intended purpose."

Roop, E. F. (1987). Genesis (pp. 266-267). Herald Press.

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GOD SPEAKS IN WORSHIP

1. What role does our conscience play in getting us to worship on Sunday morning?
2. What elements of worship call us to examine our conscience?

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THE GOSPEL CALL

1. The brothers in Genesis 42:21-24 interpret their troubles as divine payback for their sin against Joseph, leading to fear and self-blame. In evangelism, how can we distinguish between unhealthy fear (paranoia or despair) and healthy conviction of sin that leads to repentance?
2. How can we use the law and the conscience (as the brothers experienced) to prepare the heart for the gospel of grace, without leaving people stuck in guilt or pushing them away?