

## Joseph, Sermon #10

Genesis 42

We saw Joseph's promotion, and we looked at his wise administration in the last several weeks. But, the plan of God involved much more than Joseph.

- Joseph was God's man to bring Israel into Egypt.
- God placed Joseph where he could fulfill the divine purpose.

God's plan went back long before Joseph's time.

- It began with Abraham when God promised to make a great nation of him (Gen. 12:1-3). This promise was confirmed to Isaac and later to Jacob (Gen. 35)
- But Jacob and his descendants were not becoming a great nation in Canaan.

At this time, Jacob's family numbered no more than 70 people.

There was the danger that Jacob's descendants would be annihilated, or that they would be assimilated.

- God's plan was to send them to Egypt in order to preserve them.
- Under the protection of the Egyptians they would not be annihilated, and because the Egyptians would have nothing to do with the Hebrews, they would not become assimilated.
- The best of both worlds—Egypt would be Israel's incubator.

Therefore, it was God's plan to take Israel to Egypt, where they could have room for expansion and, at the same time, keep their uniqueness as the chosen people of God.

In Genesis 46, God told Jacob to go down and not be afraid and in the future "I will bring the nation out."

In Egypt, they would learn the arts of civilization and industry, and under much affliction they would eventually be consolidated as a nation and be brought out of Egypt to return to the land of Canaan—some 400 years later by another man God prepared—Moses (Exodus 1).

I have entitled today's message "Joseph Faces His Brothers."

Genesis 42:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Genesis 42:1-9a

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

## Joseph Faces His Brothers

We just read about the re-acquaintance of Joseph and his brothers, but larger than that—God is working to bring that little nation down into the nest that He has prepared for it.

Before God could do that, three things needed to be accomplished.

First, God had to put a man into a place of power/influence in the world.

- God has a leader He can trust in a responsible position—Joseph.
- He knows the heart of Joseph—Joseph never turned on his God when he was on the bottom and he will not when he is on the top.

God entrusts this man with incredible responsibility.

Second, Joseph's brothers must be brought to a place where they will accept the leadership God has given their younger brother.

- They would not do that previously (Genesis 37)

The third thing God has to accomplish is to bring those brothers to a place of repentance of their sins.

- God has a major work to accomplish in the hearts of ten adult men—the purpose of this chapter is to arouse the consciences of Joseph's brothers.
- They had been living with a dreadful lie for over 20 years.
- "Be sure your sin will find you out."

Ten men were able to keep a secret!

Mrs. Dowdy's fourth grade class

How many of us have done something wrong and we have been guilty, scared, sweaty, and nervous—but with time, those symptoms have passed—even our consciences stop bothering us.

God has a way of awakening the conscience.

God uses several things in this chapter to arouse the consciences of these ten men.

Look at verse 1.

When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he commissioned his sons to go there to buy some.

Jacob noticed their strange attitude and asked, “Why do you keep staring at each other?”

Why did the brothers hesitate to talk or even offer to go to Egypt to purchase food?

- For one thing, the trip to Egypt was long (250-300 miles) and dangerous, and a round trip could consume six weeks’ time.
- Even after arriving in Egypt, the men couldn’t be certain of a friendly reception—they were an abomination to Egyptians.
- As “foreigners,” they could even be arrested and enslaved.

Perhaps, the memory of selling their innocent brother to traders going down to Egypt haunted Jacob’s sons.

- The brothers had done that evil deed over twenty years ago.
- Conscience has a way of digging up the past and arousing doubts and fears within us.

Vs. 2—these men have never been in this position in their lives—vs. 2e.

Do you realize what a wealthy family we are dealing with?

- Great grandfather Abraham (Genesis 14)—Abraham had over 300 servants.
- Majority of his wealth passed to Isaac—Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau.

Then Jacob got the birthright and then Jacob went to work for Laban and when he came back to Israel, he was very wealthy at that point—Jacob gave over 500 animals to Esau upon his return.

These are very wealthy people, but God has brought them for the first time in their lives to famine.

- These boys have grown up in a wealthy influential family.
- They are arrogant, selfish, and self-willed men.
- They had never known want!

And, God touches their economic security and brings them to a point of insecurity—God rattles their cages.

★ Sometimes God has to touch areas, to bring us to our knees in order to reach our hearts. ★

I. So the **first step** God used to awaken their consciences was to bring about famine in the land.

- The brothers had been unconcerned about what had happened to Joseph and the sins they had committed.
- But when the famine came, these men's hearts were opened at least to the extent that God could begin to work on their consciences to bring about conviction.

Joseph's brothers were about to pass through a spiritual exercise of which they were very much unaware.

This is the way God frequently deals with us.

- He may take things away from us—so that we will begin to listen to Him and His Word.
- He uses this to cause us to search out, examine ourselves, and confess the things in our hearts that are wrong.

The Psalmist said, *“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word”* (Ps. 119:67).

Crisis has a way of bringing us to God.

God was working on Jacob's sons.

Vs. 3-4—Benjamin is Joseph's full brother; these other ten are half brothers.

God brought another jab to the heart of the brothers—Benjamin—a reminder of Joseph.

Why did Jacob refuse to let the brothers take Benjamin with them?

- Now that Joseph was gone, Jacob's youngest son was his only living link with his beloved Rachel, and Jacob wasn't about to lose the second of his two favorite sons (v. 38).
- God used this as another barb to prick their consciences. Why didn't they just tell their dad?

Vs. 5—there they are in a caravan of camels going down to Memphis.

- It was a long, hot journey—crossing the sands of the Sinai to Egypt.
- As they went along, do you think their minds went back twenty years to when they sent Joseph along this same trail?

Perhaps they thought they might see their brother among the slaves as they walked along the roads in Egypt.

Imagine them as they watched the slaves at work, wondering if one of them might be their own brother.

How God brings these men face to face with the ghost of a past sin—or us face to face with our past offenses.

- Isn't it amazing how God can bring back to our mind, or even to our face that offense (after all those years) that we thought was done and over.
- We would like to bury the past, carry on in the present, and be occupied and optimistic about the future.

★God has a way of resurrecting old offenses that have not been made right. ★

Verse 6 brings us to the edge of our seats (vs. 6)

- Joseph and his brothers meet face to face!

Joseph had successfully passed the tests God had brought to bear on him. He had passed the tests of adversity of the body, of the mind, of prosperity.

Having passed the other tests successfully, Joseph now faced the test of the inner man.

- Would he now be willing to forgive his brethren?

As did everyone who came into Joseph's presence, except Pharaoh himself, they had to bow down before him.

- They did not realize, of course, that in so doing they were making the very dream come true for which they had hated him (Genesis 37:7, 8).
- The word "bowed down" in verse 6 is the same as "make obeisance" in 37:7.
- They all bow down before him. They got right down on their faces before Joseph.

You wonder how he felt.

By the way, what do you think of?

Here is the literal fulfillment of the dreams of Joseph.

Do you remember how he had dreamed as a boy that all the sheaves bowed down to his sheaf?

Here it is taking place—all his older brothers are down on their faces before him.

Vs. 7

Joseph was speaking through an interpreter—we are told this later in this chapter (vs. 23).

In those days, as in ours, people were able to learn foreign languages.

Vs. 8

At this point, the brothers don't recognize Joseph.

- When they last saw him, he was 17 years old; now he was nearly 40.
- Joseph would have been arrayed with Egyptian garments.
- The brothers would never have guessed that the one they had sold into slavery was now the governor of Egypt.

They were not looking for him in the place of royalty so they had no idea that the one standing before them now was Joseph.

Vs. 9a—Joseph's mind zooms back to the age of 17, and he says, "Ye are spies."

God is going to use two more things to arouse these men's consciences—we will see that next time.

Let stand for closing invitation.

Our consciences need to be clean and clear.

I would not doubt that we have buried some things when we are supposed to make them right.

Cheated, lied, stolen—God has a way of bringing us to the point of making wrongs right.

Confession, reconciliation, restitution is God's way.

Forgiveness

Gospel