



Lesson 3 September 19th, 2020

Love Versus Guilt

Study Scripture – Genesis 42:6-25

Background Scripture – Genesis 42

Key Verse:

Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood.”

Genesis 42:22

INTRODUCTION

Our Lesson teaches several lessons.

First, Time does not erase sin.

Second, Evil exists. It is everywhere. We should never fool ourselves into thinking that the things which cause frustrations, the pride we see, hatred, competition, hostility, sexual abuse, violence and murder, do all come from the same seed of evil.

Scripture tells us about God and the world and He intended how life should be like. But the world became broken and God had to find a solution to save the world. Evil became so rampant God assessed the situation with men in the world stating

“every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time”. (Genesis 6:5)

God destroyed the world because of this evil and God brought a Flood and chose Noah and his family to start a new life. God promised never to do that again. (Genesis 8:21). The Flood did not solve the problem of evil in the heart of men. God therefore implements a Plan to handle the problem of evil.

God called a man named Abram, changed his name to Abraham and promised to use Abraham and his descendants to achieve that aim. The last story in the Book of Genesis is the story of Joseph the great grandson of Abraham to begin to show how God will address the problem of evil and complete the story of how God is going to change the world.

Note that God created people knowing well that they would sin for He allowed the serpent to suddenly appear and come into the Garden of Eden. Though He allowed evil to exist God personally intended to teach those that He called how to build their understanding of how God would deal with evil in the world, and how God would handle evil in their lives.

Abraham had a Son of Promise named Isaac. He had a son named Jacob who inherited the blessings of the Promise. Joseph’s story starts with his father Jacob who had a checkered past with several wives and 12 sons. It was through Jacob whose name God changed to Israel that God would begin to fulfill the promise to Abraham of making his descendants more numerous than the stars in the sky.

This was not a great family. Jacob openly made Joseph his favourite son and gave him a special coat to mark him out. Joseph had dreams that his brothers and his father would bow down to him and this inflamed anger, hatred, and a plan to murder Joseph which was changed only

because they would get some money from selling him into slavery to slave traders going into Egypt. Joseph became a victim of evil. Selling your brother into slavery is evil. So God and Joseph identified evil, and named it for what it is.

The family overflowed with envy, jealousy, greed, terrible amoral attitudes toward one another and the leading brothers did all kinds of evil. The eldest son who should receive the promise, and receive a double share of the inheritance disqualified himself by committing incest, having sex with one his father's wife. The other senior sons Simeon and Levi cruelly and viciously lied and broke their commitment by swearing they would break the covenant and accept their sister's marriage to an inhabitant of the land of Canaan once they became circumcised. Then when the men of the village of Shechem were circumcised and were in pain and unable to defend themselves, they slaughtered them and took their wives and children probably as slaves and took their possessions. Even Jacob was horrified at what they did. In another case of gross misbehaviour the rough selfish Judah broke the biblical custom and was seduced by someone who appeared to be a prostitute, and thus he slept with his daughter-in-law Tamar and she became pregnant (Genesis 38) This was the only way she could obtain justice.

The tribal situation was dangerous. God had to take this family out of Canaan, remove them from the evil influence of the Canaanites, reverse the disintegration of the family, isolate this loose disagreeable, disobedient, violent and hostile bunch of Jacob's family in a place where they would be protected, for the people of the chosen Egyptian location did not like Asiatics in general and did not like shepherd in particular. God would then have to act to forge them into a unified nation and so make the people of this unhappy ungodly behaving family want to come out of Egypt and hopefully reject Egyptian idolatry.

The people of God now increasingly identified with the Canaanites and Canaanite worshipping people who formed idolatrous but weak nations. It was vastly better to leave that situation., As we look at the evil among the people of God and in the surrounding society whose iniquity had not yet spilled over the cup of evil, we will have to look deeply at several other issues so that we will come to understand what victorious love looks like. That is the love we are called on to have and display.

We first must identify evil for this has implications for our life. We will now continue to look at: Third, our personality and compare ours with the personality of members of Jacob and his family,

Fourth, our tendency to forget or misinterpret the promises of God,

Fifth, the power and significance of a guilty conscience which can impair our ability to live successfully and retard us,

Sixth, how we can cleanse our conscience,

Seventh, the startling issue of fake repentance, which one writer called

“an imitation religion which claims renewal but lacks evidence of renewal. We need to be wary of religion that change only surface things and makes no permanent change in the heart”.

Eight, the need to awaken to the biblical doctrine that ordinary men and women can be changed and biblical writers tell us that we are not doomed to live in the old ways,

Ninth, Renewal must begin in the heart and it is not a surface thing.

Tenth, the power of guilt must never be underestimated. You will never forget the things you did that make you guilty.



Eleventh, the providence or government of God stands.

Twelve, there is a persistence in the divine purposes. In all events God is working out His purposes.

THE TEXT

Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers because of envy and the bad reports he gave of his violent and ungodly behaving brothers. His father's favouritism and his dreams that the family would bow down to him sparked hatred and malice. Taken and sold into slavery for twenty shekels of silver he was sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard and in his house he was unjustly accused of rape by Potiphar's wife and jailed in the King's dungeon. God was with Joseph and when he was at age 28 he met the king's cupbearer and baker and interpreted their dreams. Everything Joseph interpreted came true and the cupbearer was restored to his position and the baker was killed. The cupbearer promised to help free Joseph but promptly forgot his promise.

Still in prison at age 30 God gave Pharaoh a depressing dream that only the now hastily released and cleaned up from prison Joseph could interpret. The dreams spoke of seven years of abundance followed by seven years of incredible famine. The solution to this calamity was presented by Joseph. Joseph was selected by Pharaoh to administer the collection and distribution of grain in Egypt. The benefit would be extended to the entire world. Our chapter opens with Joseph in charge with the famine raging.

God would now continue to further fulfill the promise to Abraham to multiply his descendants and bring salvation and a blessing to the nations.

Verse 6. Joseph was governor over the land of Egypt. He oversaw the selling of the food that was in the storehouses of Egypt because of him, and none bought food except from his orders to do so, which means life and death of the people in that region, or expanse of space were in his control. Jacob and his family had wealth, but in this time of famine their wealth couldn't help them, as it was food that they were in need of.

Upon hearing word that there was food in Egypt, Jacob sent his sons, with the exception of Benjamin to Egypt to procure food for the household so they would survive the famine! Jacob was still suffering from the loss of his beloved Joseph and would not take the chance of losing Benjamin. This was the first of three visits by Jacob's sons. The pain of starvation reached Jacob's family and Jacob commanded his sons to get food in Egypt. Joseph's brothers were brought before him as were the many considerably sized groups that wanted to come to Egypt for food. God sent the years of plenty and the years of famine to pry this terrible but chosen family out of Canaan.

It is felt that the year was 1863 B.C. and Joseph was 37 years old. He served King Amenemes 1-1V or Senwosret 1-111 in the Strong Middle Kingdom (1990-1775 B.C.)

According to the laws of courtesy, *they bowed down themselves before him*. The custom with the Egyptians was that people would bow prostrating their whole bodies, stretch out their hands and feet, and touching the ground with their faces. As was in the dream his brothers did submit themselves to him in the most humble manner, and thereby, though without their knowledge, fulfilled his dream. As was given to Joseph in the dream, their empty sheaves did obeisance to his full one (Gen. 37:5 – 8).



When Joseph's brothers plotted murder against him and sold him into slavery they did it with the specific intention to defeat his dreams (Gen. 37:19 – 20). In a way, they also tried to thwart the plan of God. Instead, by treating Joseph in the way that they did, it would lead to Joseph being placed in Egypt and led to the fulfillment of the dreams they worked hard to end.

This is the great and glorious truth of God's providence that He can and does use the evil actions of man towards us to further His good plan. This does not excuse the evil that man does, but it means God's wisdom and goodness are greater than man's evil.

Verses 7. Some think it strange that during the last seven years that he had been in power that Joseph never sent to his father any word regarding his circumstances. We can conjecture that he easily could have used the chariots of Pharaoh to reach Canaan in three to four days. It is probable that his whole management of himself in this affair was by special direction from Heaven, that the purpose of God concerning Jacob and his family might be accomplished. But remember that Joseph could not easily connect himself to despised Asiatic shepherds without consequence from the powerful Egyptian courtiers.

In addition we must not underestimate the massive amount of work to plan and to administer the collection and distribution of grain throughout the country. Egypt was under attack periodically from other nations and they had to be careful. There were political consequences to him in his position. He had to be wise.

Joseph as was the custom had to follow Egyptian custom and spoke through an interpreter to the "inferior nations" and so was able to keep his identity from his brothers. He showed himself very rigorous and harsh with them. The very manner of his speaking, considering the post he was in was enough to frighten them. It was consistent with the position he was in when dealing with strangers that he would act this way to test them, and also protect the interests of Egypt. He might have thought that one day he might see his brethren again but not necessarily under these circumstances.

Remember that Joseph had been carried in chains to Egypt and resold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. While in Potiphar's house Joseph was unjustly accused of rape by his master's wife and placed in the king's dungeon and kept there until the age of twenty-eight, however, God was with Joseph. The situation of the cupbearer and the baker's dreams occurred at this time, which laid the foundation for Joseph's eventual release. Pharaoh had his dream when Joseph was thirty and still in prison. At this point the cupbearer remembered Joseph and God had given him the ability to explain the dream to Pharaoh, who in turn saw the wisdom in Joseph and made him second in command over all the land and over all the preparations needed to survive the famine. Joseph was free at last! And God was going to continue to keep his promise to Abraham that out of his "seed" he would offer salvation and blessings to the nations. Joseph was of that spiritual seed, a man of faith and an image of Christ.

When Joseph's brothers came in he recognized them immediately, but they didn't recognize him. They had not seen each other for twenty years, and Joseph had been a teenager while his brothers were into manhood, so their appearance did not change too much over time. What was established early in his meeting with his brothers was that the famine had reached into the land of Canaan.

Verse 8. As mentioned previously, Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. About twenty-two years had passed since he last saw them. At the time he probably



didn't have any beard, and now before them, he did and was clothed as a prince, and spoke the Egyptian language. Also, his brothers probably thought Joseph dead at this point, instead of being before them. All the time, Joseph was also speaking through an interpreter.

This was Judgment time. But Joseph needed to be careful. He had wisely to find out whether or not his brother's hatred to him had changed. If he mis-stepped there were Egyptian courtiers that would use any error to make trouble for Joseph. Do not forget this was a powerful country at the top of the world. The politics must have been incredibly nasty. Joseph was living in lavish circumstances and he had to preserve and protect himself.

Verse 9. Joseph did not play games with his bothers. Some commentators believe that if it were up to Joseph, he would have revealed himself to his brothers right then and there. But God recalled the dreams to his mind and guided him to be an instrument for the correction and restoration of the brothers. There are two parts to this dream. The first (Gen. 37:7) was accomplished; however the second (Gen. 37:9) would require more time to fulfill itself (Rev. 12).

God can, and must, sometimes use ways we think are harsh to call us to go to where He wants us to be. We must never resent it, because it was the hardness of our hearts that demanded it. He charged them with bad designs against the government, treated them as dangerous persons, saying, *you are spies*. It is sure that Joseph didn't believe that they were truly spies, but that he was using this strategy as a means of acquiring information about his father and his brother Benjamin, as the least. Joseph began to press the issue of spies in order to gather more information about them and the rest of his family in Canaan.

It was not without reason that the Egyptians might suspect the neighbouring nations round about them, being in distress, and hearing of corn in Egypt, of forming a design of coming upon them and taking away their corn by force, and might be the reason why foreigners that came to buy corn were examined by this wise man.

Joseph still had a job to do for Pharaoh in the sight of God. He accused them of wanting to know which parts of Egypt were weakest, most defenseless, and less fortified so that an invasion could be planned. This line of questioning and prodding would have seemed reasonable for those in attendance, especially from a man in Joseph's position, as so he played the part despite the fact that he previously displayed character would have told us he wanted to reach out to let his brothers know it was him and he had their best interests at play.

Verse 10. In response to Joseph's accusation against them, they were very submissive in their response to him, but all the while modestly denied the charges. They told him their business in Egypt was that of buying food, a justifiable errand, as any stranger to Egypt at the time was doing.

Verses 11 – 13. With every response given by his brothers, Joseph accused them of being spies. Perhaps he already developed a plan to see his family or was just playing to the crowd, but we see this back and forth continue from verses 11 to 13.

They took the path of over volunteering information to Joseph about themselves and their family upon the accusation being made constantly.

They tried to apply logic to their case, saying that it would not be logical that a single family should engage in such an affair, or if that were the case to send all of them at once to the same location at the same time, as they would be liable to be taken up and put to death. Finally the brothers revealed more information to Joseph about the family saying that there were twelve,



but one is not. From this Joseph knew that his full brother, son of his mother Rachel was still alive, and that the brothers had not treated him the same way they treated him.

Joseph knew that when they mentioned *one was not*, that they referred to him. How his heart must have sank, not yet knowing if they had truly repented for the mischief against their father Jacob, himself and against The Almighty God.

Verses 14. Joseph uses the point that if *twelve* sons, and since at first they seemed to speak of themselves, as if they were the only sons of one man and there were no more, now they speak of twelve, and make mention of one being at home with his father; but seeing he sent so many of them, why not all? Why should one only be left at home?

Verses 15. We have learned from previous lesson in the past months it is not a good thing to swear by anything and even more serious to swear by the Almighty God concerning an oath or promise. Joseph should have known this as taught to him from Jacob. Joseph, by being much at court, used the courtier's oath, by the life of Pharaoh, perhaps designing hereby to confirm his brethren in their belief that he was an Egyptian, and not an Israelite. They knew this was not the language of a son of Abraham. When Peter would prove himself no disciple of Christ, he cursed and swore. Now why was Joseph thus hard upon his brethren? We may be sure it was not from a spirit of revenge, that he might now trample upon those who had formerly trampled upon him; he was not a man of that temper.

Verses 16 & 17. As Joseph remembered his dreams about his brothers, he realized that the first dream would not completely be fulfilled until his other brother, Benjamin and Father, Jacob was present, especially in Egypt. Joseph was clearly getting a plan together to reunite the family and protect them during this time. Egypt in those days feared the stronger nations of the Hittites and Assyria, and it would only be natural for the Egyptian army to always be on the alert for spies who were looking for the weaknesses of this nation. So he accused the ten brothers of spying on Egypt.

They had a strange reply, reflecting their responsibility for the apparent death of Joseph twenty years earlier. When the brothers said that one brother was not, this was a lie and the brothers knew it. They had every reason to believe Joseph was not dead, but living a horrible life of slavery.

Perhaps they had repeated the lie to themselves so often they came to believe it. However, the man they were speaking about was in front of them, and he needed more answers about his family. They put on their mask of innocence when recounting the story to Jacob and now the governor of Egypt, Joseph.

No mask can obscure the truth forever. Jesus is not fooled by any mask we wear. He knows our hearts. He knew who would betray Him at the Last's Supper, and He knew what the cost to that person would be even if they did not realize it themselves. All must give an account to God, if not today then one day. Neither time nor wearing mask will erase sin.

Joseph put forth the choice that they could select one to go back and actually get Benjamin, to see if they were lying or telling the truth. Upon seeing Benjamin, Joseph would know if they were at least a little remorseful of their actions, Benjamin being also somewhat favoured by his father. To let them think about the situation they were in, he put them in prison for three days.

Verses 18 - 20. After three days in an Egyptian prison, the brothers were ready to agree to whatever Joseph wanted them to do. They had been humbled, and would listen to Joseph's demands.



His heart yearning towards them, he had to encourage them to make some decisions. but finding they could not come to an agreement among themselves who should go on the errand, he thought fit to recede from his former order, and to give them another:

He concluded with them, at last, that one of them should be left as a hostage, and the rest should go home and fetch Benjamin. It was a very encouraging word he said to them, ***I fear God***; as if he had said, "You may assure yourselves I will do you no wrong; I dare not, for I know that, high as I am, there is one higher than I."

Note, with those that fear God we have reason to expect fair dealing. The fear of God will be a check upon those that are in power, to restrain them from abusing their power to oppression and tyranny. Those that have no one else to stand in awe of ought to stand in awe of their own consciences. See Neh. 5:15, *So did not I, because of the fear of God.*

If you are honest men: -Joseph's demand was clear. They had to prove they were not spies by proving they were honest and that they told the truth about the brother back home. The brothers agreed to this (they did so) but only reluctantly, because they knew their father would never want to let Benjamin leave home.

Upon their return for more corn, their brother must be with them. This would verify their statements previously made, and prove them true men, and had no ill design upon the land, but were come only to buy corn.

Joseph, though he dealt with them after this manner to get what knowledge he could of his family, and to get sight of his brother, yet was concerned for the good of them and theirs, lest they should be in extreme want through the famine, and that they might have a speedy supply of corn, was not willing to detain them any longer. One writer notes:

"This is what makes Joseph a remarkable character. Think about what normally happens in the world. Often, when you are the victims of evil, you feel justified in returning evil in response. If somebody does something wrong against you it's easy to feel like it's OK to do something against them in return.

Becoming a victim of evil often leads people to become doers of evil. You see it in children. One child will hit another. You might walk up to that child and correct them: "don't hit". In response, you'd probably hear something like "but he yelled at me" or "she took my toy". Joseph suffered evil, but when he is presented with the opportunity he doesn't respond with evil. He could easily have been a mean, bitter person. He could have taken out his pain on those around him. Instead, he is righteous. Even after suffering evil, he doesn't choose it. He refuses evil. That's our second encouragement. Call out evil, but don't let it be an excuse for evil in return. Refuse evil.

This is really hard for us to do. It goes against our natural tendency. When we are hit, we want to get back. In fact, we want to hit back harder. We want to take revenge. But one of the most repeated ideas in Scripture is the idea that "*vengeance belongs to the Lord*". We don't have to take revenge for ourselves".

Verse 21. In this verse we have the penitent reflection Joseph's brethren made upon the wrong they had formerly done to him. They talked the matter over in the Hebrew tongue, not suspecting that Joseph, whom they took for a native of Egypt, understood them, much less that he was the person they spoke of. They remembered with regret the barbarous cruelty wherewith they persecuted him. They thought they are verily guilty concerning our brother. They thought this complicated mess was before them because of the way they treated Joseph



before, and their conscience was pricked. This was a good sign. The quickness with which they associated these events with their sin against Joseph probably meant they often remembered that sin. We do not read that they said this during their three days' imprisonment, but now, when the matter had come to some issue and they saw themselves still embarrassed, now they began to relent. Perhaps Joseph's mention of the fear of God put them upon consideration and extorted this reflection.

Their conscience brought to mind their memories. Conscience often brings to mind things long since said and done, to show us wherein we have erred, though it was long ago. Jacob's sons reflected above twenty years after the sin was committed.

As time will not wear out the guilt of sin, so it will not blot out the records of conscience; when the guilt of this sin of Joseph's brethren was fresh they made light of it, and sat down to eat bread; but now, long afterwards, their consciences reminded them of it. This is why true confession to God is the best remedy. As Christians we could save ourselves lots of mental anguish if we confess our sins to God.

If we consider the benefit of affliction, it often proves the happy and effectual means of awakening conscience, and bringing sin to our remembrance, Job 13:26. Why is that important? It is a step towards reconciliation with God.

God is about healing, and letting us understand ourselves. When looking at the evil of guilt concerning our brethren, and how to approach matters of that nature, we need to consider our conscience for it holds what we need to remain humble. Whenever we think we have wronged others, we ought to remember the wrong we have done to others, Eccl. 7:21, 22.

This matter of conscience is very interesting for they now confidently believed that it was retribution for the great crime of their lives. They knew that they had to suffer for his blood and so they were distressed. We find a discussion of conscience mostly in the New Testament. But we must be aware that conscience does not tell us what is right or wrong but whether or not we are doing things which agree with the principles that we know. One writer comments:

Now since we do know a great deal of the principles of right and wrong, conscience does at times speak of that which is right as over against that which is wrong but primarily it tells us whether what we are doing agrees with the principles that we believe are correct.

The Bible speaks of a weak conscience. The Bible speaks of an evil conscience. The Bible speaks of a sacred conscience. The Bible speaks of a pure conscience. It speaks of a good conscience, and it even speaks of the beautiful conscience. The last part, I think is something special. There is a conscience which while intrinsically good is not very outwardly attractive to others because it is filled with scruple. We all know individuals who are in bondage to certain little scruples. They are not taught necessarily in Scripture but there are things that we have thought are in Scripture. But the Bible speaks of a beautiful conscience; that is, an individual who is guided by the principles of the word of God and not by a handful of scruples which he himself may have interpreted as being scriptural principles.

The Bible speaks of a conscience being seared, and so it is possible for the conscience to speak wrongly to us. Therefore, it is not an unfailing guide. So perhaps it is true to say that conscience does not really tell us what right and wrong primary is but rather tells us what we are doing agrees with the principles that we know”.

Verse 22. Reuben reminds the others that he cautioned them about doing any harm to Joseph. However, some mistake this for brotherly love, but in fact Reuben lost his birthright to Joseph



based on his actions with his father's concubine. Yes, he might have accepted that punishment, but it seems that Jacob might have put extra stress on Reuben in that he should now look after Joseph's interest even more so after that point. Reuben alone remembered, with comfort, that he had been an advocate for his brother, and had done what he could to prevent the mischief they did him. It appears as though he had plans to rescue Joseph from the pit but was too late as Joseph was sold to the traders. Despite the fact he should have taken a harder stance to protect Joseph from before, he did make an effort, more than any other brother to convince them from this mischief. But we should also remember that Jacob later on said that Reuben was unstable as water. His self-righteousness on this occasion therefore probably does not amount to much.

It is an aggravation of any sin that it was committed against admonitions. When we come to share with others in their calamities, it will be a comfort to us if we have the testimony of our consciences for us that we did not share with them in their iniquities, but, in our places, witnessed against them. This shall be our rejoicing in the day of evil, and shall take out the sting.

Verse 23. Joseph understood every word they spoke, even though it appeared as though he made use of an interpreter. The brothers had no clue that it was their brother as they spoke in Hebrew to decide what to do.

Verse 24. More importantly is this verse to the story we see that Joseph was moved from the display he saw in his brothers. The three days in prison and the Lord working on their spirit caused a dam to burst that allowed them to address the sins of their past. Joseph was able to see the distress it caused them, and took it as a sign of repentance occurring within the hearts of his brothers.

Though his reason directed that he should still carry himself as a stranger to them, because they were not as yet humbled enough, yet natural affection could not but work, for he was a man of a tender spirit. This represents the tender mercies of our God towards repenting sinners.

He could no longer act the part he had, and keep up the sternness and severity of his countenance; wherefore he turned his face from them, that they might not discern it, and his back upon them, and went into another room: and after he had given vent to his passion, and composed himself, he went back to commune with them in regards to settling the corn and issues regarding Benjamin upon their next visit.

The subject we are studying is Victorious Love, and as we can see, this love takes a lot of work. God has been the one directing all the affairs to bring the family back together. It is so with how Jesus works to redeem man back to the Father, it is a steady and long process, but well worth the journey.

Finally, in this verse Simeon was bound before their eyes, as the brother who would remain behind. There is only speculation as to why it was Simeon. Some say it he volunteered to stay behind, while others say he was the most cruel and hardhearted among them. From the affair of Shechem, he was a man of fierce and bloody disposition.

Verses 25. *Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn,....* This was as much as they came for, and to restore every man's money into his sack; the money paid by each for his quantity of corn delivered to him, not into the person's hands, but to be put into his sack privately, and unknown to him. He also gave them provision for the way, sufficient both for themselves and



for their cattle, that they might carry the whole of what corn they bought to their families. This was the command given by Joseph, but his steward or deputy, or however the servant that he gave fulfilled such things. This also was a thing that was within Joseph's power to do. They came for corn, and corn they had; and not only so, but every man had his money restored in his sack's mouth.

Thus Christ, our Joseph, gives out supplies without money and without price.

CONCLUSION

The psalmist tells us ***“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy word”***.

This is the perfect example of God using afflictions to bring more obedience. We might not be following the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit just as the brothers were not doing when they came down to the land of Egypt. It was not that they were ignorant of the teachings of Abraham. They just chose the wrong path and so God had to bring them around.

We should not therefore feel sorry for these brothers when Joseph handled them roughly for it is clear that it was not vengeance on his part. The Scriptures tell us that he had great and warm affection for them and in fact he showed a great deal of mercy to them. He didn't even charge them for the grain that he gave to them though they were hard men who had massacred an entire village, stripped him of his beautiful coat, threw him in a pit, and then sat down to enjoy their meal while he was crying out to let him out of the pit and to show him mercy.

They never told their father the truth and they were not telling Joseph the full truth for they simply said to Joseph that one is no more giving the impression that he must be dead.

They were really practicing deception by this response to Joseph. One can tell a lie by silence or by equivocation, or by using an accent or a syllable, or by making a significant emphasis by using a movement of the eye to give a particular meaning to a sentence. They were in fact practicing deception. So Joseph thought properly that he had to confine them so that God would use the confinement to bring to mind what they had done many years before and remember their crime.

Their conscience needed awakening. As far as we know this is the only acknowledgment of guilt in all of the book of Genesis.

We must not overlook the persistent power of a guilty conscience. It had been designed by God that they had to go down into Egypt and face Joseph and accept their guilt even when they speak as they reflected on the story of Joseph and their relationship to him. When Joseph told them to bring the youngest to him it would also remind them of their guilt. When he returned their money to them that would emphasize their pain for they knew that they had collected money when they sold Joseph to the slave traders.

So we all should remember to be careful for our sins will find us out. But remember that there is something called true repentance. They had confessed their sins and their guilt but that was not really repentance. They were like Judas at this stage who would only say that he had betrayed an innocent man and then went out and committed suicide.

When there is true repentance there is more than a confession of sin and true repentance is shown in the works of repentance that follow. John the Baptist told the soldiers ***“Bring forth works meet for repentance”***. The book of James emphasizes that faith without works is dead.



Joseph therefore had to see that the brothers would stand up for Benjamin and protect him with their life.

We know of course that later in Genesis Joseph told us that God himself accepted responsibility for the terrible things that happened to Joseph. He said that they thought of and knew they were doing something evil BUT it is really God that had sent him to Egypt to save lives and to take his family out of the Canaanite idolatry and starvation and bring them into the safe land of Goshen.

This lesson clearly tells us that we should look at life in a new way instead of the way that caused us to be bitter. One writer puts it this way:

“We say, “You made me bitter”. We say this about the guy upstairs who turns his stereo on full blast at two o'clock in the morning, the employer who insists you make brick without straw, the man who promises all sorts of things and raises your expectations and then jilts you. Whatever the cause of disappointment in your life may be, this ought to cause you to look at that person in a different light.

Now it may be necessary to go to that person and to correct him in love-- which is what Joseph did to his brothers. But the key to this entire operation is Joseph's spirit. There is no bitterness, no rancor, no resentment. He is at peace because he sees that it is God who is at work in his life, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

It is not always true that you and I will see the good things that Joseph saw. He had the privilege of seeing it with his eyes. But that may not occur with us; we may have to take it by faith. John the Baptist died in prison; they cut off his head. Jeremiah as far as we know, was stoned to death in Egypt. But the eye of faith looks at all those circumstances and says, “That is God at work in my life to accomplish his very best, and nothing can thwart that. And whether I see it or not, it is working together for good, for me and for my brothers and sisters in Christ. That sets you free from repentance.

Many of us have been burdened by bitterness and hatred toward some person who has done some violent thing in our life-- perhaps a parent who wreaked psychological havoc in our lives. And they blame this person and brood over it and resent it. Joseph reminds us that it is God who put that parent in our lives. It is God who is behind all those circumstances. It is his fingers that are squeezing us. Realizing this sets us free”.

We therefore must remind ourselves that Joseph understood this principle and was able to act in love toward those that did him great wrong. So Jesus tells us,

“Love your enemies. Pray for those that despitefully use you”.

You can do that because the Holy Spirit has given you a clear vision and understanding that you have the strength of God Himself so that you can respond in the way God wants you to respond to the people that have done you wrong. Remember that God is working through you and using the terrible things that they have done to you to accomplish His ends and bring about the results that He intends. Victorious love is the kind of love that frees us all and gives you the ability to love those who hate you and to pray and bless those that curse you and despitefully use you.

We cannot forget that we will stand before God one day. No matter if we want to play the hypocrite before our brethren that will not erase sin. God will never be mocked. We must be willing to confess our sins and God in His Rich mercy toward us will forgive us and strengthen us and will enable us to have and manifest victorious love.

