

God's Conscience Awakening Kindness 1/15/2017

Gen 42:18-25

On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: 19 if you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain confined where you are in custody, and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your households, 20 and bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they did so. 21 Then they said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us." 22 And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood." 23 They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them. 24 Then he turned away from them and wept. And he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. 25 And Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, and to replace every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. This was done for them.

Sometimes God brings crisis/need to force us to address spiritual issues.

- God lovingly used famine as a cause of fulfillment of promise to Abraham, to awaken sleeping consciences & to bring reconciliation to a family. Gen 42:6-9

Joseph recognized his brothers and remembered dreams yet deliberately disguised himself.

- He knew a quick pardon would not bring true repentance because his brothers were still lying (No more=dead) & not repentant. Gen 42:10-17
 - Essence of the lie was in the deception not in words. A person can lie by silence or a glance.

Joseph gives them a taste of their own medicine from 22 yrs earlier with the hope that the brothers will "come clean". slide

- Like Joseph, the greatest test of Joseph's life was not the injustice when he was powerless to resist but rather the opportunity & power for revenge he had on the enemies who hurt him.
 - Abraham Lincoln, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

Joseph was not cruel/vengeful but he desired true repentance from his brothers. 42:18-24, Num 32:23b

- They finally admit they are guilty & deserving of death: this is retribution.
 - This is the only recorded acknowledgement of guilt in Gen.
- Acknowledgement of guilt and not repentance (usually regret). Judas never repented.
 - True repentance starts with God lovingly awakening our conscience, and that then leads to change in the heart & attitude & demonstrates itself in changed behavior

Until we are repentant, God can seem very harsh but His heart toward His people is always loving & compassionate. Ps. 119:67-68, Heb 12:5, 11

- He used famine to reconcile brothers, heal/reunite family, and draw them closer to Him.
- Observed binding, but not Joseph's tears. He was thought it to be harsh but was acting out of love.

The unrepentant don't understand the purpose of grace. 42:25-28, Prov 25:21, Rom 5:8, 2:4

- The returned money causes them to recognize the hand of God in their lives.
 - But the response to this act of grace is not joy, but fear.
- They misread providence, because it was not God against them; but rather their brother being for them.
 - They misunderstand Joseph's intentions: He was not trying to test/scare them but it was a reflection of Joseph's love/mercy for them.

▪ This is a picture of undeserved grace to guilty enemies.... Gospel
We are the hardened, unrepentant brothers that God is working (for our good) to bring us to face our sin, repent/confess it & then He empowers us to forsake it.

- Many choose living with unresolved guilt that is destroying them. Ps 32:3, 51:5
 - Hospitals/psych wards are full of sick/dying, in part because of effects of unresolved guilt or bitterness.
 - For 22 yrs the brothers never dealt with the guilt of selling their brother
- Their solution was not to deny, suppress, or transfer it to someone else.
 - Guilt was resolved only through confession & receiving God's forgiveness based on His grace, not working up feelings of remorse.
 - Christ's blood can wash away your guilt as turn to Him in faith.
- Do the sins of your past continue to characterize your present?
 - When we yield to Lord & repent, we discover His great compassion/grace, & experience freedom from guilty conscience.

