

Genesis: From Creation to New Creation

Genesis 42:1-38

"When Conscience Condemns"—September 17, 2023



Introduction

We want to think that people can change. However, if we are honest, we are skeptical about that. Since Genesis 12, we have seen a lot of dysfunction in the family of Abraham. We have seen favoritism, deceit, polygamy, betrayal, etc. Yet this is the family God has chosen - the one through whom He would raise up a Savior.

After reading the last 30 chapters, you might be left asking, "Is real change possible?" If you have been sinned against, do you think the person who wronged you can really change? You may be looking in the mirror and wonder if **you** can really change.

The Bible says that God makes His people into a new creation. ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)) Jesus tells us that we must be born again. ([John 3:3](#)) When we hear this, we can believe that real change IS really possible, even if it doesn't happen overnight. How does this happen?

Sermon Outline

1. Scene One: An Awakened Conscience Vs. 1-28
2. Scene Two: The Moment of Decision Vs. 29-38

Read & Discuss

1. Read vs. 1 – 28

Joseph has been through a lot in the last 20 years. Sold into slavery, wrongly imprisoned, forgotten by the cupbearer, and no contact with his family may have been discouraging for him. Did Joseph give up on the dreams that he had 20 years earlier? We don't know, but here we see His brothers bowing down to him. Joseph remembered the dreams. God had been faithful. The very way that the brothers thought would derail His plan, was the very thing that God used to bring it to pass. We see nations rage, and we get nervous. God is not nervous. He laughs. ([Ps. 2](#)) God is sovereign. God is in control, writing history. Is there something for which you have been waiting? Are you discouraged? How do you keep going?

Once Joseph realized that these 10 men were his brothers, he didn't gloat. He had grown up through affliction. With God's presence, he had matured. Joseph feared God, so he was set free to love his brothers. He wants them to live. (Vs. 18, 20) He didn't just want them to live physically, but spiritually. They were blind to their spiritual danger.

In chapter 37, they treated Joseph like a stranger. Had Joseph's brothers changed? How would Joseph know? Not knowing Joseph's identity, they defended themselves by telling Joseph that they were honest men. Joseph set up a test to determine if his brothers had really changed. Once they are back in Canaan will they stay there and care for themselves or will they come back to get Simeon?

We know that God has forgiven us. We are commanded in scripture to forgive as God has forgiven us. ([Eph. 4:32](#)) What if the person who has wronged you doesn't ask for forgiveness? What if they don't even know that they have wronged you? Forgiveness has an inward and outward aspect to it. Inward or attitudinal forgiveness involves talking to God and dealing with our own heart and sinful attitudes that **we** have toward the person who wronged us. It protects us from bitterness and plows the soil of our heart so that we are ready and willing to forgive outwardly IF that opportunity arises. Is there a situation in your life now in which inward forgiveness is necessary? Outward forgiveness happens when the person who wronged you comes and asks. Inward forgiveness must ALWAYS happen. Outward forgiveness MAY happen. Attitudinal forgiveness can happen without reconciliation, but outward forgiveness leads to reconciliation. Is there someone from whom you need to ask forgiveness? (For more on this subject check out the book [Good and Angry](#) by David Powlson)

The brothers' conscience becomes awakened as they return to Canaan. Over the years, they may have rationalized what they had done. What is the conscience? ([Romans 2:15](#)) It is the inward faculty that

distinguishes right from wrong. Everyone has a conscience. It is possible to sear our conscience by ignoring, suppressing or stiff-arming our conscience. If we do it often enough, our conscience becomes silent.

Do you avoid reconciliation to keep from revisiting old hurts? It was painful for Joseph and his brothers. After so many years of rationalizing, the brothers could look in the mirror and say they are honest men. But now, they realized they were guilty. God had brought their guilt out into the open. It is the Holy Spirit who brings conviction to the unbeliever. ([John 16:8-11](#)) Is there someone in your life with whom you are reluctant to share the gospel because you think it's hopeless? Pray and ask God to help you share the good news with them.

2. Read vs. 19 – 38

Once the brothers returned to Canaan, they told their father all that happened. They realized that they have their money sacks. They panicked. Their father got very upset. He won't let them take Benjamin back to Egypt. His loss had already been great. This is where the text ends.

Will they go back to Egypt? What will they do? Will they tell the truth? Will they confess? Have they changed? Moses leaves us in the unknown so that we sit with the questions. It leaves us to look in the mirror. Is there something in your past that you hope no one ever discovers? Are you leading a double life today? Has God brought someone into your life to reveal your sin? How have you responded? Defensively? Angrily? How do you respond when your sin is exposed? God wants to give you life.

When life doesn't go as you had planned, you may wonder, "Does God hate me?" No! ([John 3:16](#)) God doesn't delight in the death of the wicked. He wants you to live. What if the hard things in life are designed to bring you back to Him? Feeling bad about our sin is not enough. Real change is dependent on what you do when your sin is exposed. Shedding tears does not reveal true repentance. Godly sorrow leads to repentance, life and restoration. ([2 Corinthians 7:10](#))

When the light exposes your sin, you can hate the light or love the light. Coming to Jesus means having the spotlight put on your guilt. That's painful and embarrassing. You may be tempted to hide. ([John 3:19-21](#)) If you come to Jesus, you will find a King Who laid down His life for you. Jesus calls you, in your shame, and He cleanses you. It's not enough to know this. You have to come to the light. The only way to do this is through repentance of sin and faith in Jesus. Repent and believe. Better to come to Jesus now as a Savior than later as the Judge.

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to confess? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand, believe, desire, or do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at fbcum.org

Next week's sermon text: we turn to Psalm 115 "God Is Omnipotent (All-Powerful)"
