

## EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

### Message #87

### Genesis 42:1-38

Joseph was 17 when his brothers sold him as a slave (Genesis 37:2, 27). At the time this chapter unfolds he was at least 37. He was 30 when he stood before Pharaoh (41:46) and the seven years of plenty were over, making him at least 37 at famine time. What this means is that it had been twenty years since Joseph's brothers had committed the terrible sin of selling Joseph as a slave. From their perspective it looked like they had committed the perfect crime, but as this chapter reveals their conscience was tracking them down and so was God.

It was Moses who Wrote Genesis and it was Moses who wrote Numbers and it was Moses who said: "... be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

**ONE WHO TRIES TO COVER HIS SIN WILL EVENTUALLY BE TRACKED DOWN BY HIS OWN CONSCIENCE AND BY GOD AND, IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ENTIRE ORDEAL, IT WILL HAVE FULFILLED THE WILL AND PROGRAM OF GOD.**

Our God is infinitely brilliant. From a human perspective God expects us to face sin and right wrongs and if we refuse, He, Himself will track us down. From a Divine perspective, God uses even personal episodes like this to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

**HISTORICAL LOCATION #1** - The brothers and Jacob in Canaan. 42:1-5

Chapter 41 ends with the revelation that famine was all over the earth and all countries were reporting to Joseph in Egypt to buy food (41:56-57). Chapter 42 opens with Jacob wondering why his sons haven't gone to Egypt to buy food (42:1). This of course put Joseph's brothers in a very difficult position because: 1) They knew full well of Joseph's dreams (37:5-11); 2) They knew full well of their sin against Joseph (37:20-28); 3) They knew full well of their lie to their father (37:31-34); and 4) they knew of the retributive justice of God. Joseph's brothers did not want to go to Egypt because deep in their conscience, they knew they had not faced their sin and they knew their sin would be faced in Egypt.

- 1) Those that refuse to confess sin and make restitution will experience a famine in their soul.
- 2) Those that refuse to confess sin and make restitution will live with a justified fear that God will track them down.

**HISTORICAL LOCATION #2** - The brothers and Joseph in Egypt. 42:6-28

When Joseph's brothers set foot on Egyptian soil, they must have been a paranoid mess because at the first sign of trouble, they immediately remembered their past sin (42:21-22).

**Observation #1** - The position of Joseph. 42:6a

The word "ruler" refers to one who has dominion and power to a mastery level. This is just the opposite of a slave and Moses chose to use this to show his elevation (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 827).

**Observation #2** - The action of the brothers. 42:6b

The first action of Joseph's brothers was that of bowing before Joseph. This was a partial fulfillment of the prophecy in Genesis 37:7.

**Observation #3** - The reaction of Joseph. 42:7-26

It is not wrong to demand some form of proof of true repentance . Joseph saw his brothers (42:7a), he recognized them (42:7b) and he purposely hid his identity from them (42:7c) so that he might test them to see if they had come "to conviction of their previous sin and guilt over the treatment of him" (S. L. Johnson, *Exposition of Genesis*, Study #58, p. 4).

**(Joseph's Reaction #1)** - Joseph questioned their origin. 42:7-8

Only ten brothers had come to Egypt and by asking them their origin, Joseph could cement the fact they were his brothers. He recognized them because they hadn't changed much, but they did not recognize him because, except for his faithfulness to God, everything had changed.

**(Joseph's Reaction #2)** - Joseph remembered God's Word. 42:9a

When Joseph saw his brothers' bow, he did not think vindictively, but prophetically, he remembered the dreams (Genesis 37:7, 20), he remembered God's Word. God will always literally fulfill His Word in His time and faithful people always believe this.

**(Joseph's Reaction #3)** - Joseph tested his brothers. 42:9b-22

Joseph's brothers were known liars so he tested them to see if they had changed and he purposely accuses them of being spies (42:9, 12, 16), which forces them to identify their purpose and their family. According to verse 21, they had changed and were willing to admit their guilt.

**(Joseph's Reaction #4)** - Joseph wept for his brothers. 42:24

Joseph loved his brothers and he wept for them, but they still needed to learn a lesson.

**(Joseph's Reaction #5)** - Joseph was merciful to his brothers. 42:25-28

This act of giving his brothers their money back was a tremendous act of mercy, but instead of being thankful, they are fearful because of their sin (43:23).

**HISTORICAL LOCATION #3** - The brothers and Jacob in Canaan. 42:29-38

The brothers told Jacob everything (42:29-34) and as they emptied their food sacks, each man's money fell out (42:35).

If we attempt to run from our sin or cover our sin or forget about making restitution, God will not forget even though it may take 20 years.