

# THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – SERMON 14

## ***THE AWAKENED CONSCIENCE***

Genesis 42:1-28

### **INTRODUCTION**

- In this chapter in the story of Joseph we see how God uses the circumstances to awaken the consciences of Joseph's brethren to bring them to repentance and reconciliation with him.
- God has given every man a conscience to know good from evil.
- Conscience literally means "with knowledge".
- The conscience is like an internal alarm (Romans 2:15)
- The conscience convicts of sin (John 8:9)
- The conscience can be weak (1 Corinthians 8:12)
- The conscience can be defiled (Titus 1:15)
- The conscience can be seared (1 Timothy 4:2)
- God has His ways of prompting and awakening the conscience, even after many years of slumber.
- That guilty conscience, though it may be ignored and quashed, never goes away, and one day it will have to be dealt with.
- Many people are living with "skeletons in the closet" – sins and wicked acts that they have never dealt with; they have tried to cover them over and act like they never happened (Proverbs 28:13)
- God says, "*be sure your sin will find you out.*" (Numbers 32:23).

- Joseph's brothers probably thought that their wicked act all those years ago was ancient history.
- But God hadn't forgotten, and was ready to bring them face to face with their crime.

In this passage we will see three ways that God uses the conscience to bring the sinner to repentance and restoration.

## **I. GOD BRINGS CONFRONTATION THROUGH REVERSAL (1-6)**

### **A. God can bring to our mind painful memories (1)**

1. The word "Egypt" was a stabbing reminder of their crimes

### **B. Hardship breaks down barriers to repentance**

1. Peace and prosperity are not conducive to conviction and repentance (Psalm 119:67; Luke 15:17)
2. Hunger, thirst, poverty, sickness and oppression are some of the tools that God uses to get man's attention (cf. Amos 4:6-8)

### **C. Hardship reveals the true state of the heart**

1. In Joseph it revealed faithfulness to God
2. In Jacob, it revealed despondency and depression (v.36)
3. In Joseph's brethren, it revealed fear and guilt

## **II. GOD BRINGS CONVICTION THROUGH REPROOF (7-20)**

- A. Before the happy reunion, there must be a sorrowful repentance

1. Joseph was not taking vengeance on them, but stirring their consciences
2. "We are true men" indicates they did not yet have a proper understanding of their sin (Proverbs 20:6)

B. God directly reproves sinners

1. By the Spirit (John 16:7-8)
2. By the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16)

C. God uses men to reprove sinners

1. Joseph gave his brothers a taste of the same treatment they gave him
  - a. Treated as a spy
  - b. As they had thrown him into a pit, so he threw them into prison
  - c. Often, we do not realise the magnitude of our offenses towards others until we are victims of them ourselves
2. This was Joseph's rebuke of his brothers to confront them with their actions (2 Samuel 12:7)
3. God calls all of us to be faithful to reprove sin when we see it (Ephesians 5:11)

D. Reproof shines a light on sin

1. Open rebuke is better than secret love. (Proverbs 27:5)
2. Often when that light of reprove shines on sin, there is a negative response (John 3:19-20)

### III. GOD BRINGS CONFESSION THROUGH RETRIBUTION (21-28)

- A. The effect of their stirred consciences becomes evident
  - 1. Not *“we are true men”* but *“we are verily guilty”*
  - 2. Joseph perceives and weeps (cf. Luke 19:41)
- B. God’s chastening leads to repentance (Revelation 3:19)
- C. God’s goodness leads to repentance
  - 1. Sin brings fear to those who commit it (Proverbs 28:1)
  - 2. For the sinner, goodness brings guilt (Genesis 42:28; Romans 2:4)

### CONCLUSION

- 1. God has blessed us with giving us a conscience to show us good and evil
- 2. Our conscience must be instructed by God’s word
- 3. We must be careful not to ignore our conscience when God pricks it
- 4. Are there unconfessed sins that you haven’t dealt with, that you’ve tried to cover, maybe for years?
- 5. Has God put His finger on your conscience, to deal with the guilt that is there?
- 6. Can you say you *“have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”*? (Acts 24:16)
- 7. Only the blood of Christ can purge and cleanse a sinful conscience (Hebrews 9:14)