Sometimes, the Past Needs To Be Dug Up October 8, 2023

*Genesis 42 Series: God at Work When We Can’t See Him*

There is more grace in God's heart than there is sin in your past. – Erwin Lutzer

Intro: Why don’t the elephants escape?

1. The happy ending is never just about arriving
2. Before Joseph’s happy ending, there was more work to do

41:51 *God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.*

vv. 1-2 *Jacob … said to his sons, “Why do you look at one another? …* Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die.”

v. 4 *But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him.*

1. Now, the dreams help Joseph serve others rather than gloat

v. 6 *Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground.*

v. 7 *Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them.*

v. 9 *And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, “You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land.”*

* Why didn’t God let Joseph just enjoy his new family instead of forcing him to deal with his old one?
* When is it important to dig up the past? When should we “let sleeping dogs lie”?
* What would have happened if Joseph had just put the past behind him without dealing with it?

1. Shame can make God’s testing can feel like an attack
2. God seeks our repentance not our harm

v. 15 *By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here.*

v. 17 *And he put them all together in custody for three days.*

vv. 18-20 *On the third day Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God: 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, and bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die.” And they did so.*

1. God’s tests have a good purpose

Exodus 20:20 *Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.*

Proverbs 17:3 *The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts.*

Psalm 26:2 *Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind.*

* How would Joseph’s test determine whether the brothers had actually changed?
* What does Exodus 20:20 mean? i.e., How does God’s testing develop our reverence toward him and how does that keep us from sinning?
* In Psalm 26, David actually invites God’s testing in his life. What would bring someone to do that?

1. Sometimes, you need to dig up the past to break free of it
2. Trials can awaken the conscience

v. 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.”*

v. 22 *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.*

v. 28 *He said to his brothers, “My money has been put back; here it is in the mouth of my sack!” At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?”*

v. 35 *As they emptied their sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid.*

1. Some sins are harder to uproot

v. 37 *Then Reuben said to his father, “Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.”*

v. 38 *But he said, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left.”*

Romans 12:18 *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

* Why are Joseph’s brothers thinking about what they did to him 20 years ago?
* How do you know if it’s the Holy Spirit convicting you about some past sin and not Satan condemning you about it?
* What are some ways that you’ve dug up the sins in your past in order to deal with them?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Genesis 43

Notes