

**SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON**

**Lord's Day Afternoon**

**Date 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023**

**Preacher Pastor Philip Knowles**

**Hymns Ps 130 T Martyrdom 263, 268, T Kingsfold 334.**

**Read: Genesis 42:1-8 Text Genesis 42:1-8**

**Series: Joseph Title: The conscience seared**

***In Genesis chapter 42:3 onwards, the scene returns to Joseph and his brethren.***

***The last time both groups were in view was in Genesis 37 when Joseph was 17 years old.***

***At that time Joseph's brothers sold him as slave to Midian merchant men going down to Egypt.***

From **Genesis 37** to **Genesis 42** around 20 years have passed.

I say suggest that because Joseph's age is recorded in **Genesis 37:2** age 17, **Genesis 41:46** age 30, the years between are **13 years**.

Then add to the 13 years, the first 7 years of plenty that had ended in **Genesis 41:53**, which is 13 plus 7 which equals 20.

In those 20 years or a bit more, possibly 21, much has happened to Joseph from his humiliation to exaltation, from his trials, temptations, and throne, from rejection to ruling.

**but today and over the next number of messages, I want to focus on what has happened to the brothers in those 20 years.**

Because God will bring Joseph and his brothers together again, there will be reconciliation,

however, before reconciliation takes place there must be confession and repentance.

For 20 years the brothers had lived knowing the truth what took place that day with Joseph, though they lied to their Father, and told him a different story.

**In both cases, in selling Joseph and deceiving their Father, the brothers, thought they had gotten away with their lies and wickedness.**

but what we find in **Genesis 42, their sin is found out.**

In **Genesis 42:21-22**, their conscience having been alerted and awakened, their sin exposed, they see themselves for the first time in 20 years as guilty concerning Joseph.

The Bible Commentator **F B MEYER** *said if there is one thing more than another that is needed in Christians, congregations and in the world, it is the deep conviction of sin, well would it be if some resurrection trumpet could sound and awaken the sleeping consciences of men causing long forgotten but unforgiven sins to arise and come forth from their graves.*

That asks the question what is a conscience?

**The conscience is a moral awareness to discern right from wrong.**

**It is sensitive to good and evil.** The conscience is a witness of God in soul.

Within the creation of man, God gave a conscience, or as the word means He created man **with-knowledge**.

When God created man, he wrote on the heart of man his law, as summarised in the 10 commandments.

Paul confirmed this in **Romans 2:15**, ***Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;***)

Please, keep in mind, the context, that Paul was speaking to Gentiles non-Jews, those who did not have the law of God in a written form as the Jews did.

But the point made, weather a person had a written copy of God's law or not, by creation all humanity has the moral law written on their heart,

so that weather a person is a Jew or Gentile, none can escape from the authority of their Creator and from accountability to the Creator.

Your conscience is your internal alarm and internal warning system when you are thinking and doing wrong. It bears witness and stores information of all your works.

While the conscience can be silenced, ignored, it can never be fully switched of.

That is why the same guilt confessed in Chapter 42 by the brothers, was the same guilt they dismissed 20 years previous, trying to justify their actions, by hardening their heart against Joseph.

Instead of killing Jospheh which they knew would be wrong, and sinful, they decided to sell him.

**As far as their conscience, they tried to hide their guilt, cover their tracts, act innocent**, turn their attention to other matters, and continue in life as if nothing happened, believing the lie they created.

But God intervened in wonderful way, and their conscience roared out, sounded of and could only be at rest by the Lord who gave the conscience.

there are two thoughts concerning their conscience, it was **seared, and stirred**. But we will only deal with the first point.

### **I FIRST, THEIR CONSCIENCE SEARED**

**Verse 8** “*and Joseph knew his brethren but they knew not him.*”

In **Genesis 37**, as Joseph sought the well being of his brethren, they were planning his death.

But their plans were changed as Ruben pleaded not to shed his blood, instead throw him into the pit, but later he was sold as a slave.

And while the brothers, didn't go through with literally killing Joseph, shedding his blood, yet by the hatred within their hearts against him they had committed the sin of murder, as taught in **1 John 3:15** ***Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:***

By selling Joseph he was, to the brother's as good as dead. They were jealous of him and they sold him into the land of Egypt

They came up with another plan and story to tell their Father, as why Joseph is not with them.

They killed an animal, and put the animal's blood on Joseph's coat, and brought the coat to their father and told him that they had found the coat, leaving their Father with the impression Joseph was killed by a wild animal.

From that day recorded in **Genesis 37:31-33** Jacob stopped to live, he refused to be comforted by his family and he mourned his son for the next 20 plus years.

The brothers knew the truth, they knew what happened, and they could see the grief and sorrow Joseph's absence caused their Father.

However, since they see their Father has bought their lies and does not question their false story, **they conclude its over, we've gotten away with it.**

**Genesis 37:27** *And his brethren were content. This started the process of searing or hardening their conscience by silencing it.*

And from that time, in **Genesis 37 until Genesis 42** they have lived in denial, rejection, putting aside any sorrow, and guilt.

What the brothers had actually done, was **seared and silenced** their conscience holding hatred in their hearts.

In other words, they had become hardened to the situation, **they had built a resistance that lasted for 20 years until Genesis 42.**

This is the same lesson, the Apostle Paul taught Timothy, when referring to false teachers believing their own lies.

**1 Tim. 4:2** refers to those who "**shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrine of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron.**"

The word seared, "**seared**" means **to burn or to scar. It is something that leaves a mark of hardness.**

The picture is the applying a hot iron to skin or clothes. The burnt skin, that was once soft, becomes hard and is dead to feeling.

Clothes burned by the iron, leaves a burn mark and the soft material becomes hard.

Paul is making the point the hypocrites in view, have continued speaking lies day after day, month after month, and year after year, to the point where they have gotten so used to it, they have silenced the voice of God.

They have talked themselves into thinking their actions are right.

This is what took place with Joseph's brothers. They presented themselves acceptable to their Father, and by doing so, seared their conscience as with a hot iron.

In 1984 an Avianca Airlines jet, flying over Spain, crashed into a mountain.

When investigators found the "black box" they were amazed as they listened to the cockpit recording in the minutes just prior to the crash.

The plane's collision avoidance system began to speak to the pilot, warning him of an object that was in the flight path of the plane.

The computerized voice of a female speaking English was heard to say, "***Pull up. Pull up. Pull up***", over and over again.

After a few moments of this, the pilot was heard to say, "***Shut up Gringo!***"

And with that, the pilot turned off the system.

He just ignored the warning, flipped the switch and few moments later, everyone was dead.

That is what happens when the conscience is ignored, silenced or seared.

When we start to do something go somewhere we know is wrong, the conscience tells us to "***Pull up, Pull up.***" If we heed that voice and pull up, all is well. If we ignore that voice and do as

we please, we have begun the process of **searing the conscience**.

but here is the point not to forget, but which Joseph's brothers did forget, just because you sear your conscience, and put out of your mind certain transgressions and sins, and view yourself as innocent, **you are in fact still guilty before God and are without excuse.**

You may have escaped man's judgment, convinced yourself have gotten away with it, **but you will not escape God's judgment.**

This is what takes place in this scene in Genesis 42, the brothers have lived with a seared conscience for over 20 years, they live as if there are free from guilt, never expecting to meet Joseph.

yet God brings them to stand before Joseph to fulfil scripture, expose their sin, and feel the guilt of their sin.

notice **verse 6** ***And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth***

***remember, Verse 6*** is the first part of the fulfilment of Joseph's dream, the full and final fulfilment will be in **Genesis 45** when His father along with his brethren and their families bow before him.

Joseph's dream is recorded in **Genesis 37:7** ***For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.*** The brothers knew what this meant, as they responded in **verse 8** ***“... Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.***

This part of the dream of bowing before Joseph is being fulfilled in **chapter 42.**

Make no mistake, the Bible states your sin will find you out,

There is certainly an application for the saved and lost, which is this,

when the believer sears his conscience and is challenged, confronted and convicted about sin, the seared conscience will be alarmed, alerted and awakened, and they will come for cleansing, no matter how many days, week, months and years have passed.

whereas if the person continues to harden their heart, they will give evidence they never really possessed faith in Christ.

The Bible says in **1 John 3:9** **whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.**

Now this does not mean sinless perfection or that once saved you will never sin, the Bible nowhere teaches this, because we sin daily, **1 John 1:8-10**, and if we say we have no sin we make God a liar,

**but the teaching is this**, the one born of God, when they confronted of sin, they will not continually wilfully, practise sin by living in sin, rather they will feel convicted by God, sin exposed and they will ask for cleansing in the precious blood.

Remember when David sinned with Bathsheba, in **1 Samuel 11**, David viewed a beautiful woman named Bathsheba washing herself by her window.

David asked for more information about her, and he was told, ***Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?*** In other words, this woman is married to one of your officers, yet David coveted after another man's wife.

You can imagine his conscience sending out the alarm, this is wrong, sinful, adultery, however, David ignored the warning and seared his conscience he silenced it, he hardened his heart, focused on his pleasures, He lived in a web of lies and deceit.



Bathsheba became pregnant with David as the Father of the child.

David then planned Uriah's death and then took Bathsheba to be his wife. David thought he got away with his sinful plan. To David no one suspected anything in Uriah's death.

But God sees all, and knows all, and God sent the Prophet Nathan to David and said, on **2 Samuel 12: 9** ***Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight?***

David knew he had sinned against God, but he seared his conscience, he tried to put his sinful actions aside, but when confronted in **verse 13** ***David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.***

David's sin was put away, sent away, forgiven, covered by faith in the blood of Christ.

Think of the Lord Jesus Christ in speaking to the woman at the well, who was living in secret sin. the Lord said call your husband, to which she responded I have no husband, but the Lord said ***Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband...***" The woman had seared her conscience, living in sin, she talked herself into thinking her life style was acceptable, she thought no one will suspect anything.

She thought since the man she is living with was not her husband, then when asked about her husband, by responding I don't have a husband, then all is well, until the Saviour speaks and exposes sin and the woman believes on the Lord for forgiveness of sins, as she testified, ***Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?***

What about you today, is your conscience cleansed or guilty? is the Lord putting his finger on your life, to expose unconfessed sin, that you've tried to ignore, for days, weeks, even years, just as Josphe's brothers.

***1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

Sinner today, there is grace, mercy, peace and pardon with God from the guilt of sin. **Hebrews 9:4** Christ is able to ***purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God***