

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Lord's Day Afternoon

Date 17th September 2023

Preacher Pastor Philip Knowles Hymns

Read: Genesis 42:5-14 Text Genesis 42:5-14

Psalm/Hymns Ps 100, 725, 692

**Series: Joseph Title: The Conscience Stirred by Probing
(2)**

Whenever Joseph's brethren came to Joseph, the bible says in the opening words of **verse 7** *and Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them*, and then we read in **verse 8** *And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.*

In the literal sense of these words and in their context, over 20 years have passed since Joseph and his brothers last seen each other.

In those 20 years much has changed.

The brothers have changed with age, but still recognisable, because as soon as they entered Joseph's presence Joseph immediately *saw them and knew them.*

and you know this to be true, people you meet again having not seen for years, well you know its them, but there has been changes with age, weight changes, hair colour changes, hair loss, bodily weakness and much more.

Joseph *saw them and knew them but they knew not him*, the reason being the brethren didn't recognise or know Joseph was because they didn't expect to see Joseph and they certainly wouldn't have connected the governor of Egypt with Joseph.

It didn't cross their mind, a Hebrew ruling over Egypt, and certainly not Joseph. Really they had forgotten Joseph's dream.

During these years, Joseph has been given a position of power over the land, he sits upon the throne, he rules by his word, he is clothed in Egyptian royal garments as given by Pharaoh, -

-he keeps himself shaven as when he came out of prison, as the Egyptians shaved themselves to separate from other nations.

We also discover Joseph speaks the Egyptian language for **verse 23** states ***And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.***

so, with all these changes in languages, appearance and even the very position of governor in the land, the man they stood before, Joseph was not in their thoughts. ***Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.***

There is no doubt, that Joseph loved his brethren, because he was sent by his father to seek their well being, and he willing came to seek and find them.

Even though they despised and rejected him, betrayed and sold him, Joseph left his fathers presence and came unto his own and his own received him not.

Yet, Joseph loved his brethren, and we know this to be true, because, in **Chapter 45** when Joseph reveals himself to them, he provides for them, then we learn in **chapter 50**, after Jacob their father dies, the brethren become anxious and fearful, that Joseph will hate them and punish them for their sin against him.

But Joseph responds, in **ch 50:21** ***Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.***

If you have a margin in your bible the words, **spake kindly** means ***to speak to the heart.***

Joseph's words after **chapter 41:17** through to **chapter 50**, ***are words of grace, mercy, peace, and comfort.***

That is because his first words from **chapter 41:7-16** are rough words; they are words of conviction and judgment.

They are words spoken from the law of the land to strangers come seeking bread.

I make that point, because there are some who accuse Joseph of acting in anger, or out of revenge, but that is not the case at all.

See the over all picture, these brethren committed sin wilfully against Joseph over 20 years ago, and they never repented of their wrong doing, -

-they never sorrowed or grieved over their sin, instead they hid their sin, lied about their sin and continued in life, putting aside and ignoring their wrong doing.

However, God in His own sovereign time has brought their sin to light. The time has come for them to reap what they have sown.

God has uncovered their secret sin, and through certain providential events such as the famine and need for food, -

and people giving direction such as their Father, and safe guarding Benjamin from mischief, and the naming of a place such as Egypt -

-and now to meet Joseph, God is dealing with these men, exposing, conviction of sin in order to a confession to be made, and then repentance.

The conscience, divinely put within the nature, acting as an alarm, to warn, when doing wrong, was seared, ignored, and silenced. They kept approving their actions and believing their lies.

But now their conscience, is stirred, altered, awakened, the alarm within is sounding out still, guilty and you know it.

keep running you cannot hide, keep living a lie, the truth will come out.

(as in with King Herod who was living in sin with his brother's wife.)

(**Mark 6** records **John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife**, but later Herod has John imprisoned and beheaded, and once again Herod sears his conscience, he puts John's word out of mind, until he hears of a preacher in the land, and Herod conscience is probed, because people say its Elijah from come back from the dead, but Herod said in **verse 16 It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead**. Herod feared John, his conscience was guilty, it had been probed, he believes John is back for me. He remained troubled, and guilty.)

Oh is that where anyone is today? there is a believer in the midst, living in sin, covering up sin, for some time, entangled in the affairs of this life.

You're not reading your Bible but act like you do. You are not praying but sound like you do.

You're involved in the wrong crowd.

You're hooked on certain sites that are not wise, gambling your money, career, and family away, Your good at hiding it, covering up your tracts, you have seared your conscience, believing no one knows.

In displeasing and dishonouring God, He will bring it to light, as He is doing now.

while this is the literal context of the words, yet we read the words ***And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him***, and gaze our eyes towards our heavenly Joseph the Lord Jesus Christ and see the gospel clearly in the words,

Because Christ Jesus left the Father's presence and came into this world to seek the spiritual well being of His people, sinners He came to save who were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.

Christ knew every sinner given to Him to save, even when they did not know Him. He set His sight on sinners He covenanted to save, even before they set their sight on Him. **2 Thess 2:13**
"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation..."

But in saving sinners, Christ first exposes our sin, and reveals why we need a Saviour.

We are guilty of sin against Christ, we commit sin, we cover our sin, therefore, when sin is acknowledged, then it will be acquitted.

When sin is confessed it will be cleared.

Before sinners receive grace, they first must see themselves as guilty.

Romans 5:8 ***"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***

Jeremiah 31:3 ***"I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."***

Please, notice the order, we have been loved first, and then based on that eternal love, we have been drawn to the Saviour.

Christ loved His people from the beginning, and proved His love by drawing them to Himself, by His love.

This is what is happening in Genesis 42, Joseph must stir their conscience, speak roughly to these men, to awaken their conscience, convict of sin, cause them be sorrowful over their works of sin before he can speak words of comfort.

as we continue thinking of the conscience not only seared but stirred, their conscience was stirred by providence and people but notice today, their conscience was stirred by Probing. v7-14.

Joseph begins his probing, investigation, examination concerning his brothers character.

Joseph is probing, examining their past and actions by his words.

Notice in **verse 7** ***And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.***

Joseph is speaking as the Law of the land, as he has been set all over the land.

Joseph must examine and probe their hearts and bring to light the wickedness.

You see Joseph knew his brethren, he knew all about them, their past wicked deeds and their actions towards him, but as they come into his presence **verse 6** ***Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.***

They gave the impression all is well, they are respectful and humble men, as they came near him.

Even in their response they speak respectfully, **verse 10** ***my lord, v13 thy servants.***

These men didn't even respect their own Father, or one another, and now before Joseph they come giving the hypocritical impression, they are humble servants.

In **Chapters 37-38**, they had an evil report linked to their name, they made their Father's name stink in the society, they mocked Joseph.

you see had Joseph revealed himself immediately to his brethren, they would not be calling him *my lord* or acknowledging themselves as *thy servants*.

Rather their hearts would have been hardened because they still covered their sin, and despised Joseph.

Therefore, Joseph can see right through them, and therefore he speaks roughly, he brings down the law on them, and charges them, *ye are spies to see the nakedness of the land ye are come*.

The thought of a spy in and of itself was not bad, remember in the life of Moses he sent 12 spies to search out the land of Canaan, and bring back a report, only Joshua and Caleb brought back a good report, whereas the other 10 spies brought back an evil report.

Their words could not be trusted, because they doubted the promise and power of God.

Joseph wants to hear what they are going to say.

He wants to hear their report how they view themselves, how they see the situation. **verse 11** *We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies*.

The phrase **true men** means **honest men**. It refers to **character, Trustworthiness, nothing to hide, genuine and above suspicion**.

Now they may be honest in that they are not spies to spy out the land, but in their dealings with Joseph and their character in general, Joseph knows, was dishonest, untrustworthy, but have they changed?

In 20 years did they repent? what did they tell their Father? or are they the same sneaky, deceptive and deceiving men? These are questions Joseph demands answered.

Joseph wants them to confess their wicked deeds, and he will probe and examine until they confess their wrong doing against him, until they prove they are true, honest men.

But they answer, in **verse 10**, **nay my Lord, but to buy food are thy servants come**.

Joseph charges them again and asks the same question, in **verse 12**, but this time they add more detail in their answer, notice **verse 13** **Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not**.

There are two keys phrases in their answer for Joseph to further examine we will look at the other next time, **the youngest is this day with our father**, but for now we will consider the phrase, **and one is not**. That means **and one is dead**. See their deception and dishonesty.

They knew when they left Joseph, he was not dead, they sold him as a slave, but this was the lie that had spread, the impression they gave others, Joseph is dead.

Joseph, who is now before them, bears witness he is alive.

Joseph's deep probing is effective, they are exposing their own lies.

The one missing or supposed to be dead is Joseph.

Now the question is what happened to Joseph? why is one brother missing, why is one not, how did he die?

This is the point of Joseph's probing, he's asking questions, to get answers, what about the one who is not.

This information will be brought out progressively in the next verses until confessed is made.

Remember, in **1 Kings 21** when Ahab had Naboth killed in the vineyard because Naboth would not sell the land, the vineyard that God had given His people.

The plan was made in secret but publicly put in action, and no one knew or suspected anything.

Naboth was then killed, and Ahab thought he got away with murder. He thought he could go on in life never to hear Naboth's name and forget the events that had taken place.

Until God sent the prophet Elijah to probe Ahab to examine his actions.

Now this is amazing, Elijah didn't know anything of Ahab's secret sin, this wicked murder in secret, but God said to him to go to Ahab and he told Elijah what to say, in **1 Kings 21:18** ***thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?***

Once Elijah comes to Ahab and speaks those words, notice what Ahab said in **verse 19** ***Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?*** Ahab knew his guilt. But Elijah ***answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.***

Solomon wrote in **Prov 15:3** “**The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good**”.

Elijah’s message focused on the one who is not? Where is Naboth, you killed him.

Elijah’s probing stirred the conscience, sin was exposed, however in Ahab’s case he did not repent and died a lost guilty sinner.

What a picture we have in the gospel when the conscience is probed by all the knowing and seeing Lord.

Paul in answering his accusers preached the gospel, **That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles**. Paul made mention of the one who is not.

In referring to King Agrippa, Paul said **For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest**.

King Agrippa’s conscience was stirred it was probed, Paul got answers, Agrippa you know, what im saying is true, but the Kings refused to obey the Gospel. **Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian**.

To Almost be a Christian is to remain lost.

Likewise men and woman when we read our Bibles and hear the preaching of the word, our hearts are being examined, probed, what have you done with Jesus.

Do you seek in Him prayer, live for Him, acknowledge Him in all your ways, do you confess sin daily or do you hide sin, give false impressions all is well.

Sinner what have you done with Jesus, who is peached unto for the forgiveness of sins, behold now is the day of Salvation. You know this to be true.

next time God willing we will consider *their conscience was stirred by Proving and Patterns*