

Confrontation: Stings of Conscience

Scripture Reading — Genesis 42:18-24

They said to one another, “Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen.”

—Genesis 42:21 —

About 20 years have passed since Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. But it doesn’t take long for their sense of guilt to return when this harsh-speaking ruler in Egypt demands that one brother stay as a hostage.

This tells us that while it’s one thing to suppress a sin, it’s quite another to erase it. Guilt—even old guilt—haunts us until it is fully confessed and forgiven.

Perhaps this guilt is what kept the brothers from going down to Egypt in the first place. Were they afraid to go there? It took a bit of pestering from their father, telling them to do something about the lack of food, to finally pry them loose and compel them to go.

So, after being kept in custody for three days, and then told that one of them must stay in prison while the others bring their youngest brother, the truth finally pops out. And Joseph hears it all, though his brothers don’t realize he can understand them, for he has been using an interpreter.

In response, Joseph turns away and begins to weep. But it is too soon to extend mercy to his guilty brothers. Conscience pangs are a beginning, but the brothers are not yet confessing and seeking forgiveness. What repentance do we need before seeking forgiveness?

Prayer

Merciful God, thank you for pangs of conscience. Help us not to ignore them but to confess and seek your forgiveness for the sins we have done. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

Devotion topics: [Bible](#), [Bible Characters](#), [Joseph](#)

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