

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/15/92  
Genesis 42 "Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You Out"

**Intro:** "Nobody will ever know..." Famous last words, right?!

Illust: Children's program, "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool mom!"

Illust:

Sum Verse of Gen 42--Numbers 32:23 "Be sure your sin will find you out."  
Say it with me. "Be sure your sin will find you out." Sin always has consequences. Here's how Gal 6:7 puts it, "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

Objection: "I know some people who have violated God's Word, and seem to be getting away with it. They don't even seem to feel guilty about what they're doing. It's like their conscience is seared. What about them?"

Q: Are they really "getting away" with it?

That very issue is the one illustrated in Gen 42.

### The Setting of Genesis 42

Keep in mind 2 things:

#### 1. The Big Picture of Genesis 37-50

God devoted only 2 chapters in the book of Genesis to tell us how the Universe got here. Only 2. Yet He gave us some 39 chapters to tell us how the nation of Israel came into existence. And of those, 13 chapters are a story about Joseph (Gen 37-50).

Why is that? Listen. The story of Joseph is really a story about God.

Sometimes the Bible tells us things about God (God is holy--I Pt 1:16; God is love--I Jn 4:8). But sometimes the Bible SHOWS us things about God. That's often the case in OT, narrative literature.

The story of Joseph shows us that God is sovereign. We see in living color how He controls the events in the lives of His people. We see His wisdom, His patience, His care. We SEE it.

The moral of the story is given in 39:2, 3, 23--God was "with Joseph."

#### 2. The Big Picture of Genesis 42

Do you remember what God told Abraham would happen to his descendants?

Gen 15:13 "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a sojourner in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them 400 years."

In a sentence, here's the message of Gen 42. God used a famine to bring His people Israel to Egypt, where they would spend the next 400 years, just as He had promised Abraham years before. Gen 42 tells us loudly and clearly, God keeps His Word!

The amazing thing is this. God used the most unlikely characters to fulfill His promise! He used a spoiled son and jealous brothers and an inconsistent father and a pagan Egyptian ruler to preserve His people.

Now let's take a closeup look at the story of Gen 42.

Q: What would you do if you stood face to face with the men who caused you to "waste" 13 years of your life as a slave, and then as a prisoner? How would you feel and respond the first time your eyes met theirs?

Illust: Corrie Ten Boom--forgiving former Nazi guard

Q: Have you ever struggled to forgive someone who hurt you?  
Gen 42 can help us work through this pain.

**Proposition: Let's look at Genesis 42 from the perspective of 4 spotlights.**

- I. Spotlight #1: The Guile (1-5)
- II. Spotlight #2: The Guilt (6-24)
- III. Spotlight #3: The Grace (25-28)
- IV. Spotlight #4: The Grief

### **I. Spotlight #1: The Guile (1-5)**

As our story begins, a severe famine is causing havoc in the Middle East.

41:57 "...the famine was so severe..."

The famine reached Canaan too.

42:1-2 "Now when Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt..."

I chuckle when I read Jacob's words to his 10 sons, "Why do you look upon one another?" NIV, "Why do you keep looking at one another?"

I get the impression that the 10 brothers are like bumps on a log. They're paralyzed. Why? Remember these are the same 10 brothers that some 20 years earlier victimized their young brother. Ever since that time, they lived with a mask, a cloak of pretense. For 2 decades they played cover up. But their sin paralyzed them. Sin does that, you know!

Illust:

Q: Do you think the 10 sons really pulled the wool over Dad's eyes?

READ vv 3-5 "And Joseph's 10 brothers went...But Benjamin, Jacob sent not..."

Why didn't Jacob send Benjamin with the other 10? The text says it was because Jacob feared something terrible would happen to his only other son born to his favorite wife, Rachel. I wonder if the text doesn't also imply that after 20+ years, Jacob had doubts about the sincerity of his 10 sons. Maybe he didn't totally trust them. I don't know if he saw through their Guile or not.

But from our perspective, looking back, we can see it. The brothers had wasted 2 decades of their lives pretending, hiding the truth. Past sins haunted them in the present. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

Illust:

Tran: In the first scene we see the Guile of the Brothers. The second spotlight takes us from Canaan to Egypt.

### **II. Spotlight #2: The Guilt (6-24)**

I want you to just think of the odds of what happened next in the narrative.  
V 6 "...and Joseph's brethren came and bowed down before him..."

Can you imagine! The brothers have not seen Joseph since the Midianite caravan pulled away, hauling Joseph against his will to Egypt. They had no idea he spent time as a slave in the household of Potiphar, and then as a prisoner--13 years in all. They had no way of knowing he had spent the next 7 years as Pharaoh's executive assistant during years of abundance. Add to that at least a couple of years during the period of famine, and it's been 20-25 years since these siblings had talked.

And don't forget there are thousands of people traveling to Egypt at this time, from all over the world, searching for food. And it just so "happened" that the brother's caravan ended up at Joseph's doorstep! Coincidence? No way.

Illust:

The next 2 verses are humorous to me.

Vv 7-8 "And Joseph...knew them...but they knew not him."

No wonder! Joseph looked like an Egyptian, not a Hebrew. His wardrobe was Egyptian. His etiquette was Egyptian. Unlike his Hebrew brothers, he now had no facial hair. And his language was Egyptian. He spoke through an interpreter (23).

Now watch what happens next. The brothers start to squirm in their guilt. Here's the dialogue:

Joseph: "You're spies!" (9)

Brothers: "No, my Lord, we're here to buy food! (10-11)

Joseph: "No, you're here to spy out the land! (12)

Brothers: "No, we're just ordinary people from an ordinary family!" (13)

Joseph: "No, I still say you are spies!" (14)

Q: Why does Joseph keep insisting his brothers are spies?

A: You say, "He's going to get even with the scoundrels! That's what I'd do! Like a cat with a mouse, he's playing with them. He's making them squirm!"

Is that why? No. I suggest 2 reasons:

1. Joseph has God's Plan in mind.

How's that? Remember what v 9 said? When Joseph saw his brothers, what thought came to his mind? The DREAMS. The dreams he dreamed in ch 37, about his brothers bowing down to him. He knew it was God's plan to exalt him some day in the eyes of his brothers and his father, even though he'd been humiliated. He knew that one brother and his father were not here yet. God's plan wasn't accomplished entirely yet.

2. Joseph has his brother's good in mind.

Four times Joseph accused his brothers, "You're spies!" (9, 12, 14, 16) Why did he do that? I think he was helping them to come to grips with their GUILT. You can't experience forgiveness until you fess up to your guilt.

I think Joseph was testing the waters. I think he wondered if his brothers had ever regretted what they did. I think he is helping to revive the seared conscience of his brothers.

Objection: "How do you know the brother's conscience was seared?"

Look at v 13--"one is not" They had so covered up their guilt that they believed the lie themselves. One of our brothers is dead! How ironic that they're standing before him!

Q: How can you help someone who has a calloused conscience?

Illust:

Watch what Joseph did. He devised a test...

Vv 15-20 "Hereby shall ye be tested...put them in prison three days."

Why did Joseph test his brothers? Why did he put them in prison? Why didn't he reveal himself to them immediately? Was there revenge in his heart?

Listen. Joseph knew that his brothers had a problem. They were paralyzed by their past. He also knew that they could never experience the joy of the Lord, which He had experienced, until they came to grips with their sin. The pretending and the hiding and the cover up would have to stop!

So he pricked their conscience. He ripped the scab off of the old wound.

Q: Did it work? Did the brothers come to grips with their Guilt?

A: Yes, slowly. Watch what happened next...

V 21 "And they said...We are verily GUILTY concerning our brother..."

Listen to those words, "We are guilty." In the Hebrew, "WE" is emphatic. Wow! Those words were along time coming, more than 20 years overdue! But finally, the skeleton was pulled out of the closet. They could hide it no longer.

Reuben spoke up next, "I told you so!"

V 22 "And Reuben..."

I'm impressed by Joseph's authenticity. He was a genuine, real person. He had been hurt. And now when he hears his brother's admission, watch what he does.

Vv 23-24 "And they knew not...and he turned himself... and wept..."

Spotlight #2: Guilt

Do you know what guilt does? It screams at us. It ruins marriages. It prevents sleep. It destroys your health. "Be sure your sins will find you out."

Application: Some here today are paralyzed by past sin. Perhaps you cheated a friend out of some money. Perhaps you lied to your boss. Perhaps you took advantage of someone. And ever since then, you've been living a life of coverup. And you're pretty good at it. Your conscience used to scream at you. Now it barely whispers. But you're miserable. Listen. You need to come to grips with your guilt. Just like the brothers needed to.

Warning: Time won't heal a violated conscience. You can't cover up guilt. Years may pass, but the guilt remains. It needs to be removed. How? There's only one remedy.

Prov 28:13 "He that covers his sins shall not prosper, but whose confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy."

Ps 32:3-5 "When I kept silence, my bones became old...I acknowledged my sin unto Thee...I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord..."

I Jn 1:8-10 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves..."

Listen. If you are in misery because of past sin, time won't heal the wound. As long as you hide the sin, it haunts you.

O friend, why try to hide your sin when you can have it removed?! Why bury your guilt when you can experience God's amazing forgiveness?! God loves you! God offers you pardon for your sin. God sent His own Son to the cross to erase our guilt!

Illust:

Tran: Spotlights one and two focused on the brothers' Guile and Guilt. Spotlight 3 shines on Joseph.

### **III. Spotlight #3: The Grace (25-28)**

What is grace? Grace is not treating someone as they deserve. Watch what Joseph did out of grace.

V 25 "Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with grain and to restore..."

Did you see that? Joseph returned good for evil! Had he forgotten what his brothers had done to him? No. He made a choice. He made a choice to exhibit grace. In fact, this was but the first of many gracious actions Joseph exhibited towards the very men that hurt him.

Q: How could Joseph be gracious towards his brothers?

A: You know the answer. It's because he forgave them.

If we're honest, Joseph makes us feel uncomfortable. Do you know why? He's so different from us. When we're wronged, we retaliate. We get even. We say, "I've got the right to get back!" Joseph surrendered his rights. He forgave.

Key: Forgiveness is a choice, a two-part choice.

1. A Choice to ask God to help me to do what I can't do on my own.
2. A Choice to no longer hold the past against the person I'm forgiving.

Two Objections:

1. "I can't forget what he did to me, so I can't forgive!"

Listen. You need not forget to forgive. Forgiveness is a choice. You can make it today.

2. "I was hurt too bad to forgive!"

Your pain may be great. But remember something. None of us has ever been hurt as badly as Jesus Christ! Yet what were His words from the cross? Lk 23:34, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Jesus forgave us. And He can enable us to forgive. If we'll yield to Him, He'll pour His love into us and through us.

Illust:

Q: Is there anyone in your life you have never forgiven?

Illust: Teen, "I hate my parents..."

Illust: Spouse

Follow Joseph's example! Joseph is a Model of Grace. He didn't gloat over his brothers. He helped them. He helped them come to grips with their sin. He knew until they admitted their wrong, they could not experience freedom.

Then, in a very practical way, he did something kind to them, no strings attached. He let them keep their money. No, not because they deserved it, and no, not because he had forgotten the way they'd hurt him. He forgave them because of grace.

You know something. When we treat people out of grace, it blows them away! It's so unnatural, they don't know how to respond! Look what happened to the brothers. Watch what happened when they found their money...

Vv 26-28 "...My money is restored...and their heart failed..."

V 35 "And ...every man's bundle of money...they were afraid."

Tran: We've seen 3 spotlights--The Guile and Guilt of the Brothers, the Grace of Joseph. The last one shines again on the brothers.

#### **IV. Spotlight #4: The Grief**

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

It was a long trip home for the brothers. Once before, they had returned home without a brother. They dreaded reporting to Jacob that Simeon was in prison, and the only way to get him out was to bring Benjamin!

In vv 29-34 they rehearsed what happened to their Dad.

You can imagine how he responded!

V 36 "And Jacob said...Me have ye bereaved..."

Then the situation turned to pure chaos! Watch what Reuben offered.

V 37 "Slay my two sons..."

Jacob's grief clouded his senses.

V 38 "My son shall NOT go down with you..."

You talk about family tension! What happened next?

We'll have to wait until next week! But remember this. Guile led to Guilt. Guilt eventually resulted in great Grief. A family was in shambles because of sin.

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

There's only only hope. That's grace.

Illust: