

Physical Hunger, Spiritual Guilt: The Awakening of Conscience

Genesis 42

Hunger is a great motivator, and in Genesis 42, God uses it to draw Joseph's brothers to Egypt. There, God uses Joseph to expose their spiritual guilt. Admitting their sin was the first step in transforming this dysfunctional family into a godly nation.

Dealing with Hunger, Dealing with Guilt

- *Starving in Canaan, ten sons head to Egypt* (1-5)
- *Joseph meets his brothers; guilt surfaces* (6-26)
- *Back home, all is not well* (27-38)

God's 'Severe Mercy': His Process for Healing

- *God's sovereign goodness is revealed in times of suffering.*
- *The godly person will give God time to deal with the guilty.*
- *God doesn't want us to wallow in guilt, but to deal with sin.*



1. The 'setting' for Genesis 42 reaches all the way back to Gen 37 and Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers. He was just 17 years old then (37.2), and now he is 30 (41.46)! While we usually focus on Joseph being a slave and in prison for all these years, think about his brothers: For thirteen years they have hid a lie from their father. Indeed, they have come to view Joseph as being dead (42.13)! How would it feel to 'live a lie' like that? How did David feel when he hid his sin (see and hear his inner torment in Psalms 32 and 51). How did Peter feel after denying he knew Christ three times (cf. Lk.22.54-62)? How good would it feel to confess and 'come clean' before God?
2. At this point, it would be good to stop and consider: What God means for good, Satan tries to distort or counterfeit, in order to undermine our Christian lives. He tells people they *shouldn't* feel guilt for sins they commit, and on the other hand, tells us we *should* feel guilt for things that are not wrong. What is *false guilt*? How does God want to use guilt in our lives? How does Satan want to use it?
3. God's purpose of exposing sin is never to cause us to wallow in guilt; that is Satan's game. What is Satan referred to as in Rev. 12.10? Have you ever felt the burden of his accusations in your life? Instead of letting him 'beat you up,' what does Scripture tell us? See Romans 8.31-39 and 1 John 1.9!
4. The 'big story' that made headlines in 1900 B.C. was the awful famine throughout the Middle East. Like any famine, there was starvation and sorrow. But the biblical story – the one that rings down through history, is what God did in and with that famine: He took something bad, and used it for good. Sin has brought sickness, suffering, and death into this temporal world, and we can't escape it, but we can have a new perspective on it! How can we demonstrate an 'eternal perspective' in times of trial or suffering or persecution? For a *radical* view, see James 1.2-4!