

Session 6

February 27, 2022

THE PITFALL OF GUILT AND GRUDGES

Genesis 50:15-21

Consistency is a telltale sign of Christian maturity. Those who are well established in their faith don't ride a rollercoaster of emotion, action, and reaction. They are solid; predictable in how they think, how they act, and how they react. But not everybody is like that! By this time in our story, much has happened. By Pharaoh's invitation and under Joseph's watchful eye, Jacob, the family patriarch, had joined his sons in Egypt (Gen. 46-47) and the family was once again united. In Genesis 48 and 49, Jacob prepared for his death by offering his blessings (and sometimes curses!) to his sons. Then, the period of mourning and subsequent burial of Jacob at the start of Genesis 50 was followed by a new crisis among Joseph's brothers. They couldn't understand Joseph's *consistency*.

The brothers' skepticism (v. 15). Joseph's brothers were being cautious. Even after Joseph's tearful reception (Gen. 45:2), his weeping hugs and kisses (Gen. 45: 15), provisions and pleas to return with their father (Gen. 45:21ff), the family's welcome by Pharaoh (Gen. 47), and having been settled in the region of Goshen (Gen. 47), there was an underlying skepticism surrounding Joseph's motives. Knowing the favored, lifelong bond shared between Joseph and their father Jacob, the brothers assumed they had been kept alive for the sake of their father. Now that he was dead, all bets were off! For reflection: *Consider the cruel hatred his brothers had for Joseph. Do you think their fears were warranted? Suppose they were right, and Joseph spared their lives for the sake of their father. Would that nullify the grace Joseph was granting?*

Joseph's sincerity (vv. 16-18). Three bothersome characteristics of the brothers' communication with Joseph stand out. First, rather than appear in person before Joseph, the brothers opted to send a messenger to him (v. 16). This may have made sense considering their fears but would certainly have been insulting to Joseph. Second, they begged forgiveness by appealing to their familial relationship (v. 17). The hypocrisy is stunning! Why should he show mercy because they were brothers? Did they show him the same brotherly affection when they pitched him into that pit and sold him into slavery? Third, they appealed to their common faith. While their shared faith in the one true God was the most reasonable of the requests, the hypocrisy is again apparent. How could they claim to be God's *servants* (v. 17) when they were willing to kill their brother and lie about it to their father? Joseph's reaction to all this was sorrow to the point of tears. Because they had tugged at his heartstrings? No...because they were still so hardhearted that they doubted the sincerity of his forgiveness and questioned their subsequent restoration. For reflection: *While the brothers' fears may have been understandable, their entire approach to Joseph was insulting. How could the brothers have better brought their concerns to Joseph's attention?*

God's sovereignty (vv. 19-21). Here, Joseph admitted to the real reason his forgiveness was genuine and the treatment of his brothers was consistent: his humble submission to the sovereignty of God (v. 19). Joseph was quick to point out what should have been obvious. The hand of God was moving over the entire episode to bring about His ultimate goal, the

preservation of God's people. Notice the role and reaction of each player in the drama: *you* planned it for evil; *God* planned it for good (v. 20); *I* will take care of you (v. 21). The result? Israel's future was secured. For reflection: *Can you think of other times in the Bible when man's recklessness was still used to fulfill God's plan? How does Rom. 8:28 fit into this discussion?*