The Strange Road to Repentance, part 1

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Open your Bible with me, if you would, to Genesis 42.

! One of the realities of church services between this Sunday and New Year's is you've got a lot of people traveling with holidays.
And so you've got some of our regulars who are gone, others who may be in town that are visiting. And so what that means is for the next five or six Sundays, we've got different people that are here, and those that may be out of town just visiting family that aren't normally with us.
In some cases, maybe people who are believers and active in their church, and they're just here for Sunday, or maybe others who live in our community, but don't normally go to church, whatever the case may be.
And so I just want to say, if you're new to us today, whether you're a guest from our city, or maybe you're just visiting family in town because of the holiday, we're glad that you're here and hope that you would be blessed as we study God's Word together.
[1:26] In Genesis chapter 42, it's a fairly familiar text, if you've read through the book of Genesis. It's talking about the occasion where Joseph, who has been separated from his family for many years, is reunited with his brothers.

Just a quick reminder of the story for those who may not be as familiar with this section of the Old Testament. Joseph has been gone since he was 17.
Genesis 37 records for us the story of how his brothers, at a time of jealousy, sought his demise. They ended up selling him into slavery.
When you get to Genesis 42, Joseph is now close to 40 years old. And so it's been a little more than 20 years that have passed since his brothers did this.
His brothers were jealous of him and envious of him. And after trying to harm him, they decide rather than killing him, they would sell him off into slavery.
[2:37] They have no idea what's happened to him. They have no idea if he is a servant in a household or perhaps he is dead at this point. The brothers do not know. Joseph, for his part, by the time we get to Genesis 42, is living as an Egyptian.

He has an Egyptian name. And he is now a leader there. Joseph was sold into captivity and ended up interpreting a dream for Pharaoh and was soon elevated to a role that would be similar to the prime minister in Egypt.
When we come to Genesis 42, he's going to be reintroduced by his brothers, by the providence of God. Let's look at the text here, starting in verse 1.
When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, Why do you look at one another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt.
Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die. So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him.
[3:57] Thus the sons of Israel came to buy among the others who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan. Now Joseph was governor over the land, and he was the one who sold to all the people of the land.

And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them.
Where do you come from, he said. They said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. And Joseph remembered the dreams that

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he had dreamed of them.
And he said to them, You are spies. You have come to see the nakedness of the land. And they said to him, No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food.
We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants have never been spies. And he said to them, No, it is the nakedness of the land that you have come to see.
[5:03] And they said, We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. And behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more.

But Joseph said to them, It is as I said to you, You are spies. By this you shall be tested. By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here.
Send one of you and let him bring your brother while you remain confined that your words may be tested whether there is truth in you or else by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.
And he put them all together in custody for three days. On the third day, Joseph said to them, Do this and you will live for I fear God.
As we walk through this account, I want to show you not only the historical event and narrative that takes place, but I want you to be looking for the providence of God.
[6:09] How is it that God moves and acts using the normal means of our life to accomplish His purposes? If you want to take a few notes through this text, write down first from verses 1 and 2 that there is a summons to action.

There's a summons to action. We see it in verse 1 when Jacob says to his sons, Why do you look at one another? In other words, there's a severe famine that is taking place in the land and the sons are being indecisive.
They're standing around complaining, standing around talking about all their problems, but no one is doing anything to solve them. That may sound familiar.
Sometimes that's what people tend to do. It's pretty easy to point out the problems. It's much more difficult to say, how do we solve them?
It's pretty easy to sit on the sidelines and complain and just point out what's not the way it should be. It's something altogether different to say, how could we go and do something?
[7:18] And so Jacob says, Why do you look at one another? In other words, why are you just standing around staring at each other? Why are you just complaining about how there's no food here?

Why are we just complaining about how hungry we are? Why are you just looking at each other? Verse 2, Behold, I've heard there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us.
The family is needy and they are hungry. And they've been in a situation where they're just complaining, just staring at each other.
Sometimes the Lord has to make His people needy and hungry to get their attention. That was true in Genesis 42 and that can often be true in our own life.
Sometimes it takes our hardships or our inconveniences to bring us to a place of action. Maybe there's some things even in your own life where you know what you should be doing but you find yourself just standing on the sidelines complaining.
[8:34] That can be true in churches. Sometimes in churches, people can be aware of what they wish was different in their own congregation and instead of getting busy doing those things, it's easier just to complain about them.

One of the things I share in our membership class every single time is it's important that we as members are doing the work we want our church to be doing. I mean, everybody wants to go to a friendly church.
The only way to accomplish that is if you are friendly. Everybody wants to go to a praying church but the question is are you praying? Everybody wants to go to a church that's evangelistic but the question is are you sharing the gospel?
For many times in our church or in our families or individual lives, it can be so tempting to just sit back and just point out what is not right, what is not good and sometimes the Lord has to bring us to a place of being uncomfortable or even in a place of need that would drive us and compel us to do something that we're supposed to do.
And that's the call to action here. That's the summons to make something happen as the Father says to the sons, I'm tired of you all just staring at each other.

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[9:57] Go do something. If you're hungry, there's a place where we can get food. Go and get the food. But there's a problem here.

In verse 2, Jacob says, I've heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. And that's the problem. Just the mention of the word is going to bring back so many bad memories for the brothers.
When they were in Egypt and they sold Joseph off into slavery, this is not a place or a word they care to hear.
It brings up their hidden shame. It brings back to mind their secret sin. But they're called by their father to go and to do something.
In verses 3 to 6, we see a second movement here and that is of a shocking reunion that takes place between the brothers and Joseph.
[11:06] Verse 3, So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers for he feared that harm might happen to him.

The father, Jacob, has, he's already lost his son Joseph. He's not seen him in 20 years. He doesn't know if he's dead or alive.
He doesn't want to lose Benjamin, his other son that was born to him by Rachel. In verse 5, it says, What a strange moment this must have been.
If you remember the story in Joseph's life, he's had this dream of his brothers bowing down to him. It's part of what created so much animosity and jealousy among his brothers.
And yet, now in verses 5 and 6, the brothers come. They're going to be reunited with Joseph. He's going to recognize them. They do not recognize him. And Joseph now has all the memories of his dreams flooding his mind.
[12:35] And that's going to lead in verses 7 to 20 to a strategic test. A strategic test. Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them.

But he treated them like strangers and he spoke roughly to them. Where do you come from? He said. And they said, Well, from the land of Canaan to buy food, Joseph, when he sees his brothers, would have so much floating around in his mind.
He's wondering, is his father still alive? Is his brother Benjamin doing okay? Have these brothers who are here in front of me, have they changed?
Are they the same brothers who treated me so harshly two decades ago? You may have people in your life that hurt you.
And maybe it's been years since you've talked to them. And you run back into them and you wonder, are you still the same person who treated me that way?
[13:43] Have you changed? Have you repented? Do you feel bad about what you did to me? Do you feel bad about how you talked about me? All these thoughts are going through Joseph's mind.

It's appropriate, even maybe as you've just celebrated Thanksgiving, to state the obvious that sometimes being around family can be challenging. Don't say amen. Your family may be here with you this morning, but it can be hard.
For Joseph, the very people who were his brothers, the ones who were supposed to be his lifelong best friends, betrayed him, hurt and harmed him, left him, abandoned him.
And for 23 years, it's not as if that memory ever goes away, but you learn to move on. You learn to deal with life. You learn to just change and adapt. And Joseph now finds himself in Egypt and he's got a new life and a new job and new responsibilities and new priorities, new friends, new family.
And now here are the brothers who hurt him right in front of him. He has reason to be suspicious. I mean, after all, these are the same brothers who did this to him.
[15:12] And besides that, if you read Genesis 34, Genesis 37, Genesis 38, these were not the most upstanding men in the community. They were guilty of all kinds of things.

The last time I saw Joseph, Joseph was 17. He entered Pharaoh's court at the age of 30. There were seven years of plenty and now we are likely in the second year of drought, which means it's been about 20 years since they have seen him.
Look at verse 8. Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. Now that makes sense because the brothers would, though it's been a number of years, they would look fairly similar.
Joseph, though, would look altogether different. The men in Palestine would wear very long beards. The men in Egypt would be clean shaven.

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Besides that, Joseph is now in his upper 30s and his dress would be totally different. He would be dressed in linen that would be flowing down with a gold insignia on it that would show the people who saw him that he was a part of the Egyptian aristocracy.
[16:30] Everything about Joseph looks different, sounds different, appears different. not to mention he's literally the last person in the world they would have ever expected to run into for this occurrence.

And he says to them, you're spies. You've come to look at the land. You've come to see where we're weak. You've come to see where we're vulnerable. You've come to try to hurt us.
And they say, no, no, no, no. We are not spies. Look at verse 11. We are honest men. Honest men who 20 years ago left their brother and sold him off.
Honest men who in a fit of jealousy and envy and rage decided to just do away with their brother and then deceive their father in telling him what happened.
They say though that no, we are of one father. In other words, they're saying we don't represent a government. We are a family. In other words, they're saying we are no threat to the land.
[17:41] We're just hungry. We have no food where we are from. We're here representing our father. We're here representing our family, not a government. We're not spies. We're just starving.

And they say in verse 13, we your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan and behold, the youngest is this day with our father.
That's Benjamin. That lets Joseph know his little brother is still alive. Look at the end of verse 13. And one is no more.
Who's that? That's Joseph. We've got twelve brothers. Ten of us are here. Our youngest is at home. Dad wouldn't let him come.
And we've got one other brother and he's no more. And they're talking to Joseph about Joseph not knowing it is Joseph.
[18:40] They don't go into any more detail and you can't blame them. They don't really want to tell this perceived stranger about what they did to their brother.

But you have to wonder what's going through the brother's mind when they remember this account to Joseph.
One of our brothers is no more. we don't know what happened to him. They don't mention the events but they've never forgotten them.
Do they feel guilt? Do they feel remorse? Do any of them when they're working let their minds go to what might have happened to him?
Do they miss him? Do they pray for him? Are they cold? Are they callous? Are they just thinking it's a tough world and he got what he had coming?
[19:53] Verse 14 Joseph said to them it is as I said to you you are spies and by this you shall be tested. That's an interesting Old Testament word.

Joseph says you'll be tested it's used elsewhere Jeremiah 6 27 I have made you a tester of metals among my people that you may know and test their ways.
Psalm 66 verse 10 for you oh God have tested us you have tried us as silver is tried. the issue what's going on in Joseph's mind that the brothers don't know about is he is trying to test them to see are you the same guys you were 20 years ago?
I mean physically you're the same men but the question for Joseph is has your heart changed? Last time I saw you you ignored my screaming as I pleaded for you don't do this don't leave me don't abandon me don't forsake me and he just laughed and he walked away are you the same men or have you changed?
He's going to test them why is Joseph doing all of this? Well this is all part of the providence of God to awaken their conscience and to confront them in their sin and sometimes the Lord uses hard things to awaken our conscience I wonder if you can relate to that this morning and the fact of the matter is like like Joseph's brothers we have all sinned all of us have and all of us have treated people in a way that we're not proud of and all of us have things we would go back in life if we could and we would say things differently we would respond differently we maybe would be more quick to ask for forgiveness or maybe more quick to give grace to somebody else all of us have things in our life that we wish we could do over but the question is what do you do with your guilt?
[22:18] where do you go when you've sinned? the difference between a Christian and an unbeliever is not that some in that group are perfect and some are not we are all sinners the Bible

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says we've all fallen short of the glory of God the only difference between the believer and the unbeliever is what we do with our sin one the believer repents and pleads for mercy from the Lord the other the unbeliever tries to deal with it themselves maybe by blaming somebody else maybe by playing a comparison game I'm not as bad as this person over here maybe by trying to be really good in business so you can make a lot of money and you can be generous and you can try to satisfy your guilty conscience by your generosity there's all kinds of ways that we try to make up for that but the question is when you sin which we all do what do you do with your guilt do you try to satisfy your own conscience by your own works or do you repent and trust the Lord that's the issue in the sanctuary this morning there are in some sense there's different categories of people there are some of you here who are believers you know the Lord is your savior and you're proud to call yourself a believer there are others here and you would say that you're not a believer but you like the church you appreciate what the church does there may be others of you who would say that you're not a believer and you don't really even care that much for the church you're here because your parents made you come you're here because your spouse made you come you're here because you just feel like you're supposed to be but you don't really want to be in that sense there are all different kinds of people here but in another sense we're all the same we're all sinners we've all done wrong we all find ourselves guilty before the

Lord whether you are religious or not religious whether all of us are sinners the question then becomes what will we do with our sin this is the single most important reality about your life what will you do with your guilt and the way that you answer that question has everything to do not only with your life today but even more importantly your life for all eternity Joseph is looking at his brothers and trying to discern have they changed are they different are they the same sinful men they used to be or has their heart changed and Joseph is going to test them and as we'll look at in more detail next week the test is!
test is not going to be pleasant but it is a good thing for your heart to be tested so you can discern where your hope lies!
God need it's good our good it's good that we would be made to recognize our own need it's good when very intelligent people or very successful people are forced to recognize that no matter what they do or how they live that they are still guilty people in desperate need of a Savior.
It's good when religious people who maybe show up to church every single Sunday but don't truly know Christ in a personal way get confronted with the reality that religion alone will not save them.
[27:02] They must repent and be changed from the inside out. But sometimes the Lord has to deal roughly with us and we need to be tested.

We need to be exposed. Do we really belong to Christ or are we just merely good people? Do we really belong to the Lord Jesus or do we just like the church?
Do we really know Christ is our Savior or are we just trying to be better than most? And when the Holy Spirit begins to work in our hearts and begins to awaken our conscience, it can be a very painful thing.
But brothers and sisters, it is for your good. The question is, what do you do with your guilt? What do you do with your sin?
There may be people that knew you in your worst days and maybe you never left someone for dead like the brothers essentially did for Joseph but there may be people you've run over.
[28:17] There may be people you've harmed. There may be people you've hurt along the way and if you ran back into them, they're looking at you like Joseph looked at his brothers wondering, are you the same person or have you changed?

And the issue is not, have you tried to fix yourself? That's not what brings about eternal salvation. The issue is, have you turned to the Lord?
Have you sought His grace? Have you pled for His forgiveness? The brothers have one of the patriarchs as their father.
They know the right answers. If they were just quizzed, they'd be able to talk their way through it. If they wanted to convince someone that they were genuine, they could know enough of the right answers.
To use our vernacular, they know the Sunday school answers. They know how to navigate their way through a conversation. But the question is, not do they just know the right answers.
[29:30] The question is, has their heart been changed? And I ask you the same thing today. Has your heart been changed by God's grace?

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If you've grown up in a Christian family, or you've grown up in the church, you likely, like the brothers, know enough information to kind of talk your way through the conversation, but in your heart of hearts, you know, do you love Jesus or not?
Have you been saved and changed from the inside out? The question is not so much, can you talk in such a way to convince your family or convince your friends that you're a believer?
The question is, knowing what only God knows about your heart, have you truly repented of your sin and asked the Lord Jesus to forgive you and to save you?
That's what repentance is. And so Jacob sends his brothers, having no idea they're going to encounter Joseph.
[30:43] The only thing the brothers want is some food. But God had something else in mind. He wants to awaken their conscience.

That may be true for you today in this room. You just came to church because it's Sunday morning. You just came to church because it's what you always do. You just came to church because your parents told you we're going to church.
You just came and you had no intention of actually having the Lord awaken your conscience, but maybe even this morning, you realized through the work of the Holy Spirit that you need forgiveness.
You need His grace. And so the brothers are going to be tested. Verse 15, he says, By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here.
So send one of you and let him bring your brother. And while you remain confined, your words may be tested whether there is truth in you or else by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.
[31:58] And here's what's going to happen. Joseph's going to take the brothers and he's going to put them in prison for three days and allow their conscience to go to work. When I read that in verse 16, it takes my mind to Hebrews 10, 22 that says, Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.

Metaphorically, if I could take you today and remove you from the busyness of your job and your responsibilities as a worker, if I could take you out of school and your homework and your assignments and your final exams and if I could take you away from all the responsibilities you have in your life and your home and it were just to be you and God.
Would you be at peace? Do you stand before God with a clean conscience knowing the Lord Jesus has forgiven you?
Or if it were just you and God, would your own conscience condemn you? The writer of Hebrews in chapter 10 says, Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.
This is what is available for those who believe. A heart that can have assurance that you belong to Jesus. A heart of faith that knows not just that you fooled somebody into thinking you're a believer, but if it were just you and God and nobody else, you would not be afraid because the Bible tells us in Romans, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
[34:12] For those who have been covered by His grace, there is now no condemnation.

The brothers are going to be put into a prison for three days so they can get away from their responsibilities and alone with their conscience. And my question to you is, if the same could happen to you, how would you feel about it being just you and God?
Would you dread His presence? Or would you say, with a full assurance of faith, not based on my works, not based on my deeds, but based on the grace of Jesus Christ, I draw near with confidence?
It's a staggering thing, really. For men and women to talk about wanting to see God, wanting to go to heaven, wanting to be in the presence of God, it's a strange thing, really, for sinners like us to sing songs and pray prayers and to talk about these things.
Why would any sinner want to be in the presence of God? Wouldn't that be a frightening reality? And the answer is, yes, it would, if not for grace.
[35:51] If not for grace, and you were to be completely judged by God, you would be thoroughly undone. But by grace, He forgives, and He cleanses, and He redeems, and He restores.

What a mercy of God to awaken your conscience to the work of the Holy Spirit to come to the place where you could see your own guilt and your desperate need for a Savior.
And that need for a Savior is found in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate all this next month, His birth, and rightly so, but it's the fullness of His life that brings salvation, not just His birth.

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It's His sinless life. It's His substitutionary death. It's His resurrection that proves His sin payment was perfect. It's the totality of who Jesus is that gives us hope this Christmas season.
And so I just ask you this morning, can you draw near to the presence of God with a full assurance of faith?
[37:36] If not, you can. If you would repent of your sin, turn from your sin, and ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you and to save you, He will save.

Lord, we thank You today for Your Word and pray that You would use it in the work of Your Spirit to help us.
I pray, Lord, specifically this morning for those who do not know You as Savior, that even this day that You would help those who are guilty know that in You they can find grace and they can find forgiveness.
forgiveness. We ask for Your help to live in such a way that we would serve and love people well and point them to Your Son, Jesus Christ.
And it's in His name that we pray. Amen.
[38:42] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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