

Introduction

This week I had the pleasure of teaching a one-day class in Houston to Stephens Insurance. One of the lines that they carry is Travelers Insurance, which insures a large percentage of land drilling operations in the United States. Travelers Insurance has a strong working relationship with Wild Well Control, one of our competitors. The Vice President of Stephens asked me who was the best training company, and I had to give him our name. I gave him the top three training companies. He asked me which company was the worst, and I told him which one I thought was worst, and then I explained why it was not good. First, there is a conflict of interest. They use their training as a loss leader to get the well control work when things go bad. Second, they begin their class by telling people to call them when they have any kind of problem. Our class objective is very different. We try to train people in well control so that they know how to handle situations and do not have to call someone else. When there is a problem, we want people to have the knowledge and confidence to take charge and do whatever is called for in the situation.

In our text today, Joseph's brothers were trained by the other company. There was a problem and they were sitting around staring at one another, wondering what to do. They dialed in to Jacob with their eyes, and asked, "What should we do? We don't have any food and we are going to starve to death. What should we do?" Jacob tells them to go to Egypt and buy some food from that place so that they could live and not die. Our text today is about their trip to Egypt. They go down there and appear before Joseph. They do not recognize him, but he recognizes them. Joseph accuses them of being spies and throws them into prison. He was testing them to find out what was in their heart. After three days, he lets all of them go back home except for Simeon. He tells them to bring back their youngest brother, Benjamin, to prove that they are telling the truth and are not spies. Joseph has his people fill their grain sacks and he also puts their money back with it. When they return home, they find their money and are dismayed, and their father is not willing to send Benjamin with them to Egypt.

Joseph's Brothers' First Trip To Egypt (Gen 42:1-38)

1. Jacob Sends His Sons For Grain (Gen 42:1-5)
2. Joseph's Brothers Bow Down Before Him (Gen 42:6-16)
3. Joseph Imprisons His Brothers (Gen 42:17-26)
4. Joseph's Brothers Return Home (Gen 42:27-38)

1. Jacob Sends His Sons For Grain (Gen 42:1-5)

(Gen 42:1-5) "Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?" {2} He said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy *some* for us from that place, so that we may live and not die." {3} Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. {4} But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him." {5} So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan *also*."

There was no grain in all the earth, including Israel. When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, he shows great leadership. He said to his sons, "Why are you starting at one another?" They were sitting around moping about the famine and how they had no grain. Real leaders see the problem, and the answers seem very apparent to them.

In Proverbs 6:6-8, Solomon wrote about sluggards and work habits. He mentions three different types of leaders that ants did not need. They did not need chiefs, officers, or rulers to get them to prepare their food in the summer and gather in the harvest. These are three different Hebrew words and three different types of leaders. The chief or guide, is the head leader. The Hebrew word is qatsin (Strong's H7101), and it means the top or chief leader who makes decisions. The word for officer is shoter, and it is an administrative leader who records things. The word for ruler is mashal, and he is the enforcer. He makes sure that people do the things that they are tasked with doing. The chief sees what is going on and determines what needs to be done. He does not sit around and look at people; he sees what is needed and decides what needs to be done. Jacob is not one to sit around and stare at his sons. He sees that they have no grain and that there is grain in Egypt. He does not need for someone to tell him what needs to be done. He tells his sons in a humorous way, to get off their duffs and go get some grain in Egypt.

(Pr 6:6-8) "Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, {7} Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, {8} Prepares her food in the summer *And* gathers her provision in the harvest."

Children see the toys left out and dirty dishes that need to be cleaned. But, they wait until they are told to pick up or clean up before they do anything. Much of leadership needs to be taught. We need to teach our children to see what needs to be done and then take initiative. We do not want them sitting around looking at one another.

We see it in the church. Lots of people see things that need to be done, but they wait around for the pastor or some other leader to address the problem. We need to teach the members of the body of Christ to see needs and meet them. We need to equip them for ministry, and we need to empower them to do the work of ministry. We want people to be submitted and to communicate, and we also want them empowered to do the work. We don't want the sons of God to sit around gazing at one another, wandering what we are going to do.

Israel sent ten of his sons to Egypt, but he did not allow Benjamin to go. He was protective of Benjamin, did not send him. He said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him." He had two sons by Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin. Rachel has died, and he believes that Joseph was killed by wild beasts. Benjamin is his only survivor from his marriage to the love of his life, and he is very protective of Benjamin.

2. **Joseph's Brothers Bow Down Before Him** (Gen 42:6-16)

(Gen 42:6-16) "Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with *their* faces to the ground. {7} When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, "Where have you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." {8} But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. {9} Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, "You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land." {10} Then they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. {11} "We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies." {12} Yet he said to them, "No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!" {13} But they said, "Your servants are twelve brothers *in all*, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer

alive." {14} Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you, you are spies; {15} by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! {16} "Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies."

Joseph was the ruler over all the land and he was the one that sold to all the people of the land. I believe that he had an administration and had many people in cities all over Egypt. They stored up grain in all the cities, so I believe that he had people in place to manage these local storehouses. (See Genesis 41:48.) But, Joseph probably had an office at the storehouse in the capital where Pharaoh was, and he was present when his brothers came there to buy grain.

When Joseph's brothers were brought in, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. Joseph immediately recognizes his brothers, but he does not reveal his identity to them. The NASB says that he disguised himself to them. The KJV says that he made himself strange to them, which I think is an excellent translation. The Hebrew word is *nakar* (Strong's H5235a), and it means to act or treat as foreign or strange, to disguise. He made himself like a stranger or foreigner to them. That was probably not hard to do. He shaved before going into Pharaoh's presence. We assume that he shaved his beard, but he may have shaved his head as well. He was seventeen when he was sent away, and he is now thirty-nine years old, hardly the youth that they knew twenty-two years ago. We also see in verse twenty-three that he used an interpreter when speaking with them. He is speaking Arabic and they are speaking Hebrew. Third, Joseph is over all the land and his brothers were not ever expecting to see him again, much less in this role. There is a word that is used three times, "recognized." Joseph recognized his brothers, but his brothers did not recognize him. Even though he has not seen them in twenty-two years, he still recognizes them. There are ten foreigners, Hebrew men, who were speaking Hebrew. They stood out and it was easy to recognize them. I also believe that it was easy for Joseph to recognize them because of the dreams that he had. In verse nine, Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them. When they came into his presence, they bowed down before him. He had seen this scene before. He has an immediate flashback to the dream and recognizes them.

Then, Joseph spoke harshly with them and accuses them of being spies. He tells them that they will not get out of this place unless their youngest brother comes to Egypt. He said he would allow one brother to go home while the others remained imprisoned. I wondered why he spoke harshly with them. I wondered why he accused them of being spies. I wondered why he was going to test them. I don't know that I have all the answers to the questions, but here are a few. Joseph had two dreams. In the second dream, his mother and father and brothers all bowed before him. Joseph knows that his whole family must come before him. He knows that he must get them all to come up.

Second, he is testing them to find out what is in their heart. He said that he would test them to see if there was truth in them. I believe that he wants to find out the truth about a number of things, including the welfare of his youngest brother, and his father. I think he still wants to know the truth about his being sold as a slave to the Midianite traders. God tests us to find out what is in our hearts. In Deuteronomy 8:2, Moses wrote, "*You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*" God tested His people in the wilderness for forty years to know what was in their heart.

In Deuteronomy 13:3, God tests us with dreams that are not from Him. Even though a dream or vision may come true, that is not the ultimate test. A true test is does the dream or word cause us to love God with all our heart. Does the dream or word encourage us to obey God and His word, and to walk in obedience? If the dream causes us to turn away from God and His ways, we are to reject it. Notice to what Moses says in Deuteronomy 13:3. *"You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."* I believe that Joseph was testing his brothers to find out what was in their hearts.

As far as treating his brothers harshly, I do not believe there was any unforgiveness or malice in his heart. I believe it is part of his disguising himself to his brothers. I believe he is acting the part to throw them in prison to see what was in their heart.

3. **Joseph Imprisons His Brothers** (Gen 42:17-26)

(Gen 42:17-26) "So he put them all together in prison for three days. {18} Now Joseph said to them on the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God: {19} if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for *the rest of you*, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, {20} and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die." And they did so. {21} Then they said to one another, "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us." {22} Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood." {23} They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them. {24} He turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. {25} Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them. {26} So they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed from there."

Joseph imprisoned his brothers for three days. On the third day, he went to them and gave them another choice, a much better option. Instead of sending one brother home and leaving the other nine in prison, he offers to let nine of them go home and to leave one brother in prison. Joseph also tells them that he fears God. This was to give them some hope that he will do what he says and promises. Joseph knows that his father and family needs food, so he is going to make sure that his family has provision. His brothers don't know this, but I believe this was behind his move. He says that if they do not bring their youngest brother back, the one person that they leave behind will be put to death.

This latest proposal causes his brothers to begin talking. Their guilty consciences begin to manifest. They said, "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us." This happened twenty-two years ago. They have been living with this guilt for twenty-two years. God does not want us living in guilt. God wants us free from guilt. The answer is easy; we must repent before God and ask Him for forgiveness. His brothers had not received God's forgiveness for their sins and they were living in guilt.

Reuben, his oldest brother, answered the other brothers, saying, "Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood." Joseph heard and understood what Reuben said. He had been using an interpreter the whole time so they did not know that he knew Hebrew. Joseph now knows a lot more about what went on when he was sold to the Midianite traders. He knows that Reuben had warned them against doing what they did. When Joseph heard this, he went away from them and wept. This was an emotional time for Joseph. He went through a very difficult thirteen years after being sold to the Midianite traders. He has spent many years in the dark, smelly, dungeon. Hearing his brothers confess what they had done is bringing back painful memories for him, and he left and wept.

When he returned to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. Again, I believe that he was acting the part. He wants the brothers to know that he is serious and that his threat of putting Simeon to death unless they bring back the youngest is a serious threat.

Joseph then gave orders to fill their bags and to restore every man's money in his sack. He also gave them provisions for their journey. In the midst of testing them, he is treating them with kindness. The brothers were unaware of what he did, and they loaded their donkeys and left.

4. **Joseph's Brothers Return Home** (Gen 42:27-38)

(Gen 42:27-38) "As one of *them* opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. {28} Then he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack." And their hearts sank, and they *turned* trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?" {29} When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, {30} "The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country. {31} "But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies. {32} 'We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.' {33} "The man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take *grain* for the famine of your households, and go. {34} 'But bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.'" {35} Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man's bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. {36} Their father Jacob said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me." {37} Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you." {38} But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."

Joseph's brothers broke up their trip and at the place they lodged the first night, one of them opened his sack to give his donkey some fodder and saw that his money had been returned. When he told his brothers, their heart sank. Later, when they returned home and were emptying their sacks, each of them saw their bundles of money and they were dismayed. Why did their hearts sink? Why were they dismayed? They should have rejoiced at this good fortune, but instead they were down and dismayed.

When I was a manager of a golf club in Orlando, I found that I was not very discerning of people. I believed everyone and gave everyone the benefit of the doubt. Until someone proved me wrong, I believed and trusted everyone. So, I found that it was important for me to have some of my staff participate in interviews of potential new employees. After the interviews, I would do a debrief with my staff. I was amazed at their observations. They were suspicious of everything about the person and everything that was said. Their approach was the other person is guilty of everything until proven to be right. They were suspicious about things that I never even thought of. The righteous think everyone is righteous while guilty people suspect everyone of being guilty.

Joseph's brothers were living in guilt. When they were put in prison, they spoke about their guilt and that this was the day of reckoning for the evil things that they had done to their brother. When they found their money, they are thinking the worst. They believe that this was an entrapment and they are fearing the worst things imaginable about what might happen to them in the future. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 28:1 that "the wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion." The wicked live in fear, condemnation and guilt. They interpret everything through the lens of guilt and fear. The righteous have been set free from this way of thinking. Joseph's brothers should have rejoiced over finding all their money returned, but they were dismayed and down because they were thinking the worst possible reasons and outcome.

It is important for us to renew our minds and to think like Christ. Whether we have good or difficult things happen to us, we have to know and believe that God works all things together for our good. (See Romans 8:28.) When we are anxious and worried about things, we must pray with thanksgiving and refuse to be anxious. We have to set our minds on things that are true, honorable, pure, lovely, excellent, good repute, and worthy of praise. (See Philippians 4:6-8.) When we do that God promises that we will have a peace that surpasses all comprehension.

When we have thoughts about our guilt and condemnation, we must confess any sins that we are aware of. God promises to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (See 1 John 1:9.) We must stand on the promise that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for we have been set free from the law of sin and death. Joseph's brothers were living under the law of sin and death. They had not been set free by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. (See Romans 8:1-2.) We have to learn to think like God thinks and apply his principles to our thought life.

Our passage ends today with Jacob being upset and refusing to send Benjamin back with them to Egypt. He said that Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more. Now, they are wanting to take Benjamin, and he will be no more. Upon hearing this Reuben spoke to his father and offered that his two sons be put to death if he does not bring back Benjamin and return him to Jacob. Reuben is willing to take personal responsibility for the care of Benjamin. Reuben is the first born, and he is acting like a first born. He is taking responsibility for the care of his brothers. But Jacob answered by saying if something were to happen to Benjamin that they would bring his gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow. There is a lot of misunderstanding about this word, so I want to take a few minutes to talk about it.

"Sheol" is used sixty-six times in the Old Testament. Sheol is the place of the dead and Israel knew and understood this, So, Jacob was saying that he would die in sorrow and go to the place of the dead if something were to happen to Benjamin. This is the second time that this word is used. The first occurrence was also used by Jacob, and that was in Genesis 37:35. When Joseph's

brothers led his father to believe that he had been killed by wild animals, Jacob had torn his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for him for many days. He refused to be comforted, and said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son."

(Gen 37:34-35) "So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. {35} Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him."

David used the word a number of times. In Psalm 6:5, he wrote, "*For there is no mention of You in death; in Sheol who will give You thanks?*" It was obvious to him that Sheol was the place of the dead.

In Psalm 16:10-11, David prophesied about Jesus, saying that God would not abandon His soul to Sheol and would not allow His Holy One to undergo decay. David was prophesying that the Messiah would be resurrected from the dead and would not remain in Sheol, the place of the dead.

(Ps 16:10-11) "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. {11} You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

In Peter's sermon at Pentecost, he quotes Psalm 16. Specifically, he talks about the resurrection of the Christ.

(Acts 2:29-32) "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. {30} And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, {31} he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. {32} This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses."

Peter confirms David's prophecy that the Messiah would not suffer decay but would be resurrected from the dead. Peter uses the word Hades when quoting Psalm 16, while David used the word Sheol. It is not a misquote. Sheol is the Hebrew word for the place of the dead and Hades is the Greek word for the place of the dead. When Jesus died, He went to the place of the dead, which is Sheol or Hades. Jesus did not go to hell as is mistakenly taught by some.

In the Apostle's Creed, there are two versions. In one version it says that Jesus died and went to hell and in the other version it correctly states that Jesus died and went to the place of the dead. Some of this confusion is a result of the King James Version, which incorrectly translates hades as hell. If we define hell as the place of eternal damnation, then hades cannot be hell. In Revelation 20:14, after the Great White Throne Room Judgment and Hades has been emptied, it is thrown into the eternal fire, which is the second death. At the judgment before the Great White Throne, people who do not know Christ as their Lord will face God and be judged. Then, anyone's name that is not found written in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire, the eternal place of damnation, which is hell.

(Rev 20:11-15) “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. {12} And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. {13} And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. {14} Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. {15} And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

David prophesied that Jesus' body would not decay and he would not be abandoned in Hades. David was writing and prophesying about the resurrection of Christ. In Peter's sermon, he was saying that David's prophecy had been fulfilled.

Today, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Some refer to this as Easter, but more correctly, it is Resurrection Day. We celebrate the fact that Jesus did not suffer decay, but on the third day was resurrected from the dead.

Conclusion and Applications

Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21-24 that to live is Christ and to die is gain. Paul knew that to live in the flesh was going to result in fruitful labor for him. He also knew that the Philippians and others needed his ministry. But he also mentioned that if was to die he would be with Christ and that is very much better. When a believer dies, he does not go to the place of the dead. A believer does not go to Sheol or Hades. A believer goes home to the Lord. Jesus is not in the place of the dead; He is seated at the right hand of the Father. (See Ephesians 1:20 and Colossians 3:1.) When Jesus died on the cross, he paid the price for our sins. Those people who have put their faith in Christ are forgiven of their sins and are with Christ.

(Phil 1:21-24) “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. {22} But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. {23} But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; {24} yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

In John 5:24, Jesus said that those who hear His word and believe Him have eternal life and do not come into judgement. Those that do not believe in Christ, go to Hades and wait for the judgement before the Great White Throne. When we place our faith in Christ, our names are written in the book of life and when we die we go straight to heaven, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father.

(John 5:24) “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

This morning, have you placed your faith in Christ? Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, that He died on the cross for our sins, and was resurrected from the dead. Paul wrote in Romans 10:9-10 that if we believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, we will be saved. If you have never confessed that Jesus is Lord, let me encourage you to ask him into your life this morning.

I was in Houston this week and I had a conversation with the bus driver that took me from the airport to the car rental place. I told him that I had read in Joshua 24:15 that day where Joshua told the nation of Israel to choose that day who they were going to serve. As for Joshua, he and his house were going to serve the Lord. I will ask you to make the same choice. If you have never asked Jesus to come and be Lord of your life, I encourage you to choose him today. You will not go to Sheol mourning, but you will go to heaven rejoicing.

Introduction

1. **Jacob Sends His Sons For Grain** (Gen 42:1-5, Pr 6:6-8)
2. **Joseph's Brothers Bow Down Before Him** (Gen 42:6-16, 41:48, Deut 8:2, 13:3)
3. **Joseph Imprisons His Brothers** (Gen 42:17-26)
4. **Joseph's Brothers Return Home** (Gen 42:27-38, Prs 28:1, Rom 8:28, Phil 4:6-8, 1 John 1:9, Rom 8:1-2, Gen 37:34-35, Ps 6:5, 16:10-11, Acts 2:29-32, Rev 20:11-15)

Conclusion and Applications (Phil 1:21-24, Eph 1:20, Col 3:1, John 5:24, Josh 24:15)