

Introduction

Last week Pastor Joe Warner mentioned that I am the only golfer that he knows that could walk away from it. That did not just happen. From the time I was about eight years old until I retired from golf, I only shot in the 90's one time. For the last fourteen years of my professional career, I never shot in the 80's. A bad round for me was usually in the mid 70's. In my Junior year at TCU, we were playing the Southwest Conference Championship at a place called Waterwood National. It is located on Lake Livingston, about 30 miles east of Huntsville. It is a Pete Dye course, and I never liked his courses. In my practice round I scored four shots higher than the course record, so I was playing pretty good golf. But, the Lord decided to do something very special in the first round of that tournament. At the age of seven, I made up my mind that I was going to be a professional golfer. Every decision that I made centered around what impact it would have on my future career. Golf was the priority and the center of my life. Right before my Sophomore year I prayed to receive Christ, but that did not mean that my life was Christ-like. There was a lot of work for Him to do in my life. And on that particular day, He decided it was time to deal with Lordship. He is a Jealous God and He wanted to be the center of my life. He wanted to have first place in my life. He wanted all the decisions in my life to center around Him, not golf. So, the Lord and I had the battle of my lifetime on the course that day. Guess who won? God won that battle. My mind was everywhere but where it should have been. I shot a 91 that day, but it was a victorious day. I took golf off of the throne of my life and made Jesus the Lord of my life. From that day on, I never struggled with golf again. I could pick it up or set it down. It no longer had a hold on me. It was golf for me, but it could be something else for others. There are lots of pastors who make the ministry the Lord of their life. It ruins their marriage and many other things. There are lots of businessmen whose businesses are their life. Paul said, "To live is Christ." Christ must be the center of our lives and that is what happened to me that day.

In 1979, the PGA Tour decided that they would hold the finals of the Q-School at Waterwood National Golf Club. I dreaded the thought of going back to that place. I would have been okay if I never saw that place again, but in order to get back onto the PGA Tour, I had to get through the Local Qualifier, the Regional Qualifier, and then the finals at Waterwood. So, I made a plan. I chose to go spend a week at Waterwood National to become very familiar with the course. Then, I chose to drive from Huntsville to California and play the Regional qualifier at Torrey Pines in San Diego. I could have played in a number of places that were closer, but I chose a course that would better suit my game and prepare me for Waterwood National. I won the tournament at Torrey Pines. A woman prophesied to Karen at the trailer park that we stayed at that I was going to win. I laughed because up until then I had never won a professional event. I shot 14 under and won by four shots. Then, Karen and I drove to Waterwood National and I earned my PGA Tour Card for the 1980 season.

What does all that have to do with our text? Well, on their first trip to Egypt, Simeon was bound before his brothers' eyes and put in prison. They were told that they would not be able to see the ruler again unless they brought their younger brother. Then, when they came to their stopover point, they discovered that their money had been returned to their sacks. They felt it was a set-up to put them all in prison. They dreaded the thought of returning to Egypt. But, the famine was severe and they were out of food. In order to live, they needed to go back and buy more food. So, they made a plan. Their plan was to bring a gift to the ruler and bring back double their money. And yes, their plan included bringing Benjamin with them. They went to Egypt and met with the ruler of the land. They not only met with him, but he hosted them for a feast at his house.

Joseph's Brothers Return To Egypt (Gen 43)

1. Plan to Return To Egypt (Gen 43:1-15)
2. Joseph's Brothers Are Brought To Joseph's House (Gen 43:15-25)
3. Joseph's Meal With His Brothers (Gen 43:26-34)

1. Plan To Return To Egypt (Gen 43:1-15)

(Gen 43:1-14) "Now the famine was severe in the land. {2} So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food." {3} Judah spoke to him, however, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' {4} "If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. {5} "But if you do not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.'" {6} Then Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had *another* brother?" {7} But they said, "The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?' So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" {8} Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. {9} "I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever. {10} "For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice." {11} Then their father Israel said to them, "If *it must be* so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. {12} "Take double *the* money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake. {13} "Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; {14} and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. {15} So the men took this present, and they took double *the* money in their hand, and Benjamin; then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph."

Two weeks ago we left off with Jacob saying that his son, Benjamin, shall not go back down to Egypt with them. However when the grain and food that they brought back from Egypt ran out, they were in the same predicament that they were in before. They needed to get food or they would all die. Jacob told his sons to go back and buy some food. His sons reminded him that they could not go back down there without taking Benjamin with them. After Judah speaks to him, he finally agrees to let Benjamin go down there with them. Something happened that changed his mind to allow him to go with his brothers to Egypt. What changed his mind? It was circumstances.

(Gen 42:38) "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."

Sometimes God will speak to us in a dream, vision, or prophetic word. Sometimes, He will speak through our authorities. Sometimes He will speak to us out of His word or in prayer. But, sometimes, as in our text today, God uses circumstances to direct our paths. As long as they had food, Jacob would not have allowed his son to go to Egypt. But, they were out of food and they

could not return without taking Benjamin. So, it was either starve to death or send Benjamin to Egypt with his brothers. Jacob did not have much of a choice.

When Judah told Jacob that they could not see the ruler's face unless Benjamin was with them, Jacob asked why they had treated him so badly by telling the man about all their children. This is only his perspective. The truth is that they had not treated Jacob badly at all. Joseph had recognized them and he knew what questions to ask them. Joseph had pressed them for answers about his father and the rest of the family. Our perspectives are often times wrong, as Jacob's was in this matter.

Judah offers to be surety and to be held responsible if anything happens. He said, "Send the lad with me and will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones." Judah had the right perspective. He gave Jacob a choice. The choice was to send Benjamin with them so that they could all live, or refuse and they would all die. We all have choices in life. In Deuteronomy 30:19-20, Moses gave the nation of Israel a choice. He set before them life and death, and told them to choose life that they may live. The choice of life was by choosing to love the Lord and obeying His voice.

(Deut 30:19-20) "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, {20} by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Joshua gave the nation of Israel a similar choice. He said in Joshua 24:15, "*Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" We have choices in life of who we are going to serve. If we put our trust in God, love Him and serve Him, we have life. Every day is full of choices. Are we going to serve God and set our mind on things above, or are we going to set our minds on the things of the flesh? Like Joshua, I encourage you to choose to serve God. Like Judah, I encourage you to choose life.

(Josh 24:15) "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Jacob responded by saying, "*If it must be so, then do this...*" He was not happy with the choice. I am sure that he felt pressed into a corner. God does that to us sometimes. He puts pressure on us to make the right choice. Once the decision was made, they made a plan. Jacob said, if it must be so, then do this, and he laid out a plan. We have a responsibility to plan. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 16:1, "*The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.*" As we plan, we need to pray and seek God's wisdom and guidance. Once we plan, we need to commit those plans to the Lord. We need to pray about our plans because "*All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives*" (Pr 16:2). Therefore, we need His input and guidance. Then, we need to "Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established (Pr 16:3) We have a responsibility to plan, but God is sovereign over our plans. In Proverbs 16:9, we read, "*The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.*" God is sovereign and He directs our steps.

Jacob's plan was for them to take some of the best products of the land, which included some of my favorite nuts, pistachios and almonds. They were to take double the money so that if their money was returned by mistake, they could give it back. Then, Israel prays that God would grant compassion in the sight of the man (Joseph) and release Simeon and Benjamin.

Judah ends by accepting the fact if he is bereaved of his children, he is bereaved. In the last chapter he refused to allow Benjamin to go, lest he go to Sheol in sorrow. Now, he accepts the fact that if he does not come back he will be bereaved of his children. So, Judah and his brothers took the honey, balm, aromatic gum, myrrh, pistachios and almonds, double the money, and Benjamin and they went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. God's plan of bringing the nation of Israel to Egypt that He told Abraham about in a dream is running its course. They will soon all be in Egypt.

2. **Joseph's Brothers Are Brought To Joseph's House** (Gen 43:15-25)

(Gen 43:16-25) "When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward, "Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon." {17} So the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph's house. {18} Now the men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, "*It is* because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys." {19} So they came near to Joseph's house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house, {20} and said, "Oh, my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food, {21} and it came about when we came to the lodging place, that we opened our sacks, and behold, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. So we have brought it back in our hand. {22} "We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks." {23} He said, "Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. {24} Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder. {25} So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there."

Joseph told his house steward to bring the men to his house and slay an animal. He is preparing a feast for them. But Joseph's brothers are afraid, thinking that this ruler is seeking an occasion against them to make them slaves. Our thoughts are often that way. We think that the things that are happening to us are bad, when really God is working things out for good. Jacob thought that everything was working against him, when in fact God was going to preserve them in the seven years of famine by having them go to Egypt. The brothers were thinking the worst, when Joseph was preparing a feast for them.

When they arrived at the house, they pleaded their case with the house steward. They told him about the money that they found returned in their sacks of grain. They said they had brought it back and offered to give it to him. A fear of consequences brings a change in behavior. When they threw Joseph in a pit, they were not concerned about consequences. When they sold him as a slave, they were not concerned about consequences. Now that they are concerned about the consequences and the possibility of being enslaved, they are doing what is right. God wants us to have a fear of Him. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 8:13 that "*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...*" In Proverbs 16:6b Solomon said, "*And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from*

evil.” Our society has no fear of the Lord or the coming judgment. One survey shows that about 60% of the abortions are done by people professing to be Christians. Where is the fear of the Lord to turn away from evil. When Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York celebrated the late term abortion law that they passed, he obviously has no concern of the consequences of that decision. Where is his fear of the Lord? Where is the fear of the Lord of those lawmakers? We need a healthy fear of the Lord. One of the things to pray for legislators is a fear of the Lord.

Much of the church today has lost the fear of the Lord. If we had more of a fear of the Lord, the church would not be walking in the ways of the world. If we had more fear of the Lord, the bride would be without spot or wrinkle, and would be prepared for the bridegroom to return. If we had more fear of the Lord, we would bow down in reverence to the Lord in worship. We need more fear and reverence of the Lord.

The house steward senses their fear and knows that his master is planning a feast for them. He tells them, “*Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money.*” I believe that Joseph had introduced the house steward to the God of Israel. The house steward obviously knows what is going on. After putting them at ease, the house steward brought out Simeon to them. They had not seen their brother in months and they would have obviously been happy and relieved to see him. He had been kept safe and sound, and this would have also put them at ease.

Then, the house steward refreshes them by giving them water, and washing their feet. Normally, the lowest servant in the house would wash the feet, but the house steward does it himself. The steward shows good hospitality, treating them as guests of honor. After washing their feet, he gave their donkeys fodder. Joseph's brothers heard that the ruler was coming at noon for lunch so they prepared their present for him.

3. **Joseph's Meal With His Brothers** (Gen 43:26-34)

(Gen 43:26-34) “When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him. {27} Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, “Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?” {28} They said, “Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.” They bowed down in homage. {29} As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, “Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?” And he said, “May God be gracious to you, my son.” {30} Joseph hurried *out* for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought *a place* to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there. {31} Then he washed his face and came out; and he controlled himself and said, “Serve the meal.” {32} So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians. {33} Now they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment. {34} He took portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely with him.”

This is a very moving scene. When Joseph came home at noon, his brothers brought into the house the present they had for him, and bowed to the ground before him. They are in fear for their lives, and are hoping to gain favor with him. Joseph inquired about their welfare, and how their father is doing. They said that Jacob was still alive and is well, and they bowed down in

homage. This was the second time that they bowed before him. The Hebrew word is shaha (Strong's H7812), and it means to bow down, prostrate oneself, or worship. It is used 172 times and in 99 of those verses it is translated as worship. His brothers were showing great reverence towards Joseph, the ruler in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.

When Joseph saw Benjamin, his mother's son, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me about?" Then, he said, "*May God be gracious to you, my son.*" Joseph was so emotionally stirred that he hurried out of the room to his chamber and wept. After he was finished weeping, he washed his face and came out. It says that he controlled himself. Joseph was controlling his emotions. Having control of your emotions and your actions is a very good thing. In Galatians 5:22-23 we find that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. When we are walking in the Spirit, we should be manifesting self-control. A lack of self-control is an evidence of walking in the flesh.

A couple of weeks ago, my mother and I met with a doctor who specializes in the care of people with Alzheimer's disease. He said that one of the problems with people suffering from this condition is they have no self-control. If they get angry, they let their emotions vent. They may get loud and angry. They may hit the other person. They are without any inhibitions or self control. The Bible says that this is not a good thing. In Proverbs 25:28, we read, "*Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.*"

In 1 Timothy 3:4, we find that keeping your children under control is a requirement for pastors. They not only have to control their own temperaments, but they need to have control over their children.

How do we get self-control? I mentioned that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, so being filled with the Holy Spirit and setting your mind on things above is a big part of it. Self-control begins with setting our minds on the right things and controlling our thought life. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul wrote that we must take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. We have to control our thought life. We also have to control what goes into our heart. Jesus said that the things that come out of our mouths, and our actions come from the heart (Mark 7:21). Therefore, we have to watch over our hearts with all diligence (Proverbs 4:23). That means that we have to be careful about what we watch at the movies, on TV, or on YouTube. It means that we have to be careful with what we look at on the internet. We have to guard our hearts with diligence.

Sometimes, self-control is best done with good preventative decisions. An alcoholic has no business going to a bar with his friends, thinking he will have self-control. The best thing for him to do is to avoid compromising situations. Paul wrote that we are not to make any provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14).

Joseph exercised self-control in front of his brothers. We must also have control over our emotions. We must be led by the Spirit, not our emotions. We must be free to respond emotionally, but we cannot be controlled by emotions.

There were three tables. There was one for Joseph, one for the Hebrew brothers, and one for the Egyptians. It was loathsome for an Egyptian to eat with a Hebrew. It was similar to the Jews and Samaritans. It appears to me that Joseph is at his own table because of his position. The Egyptians that are there are separated from the Hebrews because they were considered inferior, and it was loathsome for an Egyptian to eat with a Hebrew.

Joseph had them seated according to their birthrights, and the brothers were astonished. They were wondering how this man knew their birth order. Joseph brought portions to them from his own table. The brothers were fearful, so eating from Joseph's table put to rest any fear of this man poisoning their food. Then, Joseph gave Benjamin five times as much food as any of theirs. They feasted and drank freely with him.

Conclusion and Applications

We are in the middle of the story of Joseph. In some ways I hate to end because we are in the middle of the story. The story is developing and ultimately Jacob and the whole family will have to move to Egypt. That is what God prophesied to Abraham. That is what God prophetically showed Joseph in his dreams. God is working out all the details of His plan. He has been involved in every detail. He allowed Joseph to be sold into the hands of the Midianites. He had Joseph sold to Potiphar. He had Joseph put in the king's jail. He had the baker and the cupbearer put in the same jail. He gave dreams to the cupbearer and baker. He had Joseph interpret their dreams. He gave Pharaoh the dreams about the cows and the corn. He reminded the cupbearer of Joseph and how he interpreted his dream. He had Joseph interpret the dream. God caused the seven good years, and He has brought about the famine. He is orchestrating the events to bring Jacob and his family to Egypt. He sent Joseph ahead of them and raised him up to preserve the lives of His chosen people. We see the hand of God working through all of this.

Today, how has God been directing your paths? Has he been using circumstances in your life to direct your paths? Has He spoken to you in dreams or prophetic words to direct your paths? Some of us have been in the king's jail, waiting for His timing for us to be released. If that is you, ask God to give you patience. Ask God to give you favor, as He did with Joseph. Ask God to help you forgive those that may have put you there. Joseph forgave his brothers. Joseph forgave Potiphar and his wife. He had no malice or unforgiveness. Ask God to prepare you for the plans He has for your life.

Some of you are at a point where you have some direction, but you need to make plans. You may need to make plans for your business. You may need to make plans for your finances. Ask God to give you wisdom and counsel as you make your plans. Ask Him to bless and confirm your plans.

We also saw today that Joseph's brothers humbly bowed before the ruler of the land. That bowing is translated the majority of times as worship. God is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Joseph's brothers were on their best behavior because they had a fear of the ruler. It is a picture for us of how we are to act before our Ruler. We are to live holy lives before our Lord. We are to humbly bow before Him and worship Him. We are to bring gifts to Him as part of our reverence. Joseph brought his brothers into his house to dine with them. Maybe the Lord has been speaking to you about dining with Him. In Revelations 3:20 He says that He is knocking and if you open the door, He will come and dine with you. God wants fellowship with us. Perhaps God has been speaking to you about your walk with Him. Are you living with a fear of the Lord? Are you humbling yourself before Him? Are you bowing in reverence to Him? Are you presenting yourself and your gifts to Him? If God has been speaking to you about this, consecrate yourself unto the Lord this morning. Make Him Lord of your life this morning. That is what I had to do at Waterwood National. I gave up my dreams and surrendered everything to Him, and I am forever grateful for what He did in my life that day. Let's pray.

Introduction

1. **Plan To Return To Egypt** (Gen 43:1-15, Gen 42:38, Deut 30:19-20, Josh 24:15, Pr 16:1, 3, 9)
2. **Joseph's Brothers Are Brought To Joseph's House** (Gen 43:15-25, Pr 8:13)
3. **Joseph's Meal With His Brothers** (Gen 43:26-34, Gal 5:22-23, Pr 25:28, 1 Tim 3:4, Mark 7:21, Pr 4:23, Rom 13:14)

Conclusion and Applications (Rev 3:20)