

**“Father’s Favorites”**  
**Genesis 42:25-43:14**  
June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Three young fathers were in the waiting room of the baby hospital. The first was told that his wife gave birth to twins. He was amazed and said, “I play ball for the Minnesota Twins.”

Later, the nurse came out and told the second man, “Congratulations, you are the father of triplets.” He said, “That’s amazing! I work for 3M.”

The third man fainted. When he woke up they asked, “What’s wrong?” He said, “I work for 7-Up.”

We return today to our continuing study, *The Book of Beginnings: God’s Grace in Genesis*. When we looked at the first 24 verses of Genesis Chapter 42 two Sunday’s ago, we learned there was a severe, widespread famine. Jacob sent the 10 sons yet in his charge to Egypt, where reports said there was much grain for sale. The 10 brothers come to Egypt and meet their brother Joseph (unbeknownst to them). Joseph recognizes his brothers, and uses the opportunity to try and bring them to repentance over their sin. The ensuing conversation reveals Joseph’s love for his brothers (despite their years old sin in mistreating him) and the beginning of God’s grace at work in the brothers’ hearts. Joseph learns he has a younger brother, Benjamin, and desires to see him. He, therefore, keeps one of the brothers – Simeon – in detention in Egypt while the rest of the brothers return to Jacob in Canaan.

We pick up the study this morning with the brothers’ departure, and their return to Canaan.

**Genesis 42:25-43:14:**

<sup>25</sup> Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them. <sup>26</sup> So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there. <sup>27</sup> But as one of *them* opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack. <sup>28</sup> So he said to his brothers, “My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!” Then their hearts failed *them* and they were afraid, saying to one another, “What *is* this *that* God has done to us?”

<sup>29</sup> Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying: <sup>30</sup> “The man *who is* lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. <sup>31</sup> But we said to him, ‘We *are* honest *men*; we are not spies. <sup>32</sup> We *are* twelve brothers, sons of our father; one *is* no *more*, and the youngest *is* with our father this day in the land of Canaan.’ <sup>33</sup> Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, ‘By this I will know that you *are* honest *men*: Leave one of your brothers *here* with me, take *food* for the famine of your households, and be gone. <sup>34</sup> And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you *are* not spies, but *that you are* honest *men*. I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’”

<sup>35</sup> Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man’s bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. <sup>36</sup> And Jacob their father said to them, “You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more*, Simeon is no *more*, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me.”

<sup>37</sup> Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, “Kill my two sons if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.”

<sup>38</sup> But he said, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.”

43 Now the famine *was* severe in the land. <sup>2</sup> And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, “Go back, buy us a little food.”  
<sup>3</sup> But Judah spoke to him, saying, “The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.’ <sup>4</sup> If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.  
<sup>5</sup> But if you will not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.’”

<sup>6</sup> And Israel said, “Why did you deal *so* wrongfully with me *as* to tell the man whether you had still *another* brother?”

<sup>7</sup> But they said, “The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, ‘*Is* your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?’ And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down?’”

<sup>8</sup> Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones. <sup>9</sup> I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. <sup>10</sup> For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time.”

<sup>11</sup> And their father Israel said to them, “If *it must be* so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. <sup>12</sup> Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. <sup>13</sup> Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. <sup>14</sup> And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!”

**MP 1 – Godly Fear Brings about Godly Sorrow** (v. 42:25-28)

**MP 2 – Selfish Living reaps Selfish Results** (v. 42:35-38)

**MP 3 – Living Faith leads to Living Free** (v. 43:6-14)

As today’s text opens, we come to our first principle – **Godly fear brings about Godly sorrow**. At Joseph’s command, his brothers’ sacks were filled with something they came for – food; and something they brought with – their money. Sometime on their journey (which was about a 250 mile trip), the brothers stop to rest. One of them (we’re not told who) opened his sack and saw money (silver) resting on top of the grain in his sack!

The brother reports his discovery to the rest, and verse 28 says “their hearts failed *them* and they were afraid...” They couldn’t believe this was done by mistake, or for some good reason, so they despaired, likely thinking they’d have to make a trip back to Egypt to set things right. Their verbal response is captured at the end of verse 28 - “What *is* this *that* God has done to us?” This is the first time Joseph’s brothers mention God in their speech since we first met them so many chapters ago.

There are two aspects to that statement. First, the brothers rightly understand that God had something to do with the money being in the grain sack. God is absolutely sovereign over the heavens and the earth. He, therefore, has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass (**WSC #7; Ephesians 1:11-12**). And, as God, He powerfully preserves and governs all His creatures, and all their actions (**WSC #11; Matthew 10:29**).

Yet, there is another aspect to the brothers’ words – they do not seem to see that their own sin is responsible for their problem. They are on the road to repentance; their actions will tease that out, or they will be hardened in their sin.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul speaks about this principle in his second letter to the church at Corinth. This is **2 Corinthians 7:10-11** – “For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading to* salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. <sup>11</sup> For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, *what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!* In all *things* you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

**Application:** *Do you realize that God is sovereign over your affairs?* You are not in control of your life, let alone anyone else’s! God knows your suffering, struggles, disappointments, and failures. He also knows your victories, encouragements, and successes! God is much bigger than we sometimes understand Him to be, and at the point of our meager understanding, we may tend to despair of hope. Perhaps this reminder that God is much bigger than you can know will be of help in the challenges ahead. Remember, what is impossible with us is possible with God. Fear Him properly, and serve Him acceptably.

Our second principle comes about in verse 35-38 of Chapter 42 – **Selfish Living reaps Selfish Results.**

We’ve seen on more than one occasion that Jacob had a terrible problem with favoritism. He favored Rachel over Leah (whom he married first), and he favored the first son he had with Rachel – Joseph. Jacob’s gift of a multi-colored garment caused him to stand out before his brothers (all of them older than he), and such an act of partiality bred resentment in Joseph’s brothers’ hearts.

Such favoritism continues here. Verse 35 reveals that all of the grain sacks had money in them, and Jacob now joins his fear with his sons. Notice Jacob’s words in verse 36, “You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more*, Simeon is no *more*, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me.” Jacob laments Joseph (whom he didn’t know was alive), he laments Simeon (who he probably didn’t think he’d get to see again), and now the threat of losing Benjamin, his second child with Rachel, looms. He concludes that nothing is going His way; everything is going against him.

*What of the sons’ response to his selfish words?* # 1 son – Reuben - steps forward and says in verse 37, “Kill my two sons if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.” *Could it be that Reuben’s motive was to get back in his father’s good graces?* Possibly. *But, are we to really think that Jacob would snuff out two of his grandsons if their father didn’t bring his now favored son Benjamin back to Canaan alive?*

Jacob simply cannot bear the thought of going through the rest of his days with both of Rachel’s sons gone. So, we see in verse 38, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.”

Many of the problems afflicting Jacob were self-inflicted. He was incredibly deceptive in stealing brother Esau’s birthright and blessing. And, Jacob has also been a selfish father. Interestingly, God is working through such sin and selfishness to bring about His plan to elevate Joseph in Egypt.

**Application:** *Aren't we often like Jacob when we complain that everything is against us? "Circumstances fail to treat us as we think they should, someone says something less than complimentary, we are faced by a difficult decision – and suddenly we feel that nothing has ever gone right for us in our entire lives, and we pout about it. Is that the kind of witness we are going to bear for God?"* (Boice, 1014)

And parents, especially fathers on this Father's Day, because you are to be the spiritual leaders in your family. Heed the words of **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

<sup>6</sup> "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Then, there's this New Testament instruction – **Ephesians 6:4** – "...fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Consider, parents (especially you, Dads) how you are leading your children to come to the end of themselves, and to Jesus in faith. *Do you pray with and for them? Do you read and talk about God's Word with them? Are you working through the First or Shorter Catechisms with them? Do you ensure your children frequent the worship gatherings and teaching opportunities of the local church?* If so, you can expect a bountiful harvest that will withstand the famines of life in a fallen world.

Our third point comes in chapter 43 – **Living Faith leads to Living Free**. Jacob's fourth son, Judah, begins to stand out as the leader with his counsel to his father in verses 8-10. After reasoning with his grieving father, Judah, comes up with a plan. He offered to take Benjamin and leave early in the morning. In return, his guarantee was that Jacob could do whatever pleased him to Judah and his family line. But, speed was of the essence, they'd die of hunger!

*It's not hard to understand Jacob's hesitating, though, is it?* To lose a third son could be the end of him. So, he's been trying to control as many aspects of Benjamin's life as possible – the original helicopter parent! For sure, living by faith in God carries with it risk and a measure of uncertainty. But, God's children are His children by faith in the first place. And, God's Word teaches us. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." (**2 Corinthians 5:7**)

With chapter 43, almost all of a sudden, we begin to see a very different Jacob. He's becoming a more confident man; a man of faith – and his name is again referred to as Israel (not Jacob). See verses 6, 8, & 11.

In response to Judah's offer, Israel instructs him to take some of the best fruits to Joseph as a present—balm, honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. Further, Judah is to take double money as compensation for the grain already eaten and the grain they'll bring back this trip. Finally, Israel tells Judah to take Benjamin in hopes that Simeon will also be released.

This is the essence of living by faith. Really, it's not that risky, given that God is good and sovereign. But a strong faith also brings great freedom – freedom from guilt and fear, and the freedom to accept God's forgiveness in Christ.

A man who owned a Rolls Royce, had a mechanical failure while traveling on vacation. The man called the company where he bought the car and they flew in a mechanic from England to repair it! But, that's not all.

After waiting a number of weeks for a bill for the repair job, the man emailed the company in England and asked for a bill. He received a reply that read – “We have no record of a Rolls Royce with a mechanical failure.”

Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, believers in Christ stand free, clean and bold before God. An understanding of that is absolutely necessary if any of us is going to stand against the pagan and religious manipulation of our time. When we who trust in the atoning work of Christ go before the judgment throne of God, He will say, “I have no record of the failure.”

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“By profession, I am a soldier, and take pride in that fact, but I am prouder, infinitely prouder, to be a father. A soldier destroys in order to build; a father only builds, never destroys. The one has the potentialities of death; the other embodies creation of life. It is my hope that my son, when I am gone, will remember me, not from the battle, but in the home repeating with him our simple, daily prayer, our Father Who art in Heaven.”—General Douglas MacArthur