How to Respond to Powerful People August 23, 2020

*Genesis 33:1-20 Series: How Jacob Became Israel*

“I was bound, but He was free; yea, ’twas my duty to stand to His word.” – John Bunyan

Intro: How John Bunyan faced the pressure of an entire society.

1. When you feel the pressure of powerful people, respond with humility.
2. Jacob felt like he was in a life and death situation.

v.1 *Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him.*

Genesis 25:27 *Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.*

Genesis 27:41 *I will kill my brother Jacob.*

1. Jacob had done everything he could.

v.1 *So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants.*

v.2 *Rachel and Joseph last of all.*

1. Jacob, at great risk to himself, chose the path of humility.

v.3 *He himself went on before them*

v.3 *bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.*

* What makes humility sometimes an easy path and other times a hard path to follow?
* How do we know that Jacob’s humility is not merely an act of cowardice?
* How can we make sure that our humble actions flow out of genuine humility?

1. When you feel the pressure of powerful people, respond with generosity.
2. Jacob’s humility was met with God’s grace and blessing.

v.4 *But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.*

Isaiah 66:2 *But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.*

1. Jacob’s humility, and even God’s blessing, did not mean the confrontation was over.

v.5 *“Who are these with you?”*

v.8 *“What do you mean by all this company that I met?”*

1. Jacob, recognizing God’s grace, chose the path of generosity.

v.5 *Jacob said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.”*

v.10 *accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me.*

v.11 *Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Thus he urged him, and he took it.*

**Q** How is God continuing to be gracious to Jacob in this exchange?

**Q** How do we know that Jacob’s generosity is not actually an act of appeasement?

**Q** Why should we be generous to already powerful people?

1. When you feel the pressure of powerful people, respond with obedience.
2. Jacob still faced one more unlikely challenge.

v.12 *Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.”*

v.15 *Esau said, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.”*

1. Jacob, seeking God’s blessing, chose the path of obedience.

v.14 *Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant*

v.17 *But Jacob journeyed to Succoth*

v.18 *And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan*

1. Jacob’s obedience ended with praise and thanksgiving.

v.20 *There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.*

Psalm 50:14 *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High*

* Why would following Esau’s plan be tempting to Jacob?
* What made going to Canaan better?
* How is our obedience and thankfulness to God tied together?

**From Israel to Canada: How does this ancient story relate to us today?**

1. This was a story Israel needed to hear

Numbers 13:32 *“The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height.*

Numbers 14:3 *Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?”*

1. This is a story we need to hear

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*

2 Timothy 3:12 *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*

1. This is a story that points to Jesus Christ
   * Philippians 2:7-8 *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
   * John 10:10 *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*
   * 1 John 2:6 *whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

* How did the biblical nation of Israel line up with this teaching?
* Who are the powerful people and forces pressuring us today and how are we often tempted to respond?
* How does being disciples of Jesus shape our response?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Genesis 34.

Notes