



The Sermon

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Genesis 47

"A Weary Patriarch and a Good God"

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TRANSCRIPT

This morning is Genesis 47:1-31, not the chapter about Joseph, if you consider the whole story of Joseph, one of the longest sections of the Bible in terms of a story about a given figure. This is not Genesis 47 the chapter you would think of about Joseph's story. You think about him being sold into slavery by his brothers, nearly killed – you've covered that already here from this pulpit. You might think about Genesis 50 coming up from this pulpit, God willing, soon, "You meant this for evil, but God meant it for good," kind of the capstone theological reality of Joseph's entire existence. You wouldn't think though necessarily of Joseph wisely stewarding Egyptian resources. Not many of you I'm guessing have heard a sermon on this chapter, like Dr Lawson said a few weeks ago about Genesis 46 in the genealogy; I've been listening along with you.

But this text has glory in it. We're going to see four main characters in this narrative. I'm going to break it up in terms of a character study. First, we're going to see: "The wise leadership of Joseph. The wise leadership of Joseph," verses 1-26. That's going to be most of the sermon, because most of the passage is about Joseph's wise and godly leadership. There's going to be four subpoints under my first Joseph point. The Puritans used to have fifty subpoints, so please do not complain, OK. If you want to, take it up with Kent afterwards.

Second, we're going to see: "The kind allowance of Pharaoh." Pharaoh's our second character, verses 3-6: "The kind allowance of Pharaoh." Third, we're going to see: "The wearied trust of Jacob," verses 7-9 and 27-31, "the wearied trust of Jacob." And fourth, we're going to see: "The good hand of God." We're going to see how God is working through all this passage.

So to our first character study: "The wise leadership of Joseph." Four sub-truths under this, as we will see. Verses 1-26 show us that Joseph acts in many wise ways in this chapter, and he does so both privately and publicly. The spotlight is really on him, and we see him in this chapter unveiled in all his God-given wisdom and power. And I think this will be a blessing to you as you think about your own God-given vocation and work, whether that is in the home raising up the next generation of Christian disciples, God willing, or whether that is outside of the home working to provide for your family, and on it goes.

Be encouraged as we consider Joseph in this morning's sermon. We're going to see in verses 1-6 now, first, first sub-truth about Joseph, how he presents his brothers to Pharaoh. Read with me in verses 1-6. We're going to read as we go this morning.

Verse 1 of chapter 47 in the ESV: "So Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, 'My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan. They're now in the land of Goshen.' And from among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to his brothers, 'What is your occupation?' And they said to Pharaoh, 'Your servants are shepherds, as our fathers were.' They said to Pharaoh, 'We've come to sojourn in the land, for there's no pasture for your servants' flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. And now, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.' Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them settle in the land of Goshen, and if you know any able men among them, put them in charge of my livestock.'" Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, as we consider Your word now, we turn once more to You and ask You to bless us as we study it. We need Your help. We're coming in here with a range of circumstances and experiences, trials, challenges, blessings; and I pray. Father, that Your people would be richly encouraged by this chapter. I pray that those who are not yet Your people would indeed cross the line of faith by Your grace. In Jesus' great name we pray. Amen.  
[End]

We have here a continuation of the theme of previous chapters of Joseph's engagement of his family, and basically you should understand this: the one put into the pit by his brothers is now the one who rescues his brothers and his broader family from the pit. And that's what we see in verses 1-6, this first sub-truth. Joseph brings them to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh does, in verse 3, what he often does in this narrative. He asks a question of the brothers: "What is your occupation?"

Throughout the narrative of Joseph, Pharaoh is fascinated by this man, by Jacob as we'll see in a minute, and by this family. He seems genuinely intrigued by this family. They're a striking family. They're a family that has the blessing of God upon them, and Pharaoh at some level seems to detect that and be pulled by that.

And then there's just a quick word for you. As you have a godly family by the grace of God, people around you, even in Dallas, Texas, which has a strong heritage of faith, will nonetheless look in on your family and wonder, "Why do you have a godly marriage? Why do you forgive one another when you sin? Why do your kids not be on screens all the time at restaurants when you go out with them? Why do they actually talk to their dad and mom happily and joyfully? Why do you have a godly family?" People may even ask you that question.

Well, Pharaoh is intrigued by this family. In their audience with Pharaoh, the five unnamed brothers – we don't know which five they were that Joseph selected to go into the most powerful man in the known world – they make a bold request of Pharaoh in verse 4. They ask to, "Let your

servants dwell in the land of Goshen." Goshen, as you will remember from Dr Lawson's excellent preaching – my favorite living preacher – is likely in the eastern Delta of Egypt. It is the richest land there is. So the brothers are coming to Pharaoh and they're not exactly pulling their punch, they're asking to be settled in the best place of the best place. And this is really unique in salvation history. The land of Egypt – before it becomes a living nightmare, as it will soon – is first a place of refuge for God's people.

Pharaoh responds kindly and graciously to this bold request – we'll say more about that in a moment. In fact, he goes so far as to say in verse 6, "If any of you or your brothers want to keep my livestock," – a very important job – "you can do so." And he says that because he has watched Joseph be such a godly and trustworthy man. And there's a lesson for us. When a Christian has a walk, a man or woman has a clear, faithful walk in public, others will see that, and that will have all sorts of ripple effects even for your family; and that's what's happening in this audience with Pharaoh.

We see, secondly, under this first study of Joseph truth, we see, secondly, in verses 7-12 that, "Then Joseph brings Jacob his father to Pharaoh." So let's read verses 7-12: "Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Jacob, 'How many are the days of the years of your life?' And Jacob said to Pharaoh, 'The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning.' And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh. Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their dependents."

in his presentation of his family to resettle the clan in Egypt, provide for them, though they did not provide for him, Joseph closes by bringing Jacob his father before Pharaoh; and we see familiar elements in this section. Pharaoh again – do you see this? – asks a question this time of Jacob,

indicating real interest in him, and some confusion about who this man is and what this family is, why is it the way it is. Verse 8, "How many are the days of the years of your life?" Pharaoh asks Jacob. Jacob gives a weary, an almost defeated answer. It's a strange answer. We're going to look at it in just a moment.

For his part after that answer in both verses 7 and 10, Jacob blesses Pharaoh. And you and I don't really have a context for that, because you don't go over to your friend's house, you know, you don't go to care group in this church, or you don't hang out and watch the football game before TCU takes the field tomorrow night; no one's going to bless, you know, the rest of the people or something like this, at least not that I know of. But this is a man, Jacob, who is chosen by God and marked out as the living embodiment of his people. He's going to be called Israel later in this chapter. So in a weird sense, Jacob is the people of God, and he has the ability, as God prompts him and leads him, to transmit blessing. So Jacob blesses Pharaoh, and then all sorts of good things follow in the rest of the passage.

And good things follow for Joseph's family, his brothers. They are settled, verse 11, in Egypt; and not only that, they have *metab* in the Hebrew, they have the best. They have the best of the land. It's such a tremendous gift that God has given this family. In a time of famine, as we're going to see, this family has abundant food, "according" – verse 12, look there at the end of that verse – "according to the number of their dependents." Everybody has food, nobody's lacking. About 70 people then are being directly blessed because of Joseph, and now because of Jacob.

We see, thirdly, in terms of Joseph as a character, that, "He stewards Egypt's resources well. He stewards Egypt's resources well." See that in verse 13-17? Let's read that.

"Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of

Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, 'Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.'" Verse 16, "And Joseph answered, 'Give your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.' So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. He supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year."

This is an absolutely terrible situation. It is a crisis of epic proportions. It is hard for us to imagine. A few years ago we had food shortages in American grocery stores, something basically unprecedented in our lifetime; and that was hard to navigate and figure out. But this is way worse. There is truly no food in Egypt. And this is the fulfillment of the dream that God gave to Joseph.

Joseph understood, and interpreting that dream that when God was going to give seven years of blessing to Egypt, those would be years of incredible blessing; and when God was going to bring seven years of famine, there would be true suffering indeed. And this is a spiritual picture for us. If we are not following Christ, if we do not know Christ as our Savior, then the suffering we will experience for all eternity is beyond belief. And so now is the hour of salvation. Do not delay, because the blessing that God has promised His forgiven people is indeed beyond belief. It is unimaginably good to go to heaven when you die and then live in the new heavens and new earth for all eternity.

Friends, everything you're excited about today, this week, this month, 2023, pales in comparison to what is coming. That is the blessing. That is the goodness to seek, the blessing of eternal life, because if God promises it, He's going to bring it to pass. You can't stop God. No one in here can do anything to slow the hand of God in either the direction of blessing or cursing one bit. So the way to engage God now is to trust in Jesus Christ by faith, knowing that He died for sinners like you and me on the cross, and

rose from the grave. And when you believe in Christ and turn from all your sin, reject it, leave it behind, leave it in the land you used to live in, then you are born again; and now there is blessing beyond belief for you to come. Leave the famine while there is time.

This is what the people in an earthly sense are trying to do in verses 15, 18 and 19. They seek to buy food from Joseph and not die. Note how much is staked on one man, just one man: Joseph. It's not Pharaoh interestingly, it's Joseph who is in charge of all of this. He's got every life in Egypt in his hand. Do you understand this? This is unimaginable power, that in God's providence he has. God so frequently hinges so much on just one person, one man - different biblical figures throughout the Old Testament: Ruth or Esther, Daniel, Joseph.

I think, by the way, in terms of analogy about the great story about the Texas Rangers, not the baseball team, but the Rangers, where there was a riot I believe out in West Texas. And so the Rangers, it was said, were sending their best men. And the train came in the course of the riot, and one ranger stepped off the train, and the head of the town looked at the ranger and said, "Just one ranger?" And the ranger looked right back at him and said, "Just one riot." So there you go.

Sometimes all you need is one man. That's the case with our salvation. That's the case with Jesus Christ. You don't get a group of friends and figure out how you're all going to contribute to the work of salvation. We don't pool our merit, we don't use the merit of the saints of years past and our own merit and future merit, and Christ's merit is in there, and somehow it all works out and we're good. No, it is one man's blood by which we are accounted righteous when we trust in it by faith. Just one Savior.

So, Joseph has so much on his back, and he stewards this situation well. "They bring" - verse 17 - "their livestock to him. He gives them food in exchange for it." Pharaoh prospers tremendously through what Joseph has done. And we see that Joseph executes this stewardship with the highest personal integrity. Look at the end of verse 14 with me: "And Joseph

brought the money into Pharaoh's house." If you and I were reading this in our devotions we might just skip over it: "Sure, he brought the money in." No, no, no, no. This is very important.

Hear what John Calvin, for example, says about this little detail of this massive text we're studying this morning: "Amid such vast heaps of money, the opportunity of plundering was not less than the difficulty of self-restraint. But Moses says" – Moses the author of Genesis for Calvin – "that whatever money Joseph collected, he brought into the house of the king. It was a rare and unparalleled integrity to keep the hands pure amidst such heaps of gold." So this is really important.

As with Potiphar's wife, a bunch of chapters back, so with Pharaoh's money. Joseph is a man of integrity. Joseph is the same man in private that he is in public. Joseph is the same man when there is one person with him in a house and he can do whatever he wants and no one will know. And Joseph is the same man in front of starving Egyptians, hundreds of them, and then collecting the money. And that is the great need of the day, then and now, men and women of integrity, Christians of integrity, Christians who are the same person in front of their smartphone, in front of a tablet with no one around them, that they are when they're surrounded by their friends or co-workers or neighbors. We desperately need men and women of integrity.

Integrity means that your character holds fast all the way through. You're not a different person here, and then you morph into a totally unique person over here. You're the same person. And by the grace of God, that's what you and I can be. God gives us the opportunity by the power of His Spirit. If your life – let's be honest – if it hasn't been clicking that way, if you have been flirting with being a different person over here than here, by the grace of God, when you repent of your sin, God forgives you. He's such a forgiving God. Do you know that in Christ – just be reminded of this for a second – God forgives every single sin. He's not stingy, He doesn't have a certain allotment of merit or forgiveness, He lavishes forgiveness on His people. So, praise God.



Joseph is a very positive example. Joseph collected the money, more money than we could fathom, and he brought it right into Pharaoh's house, no question. Didn't skim it off the top, didn't take some for himself. Same man in private as he is in public. You can trust Joseph anywhere. And do you not yearn for a public leader like this? This is about a politician essentially, Joseph. That's what God made him. Do you not yearn for public figures like this? Do you not yearn for strong men like Joseph who will in public lead with integrity and be gracious and good and righteous by the power of God?

Maybe some of you should be this kind of man. Maybe there's a Joseph in here. You say, "No, no, no, no, no. I just go to church and I just try to be faithful and do my work." Sometimes Christians don't dream big enough. Sometimes we don't think big enough. Sometimes we don't ask God for a stewardship like this, and perhaps we should.

Fourth truth about Joseph: "He saves many lives. He saves many lives." You see that in verses 18-26: "And when that year was ended," - verse 18 - "they" - the Egyptians - "came to him the following year and said to him, 'We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent. The herds of livestock are my lord's. There's nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us,' - this is quite a statement - 'buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live, and not die and that the land may not be desolate.'

"So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh's. As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other. Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land."

Verse 23, "Then Joseph said to the people, 'Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. And at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four

fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.' And they said, 'You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh.' So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day" - Moses' writing - "that Pharaoh should have the fifth; the land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh's."

This passage is an intensification and an extension of the previous section, verses 13-17. First, Joseph bought their livestock, basically the best of what they had. Now he buys the last thing the Egyptians have; he buys their land. "He bought it all," - verse 20 - "all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh." So the people become in this text servants, or, better translated, slaves, verse 21, of Pharaoh. The Hebrew term *abadim* is translated slavery elsewhere. You see that in Exodus 13 and 20.

So the Egyptians in order to survive have made themselves slaves. One exegete points this out. The brothers sold Joseph into slavery, now Joseph sells Egypt into slavery. What a reversal of situation this is. Do you understand? Do you remember that Joseph was a slave? He had no power, he had no influence, he couldn't turn any levers or pull anything; and now he just bought the nation for his ruler. That's how powerful Joseph is.

But mark Joseph's character once more. The textual details, they matter. Observation, observation, observation: isn't that what somebody says? Joseph, in verse 22, does not grab up the land of the priests. Did you see that? That's another point of integrity for Joseph: he doesn't go further than he needs to.

We see another detail in verses 23b to 24, we see that he creates a free market out of a dead market. Sometimes you read, interestingly, the commentators, and they say it's bad that Joseph took 20 percent from the people here. He took a fifth and left them with four-fifths of their harvest. That's the wrong way to interpret this passage. Joseph could have taken 80 percent, 90 percent, 95 percent. Instead, he takes just one-fifth, and in doing so he lets there be, as the Bible I think wants there to be, a free

market, where people flourish and prosper and take responsibility for themselves, and the right understanding of what's called self-rule: you work for your food, you're not a dependent for no reason.

So Joseph actually returns agency to the people in a beautiful act of public leadership. Joseph is not therefore acting in a kind of tyrannical way. Have you not witnessed in recent years tyranny spread, and has it not been awful to watch it spread our brothers and sisters up in Canada, for example, who were considered illegal just for gathering together for corporate worship? We have seen so many abuses of power in the last few years, and certainly in human history.

Here is a godly leader, a godly man, who acts in restraint. He does not abuse his God-given power. He helps his family first; he loves his family. Think about that. He has given up vengeance, as Dr. Lawson talked about last week. He could. Could not Joseph be cultivating in this very moment profound anger against his brothers. They were about to murder him. They sold him successfully into slavery.

He is not acting in vengeance. He has done what is so hard for the sinful human heart to do: he has let go of vengeance, he's just released it to the wind, and he's forgiven them, and he's acting for their good. And there's a call there to you and to me, because you may have suffered in a serious way in your past. There may be something now that's bitterly difficult for you. And we know, we all know that instinct, when we are wronged. I don't mean somebody walks in front of you at Target. I mean when you are profoundly wronged, and it's not going to easily heal. Is it not amazing how there can be a burning in the heart of anger 10, 15, 20, 30 years later? Do we not have a capacity, a strong one for vengeance?

Joseph's is gone. He's loving his brothers, he's helping them tremendously, and now he's used by God as, again, effectively a politician to save an entire nation. All this through one godly man.

Again, let this be a call, let this be a call to Christians today. We must not embrace a chastened Christianity where Christians see it as a virtue to not live out their faith in the public square. Not everybody's called to this kind of role or something like that, don't misunderstand. But God is telling us something through the example of this man, that the world desperately needs what you could call public Christianity, what Jesus calls salt and light. It needs it everywhere.

Did you see Dan Orlovsky, the ESPN anchor, pray on the air for the Bills player who almost died this last week? One of the most remarkable things I've ever seen in a too long history of watching TV was a guy on ESPN, a woke network in many ways, stopping and praying. It choked me up. I had tears in my eyes to see a Christian live out their faith in public. You can have the same affect. It wasn't anything fancy that this anchor did, this sportscaster. It was a simple, quick prayer. But God blesses public faith like that, and God will bless and use you.

We need to consider our second character in this serious passage: Pharaoh. In verses 3-6 we see, "The kind allowance of Pharaoh." So moving on from Joseph to Pharaoh. Pharaoh's name comes up in this passage more than any other. Jacob's name comes up seven times, Joseph's name comes up fifteen times. Pharaoh's name is used in Genesis 47, twenty-four times. So Moses is up to something. He wants us to take notice of Pharaoh and pay attention to him.

This is Pharaoh Sensusret III according to John MacArthur. So this is a specific pharaoh, this is not the pharaoh of Exodus, as you will know. We won't re-read verses 3-6. But there Pharaoh is, as I said, fascinated by Joseph's family. And Pharaoh here treats God's people very well, and Pharaoh himself is powerfully blessed in a common grace sense through God's working through Joseph. And that's a picture of how God uses His people, continuing this theme of public faith, the public faith of Joseph and his broader family.

Who knows what God is going to do when we live out our faith in public? Who can say? Sometimes we Christians get derailed by a narrative of everything's going down; and, man, there's many reasons at hand for discouragement that are real reasons. But look, Joseph is in a terrible condition. He's a slave, he's imprisoned for two years; he ends up running the most powerful nation in the world, and Pharaoh lets all this happen. And so this is all occurring because of God. This is all because of God.

God gives favor to Christians, God blesses Christians, and God even uses Christians in a given nation for the good of others. And I think the Bible is saying that that's not something we want to look down on. It's not a bad thing when Christians have a lot of influence in a society, and there's common grace in a society, and children are protected, and the family is strengthened, and marriage is what the Bible says marriage is, and these kinds of realities. There's a strong free market, and people take individual responsibility, and there's help for those who fall into trial. All these realities I think are being worked out in this passage, and even through the example of a man like Pharaoh. We don't know that Pharaoh gets saved, so to speak, he doesn't profess faith in this chapter. But it's very clear that he is profoundly fascinated and influenced at some level by Jacob and Joseph and this family.

Our third character, moving quickly on – I told you the last three would be a lot quicker – our third character we see Jacob. We see, "The wearied trust of Jacob," verses 7-9 and 27-31. Recall what I read in verses 7-9 first, where Jacob's weariness shows up. Pharaoh, as Pharaoh does frequently, asks Jacob a question: "How old are you?" basically. And Jacob answers that his days are few first. And what he's referring to is Abraham and Isaac. Abraham lived 175 years, Isaac lived 180 years, and Jacob has lived only 130 years. So his years are fewer, much fewer than the other Patriarchs. And that is significant because Jacob is basically saying, "My life has been challenging." In fact, he goes on to say his years have been few and, in the Hebrew *wə·r ā 'îm*, *wə r ā 'îm*, evil. In Deuteronomy 6:22 the same word, Hebrew word, same form, is translated distressing.

Now this is a textual detail that is very important for us, because this is Jacob. This is the man who was going to be called Israel. This is the man who incarnates God's people. The twelve tribes of Israel come directly from this man. Now if you're talking about a heroic figure like a Jacob, wouldn't you think if he's asked how his life has been, he's Genesis 35, the steward of God's blessing, 35:11. The people of God are going to be fruitful and multiply through Jacob's own family, his own seed. What a heritage, what a blessing. Wouldn't you think he'd say, "My years have been rich and full"? No, he says, "My days, my years have been few and distressing." This tells us that there is real trial in following God for some God calls.

Sometimes we feel terrible if we have suffering and trials and challenges, and we confess that out loud. Jacob confesses that out loud. And he has caused some of this suffering for himself, hasn't he? He stole the birthright from his brother Esau. He lost his son, he thought his son was dead. He didn't just like think his son was dead, his son to him was dead, his beloved son. What is more painful than losing a child? And that's been Jacob's life. It has not been a peak existence after peak existence kind of life, it's had real hits, but it's had many misses.

And that reframes things for us. You can be a follower of God truly, you can know Jesus Christ, and yet your years may be challenging. Things may go tougher than you anticipated. Marriage may prove more challenging than you thought. Raising children to know the Lord may have more difficulties than you anticipated. That work plan that you crafted may not play out the way you anticipated. You may be single much longer or even period and not have wanted that or ask God for that.

There's all sorts of trials that a crowd, a group represented in this room are going to experience. And we need to just recognize that if we sometimes feel hard-pressed and confused and challenged, not just for like two hours on a Monday afternoon, but for an extended time. Jacob felt this. Jacob was weary. You ever feel weary? Anyone in here feel weary extendedly? I give you Jacob. He feels that.

Nonetheless, he speaks a blessing upon Pharaoh. He blesses Pharaoh, and then Pharaoh is directly blessed, as the narrative we've already walked through shows. So Jacob is, first, weary, and his example speaks to us and encourages us.

Remember Paul? Paul's held up as such a paragon of unwavering faith, and he was. He's incredible as a man, a man of God, a sinner just like us, redeemed by God's grace. Paul says though at one point that he despaired of life itself at one point. So you can hit lows as a true Christian I mean. Praise God that we have the Word, we have godly leaders, biblical counseling. We have the gospel, which never runs dry. We need these things, don't we? And when we fight for faith, by the power of God, by the Spirit in us as a Christian, God will bring us through. If you are in low times as a believer, God will bring you through.

Look at verse 27. That's what God does for Jacob: "Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.

"And when the time drew near that Israel" - Jacob - "must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'If now I've found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.' He answered, 'I will do as you have said.' And he said, 'Swear to me'; and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed."

OK, wait. This is another reversal. Jacob comes to Pharaoh, and he is low. "Distressing has been my life," he says in a moment of raw candor. And look what God ends up doing. He gives Jacob after that audience 17 more years. He gives him a whole 'nother season of life. And what does Jacob watch and witness in that season? Israel, the people, was fruitful and multiplied greatly.

God loves life. Our world loves death, but God loves life. God loves children. God loves families. Your family growing and multiplying is no threat to the earth, it is no threat to climate crises, et cetera and so on; God will manage those. God loves life, and He blesses Israel, and specifically Jacob's own family, immensely through multiplication and fruitfulness of the physical kind. And all this, again, is the fulfillment, the living fulfillment of Genesis 35:11, God's promise to Jacob. When God makes a promise, God will keep His promise. He keeps it to Jacob, and this changes Jacob's life.

Jacob calls in Joseph, verses 29-31, and swears that he will now be buried in Canaan, not in Egypt. He wants to be buried with the Patriarchs – there's more on that to come in successive chapters. But it's important to see that Jacob has reinvigorated. Have you ever seen this happen with someone? You thought they were running dry, you thought they had played out the string, and then God gives them new energy and new vigor, maybe even in the last chapter of their life. We've seen that recently with John McArthur, for example, where God the last several years raised him up again and gave him great faith and strength to stand against numerous evil challenges to the gospel, numerous anti-gospels that are out there.

And that is what happens with Jacob, and Jacob at the end, after his godly son swears to him. I mean, this is a real patriarch, this is a real head of the home. He looks his boy in the eye and he says, "Swear to me, you will take my bones to Canaan." He is not messing around, father to son. And son knows it, and son swears it to father.

And then look at that last little detail of our passage: "Then Israel," – verse 31b – "then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed." That is not a mere locational detail. What Jacob is doing, it certainly appears from the text, is worshiping God. He's closing his time with prayer. This is a kind of prayerful worship of the living God. Gone are the words of distress; they are replaced with a posture of thankful worship. His godly son that was ripped from him is going to take his bones and keep his promise. The people are multiplied, they're prospering. Look at the goodness of God.



This is where you have to worship, don't you? You have to worship something in this world. There is such, such a powerful goodness - I almost said raging goodness, but that doesn't quite make sense. There's such powerful goodness loosed in this world. There's such true joy that God has unleashed in this world, that there's only one response that is appropriate. It's not just thank you: "Yeah, thank you. Mm-hmm, thanks, that's great." It's not respect. It's not even mere honor alone. It is worship!

That's what Jacob does with God. And that is waiting to be unlocked in every human heart, the worship of the living God. It's the deepest possible reverence and thankfulness. It's coming to the end of your days, the last minutes on earth of your life and realizing your God has been abundantly good to you, and you can die. You're ready to go and meet Him. That is how Jacob's chapter closes. And that is how your chapter can close too, whether that end is very soon or far off in the distance. And it's all because of our fourth character. It's all because of God.

Fourthly, we see, "The good hand of God," in this passage; and we will hasten to a close. This chapter represents the fulfillment of Genesis 39:2, "The Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered." It's the extension, that is, of that reality: wherever Joseph goes, he prospers, not because he is such a great guy who easily makes friends and influences people, but because squarely of God. God has His hand on Joseph. And God through His Spirit has His hand on every Christian in here. And if you've never had anyone bless you, or love you, or be kind to you, forgive you, God will give you His Spirit through faith and repentance, and you will be His. And again, His hand will be upon you.

That's what we're learning here. This is how kind our God is. The man who was sold into slavery becomes lord over an entire nation. The man abandoned by his brothers rescues his brothers. The man who has all power and agency taken from him and becomes a slave becomes nearly the most powerful man in the world; and God wants him to be. There's no shame in that. The man forcibly removed from his homeland becomes the man whose

homeland comes to him; and he sustains it. He makes sure the people of God live. Incredible reversal.

So what do we see? We see the good hand of God. Let me list these out rapid-fire. You're a Lawsonian congregation, so you're going to be OK with rapid-fire I think.

We need to see just in conclusion that God uses terrible circumstances for the good of His people. You may be in terrible circumstances, you may be in the equivalent of Egypt and you think, "I can't be here, there's no good that will come of being here. I've got to get out." It's not wrong to want to get out. But God uses you in Egypt. Take heart.

See as well that God prospers and powers His people in difficult times. He specifically gives Joseph exactly what he needs in a difficult place. It's not time limited for Joseph. God's teaching you something. He will help you in your own Egypt.

See as well that God engages fallen people and He uses them in His plan. For some Christians there's this theology of the public square where there's no fallen people, where you could never vote for anyone who's anything other than Jesus, or something like this. Well, one of the realities of the Bible, of the Old Testament, is that God uses and engages fallen people. It doesn't mean we therefore brand them as a believer or something like this, or treat them as a Christian; that would be a mistake. But you just have to understand, when you go to the Old Testament, and even the New as well, that God engages and uses fallen people even to help, even to help His people, His blood-brought people.

See next that God plants His chosen people amidst sinners. We want to head for the hills, we don't want America to get darker, or whatever it may be. God puts Joseph in Egypt. I repeat myself: He puts him right there, and He wants him there. And I would wager He wants us here, and He wants us to be public Christians.

See that God gives wisdom as well for our earthly tasks, tremendous wisdom, overflowing wisdom. You and I don't have wisdom. There's not like a little authentic me wisdom spring in our heart. We don't need to follow our heart. We don't need to trust ourselves. We don't even really need to be authentic to ourselves. We don't need to forgive ourselves. We need the wisdom of God. We need the forgiveness of God. We need the grace of God. There's a biblical theme here developing: Praise God; God gives it.

Some of you are in public influence. You have public leadership in business or politics or public square or entertainment, I don't know, education, all sorts of that. Use it. Don't freak out about it if you have it. Pray for God to give you wisdom to steward it well. We see that along these lines. God calls His people to serious influence. He's the second most powerful man, Joseph, in the world, and that's good. God wants His people then to live out their faith in public.

And we see, finally, that God honors His promises. God keeps His promises. You feel this as a father or a mother when you make a promise to your child even about something small, it's amazing how they will, when there's a relationship of love, lock onto that. Yes? Anyone ever experience this where you didn't play catch quite in time, and the world temporarily comes undone, and you've got to put it back together and play the catch, and next time hit your marks? Yes? Some of us fathers have been there, for example.

Well, God is the one who keeps His promises perfectly. And you need to know this as we conclude. There is a greater Joseph at hand, and there is a greater famine, and this famine is not physical, this is a famine that every sinner is in from birth. It is the famine of grace, mercy, truth, love, and hope. You can have gleanings of those things outside of saving faith; but if you are not in Christ, you are in famine, and there is no way out of it.

But here's the good news. In Jesus Christ, I give you good news. The famine is over, the famine is canceled, the famine has ended. There is infinite

grace, truth, mercy, hope, and love in just one man, Jesus Christ, the greater Joseph. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father God, I pray that You would give us encouragement and hope. Many of us, when we're battling our own sin and challenges and trials, will battle that real discouragement that we hear in Jacob's words. We feel weary. Others of us are doing fine, and yet will have our own seasons of difficulty. And so I pray that this text will profoundly encourage Your people. I pray that it will point us, yes, to the godly example of Joseph, but even more, to the greater Joseph, who through His cross and resurrection has ended the famine once and for all time. And I pray, Father, this morning that You will cause Christians to run once more to Christ. And I pray that You will cause those who do not yet know Christ to run to Him. Thank You that the famine is over, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.