

00-05-07a

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning for our scripture reading to Psalm 26. Psalm 26. We're going to see that just as Joseph has been through a period of trial during his stay in Egypt, his brothers are about to enter a period of trial.

And Psalm 26 is one of the first passages that comes to mind when you think of this subject, because here David, who knows a lot about testing and trial, in his prayer to the Lord, talks about that subject and illuminates it for us. Psalm 26. Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity.

I have also trusted in the Lord, I shall not slip. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me. Try my mind and my heart.

For your loving kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in your truth. I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites. I have hated the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.

I will wash my hands in innocence, so I will go about your altar, O Lord, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of all your wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. Do not gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, in whose hands is a sinister scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes.

But as for me, I will walk in my integrity. Redeem me and be merciful to me. My foot stands in an even place.

In the congregations I will bless the Lord. It's a wonderful thing to see a prayer that is an example of stating what we know. Many of these things we know to be promises of God.

We know they are things that God has done and continues to do. Redeem me, cleanse me, preserve me. We know that these are promises, and yet we see David in his prayer life bringing these to mind and speaking them to the Lord.

There's been a lot of talk, I say a lot, depending on who you listen to I guess, but as you know I expose myself to what goes on in a lot of the Christian broadcasting media and so forth because it seems to be what's popular. There are people who contribute to keep these things on the air. There has been for the last number of years the idea of positive confession.

If we agree together, God will do it and so forth. And there is scripture that these things are based on, but the pattern that we find, especially when we look in detail at prayers such as this, there is a foundation upon which claiming these promises rests. It isn't just a matter of roping two or three people together and saying, let's all agree and God will do it because he says, two or three of you gather in my name.

If you agree on these things, I will do it. There's a foundation and we take the entire witness of scripture in prayer. What is the foundation of David's prayer here? What does he stand on? It's just like the hymn, isn't it? He's standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises, I cannot fall. Listening every moment to the Spirit's call. Resting in my Savior as my all in all.

And this is the environment. Even when you look at the statements that Jesus makes over in John, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. If you look earlier in that same context, he talks about having his word and keeping it, resting in it.

There are conditions for claiming these promises, just as there are conditions for claiming our inheritance. And oftentimes the conditions get overlooked. But David begins this psalm by saying, Vindicate me, O Lord.

Why? Because I have walked in integrity. 1 John 1.7 If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we keep on having fellowship, each with the other. And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sins.

All those verbs are in the present tense. If we keep on walking in the light, just as he keeps on being in the light, we keep on having fellowship, each with the other. Us with him, he with us.

And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin. There have been times when the confession of sin has been emphasized. Just name your sins and God will forgive.

But there is a condition. We have to keep on walking in the light. How do we know whether or not we are walking in integrity? Well, we have to look.

Have you ever been thinking thoughts? This happened to me on the way to work one day this past week, where you get your mind on a track and you're off in your own thoughts. And driving is something we can, especially when it's the same route day after day, we can sort of hand this off to our subconscious mind. If you ever come to yourself and realize that you've already gone a couple of miles, you've gone through lights, you don't remember which lane you took, or how you just come to yourself and here you are miles down the road, because it's familiar.

And our subconscious mind knows how to obey traffic signals and how to weave in and out of traffic and observe the other guy. Sometimes we do this. And what happened to me this past week is I found myself going down an old route that I used to take.

You know, the old subconscious doesn't always stay up to date, I guess. And I found myself taking a longer way that I used to go before they fixed up Central. And it was too late to turn back, and so I took the slow way and was a few minutes late, because the

new way is about 10 or 15 minutes quicker.

But we can't always just hand off where we stand in our lives as believers to our subconscious spirit, or just assume that because we're in the same old habits and we're conforming like we always have, that we're going to end up where we need to be. We have to pay attention to our path, don't we? We have to look and see if the Word is indeed serving as a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path. David is able to go before the Lord and say, I have walked in my integrity.

This is the David of Bathsheba fame. This is the David of Uriah fame. This is the David of Absalom fame.

And yet he can come before the Lord, and we've seen this in countless Psalms that he wrote, where he says, I come before you with a clear conscience and a pure heart. How can he say that when he made so many mistakes? It's the same way that we can say it when we make so many mistakes, because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sins. It's over with, it's done, it's forgotten.

And when we come before the Lord, we can say, Lord, I'm claiming my integrity. What a wonderful... If God did nothing else for us but that, it's the greatest thing. I saw a celebrity on TV this past week.

I won't tell you who it is. It's a well-known actor. And he was on one of these shows, and I don't know what all they were up to.

I just kind of flipped past it. But you could tell that he had not been in the faith very long. I think he had come to Christ perhaps as an adult, and he had been in Hollywood and gone down some of those roads.

You can go down there. It's so convenient. And what impressed me about what he was saying is they had sort of called upon him to speak, and he didn't have a lot of knowledge to pass on or a lot of experience as a believer to pass on.

The thing that he said, he said, you know, there are lots of religions. I've tried some of these other cults and religions that are fashionable and trendy in Hollywood. He said, you know, the thing that brought me to Christ was forgiveness of my sins.

My sins are forgiven. And you could see that that was the truth that had impressed him the most up to this point in his Christian life. And that's the biggest one.

What a great thing to cling to and to claim. Our sins are forgiven. We don't ever want to lose the joy of that.

That's the great joy of deliverance that we experience, not only at salvation, but every day. But isn't it interesting at the same time that he says, I have walked in my integrity, I

have trusted in the Lord, I shall not slip. Then he goes in verse 2 and he says, Lord, examine me and prove me.

Try my mind and my heart. If he's already claiming his integrity, why would he ask God to look and examine and prove? Well, we have blind spots. We have things that we can't or won't face up to in some cases.

But David says, your loving kindness is before my eyes. Chesed. God's grace.

God's loyalty. Chesed has been translated loyal love. The New King James usually translates it loving kindness.

Your chesed is before my eyes, and I have walked in your emet, your truth. Walking in the truth, being open to the searching of the Holy Spirit to examine the thoughts and intents of our hearts. This is what David was doing even in the Old Testament.

He says, I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites. I've hated the assembly of evildoers and will not sit with the wicked. There are unknown sins that God has to expose in our souls, but there are things that obviously can lead us in wrong paths.

And David defines this in terms of associations here, doesn't he? He has cut himself off from evil associations. He's cut himself off from associations that lead him into sin. Jesus talked about this in the New Testament with the figure of cutting off the hand that offends, or the eye that offends, or the foot that causes us to walk astray.

And this can sometimes be a difficult thing, but if we, every time we get into a certain group, or with certain people, or in a certain environment, there are people who can't bring themselves not to go to the movies and expose their soul to some of the carnality that is put on film and disguised as art, labeled as art, when in fact it is indulging the weakest areas of our nature. Well, can we not sit with that assembly? Can we cut ourselves off from it? That's one way that we can guard our souls. It's the old computer programming adage, garbage in, garbage out.

I will wash my hands in innocence, so I will go about your altar, O Lord, so that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving. David links the ideas of cleansing with the altar, the sprinkling of the blood, the pronouncement of cleansing that was a part of the Levitical ritual. And the purpose for that is to be able to proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of God's wondrous works.

We're not qualified to proclaim. We're not qualified to go forth and tell the wondrous story. Remember George Beverly Shea, one of the favorite songs I have for him to sing is, I will sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me.

To be qualified to do that, we've got to go to the altar first and be cleansed and be

purified, have our hands washed in innocence. Lord, I have loved the habitation of your house, the place where your glory dwells. Do not gather my soul with sinners.

David says, I'm not going to gather my soul with sinners in these places where they sit and where they stand. So please don't gather my soul with them when it comes time for judgment. And so it's one thing to pray, O Lord, don't judge me with the wicked, but it's something else to be able to pray that because we've taken the steps that are within our power.

And then he closes in that great chiastic fashion by returning to the concept of walking in integrity. Redeem me and be merciful to me. We're qualified for that daily redemption.

We know about salvation redemption, and we're no longer bound for the lake of fire. But there's a daily redemption, redemption out of this present evil age, redeeming the time because the days are evil. And David claims that redemption and that mercy that's renewed every morning.

And he is able to claim it because he has claimed first the cleansing. And the purification. I will walk in my integrity.

Redeem me and be merciful to me. My foot stands in an even place in the congregations. I will bless the Lord.

And this also enhances our fellowship, doesn't it? Because we are in a place to be a blessing to others in the church age, our spiritual gift to function for purposes of edification and building up of the body. Sometimes in church, lots of different churches, especially churches with a teaching emphasis, there seems to be a real focus and centrality of the teaching gift that the pastor exercises. But the fellowship and the assembling of ourselves together, not only in worship, but also in our daily contacts, are opportunities for each of us to have our spiritual gift function.

And I think you know this more by your experience in receiving, but think about it. It's also your chance to do the same for others. We come together in fellowship, and the thing that may stick in your mind and the thing that may be a blessing to your soul in the coming week isn't so much what was said in the lesson, but it's the fellowship and the uplift and the encouragement that comes from having been around the other believers who were there in worship.

And each of us have that opportunity. So this is a wonderful psalm. It's a wonderful reminder of the role that God's grace plays in our daily life.

And it's also a reminder that there is this testing element. There is this examination by the Lord, the proving of the heart and the reins, it says literally in another place, try my mind and my heart. The need for examination to see what's there.

And that comes into play as we resume our study back over in Genesis 41 and into chapter 42 this morning. We have reached the point now in our study of the life of Joseph, for he has survived his increasingly difficult circumstances in these different houses. We looked last time at the four houses of Joseph.

The house of Jacob, where he is kidnapped by his brothers, thrown in the pit, sold into slavery. Then he's in the house of Potiphar. He's unjustly accused.

He lost his garment when his brothers sold him into slavery. Potiphar's wife grabs his garment and he is imprisoned. The third house is the round house, the prison where he meets the butler and the baker.

And when after two years, beyond that set of dreams and predictions, the butler belatedly remembers Joseph, then he loses that prison garment as he is cleaned up and washed and shaved and brought before Pharaoh. So he has in each case a house, in each case a permanent transfer out of that house, a loss of the garment associated with that house, and it's all a part of the plan of God. And in those first three, Joseph doesn't have circumstances that would give him confidence that things are going to get better.

He seems to sort of be going from bad to worse in some of these. But what does he have? He has that initial revelation from God, the Word from God in the form of his two dreams that says the sheaves are going to bow, the sun and moon and stars are going to bow. And as long as Joseph maintains confidence in that revelation from God, he knows he's not going to be executed.

He knows that he's going to survive to be exalted. And that's not just something to give him a big head, it's something to give him confidence and to sustain him through all these trials. Well, now, at the end of chapter 41, when he accurately interprets the dreams of Pharaoh, and this Pharaoh, who is more receptive to recognizing revelation from God and acting upon it than Joseph's own brothers, elevates Joseph to the rank of Vizier.

V-I-Z-I-E-R This is the administrator of all things in the land of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. And so we saw this in verse 46 of chapter 41, Joseph was 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Now this is when he interprets the dreams.

We were told early on when Joseph was first introduced in our story, in chapter 37, verse 2, that Joseph was at that time 17 years old. Thirteen years have elapsed from when he was kidnapped until he is exalted. Thirteen years of unjust treatment, of false accusation, of imprisonment, slavery, maltreatment.

And yet God, even in those circumstances, elevates Joseph in each house. He rises to the top. He was first of all given shepherd status over his brothers by Jacob, which was the reason they hated him so much.

He is then elevated to control all things in Potiphar's house. What they say about a lot of sex-related crimes such as rape is that a lot of times it is not so much the act itself, it is somebody has a psychological need to dominate. And this can take a lot of different forms.

And you almost get the idea that beyond just sensual desire for Joseph because he's handsome, Potiphar's wife wants to have control of Joseph. If she can compromise him, this is going to reduce his influence. And you almost get the idea that she may have been jealous of Potiphar's trust.

Obviously Potiphar trusts Joseph more than he does his own wife because when she accuses him of a death sentence crime, he doesn't execute the death sentence as he easily could have. But anyway, Joseph rises in each case and then when he's put in the roundhouse in the prison, he is put in charge of all things there and that's how he comes to be serving the butler and the baker. And now in this last house, the house of Egypt, if you will, Pharaoh has elevated him once again to a status that is second only to the final authority.

And this is a reminder to us of, as we saw last time in looking at the parallels to the Lord Jesus Christ, that in each case, as Paul says, God hath highly exalted him and put all things under his feet. He is the head of all things to the church. He is the fullness of all in all, but he is still submissive to the Father.

And even after the millennial kingdom where he rules and reigns for a thousand years with a rod of iron, at the end of that time, he will turn over everything to the Father. And the eternal kingdom with the new Jerusalem is the kingdom of the Father. And you see that in the parable of the sheep and goats where he says to the sheep, enter into the joy of the Father.

They will shine like stars in the kingdom of the Father, Jesus says in another place. So it's helpful to distinguish those two kingdoms and to remember that even as highly exalted as the Lord Jesus is, he told us in 14.6 that his purpose, he is the way, the truth, and the life so that men can come to the Father. Our relationship is with the Father.

We want to respect that truth as we look at the Christ-centered life and the appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In some cases, we almost lose sight of the Father with the emphasis on the Spirit and emphasis on the Son. There's a widespread change from what used to be a well-respected truth in the church of praying to the Father.

Now you hear a lot of prayers to the Holy Spirit. You hear a lot of prayers to the Lord Jesus. But Paul... It's fascinating to go study the letters of Paul.

Every single recorded prayer of Paul is to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And why is that? Because the Lord Jesus Christ did what he did to bring us to the Father.

And it's a wonderful thing to remember.

So here's Joseph now elevated in this fourth circumstance. Once again, God blesses him. Why? Because he has been clinging like the boy lashed to the mast to that revelation from God that was given to him when he was 17 that he will survive and that there's going to be this situation arise.

And there's a purpose in that situation. Joseph isn't just hanging on so that he can be exalted. He knows that there's a reason for God exalting him.

So he's 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh. He went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went throughout all the land of Egypt. This is a great principle.

You know, people go to the Word of God for principles in business and life and so forth, even for church organization and administration. But once Joseph receives this responsibility, what's the first thing that he does? He does a recon. I've been put in charge of Egypt.

I'd better go look at it and not just take somebody's word for it. He doesn't insulate himself with 15 layers of bureaucracy. He could have sat there eating peeled grapes in the palace of the Pharaoh.

But he goes throughout all the land of Egypt. He knows that seven years of plenty are coming. He knows that seven years of famine will follow.

He has described to Pharaoh a solution for this to store up the grain. But to make sure that he can implement it, he goes out and walks the ground himself. He looks it over himself.

When we have a responsibility, whether it's parenting or business or being an employee or an employer, being a good son or daughter to our parents, being good parents to our children, being a good husband to our wife, whatever it may be, a wife to our husband, any area of responsibility, it is helpful to equip ourselves with knowledge of that situation, to do the recon, to be aware of the facts. This is one of the most helpful things in prayer. And you will remember that one of my personal peeves, and like Paul says, this is Paul talking and not the Lord.

Well, this is Sam talking and I'm not stating that this is a biblical principle to die for. But I am reluctant to take prayer chain requests. I am reluctant to take requests for prayer for situations that I know nothing about.

This happens at my place of employment a lot where an employee has a sister who has a friend who is going in for surgery. Please pray. It's very difficult for me to pray in any but the most general terms for those requests.

I have no real facts. I have no personal experience to make a perception of who might be saved or who might be unsaved or what God's purpose might be in that situation except in the most general terms. We can always offer those general prayers, but the model in Scripture is to pray specifically, to pray intelligently, to pray in the will of the Father.

And the more we know about a situation, the more effective our prayers are going to be. I'm not saying we shouldn't pray in a general sense. We pray for those who have the rule over us, and a lot of times we don't know what their situation is either.

But look at the example of Joseph. The more we know, the more effective we can be. And if we want to pray for a specific situation, it's helpful to know as much about it as we can because this will inform our prayer.

God already knows the situation better than we do. Prayer is for our benefit. Prayer gives us a practical exercise in the application of biblical truth.

Instead of saying, Lord, bless so-and-so, Lord, heal so-and-so, Lord, bless so-and-so, Lord, comfort so-and-so, Lord, heal so-and-so, that doesn't exercise us the way prayer is designed to do. To say, Lord, I know that this person is a believer who has pursued, who has asked and has been seeking and has been knocking on the door. I know that they have resources in their soul.

Lord, bring that to their consciousness. Let God, the Holy Spirit, speak those words of comfort in a way that we can know and pray. And every single thing we pray, we know we're going to get a yes answer.

You do studies on prayers and they say, well, sometimes God answers yes, sometimes God answers no, sometimes God doesn't give an answer and that's an answer in itself. I don't believe in the no answer prayer. I believe in the yes answer prayer.

Jesus told the disciples, whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, He will grant. Well, the key is praying in His name. How do you pray in His name? Well, you have to know how to represent the Lord because what is it when you do something in the name of the United States of America? You go over as an embassy ambassador or an embassy guard or whatever, you're representing your country.

Well, you've got to know what your country wants. If you're the ambassador, you have to know what the will of the government is so that you can represent it in this foreign territory. When we pray in Jesus' name, we need to know what we're praying for.

So, being informed is very helpful in that regard. So, He went throughout all the land of Egypt. In the seven plentiful years, the ground brought forth abundantly.

This is a curious term. In fact, it's unique in the Old Testament Scriptures in Hebrew because this is a phrase that means to bring forth by handfuls. To bring forth by

handfuls.

And it sounds like, wow, this is really abundant. And it was. But this phrase is normally applied when there's a small amount in use.

This is used, for example, over in Leviticus 2. When someone brings the grain offering to be offered at the tabernacle and it says that a handful will be taken out and sprinkled on the altar and burned before the Lord and then the rest of the grain offering goes to the priests. And so it's an odd thing when it says it brought forth by handfuls. But if you think about it, how many hands are there in Egypt and how many fields are there in Egypt? And rather than talking about one individual before the altar with a sacrifice, there are literally millions of hands in Egypt and all of these hands are full of grain.

And it becomes so numerous that it can't even be counted. Verse 48, He gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt and laid up the food in the cities. He laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them.

How could He do this? He traveled the whole land. He knows the cities. He knows how the fields are laid out.

He knows and has assured Himself that this is doable in each city. What is the biggest problem with trying to lay up grain in this way? What happens when we try to provide food relief to these godless, pagan countries that we get tangled up with overseas sometimes? What happens to the grain that we send, these big bags of grain? Corruption sets in. It gets sold on the black market.

Somebody pockets the proceeds and sells it elsewhere and the people for whom it was intended never get it. How is Joseph going to ensure that corruption doesn't consume this that he's laying by? To keep all of this grain for seven years, you think about it, this is not an easy thing. Joseph went throughout the land.

Joseph has talked with people. He has identified people he can trust, people who are going to be honorable. It's one thing to go to God and say, Oh Lord, bless our efforts.

It's something else to do a reconnaissance, be faithful. Joseph has had experience in administration, hasn't he? Do you think in the house of Potiphar he didn't find somebody dipping their hand in the till? Do you think that in the administration of the prison he didn't find corruption amongst the guards or amongst others? Joseph knows how to do this. He's been equipped by his experiences, even some of which might not have been pleasant.

And God equips us through our experiences and through the illustrations that we have in Scripture to be wise as servants even as we are harmless as doves. So Joseph has done his homework. He's not just standing up in the palace and saying, Oh God, help, and issuing an edict and then sitting there waiting for the results.

So every city, the food of the fields which surrounded them. This is also great because no one calamity can get the grain. It's distributed throughout all the land.

This shortens the transportation loop. It's going to be easy to redistribute it later on. There's a lot of wisdom in his policy.

Joseph gathered very much grain as the sand of the sea. When's the last time we heard this phrase? God talking to Abraham, your descendants are going to be as the sand of the sea for multitude. And this is a conscious reuse of that phrase.

There's quite a bit of vocabulary here that harks back until he stopped counting for it was immeasurable. There was no way to count it. Just as there was no one to interpret the dreams, these phrases hark back to earlier episodes in Joseph's career.

It was immeasurable. And it's kind of funny because Joseph is a really good administrator. He's been keeping records along and he has to finally stop.

They're just running out of papyrus to keep track of all of this grain. And he finally says, you know, it's pointless. We're bogging ourselves down with paperwork here and there's no need.

And Joseph also recognizes when he can streamline the system and he doesn't have to keep paper for paperwork's sake. And I will take this opportunity to climb up on my soapbox and say sometimes record-keeping becomes pointless. And you can probably make that application yourself.

But to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, priest of On, bore to him. I find this very fascinating because in a lot of cases we don't get information, biographical information, about spouses and their antecedents and so on. But here, not only are we given Asenath's name, but also her father's name and his job.

He is a priest. You remember in the trials of Jesus that we studied just back here in April, who's the high priest that year? It's Caiaphas. Who else does Jesus go before in terms of a trial? In fact, who does He go to first? Annas.

What is the relationship between Annas and Caiaphas? Father-in-law. Father-in-law. Son-in-law.

So what relationship does Joseph now bear to the big high priest in Egypt? Son-in-law. So, is Joseph a prophet? We can nod our heads in the affirmative. Does he have kingly authority? Does he now have a priestly connection? Prophet, priest, king.

Should this be significant to us? Why does the Bible say that Asenath was the daughter of the priest of Ann? It's not an idle detail, is it? Joseph called the name of the firstborn

Manasseh, for God has made me forget all my affliction and all my father's house. What an interesting thing to say. You remember that the last couple of generations in the house of Abraham have been named by the mothers.

Remember all the sons of Rachel and Leah were named by the mothers with the exception of Benjamin. Jacob changed son of my pain to son of my right hand. Ben-Oni became Ben-Yamin.

But in general, the pattern has been that the women have named the sons. Of course, God named Isaac. But here, Joseph takes over the naming abilities.

And even though he has an Egyptian name, he's living an Egyptian life with an Egyptian wife, he gives his sons Hebrew names. And it's an irony, it's almost an oxymoron here that he says, I'm going to name him Manasseh. Nasa is the word that means to forget.

And the M in front of it, the maim, is a preposition that means from. So from forgetfulness. Or you can take a verb and make it a noun by putting a maim in front of it and making it a participle.

And so, he says, God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house. But if you think about it, he's named his son in honor of forgetting his father's house, but he's given him a Hebrew name. And every time he says, Manasseh, come in here and wash your hands, the name itself is a reminder of that which he says he has forgotten.

So has he really forgotten? In what sense has he forgotten? Has he forgotten his roots? Has he forgotten his brothers and his father and all of his heritage? Not at all. And the second association here, my affliction, my toil, this is not only the toil in Egypt, but also the unhappy experiences that he had in his father's house. He hasn't forgotten his family.

Every time he says Manasseh, it's a Hebrew word. All the Egyptians are going to say, Manasseh, what a strange name, because they don't speak Hebrew. And we're going to find out later, Joseph will use an interpreter to talk to his brothers.

So it's not forgetting his father's house in the sense of I don't remember Jacob and my brothers. It's the affliction. It is a symbol of forgiveness.

God has vindicated Joseph. God has justified Joseph. And Joseph is not going to hold either his experiences in Egypt or his experiences back in the land of Canaan against anyone.

Joseph has already reconciled this in his own soul. He harbors no bitterness. He's not bearing a grudge.

He forgets the pain and affliction of his father's house just as he forgets the pain and

affliction in Egypt. The name of his second son he called Ephraim, for God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. You'll recognize the suffix there, em, as being a plural or a multiplier.

And the root there having to do with fruit or bearing fruit. So, forgetting the past, the fruit of the present is what he's focusing on. He forgets those painful things which are behind.

He doesn't cling to that. Even in secular psychology, people recognize that you've got to let go of things in the past before you can heal and get better. And it's certainly a spiritual principle as well.

This is one of the reasons God does forgive us and cleanse us from all sin. And that our forgiveness from God is conditioned on forgiving others. Jesus says, and Paul both say, you cannot be forgiven unless you first forgive.

And this is the way our souls are built. We do have to let go of that. And you can see it in the naming of Joseph's two sons.

I'm turning loose of the pain and affliction of the past and I'm enjoying the fruitfulness that God has brought me in the present. The seven years of plenty, which were in the land of Egypt, ended and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

This is the second worldwide calamity recorded in the book of Genesis. You remember the first, the flood. This famine is not just in Palestine, not just in Egypt, it is worldwide.

It is over all the world, at least all the known world of this day, which is probably centered around Mesopotamia. And once again, you have an ark floating in the midst of a worldwide calamity. And that ark is piloted by the latter day Noah, which is Joseph, and all of the people riding in that ark, all of the people residing in the land of Egypt, are preserved.

All the land of Egypt was famished. The people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph.

Whatever he says to you, do. The famine was over all the face of the earth and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. Notice this is not welfare.

God's deliverance did not involve the dole. He did not give away... This, you remember, was taken from them in the form of a tax. And it is sold back.

The famine became severe in the land of Egypt. All countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain because the famine was severe in all lands. Provision is there, but you've got to pay something to get it.

It requires something of you to partake of this deliverance. And isn't that the way it is for us? It requires something of us to partake of the deliverance of God. This is not participation.

This is not contributing to our salvation. It's not salvation by works. But something is required of us.

Something that we already have. These people... Do you think that Joseph turned away the poor and turned away those who were homeless and had no resources? Probably not. But the pattern is he is going to require them something which they already have in order to get this grain that sustains and delivers.

And once again, when you think about Proverbs 2, God does not just inject us with His truth. God does not bestow His grace without condition. And as much as we may need to wrestle with the concept a little bit, there are conditions for receiving God's grace.

It requires something from us. It's not meritorious. We don't contribute.

We don't get glory. We already have what it is that is asked of us, and that is faith. We have the currency to redeem the time when the days are evil.

And it is our faith. The very prosperity that God brought to the land of Egypt in the years of plenty has put money in the pockets of the people so that they are able to buy the grain in the times of famine. And we want to be sure that we are digging into our purse, as it were, and bringing in the currency to partake of God's redemptive grace.

This is a good place for us to pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see this very fascinating encounter. Have you ever asked yourself the question, why didn't Joseph just say, Judah, Simeon, Levi, it's me? He doesn't do that on the first occasion, nor the second, initially.

Why? Well, we'll try to answer that question when we come back.