

00-07-09a

God, this morning by going to the Lord in prayer, Father, we thank you on this day for the blessings that you have bestowed on us, the watch care that you have provided for us to keep us safe and secure, to provide for our every need, to bless us in so many wonderful ways, and to give us the opportunity, as we do this morning, to gather together and be nourished, have our souls fed, have the resources provided in our souls to live in a way that is pleasing to you. We thank you for the country in which we live. We pray that you'll continue to guide our leadership and through them to ensure that we have the freedom and the opportunity and the privacy to worship and to pursue our lives before you.

We pray for those who are outside our country, who are serving as missionaries or serving in other capacities. We pray that you'll be with them and protect them and give them guidance and wisdom as they exercise their spiritual gifts. We pray for those who are here in our country who have the opportunity to teach.

We pray that your spirit will give insight and understanding and wisdom in the speaking of the truth and love. We ask that same thing on ourselves this morning, that you will be with us as we seek to rightly divide the word of truth. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will superintend and that our worship will be pleasing in your sight and edifying to each one who participates.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, if you'll turn with me to Isaiah.

I had a hard time choosing between chapter 25 and chapter 26, but 26 will be our scripture reading this morning. Isaiah chapter 26. When you get the chance, you can go back and read 24 and 25.

This is a great section of Isaiah's prophetic book. But 26 pertains to what we will see in Genesis this morning. This is subtitled in the New King James, A Song of Salvation.

It is described as a song inciting people to confidence in God and an exhortation to wait for His coming to judge. Anytime you see, particularly in the prophets, the phrase, in that day, we know that we're dealing with eschatology. We need to identify which day is being spoken of.

It is generally the day of the Lord, which encompasses more than a single 24-hour day. Obviously, at that time would be a good rendering in English. But it is at the time of the return of the Lord, His judgment on the nations, His deliverance of Israel, the inception of the Millennial Kingdom.

In that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city. God will

appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks.

Open the gates that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in. We've talked before about the specific heritage of those who are not only believers, but who have been faithful and obedient, those who have kept the Word. They will have the privilege of living in the historical boundaries of the Promised Land.

They will have the privilege of entering into the gates of Jerusalem. It is not a universally granted privilege. This is one of the passages that reminds us of that.

Open the gates that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for in Yah the Lord is everlasting strength.

For He brings down those who dwell on high. The lofty city, He lays it low. He lays it low to the ground.

He brings it down to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy. The way of the just is uprightness.

O most upright, you weigh the path of the just. Yes, in the way of your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for you. The desire of our soul is for your name and for the remembrance of you.

With my soul, I have desired you in the night. Yes, by my spirit within me, I will seek you early. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness, he will deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when your hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they will see and be ashamed.

For their envy of people, yes, the fire of your enemies shall devour them. Lord, you will establish peace for us, for you have also done all our works in us. O Lord our God, masters beside you have had dominion over us, but by you only we make mention of your name.

They are dead, they will not live. They are deceased, they will not rise. Therefore you have punished and destroyed them and made all their memory to perish.

You have increased the nation, O Lord, you have increased the nation. You are glorified, you have expanded all the borders of the land. Lord, in trouble they have visited you, they poured out a prayer when your chastening was upon them.

As a woman with child is in pain and cries out in her pangs when she draws near the time of her delivery, so have we been in your sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we

have been in pain. We have, as it were, brought forth wind, we have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen.

Your dead shall live, together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust, for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter your chambers and shut your doors behind you.

Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment until the indignation has passed. For behold, the Lord comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth will also disclose her blood and will no more cover her slain." You could, of course, spend weeks studying the details of this chapter, but I think the thrust of it is clear.

It is a reminder that we are sustained by hope and faith. The first thing he mentions is that God is going to appoint salvation to be walls and bulwarks. There is a day coming when there won't be the need for any sort of human security measures.

Remember, we just heard the story in our reenacted Bible story CDs this past week about Nehemiah and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. One of the first things they did when they returned to the city was to try to raise the walls back up and provide for security. They had men with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other trying to rebuild the walls.

But there is a day coming when God is going to appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks and there won't be a need for protection from enemies because the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, is going to enter into that city and be under God's umbrella of protection. But this is a future promise. It's a future hope.

But then he brings it back down to the present when he says, You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind has stayed on you because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for in Yah the Lord is everlasting strength. And if you look at your text note down there on verse 4, Rock of Ages is the literal translation of everlasting strength.

And Yah the Lord is the Rock of Ages. Obviously you can see the comparison between strength and rock and everlasting and the ages. But our confident expectation of deliverance and blessing and reward in the future is what sustains us now.

When we stay our minds on the Lord, we can partake of that future security and that future blessing even now. We know that God brings down those who dwell on high. The lofty city is laid low, people who make flesh their strength.

We see this all around us today. You see it when you're in your place of employment, whether it's large or small. You find people either within your own organization or in competing organizations who use very non-admirable tactics to advance their business or to advance themselves within their organization.

They say things that are not true. They do things that are underhanded. They take credit for things that don't belong to them.

They will bad mouth others and put the worst light on others to seek to advance themselves. This is like building walls and seeking to establish yourself by your own strength and by your own effort rather than relying on God. Many times we have to labor in obscurity and rely on God to choose the time and the place of our promotion or our advancement.

In some cases it may never come in this earth. We may never see ourselves. I used to think that there were all kinds of blessings that were going to come to the believer who was faithful and that God would advance you professionally and advance you socially and advance you in all different kinds of ways and it would be manifest.

This was the same thing that the Israelites used to think. The Jews in Jesus' day thought, well, if you were rich and influential, that was the blessing of God. And we know from what Jesus said that that's not always the case.

It is a principle, but it's a spiritual principle that God will bless and God will advance. And we don't always see that work itself out in human life, but that is the place for hope. That's the place for faith in God's promise that ultimately faith and obedience are vindicated in God's plan.

God may choose to vindicate it visibly in this earth or he may choose to wait and have us be what's been called invisible heroes who are not noticed and whose names are not written. I've said many times I'm going to be very interested to get God's church history textbook. I've had lots of church history textbooks in my seminary career and have some in my library that attempt to trace what has taken place from the time of the apostles down to the present.

You have different ones. You have the popes in the early Catholic church. You have the reformers and you have different ones who headed movements and theological books being written and so on.

Their names are familiar. Their works survive down to the present. And yet I suspect when we read God's church history book, there are going to be many small congregations, many obscure and completely unknown individuals who are going to be the notable and the examples of what God's grace and God's power can do in the lives of believers.

But it takes faith to believe that. It takes faith to understand and rely on and operate in the light of that truth. And that's why this chapter begins with future hope because hope is the motivation for our faith.

If we didn't really expect God to vindicate, if we didn't expect God to see and to

remember our struggles with our own sinful nature, our struggles against situations that come up in our lives, if we didn't think that God saw, if we didn't think that God cared, if we didn't think that there was any future benefit as a result of being faithful, then what's the point of being faithful? We might as well just seek results in this life. But Jesus talked about those kinds of people and he said you see people looking for notoriety and looking to be noticed as they drop their money in the coffers or as they pray on the street corners and he said they have their reward. What's the implication of what he's saying? If we do what is right and pleasing in God's sight, we may not have our reward yet.

It's a future reward, but it can be a source of great motivation if it's real to us. Those who dwell on high, the lofty city is going to be laid low, laid low to the ground. He brings it down to the dust in verse 5. Who's going to tread on all of these lofty things that people build for themselves? In verse 6, the foot shall tread it down, the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy.

These are the people that Jesus addresses at the beginning of the Beatitudes, the poor in spirit, because theirs is the kingdom. And the kingdom is going to be built on the ashes of the bonfires of all of the wood, hay and stubble that people produce for themselves. And the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy will tread upon it.

And we're reminded in verse 7, the way of the just is uprightness. We have to know what the upright path is. We have to be able to discern it.

And it's not always a matter of just finding that which has a component of sin and choosing the other thing. As we've talked about, it is a matter of perceiving the better things, of discerning between good options. What is the most upright path? Because God is going to weigh the path of the just.

He's going to consider it. He's going to analyze it and judge it. And He's going to distinguish between those who are just.

There's going to be degrees of reward and degrees of blessing, just as there are degrees of discipline and degrees of judgment. So the speaker here says, Isaiah says in verse 8, In the way of your judgments, O Lord, we have waited for you. This is the reason that we place a strong emphasis on studying the Word of God and familiarizing ourselves with its contents, both the Old Testament and the New, and seeking to observe, to interpret and to apply those truths in our life.

Why do we do that? Is it just a ritual? Is it sort of a blessing by association? You kind of get into the Holy Word of God and some of the holiness rubs off. Why do we do that? Well, in order to wait for the Lord in the way of His judgments, we have to know what the way of His judgments is. And it goes beyond just rules.

It goes beyond do's and don'ts or the Ten Commandments. It goes to the thoughts and

intent of the heart. Why do we do what we do? Are we motivated by putting up a good appearance? Or are we motivated by a desire to please God in the inmost recesses of our heart? The desire of our soul, he says, is for your name and for the remembrance of you.

It doesn't say the desire of our soul is to have a good testimony. It doesn't say the desire of our soul is to bring the lost sheep into the fold or to make an impact on people or to accomplish good in the world. The desire of our soul is for your name and for the remembrance of you.

And this is something we sometimes have to work at. If we just go along with our default set of human thoughts and the inbred pattern of our sinful nature, we're not going to be seeking these things. We have to consciously meditate on the things of God.

He says in verse 9, With my soul I have desired you in the night. We don't always go to sleep right away. Sometimes we wake up in the middle of the night and have the opportunity to think.

What do we think about? Do we worry about the next day? Do we make plans for how we're going to shop or how we're going to accomplish things at work? Or do we turn our attention to what we hope is a repository of truth in our soul, the promises and principles and doctrines of the Word of God, the stories and the things that we've studied maybe in recent days? Do we bring those things to mind? Do we recall it? There have been many studies done in the area of learning about how can you retain what you learn. If you hear it alone, you retain about 20%. That's only two things out of ten, which is not a very high percentage.

If you hear it and see it, you retain about twice that much. And this is why visual aids are so good, not only for children but for adults. People use overhead projectors or they will use whiteboards or something to reinforce the points that they present.

If you hear something, if you see it, and if you participate in it in some way by perhaps writing it down, taking notes, we sometimes think, well, you know, I'm going to quit taking notes because I take them and then I never go back and look at them. I don't use them for anything. I can't make sense out of them later.

One of the benefits of taking notes is that it reinforces what you hear at the time that you hear it. It implants it more firmly in your soul. And even if you never use the notes again, if you don't use them as a great, you know, some of us are better note takers than others.

I go back and look at some of my notes and I'm not even sure I wrote them. I can't make heads or tails out of them. But they made sense at the time.

And usually what will happen is I will glance at a page of notes and then I remember the

time that I was doing the study. And I remember more from my own mind than I do from looking at my notes because just the pattern of scribbling on the page, I think, oh, yes, I remember. I can remember where I was and what books I was looking at and what I was thinking about when I made those notes.

And they're more of a jog to my memory than they are an actual record of what I learned. But to hear, to see, and to participate in some way, whether it's doing a practical exercise where you build something or make something. This is a principle used by teachers for children to have them do a craft or to cut and paste a memory verse in some fashion.

You can retain 60% to 70% even weeks later of what you learned. What a wonderful thing to be in the Word of God and to actually be able to retain it. And then when you wake up in the night to have that come to mind and to desire God in the night to try to remember those things rather than to be thinking about the details of this life which are transient and ephemeral is a good word.

I try to trot out a three or four syllable word every once in a while. But they're temporary. They don't last.

With my soul, verse 9, I have desired you in the night. Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek you early. Things that we do early are the most important things.

We get up early to work out. We get up early to get dressed and get a start on the day. We get up early to make plans and make provision for the day, to pack a lunch or to make provision for the rest of the day.

Well, wouldn't it be a great thing if we got up early? Some of the best devotion times that I have ever had, either personally or in our devotions as a couple, have been the ones that we do first thing in the morning because it almost symbolically sets a tone that the most important thing of the day is going to be spiritual things. By my spirit within me I will seek you early, for when your judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. How do the judgments of God exist on the earth? Right now they exist in the body of believers, the body of Christ.

We are the light of the world. We are the salt that Jesus spoke of when he talked to his generation. At that time it was Israel, but the same principle applies to us.

We are salt. We are light. The judgments of the Lord exist on the earth in and through us.

And that is the way that the world will learn righteousness. Not by what we say, but by how we live. And then you have this principle that we have all observed in verses 10 and 11 that even when grace is shown to the wicked they do not learn righteousness.

In the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. And we have to recognize that even when we set a priority on spiritual things, even when we live out the judgments of the Lord, there are going to be people who see that and reject it. Who see it and seek to take advantage of us.

Who return evil for good. And it's because they have made the choice to reject God. Jesus said, if they reject me they are going to reject you.

And we have to understand that there are people who will dislike us. One of the hardest things is to be disliked. To be disapproved.

Regardless of the source. Sometimes I've had to work for days in my mind because I realize that somebody is really unhappy with me. And it's somebody who doesn't have biblical standards.

Who may not even be a believer. Their whole opinion and attitude is unjust and unjustified. I don't deserve it.

They've misconstrued. They've misunderstood. They've chosen for whatever personal reason to disapprove of me.

But it's a very hard thing to know that someone disapproves of you. No matter who they are. Even though you don't respect their basis for judging.

You realize that they have no sound standards. They are not looking at you with any kind of objectivity. They are being petty and vindictive and sinful in 16 different ways.

But it still bothers us to be disapproved. It's one of the hardest things to live with. Is knowing that someone dislikes you or despises you or disapproves of you.

And is willing to talk about it. But in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly. He will not behold the majesty of the Lord.

You might just make a note of this verse in connection with infant salvation. I know that seems like an unrelated topic. But people say well if someone dies before the age of accountability.

They are just going to pop them right up to heaven. And so shall they ever be with the Lord. No one escapes the volition test.

If that were the way that the death of someone who dies early were handled. And that's a second class condition. If and it's not true.

But if it were true. If a child of a year and a half, 18 months old died. And went straight to the Lord and was automatically saved.

Look at what this verse says. If that person would have grown up in this world. To be convicted by the Holy Spirit and reject God.

Beholding the majesty of God is not going to convert them. This leads to the rationale that well if we could just reveal enough of the glory of God. If we could just reveal enough of the reality of the lake of fire.

And the necessity for salvation. Everyone would be saved. What you are saying then is that God only saves some of us.

And the others are not saved because God does not sufficiently reveal himself. If God would reveal enough of himself. And enough of the actual situation.

That people are suspended over the lake of fire by a thread. As some of the old guys. Fear and Trembling and the Sin Unto Death.

Here's a book. I forget the guy's name that wrote it. But it's real famous.

Kierkegaard. Some of these other guys have gone on and on and on. Some of the old fiery evangelists.

Talked about how we're suspended over the lake of fire by a thread. And what a field of flames licking your feet and so forth. And people would fall down weeping in the things to be saved.

But the point here is. It isn't a matter of insufficient revelation. And we generally agree with that.

It isn't the fact that there hasn't been enough of God revealed. Or not enough of the eternal potential for eternal damnation has been revealed. That everyone would be convinced.

Because if that were the case. Then everyone who's not saved is a victim of insufficient revelation. Well if we accept that promise.

That there is enough revelation to convict any person. And that people willfully choose against it. Although it is revealed.

Well what's the difference if you stand somebody in the presence of God. A child who would have grown up to be an unbeliever. If they die at 18 months and get transferred to.

Directly before the throne of grace. They're going to reject God in the presence of his majesty. Just as much as they would have down here.

To say anything different is to say that well. Then people who are unbelievers down here

just didn't get enough of the revelation. Pop them all before the throne of God.

And they'll all be saved. It's not so. Satan, Lucifer was the guardian of the throne room of God.

And stood in his presence every day. And he fell. God walked with Adam in the garden.

Every day in the cool, in the breeze of the day. And he fell. So to be in the presence of God is not a guarantee of positive volition.

We have been given by God the ability to choose. And there are people who will see the righteousness in the millennial kingdom. Who do you think makes up the Gog and Magog rebellion? The Lord Jesus Christ is on the earth.

Ruling from Jerusalem on the throne of his father David. And what happens? By the end of that thousand year period. There is a huge percentage of the population of the earth.

That is ready to rise up in rebellion against him. And that is the Gog and Magog rebellion. They have seen him at first hand.

You have perfect human beings. And what's being spoken of here? Even though grace is shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness, he will deal unjustly.

People say, well, if we could just fix society. These poor people in the ghettos. And they're getting a bad start.

And they're exposed to bad role models. And if we could just put them in a land of uprightness, they would deal justly. The Bible says no.

You can't fix a sinful nature by putting it in a good environment. And that's what the millennial kingdom is going to prove. You put a fallen nature in perfect environment, it's still going to be fallen.

You can't rehabilitate by fixing things on the outside. It takes direct action on the soul. This is one of the problems that I see in organizations such as the one I work for.

Who deal with children. And who use psychological principles. We claim to be a Christian organization, but we don't use biblical principles.

We use psychological principles in dealing with children. And the idea is, and it's something you really have to get used to when you're in that environment. That when a child misbehaves, what they seek to do is remove the source of conflict.

Rather than disciplining the child and recognizing that the problem is internal to the child. They try to remove that which is causing the conflict. And wait for the child to

evinced some sign of positive behavior.

And then reinforce the positive. They don't discipline the negative. They just reinforce the positive.

Well, a sinful nature doesn't produce something positive very often. And usually when it does, it's for its own purposes. And so children learn to manipulate by aping or superficially conforming in some way.

So that they'll get the reward. And then they turn right around and throw a conniption fit. And are never disciplined for it.

And they learn to manipulate the environment. Because people believe that the environment will make the child good. And it won't.

And this verse says that explicitly. In the land of uprightness, he will deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. There are people who, faced with the majesty of God, will just turn away.

And it is a choice. It is a sovereign decision. Each of us, as human beings, is captain of our own ship and master of our own fate.

Now, if we choose to be saved, that doesn't accomplish anything. We can't, by our own merit or by our own choice, do anything for ourselves. But we can wish for it.

We can desire it. And God will see that desire. And then our salvation is 100% divine action.

I was cleaning out the garage yesterday and got so hot and so full of perspiration. And was running on short rations and all. And I really felt bad.

And I came in the house and it was cool. And I thought, boy, I would love to just sit here and cool off. But when you're soaking wet and you've got a reasonably nice house, you can't sit on anything.

You can't lay on anything. You can't get into a comfortable position. I was covered with dust and stuff from the garage.

And I looked around and I was in the house and I was wishing for some way to be suspended in midair and be cool without touching anything. And I couldn't find it. I finally had to lay down in a really uncomfortable position on the floor to wait until I could dry it off enough to be able to do something.

But I wished for comfort. I wished for relief from misery. But wishing for it doesn't make it happen.

But there are some people who don't even wish, who don't even care, who will turn away from the majesty of God. The only thing that distinguishes believers and unbelievers is what we choose. But our choosing has no merit.

And this is the big point that's been missed by Reformed theology, unfortunately. Ephesians 2, 8 and 9 says that faith is not meritorious. Calvinism and Reformed theology assumes that faith is meritorious.

That's why they say you can't have it if you're an unbeliever. You can't have faith. God has to give it to you.

Why would God have to give you faith? Why would they say that an unbeliever, a depraved person can't have faith? Because they believe it has merit. And the Bible says faith has no merit. I don't know why they can't just read Ephesians 2, 8 and 9 and understand that you're saved by grace through faith and that process is not of ourselves.

It's a gift of God and not of works. There is no merit in faith, exercise of faith. The merit of faith is in the object.

It's what you place your faith in. You place your faith in yourself, it's the same faith. There was a guy that came over to Beirut while I was there and drove a truck into a building and killed 254 sailors and marines.

He had faith that he was going to go to some Arabic Valhalla and be a favorite child of Allah. Well, it takes a lot of faith to kill yourself. And he had faith.

All of us have faith. There's no merit in having faith. He has no merit in my mind, that's for sure.

The merit of faith is in the object. And when you see the majesty of God and turn toward it, God can redeem, God can save, God can bless. You see the majesty of God and turn away from it, stand by.

When your hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they will see and be ashamed. There's a day coming when they're going to see and be ashamed. They will envy the people of God and the fire of God's enemies will devour them.

Well, I wish we could do a verse-by-verse treatment of all of this, but I do want to get back over to Genesis this morning and resume our study at the end of chapter 47. We've seen the family of Jacob, which has been somewhat symbolically numbered at 70. It's interesting to go and see how the number 70 is arrived at when we look through the actual individuals listed in chapter 46, because depending on whether or not you count Onan and Ur, who actually died in Canaan, they are numbered among these descendants.

It's interesting to look at the proportions as well. I say interesting. We're trying to use better synonyms than just interesting.

But I think there is some significance when you look at the number of descendants by each of the four wives and handmaids. There are twice as many by each wife as there are by each handmaid. So, for example, to Rachel, her sons and grandsons number 14, where her handmaid Bilhah, her offspring number 7. And then when you get to Leah, her offspring number 33, and her handmaid Zilpha, number 16.

So the handmaid has exactly half as many. Of course, 33 is a little bit more than 16, but there is a priority placed on the offspring of the wives as opposed to the handmaids. So that's another little observation you can note there.

But you lose two of the sons of Leah because Judah's sons Ur and Onan die in Canaan, and yet they are counted in the total of 70 who came down to Egypt with Jacob. So you say, well, we lost two, but if we add in Dinah, that replaces one, and you can play games with that to arrive at 70. But the point is, 70 is a number of completion.

It's a number of fullness, and the total is very close to 70. You can make it 70 depending on how you count them. There's also the idea that even though Ur and Onan have perished, they are numbered among those who come down to Egypt and who are at the inception of the nation.

And this implies that even though they're dead, they are not forgotten. They are not gone. They are still included in the number.

Even though physically they don't make the trip, they're still counted among the 70. That's the explanation that I prefer. People try to count the wives or count the daughters or do this, that, and the other to make the total come out to 70, but I think if you just leave Ur and Onan in the list, as the Word of God does, it is an implication that though they are gone, they are not forgotten and that they are, in fact, part of the inception of the nation.

But we saw Jacob settle in the land of Goshen, and he and his sons are taking care of the livestock of Pharaoh, so this is not a pure gift. It is sort of a lease arrangement. And in the beginning of chapter 47, we saw the situation of Joseph's father and brothers in verse 11, giving them a possession in the land of Egypt.

This is a different word than what was given back in verse 4. When they said to Pharaoh, This is the word *gur*, G-U-R, in Hebrew, which is the word for sojourn, to live as a transient. But in verse 11, And in the land of Goshen, this is their possession. They actually own this land.

It's theirs. It's been deeded to them, just as the land in Shechem that Jacob purchased, just as the cave of Machphela that Abraham purchased. It is theirs, and it belongs to

them.

And I think this is one of the reasons that you see, as we did last time, that Egypt is included along with Assyria, with that highway that connects all the way through Israel, that any place that Abraham and his descendants have owned land is included in this place of blessing. And of course, Abraham and his family owned land going all the way around to Ur and all the way down into Egypt. And because they have owned this land, because they have walked it, God told Abraham, Everywhere that you set your foot, I'm going to give it to you.

Of course, he was talking primarily about the land of Palestine, but God honors this promise in its fullness by giving them Egypt and giving them all the way back around to where Abraham originated from, ultimately. So, then we saw in the last half of the chapter there, where Joseph dealt with the famine and how the people ran out of money in the first few years of the famine and no longer had the ability to buy grain. And so, Joseph set up a system of mortgaging their livestock.

He said, Give me your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, in verse 16, if the money is gone. So, they brought their livestock in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herd, and for the donkeys. And by the way, in verse 17 here, in Genesis 47, this is the first mention in the Bible of horses.

Horses, archaeology has gone back and examined, and the earliest record of them in Egypt is right around this time, the 17th, 18th century B.C. is the first appearance of horses, and this is right around the time of Joseph. And so, they had not been in the land very long, and they were a prized animal for pulling chariots and so forth. And so, these horses probably brought quite a bit of recompense in terms of bread.

And then, when that year had ended, and we would guess that this might be the fourth or fifth year of the famine, because there had already been two years of the famine when Jacob came down, and after another year or two, people have run out of money. And so, in that year, they exchanged their livestock, and then in verse 18, that year ended, they came the next year and said, We will not hide from my Lord. Our money is gone.

You also have our herds of livestock. There's nothing left but our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes? And so forth.

Give us seed that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate. Verse 20, Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. For every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them, and the land became Pharaoh's.

As for the people, it says he moved them into the cities. Probably a better translation, I think you have a text note in the New King James, it says that he made the people

slaves. And that's actually what happened.

Obviously, they couldn't continue to farm the land and plant seed if he moved them all into the cities. But he made them slaves. And I think people have chosen not to see Joseph doing this.

But slavery, we're sort of conditioned by the African slave trade that's a part of our national history, the history of England and some other countries. And we think of slavery in its worst and most abusive forms. And taking nothing away from that, there are forms of slavery that are not so severe.

And although if you try to point that out, in our country, you get a hail of arrows and rebuke because people choose to believe that all of the slavery that was practiced in the United States was in its most heinous and abusive form. And you go watch Roots and these other things where all you see is mean, vicious, ornery old white men beating black men and separating families and abusing and fathering children and just being the worst form of criminals in this regard. But in reality, there were many people who were living in Africa in squalor.

And yes, it was a bad process. And no, it should not have happened. But the end result is people who might have grown up and lived and died in darkest Africa with a loincloth in the jungle came to America and received the influence of Christianity, received ultimately membership in a great civilization, the opportunity for education and advancement.

It has had its problems, and I take nothing away from that. But when you look at the end result, the blacks, like the Chinese and like the Hispanics and many other racial and ethnic groups, have by and large prospered in the United States. It has not been without its problems.

It has not been without discrimination and abuse. But when you look at them as a class, when you look at them as a group, where they are now versus where they were 300 years ago, this country has been a haven and a place for advancement and most of all for hearing and responding to the gospel. So all I suggest to you is we need to look at these things in a balanced way, taking nothing away from the bad side of it that has been pointed out.

It would be nice if once in a while people would look at the positive side, and there have been benefits. God is not limited by circumstances. God can bless.

God can prosper those who honor him, just as he did Joseph. So in the same way, this slavery was something that worked out well. The people thank Joseph and are very grateful for this arrangement, because otherwise they would have died.

Look at verse 25. You have saved our lives. Let us find favor in the sight of my Lord, and

we will be Pharaoh's slaves.

And this was a condition that persisted for several hundred years after this. At the time of the writing of Genesis, this was still the arrangement. They paid a 20 percent tax to Pharaoh, and they kept four-fifths of everything that they earned.

And people thought it was a good system, even though they were slaves. You can look at slavery in Israel and see that it was a very compassionate slavery. They were not allowed to abuse.

They were not allowed to beat. They had to free people who indentured themselves in order to pay their debts and so forth. It was a sanctioned thing in Israel.

Read the law of Moses. But in any case, this brings us up to the present. And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt, in verse 26, that Pharaoh would have one-fifth, except for the priests.

And you see a similar situation in the nation of Israel, where you have the tithe that supports the country. You have the priests who are exempt, supported in other ways. And most interestingly, you can see a great picture here of the parable of the soil and the seed in the New Testament, when Pharaoh owns the land, and he gives the seed to the people.

And they sow the seed, and the crop grows, and a portion of that crop is for the owner of the land, and the other portion of the crop is for themselves. And in the same way, when the seed of the Word of God is sowed in our soil, and we bear fruit, we benefit, and God benefits. It's mutually beneficial.

And we don't bear thorns and are nearer to curse and being burned, as Hebrews chapter 6 points out. Let's pause here. We've done a good thorough review.

We'll pick up at verse 27 when we come back from the break.