

Covenant Faithfulness

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Our scripture lesson or reading is taken from the book of Genesis chapter 46 beginning at verse 1 through 7 and Genesis 47.

! So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, here I am. Then he said, I am God, the God of your father.

Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt and I will also bring you up again.

And Joseph's hand shall close your eyes. Then Jacob set out from Beersheba. The sons of Israel carried Jacob, their father, their little ones and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

[1 : 12] They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan and came into Egypt. Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons and his sons' sons with him, his daughters and his sons' daughters.

All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt. 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 are 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 is 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.

[2 : 27] 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.

Then Joseph brought in Jacob, his father, and stood in before Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And 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 Ramesses, 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. 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.

[3 : 46] 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. 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. And when that year was ended, they 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 is 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?

[4 : 53] 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. 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 harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, a seed for the field, and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.

[5 : 56] 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 that Pharaoh should have the fifth.

The land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh's. 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 17 years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years. And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, If now I have 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. This is the end of our scripture reading. Thank you very much, David, for reading for us.

[7 : 16] I'm not much of a movie watcher, but the movies that I do enjoy are the ones that end in a way that I never could have imagined.

Those are the ones I enjoy. I detest a movie that you could detect right away where it's going to end up, and it ends up there. I enjoy being surprised.

It has an ending I never could have imagined. If Genesis were a movie, it would be one that I would enjoy. Because the way Genesis ends is a way that none of us could have imagined.

Imagine, again, most of us have read through Genesis, and so we know how it ends, but think about starting at the beginning of Genesis. Could you have imagined that the book would unfold in the way that it has, and they would end in the way that it does?

Genesis is a true account of creation. How a good and gracious God created the world and placed a man and a woman in a garden that he curated for them and how they rebelled.

[8 : 37] And in their rebellion, they plunged all of humanity into sin and how God made a promise. God made a promise that he would bring redemption.

And we see this promise being unfolded in the book of Genesis. And it comes into particular focus in chapter 12 when God calls a man named Abraham.

And through this man and his family, a sinful, broken, and messy family, God works out this plan of redemption.

And when we consider the brokenness of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and their families, how they were riddled with sin, it's natural to ask the question, why?

Why was God relentless? Why was God patient? Why did God continue to work with this family to bring this promise of redemption to pass?

[9 : 56] covenant faithfulness. And I think the reason is two words. Covenant faithfulness.

Covenant faithfulness is the reason that God patiently bore with his people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their offspring in their sin, in their brokenness, in their messiness to bring his purposes to pass.

He did it not on account of them, but on account of covenant faithfulness. As we come to Genesis 46 and 47, this truth comes into focus, into sharp focus.

And I pray this morning that as we consider it, that we're able to see it. And I pray that we would be able to not just see it in a vacuum, but see it in connection to our own lives.

Because we, like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, we're all broken people. We all have messy lives. And yet, we can trust a faithful God who makes promises and who keeps them.

[11 : 25] Not because of the faithfulness of his people, because in truth, the one common denominator of all God's people is that we are less than faithful.

But he keeps his covenant because he is faithful. And I pray this morning that we would see this as we consider Genesis 46 and 47.

Would you pray with me this morning? Father, we bow our hearts and we ask that you draw near to us.

You speak to our hearts from your word. Lord, help us, Lord, to be postured to hear and obey all that you say to us.

Would you help us to see that you are a God who is faithful to the covenants that you make with your people.

[12 : 25] Indeed, Lord, you've been faithful over all the generations to keep the covenants that you've made to your people. And I pray that you would encourage our hearts and strengthen our lives and fill our hearts with faith.

That even though our lives are not what you have called us to be, that in many times and in many ways we fall short, we can look away from ourselves and we can look to a faithful covenant keeping God who always keeps his promises.

Would you do this, Lord, as we open your word this morning in Jesus' name. Amen. As we consider Genesis 46 and 47 this morning, there are three specific ways that God's covenant faithfulness is seen and in our remaining time I want us to consider these three ways.

First, we see God's covenant faithfulness in the fact that he keeps his promises. God keeps his promises. And how do we see him in Genesis 46 and 47?

What do we see in these two chapters that are evidences or expressions of God's covenant faithfulness?

[14 : 05] Well, we see it by remembering that Jacob and his family is coming into Egypt. Their coming into Egypt was in fulfillment of a promise that God made to Abraham 215 years earlier.

That's the lapse in time between when God first made that promise to Abraham back in Genesis 15 and the point at which Jacob and his family are now making their way into Egypt.

You may recall the Lord called Abraham in Genesis 12 promised him offspring, promised to bless the whole world through him and some years had elapsed and the promise hadn't taken place.

And we come to Genesis 15 and it's a point that's very low in Abraham's life. He's depressed, he's discouraged. This promise that God has given to him, he is old, his wife is old, even when she was younger she could not bear children and this has not happened and he believes that this slave, Eleazar, is going to be his heir and God comes to him in a vision and assures him that he's going to have a son and that his offspring would be so many that in the same way you can't count the stars in the skies, you would not be able to count his offspring.

But that's not all that the Lord said to him. Look at Genesis, well actually it's going to be projected for you, you don't need to turn there. Genesis 15, 13 to 16, this is what the Lord says to him.

[15 : 58] The Lord said to Abraham, know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there and they will be afflicted for 400 years.

And I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace, you shall be buried in a good old age, and they shall come back here in the fourth generation for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

those are the words that God spoke to Abram when he made a covenant with him back in Genesis 15 about the land he was going to give them, about the son he was going to give them, and what would happen to them.

He told them that they would be sojourners for 215 years. Well, he didn't give that specific time, but he said they would be sojourners in a land that was not theirs, and 215 years have now elapsed, and he said they would be there for 400 years as slaves.

And then God promised that he was going to bring them back to the land of Canaan. Now, who could have imagined that the journey to fulfillment of those words of the Lord would have taken the course that we have been reading about in the book of Genesis.

[17 : 43] Ten years after Abraham and Sarah had lived in the land of Canaan, they got tired of waiting, and they took Hagar to their own hands, and Sarah gave her slave, Hagar, to Abraham and said, maybe this is the way God wants us to have a child.

And they had a child, Ishmael. And the Lord says, no, that's not going to be your heir. And the Lord promised him that he was going to have his own child by his wife, Sarah.

And 15 years later, the Lord fulfilled that promise. He had a son by the name of Isaac. And later, Isaac married, married Rebecca, and they had twin boys, Jacob and Esau.

Esau was the eldest. The birthright belonged to him. and Jacob cheated Esau out of his birthright. There was sibling rivalry.

The father, Isaac, loved Esau, and the mother, Rebecca, loved Jacob. And their sibling rivalry grew to the point that it became murderous and Jacob had to run to his uncle.

[19 : 00] He was in exile for 20 years, seeking refuge from his brother who vowed that he was going to murder him. And during those 20 years, his uncle mistreated him and deceived him and defrauded him.

And during that time in Paddan Aram, he acquired four wives, had 12 sons and a daughter. And after 20 years, he left Laban.

he comes back to the land of Canaan. And Jacob shows open favoritism in his family. He loves Rachel and her two sons, especially Joseph.

And this brings tremendous strife in their family. And in the end, his brothers sell him into slavery.

They sell him to some merchants who were on their way to Egypt. And he is sold into Egypt as a slave. He works in the house of one of the leaders in Pharaoh's administration.

[20 : 13] He is lied upon, he is thrown in prison, and between Portipha's house and Pharaoh's prison, he spends 13 years. dreams. And God blessed him with the ability to interpret dreams.

And he was able to interpret Pharaoh's dream, and Pharaoh promoted him just like that to become prime minister. And God ordained a famine, a famine came.

Not just in Egypt, that was the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, but it extended across the region, Canaan included. And as a result of the famine, his brothers come to Egypt in search of food.

And after some delay, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. They are gloriously reconciled, and he sends for his father.

His father comes back with all of his family, and they come back to Egypt. Who could have imagined that this promise that the Lord made to Abraham some 215 years ago would happen in this particular way.

[21 : 32] And God works in this family, in Abraham, in Isaac, and in Jacob's family, families that are marked by extraordinary sin and messiness and brokenness.

in the midst of all of that, God keeps his promises, and he brings his promises to pass.

And why did he do it? He did it because he is faithful to the covenants that he makes with his people even when his people are unfaithful.

And brothers and sisters, I believe that we should take this to heart this morning. We should take this to heart. One of the greatest burdens of the Christian life is to believe that there is a burden that is rested upon us to make progress in the Christian life and to cause to come to pass the many things that we see in God's word.

This is one of the greatest burdens that one could ever assume to take upon him or herself. And the reason is God never intended it to be that way. We should take heart this morning that no amount of sin, no amount of human brokenness, no amount of messiness in our lives is able to thwart the promises and the purposes of God.

[23 : 11] God keeps all of his promises. They are his promises. And nothing is too hard for him to do. The passage of time does not prevent God's purposes.

215 years had elapsed and yet God's purposes, his promises were not thwarted. difficult circumstances may arise, but they do not thwart the promises and the purposes of God.

And see, this is why we can trust the Lord, brothers and sisters, that no matter what, no matter what things look like, God keeps all of his promises without exception.

I know that when we think of the promises of God, sometimes we think about it on a personal level. And I think we need to make a distinction between promises that we believe God has spoken to our heart, maybe through prayer, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, and the promises of God's word.

The promises of God's word, without exception, will all come to pass. There's not one part of God's word that is untrustworthy that we should wonder as to whether it will come to pass.

[24 : 47] No, God keeps his word, he will perform all of his promises. We can think of these as general promises. But when it comes to personal promises, those that we believe that perhaps maybe reading scripture, God is impressed in our heart, maybe in prayer he is impressed in our hearts.

Maybe through the witness of the Spirit we believe God has spoken something personally to us. We cannot hold on to those with the same degree of certainty as we can with God's word because sometimes what we think may be a personal promise is really just a personal desire that may not be something God has promised to us.

And so we must not hold those personal promises with the same kind of strength and conviction that we hold on to as relates to God's word. Now I know that all of those personal promises, we take them sincerely and we believe that God has spoken them to us even when it's our own desire.

And so we can continue to serve the Lord sincerely, we can continue to believe those promises, but we must trust the Lord that not all of them may truly be a promise that God has given to us.

And it sometimes will bring disappointment. But even in the midst of those disappointments, the Lord will care for us. He will take care of us. And so we can go on trusting, and we can look to him.

[26 : 23] The second way that we see God's covenant faithfulness in Genesis 46 and 47 is that God preserves his people. We see this in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their families.

We see them walking through many dangers, toils, and snares. Over this 215-year period that we're looking at that brought Jacob and his family to Egypt, we can reflect back and remember how the Lord preserved Sarah.

When Abraham exposed her to sexual exploitation by Pharaoh, by Abimelech, God preserved her. God protected her in the midst of that.

God protected Abraham because he could have been killed by Pharaoh and Abimelech for deceiving them. God preserved Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as they lived in the land of Canaan, surrounded by godless people with whom they had conflicts from time to time.

in Genesis 47, in verses 7-9, we have Jacob standing before Pharaoh.

[27 : 49] And he utters some brief words to Pharaoh, but they're very profound, what he says to Pharaoh. And they're profound because they give us an insight, they help us to see how God preserves his people.

look at Genesis 47, beginning in verse 7. Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood before Pharaoh and Pharaoh blessed and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

And Jacob said to Pharaoh, sorry, and 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 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.

Jacob describes his days as few and evil. And Jacob's words remind us of how God preserves his people.

[29 : 09] God's preservation of his people does not mean that we will not experience the hardships of life. It doesn't mean that. As God's people living in a fallen world, there is nothing that God exempts us from that those who do not belong to him experience.

Everything that unbelievers experience in this world, believers experience as well. We're not exempted. We have our trials. We have our troubles.

Just like everybody else. Some of it is because of a broken world of sin. Some of it is because of our own sin. sin. So God does not promise us that we'll be exempted from troubles and trials.

What he does promise us is this, that he will be with us and he will preserve us in the midst of our trials and our troubles. And this was true for Jacob and his family.

They experienced enormous trials and troubles. And in Jacob's case, a lot of it was his own doing. Most of the troubles and trials that Jacob experienced, it was his own doing.

[30 : 32] But God was faithful to him nonetheless. God preserved him in the midst of those trials and difficulties nonetheless.

And he would preserve us as well. he will keep us as well. Even when he sometimes may discipline us, he will keep us and preserve us in the midst of it.

Yes, we will testify as Jacob testified that we have experienced trials and difficulties. But the mere fact that Jacob was able to stand before Pharaoh and say that was evidence that in the midst of his few and evil days, God preserved him and God kept him.

The fact that he was standing before Pharaoh in the midst of a famine was evidence of God's preserving grace at work in his life.

And, brothers and sisters, it's encouraging to remember that even though we're not exempted from life's trials, we're not at the mercy of life's trials. We're at the mercy of a sovereign, good God who is with us and who will preserve us in the midst of our trials.

[31 : 58] trials. And I know for some of us this morning, this is a live issue. Some of us are walking through health trials. Some of us are walking through marital trials.

Some of us are walking through difficult, prolonged business challenges and a myriad of other kinds of challenges and trials.

and the promise to us is the same, all of us. God is going to preserve us through that. We don't know how and we don't know when.

We don't know how it's going to work out. We don't know the season of it, the length of it. But here's what we know. God will preserve us through it. And we will look back and we will testify as Jacob testified.

And we will say, I've had many, many trials. But our ability to stand and testify is evidence enough of a God who has preserved us.

[33 : 05] And I wish I could tell us this morning that when we stand on the other side of a trial that God has brought us through, that that would be it. But I would be dishonest if I told you that.

Job said, man born of a woman is few of days and full of troubles. That is our lot in this fallen world. But we need not be concerned about that.

We should take comfort in the fact that come what may, trial after trial, God is going to be with us. And he will preserve us through the trials that come our way.

and he does it because he is faithful to his covenant. The third and final way that we see God's covenant faithfulness in this section of Genesis is God provides for his people.

He provides for his people. Here we have a regional famine, a famine that did not just hit the land of Egypt, but it extended all the way to the land of Canaan.

[34 : 21] And here in Genesis 46 and 47, there are five more years left in the famine. The Egyptians, they ran out of money.

When they ran out of money, they sold their livestock. When they ran out of livestock, they sold their land, they became sharecroppers for a pharaoh. where he owned the land, they worked the land, they gave him 20%, and they were able to keep the balance for themselves.

But in the midst of these desperate circumstances, we see the Lord providing for his people. And there are two verses that in particular bring this out, how God provided for his people.

Look at verses 11 and 12 in Genesis 47. Then Joseph settled his father and brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Ramesses, 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.

[35 : 45] Two different experiences. In the midst of a famine, when the Israelites were being given land, getting a possession in land, in the best of the land, although Pharaoh commanded it, we know that God was sovereign over Pharaoh in the dreams and over everything else, and the Lord was the one who was giving his people a possession in Goshen, while the Egyptians were parting with their land.

They were parting with their livestock. The livestock of the Israelites was multiplying. They were on the brink of famine, saying we're going to die if you don't give us something, Joseph.

And we see that Joseph provided for his entire family, the entire household of Jacob, who came to the land of Egypt.

God provides for his people. And he does it because he is faithful to his covenant. He doesn't do it because we merit it.

He does it because he is faithful to his covenant to care for his people. again, brothers and sisters, we should take this to heart.

[37 : 12] The Lord provides for his people as an expression of his covenant faithfulness. Thank God for jobs. Thank God for businesses.

Thank God for other means of income. But ultimately, God is our source. None of those things, none of the means of income that we have is permanent.

God is the permanent one. He is the source. He is the one who provides for his people as part of his covenant faithfulness.

I know that in any sermon, at the end of it, there are questions. questions. I have no way of knowing all those questions, but as I thought about this, I suspect one of the questions that must linger in some of our minds is how is it that God is able to overlook sin?

God is able to, in spite of sin and disobedience and messiness and brokenness in his people's lives, how is he able to still continue to hold to his covenant and show covenant faithfulness to them?

[38 : 41] Does he just turn the other eye and say, don't worry about it? God is he just a God of sloppy grace where it doesn't matter how we live and what we do and he will just come along and bless us all the same and preserve us all the same and keep his promises all the same?

No, none of that is true. The reason that God treats his people in this way is because of his son.

It's not about you, it's not about me. It is about God being gracious to you and gracious to me because of Jesus Christ.

The plan that God promised in Genesis chapter three where he said that the seed of the woman would come and crush the head of the serpent one day. And this plan that we see unfolding in the life of Abraham and his family, the ultimate climax of that plan is the Lord Jesus Christ himself whom God sent into the world, who came and walked on this earth and lived a perfect life before God, obeyed him at every single point.

God. And then he went to the cross and God laid upon him the sins of his people, the sins of all those who would ever trust in him and Christ paid for those sins.

[40 : 26] sins of God. And on that basis, God is able to deal with us in a merciful and kind way because of the merits of Jesus Christ.

Not that he is overlooking our sins, Christ has paid for those sins. Christ has gone to the cross, he's lived the perfect life so that we can be the beneficiaries of the mercy and the grace of God.

That's the basis of unrich. God is able to keep covenant faithfulness because he does it through his son. He does it on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so really the answer to that question is one word. God is able to do that because of Christ. And even during the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when God was working in the midst of all of their sin and all of their brokenness and all of their messiness, it was in anticipation of the sacrifice and the obedience of Jesus Christ that would come and they were the beneficiaries of that.

We live in a world that's filled with all kind of uncertainty. economic uncertainties. There's uncertainty about war.

[42 : 01] We are entering into the busiest time of the hurricane season when one hurricane, if it's of the size and intensity of a hurricane like Dorian that were to hit this island, it could set us back for years.

And then amidst of all that, we have our own personal uncertainties. Brothers and sisters, we can take comfort from the fact that whatever comes our way, God is sovereign over it and in the midst of it, he is bringing his purposes to pass.

no matter what, no matter how turbulent, no matter how confusing, in the midst of all that, God is bringing his purposes to pass.

And we see this in the life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as we're coming to the end of Genesis. And I trust that we would make the connection to our own lives, that we who belong to Christ as we sojourn on this earth.

God is with us. And he is going to take care of us. We don't understand any of those uncertainties. We don't know how they're going to work out, but here's what we can know.

[43 : 22] Here's what we do know. We can know that God is going to be with us. He's going to keep his promises. He's going to preserve his people.

And he's going to provide for us. And he's going to do it. because of his son. He is going to do it because of the covenant that he's made with his son, that he will take care of his people.

And so I pray that we would take heart. I pray that we would be encouraged. I pray that we would look to the Lord and trust him, come what may, in our lives.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you, our God who keeps your covenant. We thank you that you're faithful to your people because of your son.

And Lord, we pray that whether as we look at the world or we look at our lives and all the uncertainty there is, would you help us to fix our eyes on you, place our trust in you, because you are a covenant keeping God.

[44 : 45] We promise that you'll never leave us, you'll never forsake us. And Lord, may this be the true conviction of our hearts. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.