

“Grace in the Land of Goshen”

Genesis 47

July 23rd, 2017

Carolina Sandell, the author of today’s opening hymn, was a Lutheran pastor’s daughter in Sweden. She was 26 years old when tragedy struck. Lina and her father were crossing a lake when the boat they travelled in lurched and her father fell overboard. As Lina watched in horror, her father drowned before anyone could mount a rescue effort.

When tragedy strikes, some people allow it to destroy them, but Lina’s faith saw her through the tragedy. Her grief gave her music a depth and sensitivity that had been missing earlier.

During her lifetime, Lina wrote 650 hymns. “Day by Day” speaks of finding strength to face trials—and having no cause for worry or for fear. It encourages us to live with the promise of “a special mercy for each hour” (v. 2). It asks God’s help in tribulation - to trust His promises (v. 3) – “till (we) reach the promised land.”

This sort of song becomes popular because it provides comfort to people in distress. That describes most of us at some time or another. We need strength to meet the trials we encounter. We need the assurance that God is with us—and loves us—and will help us—even when our circumstances are grim. We need to know that God will help us “till (we) reach the promised land.”

Speaking of the Promised Land, we studied **Genesis Chapter 46** last week. There, we learned that Jacob and his family moved from the Promised Land to the land of Egypt. This morning, as we explore **Genesis Chapter 47**, we see Joseph informing Pharaoh that Joseph’s father and family have arrived in Egypt. It would be the beginning of a 430-year stay for God’s people in a pagan nation surrounded by ungodly influences.

Genesis 47:1-31:

Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, “My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they *are* in the land of Goshen.” ² And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. ³ Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What *is* your occupation?”

And they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers.” ⁴ And they said to Pharaoh, “We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.”

⁵ Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. ⁶ The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.”

⁷ Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How old *are* you?”

⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty 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 pilgrimage.” ¹⁰ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

¹¹ And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹² Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, according to the number in *their* families.

¹³ Now *there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. ¹⁴ And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

¹⁵ So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed."

¹⁶ Then Joseph said, "Give your livestock, and I will give you *bread* for your livestock, if the money is gone." ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread *in exchange* for all their livestock that year.

¹⁸ When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. ¹⁹ Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give *us* seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate."

²⁰ Then 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. So the land became Pharaoh's. ²¹ And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from *one* end of the borders of Egypt to the *other* end. ²² Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations *allotted to them* by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands.

²³ Then Joseph said to the people, "Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, *here is* seed for you, and you shall sow the land. ²⁴ And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones."

²⁵ So they said, "You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants." ²⁶ And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, *that* Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, *which* did not become Pharaoh's.

²⁷ So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly. ²⁸ And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years. ²⁹ When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰ but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said."

³¹ Then he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed."

MP 1 – God's Grace through Pharaoh (v. 1-12);

MP 2 – God's Grace through Joseph (v. 13-26)

MP 3 – God's Grace in Goshen (v. 27-31)

The first 12 verses show **God's grace demonstrated**, interestingly, **through Pharaoh**. After his conversation with Pharaoh, Joseph selects five of his brothers (we don't know whom) for an audience with Pharaoh. The brothers' words to Pharaoh are respectful, seeking his permission to live in the land of Egypt. *Why?* Verse 4 contains the answer, "...because (they) have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine (was) severe in the land of Canaan."

Pharaoh's instruction to Joseph in verse 6 is most gracious, "The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock."

Not only does Pharaoh allow Joseph's family to live in the choicest land of Egypt, Pharaoh also offers a job to any of the brothers who are able to herd the royal livestock! This could only be the grace of God demonstrated to Jacob and his family! What a promotion for the 11 sons of Jacob. "One day they were ordinary resident aliens, and the next day they were Pharaoh's official herdsmen! Joseph had been kind to Pharaoh, and now Pharaoh showed kindness to Joseph's family." (Wiersbe, 137, 138)

Again, we see God's sovereignty in play. Of course, God works in and through His people, calling us to salvation and ministry among and through the local Church. But, God isn't limited to rule over His people. He often works through people who are not His own. This was true of Pharaoh in today's passage; it was also true of Cyrus (**Ezra 1:11ff, Isaiah 44:28**); Nebuchadnezzar (**Jeremiah 25:9, 27:6**), and Caesar Augustus (**Luke 2:1ff**).

In verse 7, and again in verse 10, Jacob blesses Pharaoh. Jacob wasn't intimidated by Pharaoh. And, that is noteworthy, given that according to Egyptian theology, Pharaoh was a god, the earthly embodiment of the great sun god Ra. In this encounter between Jacob and the Pharaoh, it would seem that the blessing should have been given by Pharaoh to Jacob, not the other way around. But, the one giving the blessing is the greater of the two.

Application: As we apply this text, we must strive for the outlook Jacob had, Christian friends. We are sometimes dazzled by the unbelieving world, its' wealth, influence, and power. In the presence of those the world thinks important, we stand mute. We need to learn, as Jacob did, that as Christians we have more to offer the world than the world has to offer us.

What do we have? We have the treasure of the Gospel and knowledge of the true God (salvation). Thus we are the "aroma of life" to those who respond to our testimony (**2 Corinthians 2:16**). No greater wealth, influence, and power exists. The best good to be done for others is to offer them the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (**2 Timothy 1:7**) Take the name of Jesus with you!

From the **grace God gave Jacob and his family through Pharaoh**, we next see the **grace God gave them through Joseph**. Verse 13 summarizes the struggle for life – "the famine *was* very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of (it)." We are not well-versed with the affliction of famine. God has been most gracious to North America in that way. Yet, there many places of the world where food is much more scarce than it is here.

Then, there's the curious story of famine-buster, Michel Lotito.

Over the course of 40 years, Lotito ate an estimated 9 tons of metal. The incredibly thick lining of his stomach and intestines allowed him to consume almost anything. In 2007, Lotito died of natural causes unrelated to his eating habits. But before he passed away, he made sure he could eat a coffin. His most famous meal was a Cessna 150 Airplane (eating the plane took him two years from 1978 to 1980).

But not everyone is equipped to deal with famine that way, are they? In the middle section of **Genesis 47**, we see Joseph managing the distribution of the grain stored during the 7 years of plenty. Initially, people traded their money for grain (v. 14-15); then when the supply of money

was exhausted, they gave their livestock in exchange for bread (v. 16). When they ran out of livestock, the people gave their land for seed (v. 19); finally, the chapter reveals the people sold themselves into servitude in exchange for seed (v. 23ff). They gave ‘everything but the kitchen sink’ for something to eat. And we’d do the same in that situation. But, we must be careful.

Application: Just a few weeks ago, we Americans celebrated for the 241st time, our independence from the government of England. Thirteen loosely united colonies mustered the strength and fortitude to defeat the greatest military force of the day. A new nation with a new government had been formed.

As a people, we are vulnerable if we think of government as being the answer to most human woes. For instance, “We want government to take care of the poor, when that is clearly a responsibility the Bible puts upon those to whom God has given means. (Incidentally, that is one reason why we will receive a Fifth Sunday offering next Sunday to support our church’s benevolence fund.) We want government to take care of the elderly, when that is a responsibility the Bible puts upon children.” (Boice, 1130).

What we give away to those who rule over us, we can rarely, if ever, get back. Look at Venezuela, once the wealthiest country in Latin America. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Venezuela experienced democratic reforms and improved living conditions across the country. Farms prospered and oil production rose.

In 1998, Hugo Chávez won the presidency. He undertook social welfare programs, and paid for them with the country’s oil profits. Chávez abolished the upper house of parliament, eliminated term limits for the presidency, packed courts with cronies, censored critical media, and pushed through what he called an “anti-capitalist” constitution. In 2001, Chávez seized land. Farms languished, along with other companies Chávez nationalized.

These days, Venezuela’s triple-digit inflation rate is one of the highest in the world (400%!). Local currency is nearly worthless. Medicines are scarce, and surgeons often urge patients to bring their own sheets, toilet paper, and gauze. Venezuelans line up at grocery stores before dawn, hoping to buy scant quantities of items like sugar, oil, or eggs. A national identification number dictates the single day each week a shopper may line up for price-controlled goods.

God created government to protect citizens against evil. But government must be entrusted to men and women of integrity. Our second President, John Adams, famously wrote, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

With the last five verses of **Genesis 47**, we see **God gave His people grace in Goshen**. That grace is summarized in verse 27 – “So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.” God was coming through yet again on the promise to His people first given to Abram back in **Genesis Chapter 12:2** - “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.” Jacob would enjoy 17 years of life in Goshen as his family would grow as it never had before.

Long life is another of God’s graces to His people. Verse 28 teaches that Jacob had reached 147 of age. While that is an amazing age in terms of today’s life expectancy, Jacob did not make

it to the age of his grandfather Abraham (175 years), nor did he make it to the age of his father Isaac (180).

We've occasionally touched on this as we worked through the earlier chapters of Genesis. The Bible reports some hard to believe ages of people. The first man God created – Adam – lived to be 930 years of age (**Genesis 5:3-4**). *Do you remember how old Noah lived?* He was 950 (**Genesis 9:29**)! And the oldest age of anyone record in Scripture belonged to Methuselah – 969 years of age (**Genesis 5:27**).

The error many people make is to look at the present day, and presume the Bible must be wrong because it records such unbelievable ages. We must resist such temptations, however. The Bible is the Word of God, and because it is His inerrant word, it cannot make mistakes. Even so, the Scripture itself points out the reason why people don't live as long today, as they did when the earth was younger and people were closer to the creation of the world.

We turn to **Genesis 6:3** for that. There, we read God's words, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." This God declared when there was great depravity among all mankind on the earth – that is, with the exception of Noah, who "walked with God." (**Genesis 6:9**)

God was about to limit the individual lifespans of mankind to 120 years, which would start to happen after the Flood. God had created our first parents, Adam and Eve, without sin and to live forever. But, they chose to sin against God by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which He had forbidden them to eat.

Psalm 90 further refines our life expectancy when we read, "The days of our lives *are* seventy years; and if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years," (**Psalm 90:10**) That lines up with the typical life span in our day and it has been the case for the past couple thousand years.

The chapter ends with a conversation between Jacob and Joseph. Jacob was coming to the end of his life, and he gave instructions to Joseph to be buried among his forefathers back in the land of Canaan. It was his desire that his funeral would be a clear witness that he was not an idol-worshipping Egyptian, but a believer in the true and living God.

Application: Similarly, friends, we are wise to plan our own departure from this present life. Many of you have a last will and testament, and that is important for the distribution of your assets or estate. But we mustn't neglect our last witness and testimony!

Make sure to leave instructions with me the hymns you'd like sung at your home-going service. It's important, too, that you write down any of your favorite Scriptures that you'd like read or preached at your funeral service. If you go before I do, I assure you that I will be faithful to preach the gospel.

Please don't put this off. Your demise can be most unexpected. If you are not a believer in Christ, your life may come to an end before you have trusted in Christ. Do so today!