

Surviving the Famine

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[0 : 00] Now as we come to this 47th chapter in Genesis, we're drawing near towards the end now of this first and highly instructed book of the Bible.

We have Joseph now, the governor of Egypt, presenting a selection approximately half of his brothers to Pharaoh and of course his father too.

Having come into Pharaoh's kingdom, this is no more than a courtesy that they are showing themselves and presenting themselves to Pharaoh by way of greeting and by way of thanking him for his hospitality in receiving them as a whole extended family into his kingdom to nourish them and to help them.

So Joseph presents his father and his brothers to Pharaoh. Now he took some of his brethren, five men, presented them out to Pharaoh, probably the five elders, but we don't know exactly who they were.

And as Joseph had primed his brothers beforehand, Pharaoh will ask you, what is your occupation? We can only assume that the Egyptians did not want idle vagrants in their land, but if somebody was prepared to work and had a job, an occupation to do, they were content to let them stay as long as they were going to contribute something to the land and to the economy.

[1 : 17] What is your occupation? They said unto Pharaoh, thy servants, our shepherds, both we and also our fathers. Now there is no clash here. There's no contradiction in what we see that Joseph told them to say in verse 34 of the previous chapter.

Say thy trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now. To us we think cattle, well that's quite different from sheep because that's cows and boos and so on. And the other is sheep. It's cattle in the sense not of purely the bovine variety that Joseph was talking about.

He means livestock. He means all different kinds of livestock. If they're shepherds then they would have goats as well as sheep. It would be the lesser, smaller cattle, smaller livestock that would be their business, that would be their work.

And he says, say this, let them know that this is what you do. And he said, every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians, either because they regarded them as beneath them, that doing the shepherding work was, you know, you banish people out into the hills or into the pastures.

And you weren't under your feet when you're doing the real work of working the fields and irrigating them and sowing and reaping the crops or the work in the cities or the towns. The shepherds or the livestock keepers were like the lowest of the low.

[2 : 36] Perhaps that was the reason. Perhaps because they regarded the beasts themselves as being beneath them. Perhaps because maybe for all we know there weren't any particular goats or sheep who figured as deities, as gods in Egypt, whereas most other creatures had a god with some kind of head on its statue or some other kind of creature.

We do not know the precise reasons why shepherds would be an abomination to the Egyptians. But in underlining this point, it's another reason why the Egyptians might want them as far away from them as possible.

The land of Goshen, which was in the Nile Delta. The delta area, of course, is where the Nile spreads out into all the different streams as it reaches these different mouths.

It's about 100 miles across all the different streams of the Nile Delta. Goshen has stopped to have been to the eastern side of that, where it would be well watered by the streams of the delta.

So it wouldn't be dependent on irrigation channels and so on. There would be pasture land there because there'd still be a flow of water. Because whatever is coming down from the Nile, and of course the Nile is the longest river in the world.

[3 : 52] So if it's flowing down from the Nile, whatever comes down that one mighty river, it's going to be feeding out into all the streams of the delta. As we know, a river gets bigger, gets stronger, gets more water in it, the nearer it gets to its mouth, the further down the road it is.

Admittedly, it spreads out and dissipates its strength when it gets to a delta area. But at this stage now, it's spreading out over what must be comparatively flat land.

So it is well watered land. It means that there will be pasture for their flocks, but perhaps not the kind of land that could be dug for agriculture and growing of crops and so on.

So they will be well away from most of the Egyptian population. And that may be another incentive to say, oh yes, we're shepherds. But also they're saying, not only are we shepherds ourselves, but it's not just something we cooped up in this generation in order to keep ourselves as far away from the Egyptians as possible.

Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers. Generations of us have looked after sheep and cattle and goats and so on. Livestock has been our business, at least anyway since the days of Abraham.

[5 : 10] Now if we go back, if you remember, when we looked at the early chapels of Genesis, in chapter 11 where Abraham and his father Terah, they leave the city of Ur of the Chaldees.

Now Ur of the Chaldees was a metropolis of sophistication and of culture and of wealth and of diversity of trades and so on.

City dwellers would be comparatively sophisticated people with their wealth concentrated in currency, ready currency for the markets that would be there and all the different trades that would be operating there.

Abraham and his family, if they're coming out of the Chaldees, are not only city dwellers, but dwellers in a big prosperous city. In order to then come out of that city and make a journey and have a means of sustaining themselves as they travel, they would almost certainly have had to turn all their wealth, all their property, everything that they had, into something that was movable.

Now if you have a house in a city before, that's not movable, but you can sell it. And you can then get tents. Tents are movable. Livestock is movable.

[6 : 19] It is wealth that is property which travels with you. If you've got a field and you dig it and you plough it and you sow it and you harvest it and so on, that's fixed. You can't take that with you if you move hundreds of miles.

But if you've got flocks and herds, they can come with you. Wherever there is grass, wherever there is pasture, they can feed. Where they can feed, you can get milk from them. You can get meat from them if you're careful about how you slaughter and how you call them and so on.

And just keep winnowing out the flock but don't make it so that you've eaten everything and all your wealth. If you're careful with it, you can get a measure of meat from it. You can get milk from it.

You can get the skins from it and so on. There's a certain amount that you can get if you're keeping your flocks and herds carefully and stewarding them well. It is movable property.

And from the days of Abraham, this is the way they have had to be. Dwelling in tents. Those who have no fixed abode. As we read in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 8.

[7 : 23] By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed. And he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country.

Dwelling in tabernacles. That is in tents. With Isaac and Jacob. The heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

So the city that he hopes to return to now or come to is not out of the Canaanites. It's that which the Lord has prepared for him. And they are sojourning as they did in the land of Canaan.

They don't own property there. The only property that Abraham ever owned there was the cave in which to bury his wife. That is the only inheritance that the sons of Abraham have.

That cave to bury their death. If they are sojourners in the land of Egypt, that's all they were in the land of Canaan. They may have called it their home, but they were tent dwellers.

[8 : 26] They moved about from place to place. If they got grief from the local inhabitants, they had to move on. If somebody said, no, this water is ours, they had to go and dig another well somewhere else. If they didn't own a thing, they could only have the grass that their beasts ate and they moved from place to place.

And so what they say to the Egyptians is, what they say to Pharaoh is, for to sojourn in the land that we come. We're not wanting anybody's fields or houses or cities. We just want to stay here until there's grass again in our own country.

There's no pasture for our flocks. The famine is sold in the land of Canaan. Now, therefore, we pray, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. Just until the famine is over.

Well, that's the intention, to sojourn in the land. That's all they want. And in a sense, that's all any of us can do. Sojourn for a time where we are in this world.

But we'll come to that. And then Jacob is brought in. There's the sense in which you can almost picture that Jacob is carried in and sat down in a chair.

[9 : 30] He's not standing before Pharaoh. And that's what we have here. And Jacob, Joseph brought in Jacob, verse 7, his father, and set him before Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

You might think, well, it's a bit of cheap, surely, isn't it? Surely the less is blessed of the better. Who is he to bless Pharaoh? It's not in the sense of, oh, I'm great and I'm powerful. And you, Pharaoh, you're just nobody. But rather, it is twofold.

First, it is in the sense of a salute of honor. A gesture of blessing and appreciation and acknowledgement of all Pharaoh's hospitality and kindness to them.

It is a greeting. A reverential and religious greeting that Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Also bearing in mind that he is the senior in years, albeit not in earthly power.

And yet, in the same sense, there is a sense in which there is a certain kind of role reversal here.

[10 : 32] But we'll come to that in just a minute. Pharaoh's question to Jacob is, you know, how old art thou? Literally, in the original Hebrew, that would translate as, how many are the days of the years of thy life?

And I might think, well, why didn't they just put that? Because in the next verse, you know, that's exactly how Jacob answers it. So why didn't they just get Pharaoh to say, possibly because, in translation, it would be repeating it just a few, many times too often.

Because Jacob said to Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life. And I'm not attained out of the days of the years of life of my fathers and the days of their pilgrimage.

There's only so many times you're going to repeat the same phrase. So, Pharaoh's question is put in a simpler form. But literally, that's what he's asking. How many are the days of the years of your life?

And so the days of the years, Jacob says, not of my life but of my pilgrimage, are 130 years. Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.

[11 : 40] I'm not attained out of the days of the years of life of my fathers and the days of their pilgrimage. Both I and my fathers are on a spiritual journey.

Now this is again what we read in Hebrews 11 here. Verses 13 and 14. These all died in faith. Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. That country is not Egypt. That country is not even Canaan. That country is a heavenly country the Lord prepares for them.

But it is a pilgrimage for Jacob. It is a spiritual journey. Wherever he may travel physically, his pilgrimage is to draw him nearer and nearer to the God of his fathers.

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He seeks to draw closer and closer to God in the days of the years of his pilgrimage. It is a journey of faith.

[12 : 46] It is not merely a trotting around different lands and planting your tent in different places. It is a spiritual journey. It ought to be a spiritual progress.

The days of the years of my pilgrimage. All of them are on a journey of spiritual progress. In the land that they are going to is not a physical land.

This land, not even Canaan, is not their home. But rather the land which the Lord has prepared for them. That ultimate land of promise. And so it ought to be with us. The days of the years of our lives, whether they be many or be few, ought to be years of pilgrimage.

Of this spiritual journey. And we would hope and pray of spiritual progress. We ought to be nearer to the Lord now that we were five years ago.

We ought to be nearer to the Lord now that we were last week. We ought to be making progress. Sometimes, of course, we slide back. Sometimes we lose ground. And we allow the devil to undermine our relationship.

[13 : 52] And we sin against the Lord and it sets us back. And then we have to claw our way back up the mountainside, as it were. But we ought to be making progress. We ought to be on a pilgrimage.

Getting closer and closer to the Lord our God. Few and evil, he says. Well, that's a strange thing for somebody who's 130 to say. Now, clearly, he was a wonder to the Egyptians.

Who obviously tended to live nothing like as long as this. But Jacob's longevity could never be a source of pride to him. Firstly, because, as he says, you know, few and evil in the days of my life.

And because his life had been one of almost continuous trouble. And if you think of it, you know, in his early years, he's overshadowed by his elder brother. He saw the man's man, the hunter, the one just bursting with vigor and vitality and machismo.

The one who went out and got the beast. His father loved his savoury meat that he prepared. And the savoury venison he would bring in. And Esau was his father's favourite.

[15 : 00] And Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents. You know, a wee bit, perhaps not ephemeral, but certainly a softer character. And a sort of quiet, weaker one.

And always in the shadow of his brother. But he manages to trick him out of his inheritance for this mess of pottage. And then, of course, that just gets him so annoying. And he tricks him out of the blessing.

And then Jacob has to run for his life. Because that's effectively what he has to do. He has to run for his life because his brother wants to kill him. And he goes into the land of his relatives to Hara.

Where, having cheated his own brother, he then is cheated by his own uncle or cousin or whatever relation Laban is to him. He's cheated out of the wife that he wants. And then he gets her, but then he's got two wives.

He didn't really want two wives. But then, of course, that's a source of friction. And it's a source of friction between them and sisters. And it's a source of friction between their children. And this is one of the reasons why Joseph is sold into slavery in the first place.

[15 : 59] It is fraternal jealousy. Different mothers. Different kind of set up in the family. Different affections from their fathers. Trouble in his youth. Trouble in his middle age.

Trouble in his old age. All through his life. Trouble. Some of it in his own making. But still, trouble. Few and evil have the days of my life been.

And also, though, because it was an achievement. Okay, 130 years old sounds good. But it was considerably less than those of his forefathers.

We know if we were to read on in the end of the chapter, verse 28, that Jacob lived in the land of Egypt 17 years. So the whole age of Jacob was 140 in 7 years. Okay, pretty good going.

But Isaac had lived to be 180. And Abraham had lived to be 175. And Abraham's father, Terah, had lived to be 205. So, you know, he's not doing quite so well when you compare it with the days of his grandfather and father and great-grandfather and so on.

[17 : 02] It looks good in the sight of the Egyptians. But, you know, if all you're comparing yourself with is the Egyptians, then it's not that brilliant. So, likewise, you know, let's not fool ourselves into thinking that we are especially good followers of the Lord.

Oh, look at what we've achieved. Look at how many years we've gone with the Lord. Look at how well we're doing just comparing ourselves with ourselves. That is a foolish thing to do. Paul tells us, 2 Corinthians 10, verse 12.

We dare not make ourselves of the number or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves. But they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise.

Don't look at the world around you and say, wow, look how depraved. The bad the world is. I must be good. By comparison. The monthly record, I've carried an article some months back about, you know, young people going away to universities and so on.

And how the struggles that they face and how the temptations that they may come under. And how it's possible to fool ourselves into thinking that we're in a better spiritual condition than we actually are.

[18 : 08] Because they took the perhaps fictional example of, say, a young man going off to university or something. And because maybe he's in church every Lord's Day and maybe he's not getting drunk at the weekend like his flatmates or his pals are.

He's not sleeping with his girlfriend and so on. He may feel like he's pretty much a super saint by comparison with everybody around the world. But, you know, these practices of temperance and comparative chastity and of attendance on the Lord's house, you know, just a couple of generations previously, that's what the godless and the unbelieving were doing.

You know, those who weren't professing Christians were still in church every week. They weren't, you know, sleeping with their girlfriends and so on before they got married. They weren't getting unduly drunk or plastered at the weekend and so on.

So all this level of, oh, yeah, pretty good because I don't do these things, you know. It's not that long ago since even the godless and the unbelieving weren't doing them either. We compare ourselves with ourselves.

We're only going to end up as fools. We rather look to Christ and see what we ought to be and then we see how far short we fall. It's no use looking around the Egypt and say, oh, look, I'm 130.

[19 : 15] None of them get to that stage. It's no use saying, oh, yeah, I'm good because I do this, I do that, I do the next thing. So what? Plenty of people do these things and they know we're nearer of the Lord and maybe we are.

So Jacob, the poor aged refugee, is blessing Pharaoh, the mighty king.

Does that seem like a wee bit of cheek? Well, as we said, it's meant, first of all, as a sort of a courteous salute, a gesture of appreciation, a thanksgiving, what he's done.

But also, as we read in Hebrews, you know, the lesser is blessed of the greater, of the better. Now, in what sense is Jacob better than Pharaoh? Well, Jacob is in a relationship with the living God.

Jacob is a man of God. He is one of the elect of God. He is a saved soul. Pharaoh is an idolater. He is a pagan king. You know, unless something dramatic happens, Pharaoh is going to hell.

[20 : 14] Well, Jacob is going to heaven. There is, in this sense, although their worldly situations are so diverse, one, a mighty king upon the throne, one, a decrepit, it seems, aged refugee who's come seeking refuge in famine, their roles are in many ways spiritually reversed.

Ian MacDonald, who was the session clerk in the Aberdeen Free Church for many years, wrote a book a few years back about the Gaelic Church in Aberdeen. And he said how on the Lord's Day, there would come about a role reversal in compared to the normal hierarchies and divisions of society during the week.

Those who may have been bosses or employers or richer men in the community during the week as they went about their ordinary business and so on, and perhaps they had employees who were quite low down the food chain or not very wealthy or not very powerful, didn't employ, people and so on.

They were comparatively lowly individuals. But come the Lord's Day, these were the ones who would be the ruling elders at the front or taking in people's tokens for the Lord's Supper, the ones who would be ruling over the flock, the ones who would be held in honour because not their status in society, not their wealth or their property or their power, but because of their reputation for godliness.

And that was all that mattered within the Lord's congregation was because of people's understanding and knowledge of these men walked with God.

[21 : 51] And all the things of the world didn't matter. Come the Lord's house, come the Lord's Day, there was this role reversal of power and of influence.

And it's something of that that we have here. Although Jacob is the elderly refugee, he is the one who stands tall in the sense in the eyes of God.

And it wouldn't be surprising to us if perhaps something of that was not lost for the Egyptians. However, we go on after this. Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from before Pharaoh.

Jacob, Joseph placed his father and his brethren and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt and the best of the land in the land of Ramesses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

He nourished his father and his brethren and all his father's household of bread according to their families. Two things to notice here. First of all, where it says, verse 12, according to their families, it literally translates according to the little ones.

[22 : 52] The sense here is obviously to place the food in their mouths as you would with a little child, with an infant. You know, it can't feed itself, so you put the food physically into its mouth.

He brought the food physically to them who had nothing and as yet had no means of feeding themselves. We don't know exactly how many souls were there.

Obviously, the previous chapter has given us a list of the children of Jacob and their sons, but that doesn't tell us about their wives or their handmaids or their servants or whatever.

And also, almost certainly, some of these individuals were not yet born. Benjamin's children, for example, not yet born at the time when this list is given. But these are all those who would, in the fullness of time, be there in that first generation of those who came into Egypt.

So we don't know how many souls it was, probably in the low hundreds. It's not a vast number. And while you consider that they would all have been in probably one or two large encampments in the land of Canaan where there was no pasture because of the famine, it wouldn't be too much of an imposition in a well-watered, well-pastured land like caution in Egypt for them all to be comparatively contained in one major camp.

[24 : 09] But Joseph brings the food to them. He nourished his father, his brother, and all his father's household with bread according to the little ones, according to their thumbs.

That's the first thing. Secondly, going back to the previous verse, in the land of Ramesses. Now, this is a case of, I think, describing a land in advance of when it would actually have been called that.

Now, we've got an instance of that in Deuteronomy chapter 34, where if you look there, you see that Moses went up from the plains of Moab onto the mountains of Nebo to the top of Pisgah that is over against Jericho.

The Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea.

Now, as yet, neither Judah nor Ephraim nor Dan nor Naphtali or anybody else has entered that land. They haven't claimed it. It hasn't been divided to the tribes in this way as yet.

[25 : 09] But rather, this narrative of Moses just before he dies is describing the land as it would be understood by subsequent generations.

The land of Gilead, the land of Judah, the land of Dan and Naphtali and so on. These tribes have not yet gone into the land. So it is being described not in terms of how it was understood then, but how it would come to be understood.

Rather in the same way as we might say, you know, the original Scots from Ireland came over and settled in Argyle. It wasn't called Argyle in those days. Argyle simply means the land of the Gales.

It wouldn't have been called that. All the things that we call our towns, our places, our lands nowadays would have been called something totally different in a former age. And I would suggest to you that that is the case here with the land of Goshen.

It's described as the land of Ramesses. We're told in Exodus chapter 1 at verse 11, therefore they did set over them taskmasters, this is Israelites a couple of generations further on, to afflict them with their burdens and they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Python and Ramesses.

[26 : 21] In other words, Ramesses has not been built yet as a city or as an area, but it's the area where it would be built. So it has been described as the land of Ramesses, although that's not what it would have been called then.

But it's been described in that way so that people of a subsequent generation can place it geographically so they'll know what it is. From verse 13 onwards, we read about the famine beginning to bite in the land of Egypt.

What may seem to us either a wondrous provision for the Egyptians in this time of famine or, depending on your political viewpoint, it might seem like shameless and ruthless exploitation of the poor in their time of need.

Either way, this is what happened and this is what's recorded for us. The famine was biting in Egypt. And, you know, they have such a dependence upon the provision of the food and of the Nile flooding year by year.

And perhaps they come to expect every year that there would always be enough food. And the seven bumper years, of course, they just thought, oh, times are even better than usual. Some of them may have been wise enough to lay aside a little for the coming years.

[27 : 37] Probably if bumper year had followed bumper year, they had got used to it and probably hadn't made much provision. But we read there was no bread in all the land. In other words, nobody had any of their own.

Obviously, the storehouses and cities that Joseph had set up were there. The famine was very sore. So the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. Initially, people bought food for money.

He gathered up all the money. Verse 14, it was found in the land of Egypt, the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. This indicates to us again how faithfully Joseph dealt with the Egyptians and with Pharaoh.

He could so easily have brought it into his own house. He could have creamed off a percentage for himself and said, listen, if it wasn't for me, you wouldn't have any of this money. So I can take a percentage for myself.

No, he gathered up, brought it into Pharaoh's household. He was faithful as a steward and as a servant. But also we see the dependence of the Egyptians even upon the provision that the Lord makes.

[28 : 43] Our unconscious dependence. You know, we do this still. We turn on the tap. We expect water will flow out of it. We flick the switch.

We expect the electricity will be there and be provided. It's extremely inconvenient when it's not because we're so accustomed to it. The Egyptians were accustomed to the Nile flooding every year. If it didn't and there wasn't water to irrigate the land, then the crops wouldn't grow.

If they starved, there wasn't pasture for their flocks. They would all be in starvation difficulty. They depended upon that which was provided. I've used the example in the past, I think, that an Australian gentleman who used to know that I worked with a particular charity.

And he mentioned how he had been involved with some of those who'd been involved with desalination projects for Arabia, Saudi Arabia. And the oil money from Saudi Arabia was being invested partly in desalination plants to draw water out of the Red Sea, salt water, of course, and then to take the salt out of it, to desalinate it so it could be used for irrigation for the coastal areas there of Arabia.

As he said, it's an extremely expensive way of doing it. Not all this infrastructure, all this engineering and so on. It's an extremely expensive way of doing it if it's just going to drop down out of the sky.

[30 : 03] That's his words. If it's just going to drop down out of the sky. And that's what makes us feel. This is exactly what happens. Every time it rains and we moan about, oh, it's raining again.

The water that we need for that drops down out of the sky. And when we go in and out the tarp, when we see the white streams coming down the hillsides, oh, look, they're gushing and the waterfalls and so on.

Today, there's been a lot of rain. We just take it for granted. We always assume there'll be plenty of rain. Some of you may remember when, I think it was 95, when it was like 10 weeks, it didn't rain in the summer.

And how all the mountains were getting so dry and how the water was beginning to be restricted. 10 weeks without rain in our comparatively damp, wet climate. And that's all it took.

How long does it take before people start panic buying the supermarkets when, if the weather is bad and the ferries don't sail for a couple of days and there isn't bread or there isn't milk in our supermarket shelves, how soon do we start panicking?

[31 : 02] How long does it take? Probably only a matter of days before we begin to panic at the lack of a regular supply of all that we take for granted.

But if we don't recognize the provision that the Lord makes for us, we just do take it for granted. And we think God knows us. If something is free, we don't value it.

You know, if something was, say, a freebie from a marketing company, you got it in the portion, you know, that's nice, whether it's a pen or whether it's a, you know, a little trinket or a little cup or whatever it might be.

And then something happens and it gets broken. And you would say, oh, well, it's okay. It was just a freebie. But if it was something that you'd spent hundreds of pounds on, you'd say, oh, no, that's a disaster.

It's broken because that costs so much. If it's free, we don't tend to value it. If it's expensive, we think it's worth something. Tragically, that is often the case with our attitude to the Lord and his grace.

[32 : 01] Grace, which means literally free gift. Because it is free, we don't tend to value it. Because it's not something that we have expended energy, time, blood, sweat, tears upon, something somebody else did.

It was a free gift to us. So we don't think about it being valuable. And all through our lives, it is there freely offered to us. And the day will come when many millions of souls will stand before that judgment seat of the Lord.

And we go, how could you miss this? It was here. It was in front of you. It was free. It was offered. It didn't cost anything for you. It was freely available.

Why did you not take it up? And I'll probably think, well, we didn't think it was worth taking. Because it wasn't valuable to us. It didn't cost us anything.

It couldn't make a difference in the life that we wanted or we had. It was free. It was for nothing. So we didn't value it. And that is so often the case.

[33 : 03] The more the Lord gives, the less we value what he gives. The manna fell every day for the Israelites in the wilderness. So they stopped valuing it. They said, oh, we wish we had meat to eat.

Because this manna was sick of the taste of it. And now we're sick of the taste of it. A little while ago we were starving. And we were glad of it. How quickly we become blasey about what the Lord provides.

So they got, they parted. They were starving. They parted with all the money. They had saved up. Silver and gold. But they paid for their corn and for their food. Because, of course, there's no use saying, oh, well, we're not going to part with our money if you're starving.

You can't eat your silver and gold. Silver and gold would not feed them. They must have corn or they perish. And likewise for your soul, my friend. Silver and gold and money in the bank and wealth and property will not feed your soul.

It will not save your soul. It will not save us. We must have the bread of life. Nothing in this world is such that we can trade for salvation.

[34 : 12] We must have the bread of life. We must have that which Christ alone can give. You may be brilliant on the monopoly board. But it's no use gathering up all your monopoly money. And going to the petrol station or the supermarket and saying, look, I'll give you all this.

How much can I get for that? They'll say, well, this is worthless. This is monopoly money. It's not real money. You're not going to get anything for it. It's a different currency altogether. It may be fine in your fake game.

But it's not real life. And compared to the vastness of eternity and compared to the ultimate reality of God's truth, God's life, God's eternity, this little blip of time here, it's like a little game of monopoly where we accumulate our little piles of paper cash.

And we think, well, what can I get, Lord, with this? Look at what I've done. Look at what I've built up. Look at how successful I've been. You've got to be impressed with me. And God has not impressed with us.

Because he already has so much more than that. And that tends to be our attitude too, doesn't it? If somebody thinks, oh, they've done well, they've done this, they've done that. We don't think, yes, yes, they have.

[35 : 18] Of course, I've done a little bit better. What we tend to think is, well, that's not very impressive. I can do that. I remember when I was younger, seeing somebody playing a violin on the stage.

And so it's, oh, aren't they good? And I was sitting there like, well, I could do that. I mean, I could play that tune. That's not brilliant. But rather than saying, yes, yes, they're so good. And I must be as good as that too.

We tend to deprecate that which we ourselves can achieve. And we don't say, yes, they must be good. And I too am good. We say, they're not that good.

I'm as good as that. And so if the Lord already owns the heavens and the earth and all the baskets of eternity, and we come up with that, look what I've done, this one, Lord. And I say, well, I'm not impressed with that.

What else have you got? Never mind your monopoly money. Never mind your silver and your gold. Never mind all your achievements in business. What have you got that you can actually trade with? You say, well, I don't know, Lord.

[36 : 14] What do you want? There is only one thing that the Lord is interested in. Only one thing that will be currency with us that will actually buy us bread.

And that is the blood of Christ shed for us on the cross. If we have that Christ in our heart, if we have that Christ as our Savior, that is currency in the bank of God's free mercy.

That is currency with which our salvation can be bought. It is free to us because of what Christ has done. But if we do not lay hold upon that free gift, we have nothing, as it were, to trade.

Christ alone is our salvation. He's not going to want to know what silver and gold you've got. He's not going to want to know, oh, what bits of shiny metal have you got? How many houses have you got?

How many cars have you got? How far did you rise in your business? How long did you spend at the office? He wants to know, what will you of Christ do you say? What think ye of Christ?

[37 : 16] What do you really have that's worth anything to God? The only thing that counts for God is his beloved son, Jesus. Do you have that currency to trade with?

Do you have that wealth, that Savior of your soul? Silver and gold is no use to the Egyptians when they're starving to death. And all the silver and gold in this world is no use to us either if our souls are punishing.

It is a different currency that we must have. It is a different feeling that we need. So they parted with all their money and they got food and they looked for another year.

And then, of course, the next year, then the money had run out. And they said to Joseph, well, we've got no money. The money's not failed. He said, well, give your cattle. And I'll give you for your cattle if the money fails. Well, cattle and livestock, these are wealth.

There's no point pretending that they're not. Just if we look at chapter 13 in Genesis, verse 2. Abraham was very rich in cattle and in silver and in gold.

[38 : 21] Livestock is wealth. Likewise, chapter 24, verse 35. When the servant is going for the wife for Isaac, he said, the Lord hath blessed my master greatly.

He has become great. And he hath given him flocks and herds and silver and gold and men's servants and maid's servants and camels and asses. Livestock is wealth. They give their wealth such as they have.

They get food. They live. And the next year, of course, now they've already spent their money. They've got no livestock to work their fields. They've got no corn to store their fields. What use is the land now to them?

What use is land that they cannot work? Land that can produce no crops. Well, take the land. Take the land and take us. Take our bodies. Take us as servants for faith.

There are some people, of course, who would rather starve to death and die rather than live in any kind of slavery. But most of us, probably, if we actually knew the pangs of hunger and it were concerned, perhaps not only for ourselves, but perhaps for our children or our loved ones and our families.

[39 : 21] You know, people say, how could you possibly sell off your daughter to be married to this person? How could you sell off your children? Because that way they might live. That way they might be fed.

If you can watch your children starve to death under your penniless hand or give them some kind of a future with someone who can feed them and pull them and provide for them, which is the loving thing to do?

And in our comfortable, wealthy, Western society, we say, oh, yes, you could never sell into slavery. No, you should never, ever be that. Okay, starving to death is the alternative.

That's the reality on the ground for poverty, famine-stricken individuals. So they sell themselves. They sell themselves so that they can live.

Live as Pharaoh's servants and slaves rather than perish in some form of perverted freedom whereby it's freedom to starve to death. So Pharaoh takes the Egyptians as his bondservants.

[40 : 22] He takes their land. He takes their money. He takes their wealth, their cattle, their flocks, their herds. He's got the lot. Such is the way that Joseph has faithfully dealt with his master that he has made Pharaoh greater than he has ever been before.

His control of Egypt is now all but absolute. Only the heathen priests and their temples, because they have an allowance from Pharaoh anyway, they survive. They don't need to sell their allowance.

Everything now belongs to Pharaoh. But what use anyway was their land? If they've got no beasts to till the soil with, if they've got no sheep to sow, if they've got nothing they can eat, you might as well get rid of what you can't use in exchange for what you can.

Now the implication here in verse 23 is that this is the last year of the famine. Because now Joseph says, he says, take seed and sow the land. And yet previously to his family he said, you know, there's going to be five years when there's neither earring nor harvest, neither sowing nor reaping.

So the implication that now you're going to sow the land, now there's going to be a harvest next time. And that now there will be hope, now there will be a future. Remember, God is not going to be angry with the land forever.

[41 : 38] God is not going to keep us in a state of famine forever. The tide will not always be out. The famine will not always prevail.

The rains will come again. The crops will grow again. There will come a time, a reaping time. There will come a harvest again. This is what the Lord is promising, even through Joseph here, after six, seven years of wall-to-wall famine.

Yet there will be better days. And this, I would suggest to you, my friends, gives us a little measure of hope. A little measure of hope that the Lord will not remain filled with wrath against us forever.

Even if our hearts may remain hard, even in exile, the Israelites finally were permitted to return. Even in the midst of their stubbornness and rebellion, the Lord finally had mercy.

Not simply for their sake, but for the sake of his own honor and glory. This is what we have to pray. That the days of famine will end. That the days of the famine of hearing the word of God.

[42 : 52] That the famine of the spiritual need in our land will come to an end. That when the days are fulfilled and when finally we have starved for long enough. When we recognize we have nothing, Lord.

Take us as we are. Take our lives. Take our lands. Take our bodies and souls. Take our homes. Take all that we have. Just take us. But let us live. Let us live in thy sight.

And bring back the days of fruitfulness to us. Not the days of material wealth that we have brought the elbows. Rather the days of spiritual blessing.

This is what we have need of. As a land, as a nation, as families, as individuals. Pharaoh takes a fifth. Pharaoh takes 20%.

The Lord, when he calls on his people for what they should render to him, asks only for a tithe. 10%. Half of that. The generosity of God compared even with the supposed generosity of Pharaoh in the pagan world.

[43 : 58] God is always more generous. God is always more kind. God is always more faithful. God is always more loving. God will always be better for you.

And for you. Then all the wealth and empty promises of this world. You can't eat the silver and gold. You can't get to heaven on barren lands.

It is the Lord and he alone who saves. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest. Not just that he will send reapers into the fields.

But that he will send the rain again. And bring forth bread to the eater and sea to the shore.
And restore us again the land of plenty in the midst of the years.

Let us pray. Thank you. Thank you.