

Trusting the God of Our Sojourning – Genesis 46:28-47:13

Last week we saw the covenant family of God as they gathered and prepared to make the journey to Egypt, away from the land of Canaan. The covenant people of God are preparing to travel away from their homeland, where they will live as sojourners or exiles in a foreign land.

There's no place like home. Most of us recognize this famous line from the Wizard of Oz. The main character, Dorothy, is told to repeat this little chant over and over as she clicks her ruby slippers together, and she will be taken away from the Land of Oz back to her home in Kansas. Though she has had an amazing adventure, made new friends, and met some interesting characters, her heart is still with Auntie Em and the rest of her family in Kansas. There certainly is no place like home, is there? But where is home? Some say home is where the heart is.

Regardless of how we express it, home is where we feel the most secure, loved, happy, and satisfied. It is where our heart feels most content. Scripture teaches us that for the Christian, our home is with God. Our home is where we can live in the presence of God, unhindered by sin, and where we can glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. That is what God created mankind to enjoy when he created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden. However, because of the Fall, mankind can no longer enjoy that type of intimate fellowship with God on earth. Scripture teaches that now the people of God live as sojourners on this earth. We see the term for sojourner used throughout the OT and NT. A sojourner is a temporary resident, a stranger or traveler who dwells or live in a place for a time. The Bible calls us sojourners because our home, our ultimate home and final home, will be in a new earth, re-created where we can enjoy intimate fellowship with God, unhindered by sin once again. A permanent land of promise, an eternal land of rest where we will live in the presence of God forever.

Until then, we see God calling His people to live as sojourners, those who are strangers and exiles in this world. And as sojourners in this world, we are called by God to hold the things of this world loosely. To not become enamored by the world of our sojourning, but to look forward to and live in light of our heavenly home.

However, because of sin we do not rely on and trust in the God of our sojourning. We tend to place our ultimate trust, hope, and security in the temporal things of this world, rather than God. We are to look forward to our eternal home while trusting God in the here and now. Though we are to live in this world, we are not to be of this world. As Christ sojourned here, He fully trusted in God. That is the challenge of a sojourner.

Because Christ sojourned in this world with complete trust in God, believers can trust God as they sojourn. But how? How can we trust God as we sojourn?

In Genesis 46 and 47, we find three ways we can live as sojourners who trust in God. You can see them printed there for you in the WG. We live as sojourners as we trust in God's person, we trust in God's plan, and we trust in God's provision.

In our study of Genesis, we have seen God lead and guide his people. Since the time of Abraham, God has tasked specific men to carry out this mission. These men have fulfilled the roles of leaders, guides, and rescuers. Most recently we have seen Joseph filling this role as God has positioned him to become the savior of the covenant people of God. God has ordained Joseph to rescue the Israelites from famine and death. In the latter part of chapter 46, Joseph has made arrangements to move his father Jacob's family to Egypt. Because of Joseph's high-ranking roll in Egypt, the king of Egypt has allowed Joseph to bring the entire clan to settle in the Egyptian land. Once again, we see the people of God sojourning, but not without God providing a leader for them.

We first read that Jacob sent Judah ahead to meet Joseph and prepare the way for their travel to Egypt. Verse 28 is almost a sidenote, but it actually holds great importance for the future of God's people. Earlier Judah had become spokesman for the brothers; now Jacob appears to recognize Judah's leadership. This is an example of God providing an additional leader for his people. A leader, whose offspring will be a future rescuer of God's covenant people. We will read more about that in the chapters to come.

For now, we move on to Joseph. Notice the love of God's chosen leader and heir for His people. Verse 29 says Joseph prepares his chariot. This is not something that someone of Joseph's rank would do himself, but this displays his desire to see his family, specifically his father. He has great love for his people, his family. We see the depth of this love displayed as he reunites with Jacob.

After joyful tears and embraces, Jacob said he could die in peace after reuniting with Joseph. The son he loves is here to carry on and protect the clan. Father and son have reunited and the family of Jacob, which represents the church of God, the covenant family, have been rescued. In this sense, God provided a savior for his people.

Moses, the author of Genesis, was such a person as well. Moses was the person that God raised up to rescue his people from slavery in Egypt. Even as His people lived in captivity, God was preparing a savior to rescue them. God was with them in their sojourning outside the promise land. This helps us understand why Moses would want to write about the account of the Israelites' ancestors coming to Egypt. It was to help them see that God had a plan in bringing them to Egypt, and it is His plan to bring them out of Egypt and deliver them back to their homeland in Canaan. This would encourage the Israelites traveling with Moses to press on toward their home. They must leave the world (Egypt) behind. Though they were slaves under the new Pharaoh, and suffered much persecution, they had some of their basic needs met. In the wilderness, they were hungry and thirsty. But God was with them and God had given them a rescuer. Moses reminds them they must trust the rescuer.

If we are going to live as sojourners, we must look to the person God has given to lead and guide us in our sojourning. We must trust in God's person. All the leaders of the OT, Joseph included, point to the ultimate Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the full, perfect, and final leader and Savior of God's covenant people. Christ sojourned perfectly on our behalf. He trusted the Father's care for Him. He knew the earth as it is now was not his home. His home was with the Father, and he knew He was returning there. He was preparing the way for his people to join Him there. In John 14, Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it

were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

Christ is the key to our final home. He is God’s person. If we are to sojourn well on this earth, we must look to one who has perfectly sojourned in our place. As we trust in Christ’s sojourning here – His birth, death, and resurrection, we are united to Him by faith and are seated with Him at the right hand of the Father. As we trust Christ’s work on our behalf the things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. And the things of heaven, our true home will grow increasingly beautiful.

So God has provided the person for His people *and* he also has a plan for His people. God promises Abraham that his descendants would grow into a great nation. We see God’s plan on display in chapter 46 of Genesis. God had planned to move the covenant family to Egypt to rescue them from the famine but to also prosper them so they can grow into a great nation.

So the rescuer of God’s family, Joseph, goes to work securing a place to settle. He has rehearsed the plan with his brothers and must now enact the plan to settle his clan in Egypt for their growth and prosperity. Beginning in chapter 47, Joseph approaches Pharaoh with his request. Joseph states that his father and his brothers and all they possess have come from the land of Canaan to Goshen. Goshen is in eastern Egypt on the border close to the Mediterranean Sea, in the delta of the Nile River. Joseph takes his father Jacob and five brothers to meet Pharaoh. He has already instructed the brothers what to say. The brothers relayed Joseph’s message. They were shepherds, and were seeking to sojourn in the land. This confirmed the brother’s trust in the plan and assured that Pharaoh would not be worried about their intentions.

We see here that God is guiding Joseph and his plan. God has planned for the protection of His covenant people. We can see God’s plan for protection in several ways. Goshen is a fertile land with lush pastures, which will provide excellent grazing for their livestock. Goshen is away from the high concentrations of Egyptian cities and Egyptian people. This will make it easier for the descendants of Jacob to be separated from the surrounding pagan culture. Goshen was also on the eastern outskirts of Egypt close to the land of Canaan in case the Israelites ever had to leave to return to their land. The plan of God was to grow and prosper His people, just as He had promised Abraham. Joseph trusted in God, and that trust informed Joseph’s decision about where the Israelites would live.

Maybe you’ve heard the saying, “*The best laid plans of mice and men.*” It is believed to originally be a line from a poem by Scottish poet Robert Burns. The point of the line as it is commonly used is to describe the often futile nature of the plans of man. However carefully you plan a particular undertaking, something nevertheless often goes wrong with it along the way. So, another way of putting it would be to say that the best-laid plans can nevertheless end up going awry when it comes to putting them into practice. This is true of the plans of man. But not of the plans of God. God’s plans always come to fruition.

The purpose of the move of Joseph’s family is to preserve them so they can flourish as a people. God’s plan for His people throughout the ages is to preserve them. We know those plans for now involve us living as sojourners. However, though we may live as exiles and strangers in this

world, we are not without hope. God says He knows the plans He has for His people, plans for welfare, and not for evil, to give them a hope and a future. Therefore, we can trust in the plans that God has.

The future for the Israelites was to be finally settled in the land of Canaan. Moses was writing these words to the Israelites as they wandered through the wilderness on the way to the promise land. It was to encourage them to trust God, to trust that they would be delivered. What Moses and the ancient Israelites knew in part; we now know in full. We know that Canaan was not the final home and land of promise for the people of God. That final home is with God in glory, in the new Jerusalem. That final home is there for all those who are united to Christ by faith. Because Christ was fully submitted to the plans of God, because He fully trusted in the plans of God, He secured the believer's final home. We trust God's plans when we see the final fulfillment of His plans in the person and work of Christ.

Are you trusting in the plan of God for your life? If you are united to Christ by faith, God has plan to deliver you into glory one day. To be with Him in heaven. That is your hope. And it is secure because of Jesus. Because Jesus lived and died to rescue the people of God, your sojourning in this world is temporary. And you can live now as a sojourner, not being conformed to the things of this world because of Christ.

Finally, we see God providing for His people. God accomplishes this provision through Joseph. Of course, God has provided rescue from famine in the land of Canaan for the covenant family and He has also provided protection in the land of Egypt by setting them apart from the pagan Egyptians. In verse 7, Joseph presents Jacob to Pharaoh and Jacob blesses him. Jacob was an old man and the interaction between him and Pharaoh displays reverence by both men. Jacob's blessing paid Pharaoh respect and thanked him for his kindness. The blessing was also an act of piety – Jacob prayed as one having the authority of a prophet and a patriarch. Pharaoh acknowledged Jacob's age and status as the patriarch. This interaction between the brothers and Pharaoh and then Jacob and Pharaoh sealed the provision of the land of Goshen. Pharaoh had no reservations in agreeing to let Joseph settle his family wherever he wished.

So, we see God provide for his people as they are able to settle in the land of Goshen, which is referred to in verse 11 as the land of Rameses. And then verse 12, *And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food.* The covenant family received food. They would not be destroyed by the famine. God continued to keep His covenant promise to His covenant people. He would establish and provide for them, even as they sojourned. Referring to God's people here in Genesis, Psalm 37:19 says, "In the days of famine they have abundance."

Through Joseph's wisdom God preserves Israel in Goshen, both physically, by providing food and land, and spiritually, by providing for their isolation from the pagan Egyptians. God has promised to provide for His people; and throughout Genesis He has provided for them. Even in their sojourning, He has provided. God's provision for His people in the OT points to the full and final provision of Christ. Christ's life was provision for the righteousness that his people lacked. Christ's death was provision for the penalty that His people had earned.

Our true citizenship is in the kingdom that cannot be shaken. Like Jacob, let us hold fast to the promises of God that those who endure shall be granted a position and honor far greater than any we can find in the kingdoms of men. Our life here represents only a “sojourning” — a temporary residence in exile from our heavenly home, according to Hebrews 11:13–16. Life in this present age, while by no means insignificant, will pale in comparison to our final home where we will dwell with the Lord on a renewed earth. Jacob believed this truth, though he grasped it only in shadows. Under the new covenant, we long for this day with fuller clarity. John Chrysostom said believers in all ages “have the same attitude to this life as if living in a foreign land”.

God’s preserving of His people here in chapter 46 and 47 resolves a number of concerns from previous narratives: Jacob now has the large family that God promised him; Joseph is reunited with his father; and Jacob’s family no longer has to worry about survival during the remaining years of the famine. God wants us to see that He has continued faithfully with His people. Even as they move away from Canaan. We must remember the promises of God. God has promised a person to lead and guide us in our sojourning, He has promised a plan for our sojourning, and He graciously promises to provide for us during our sojourning. All these promises find their fulfillment in Christ.

Christ was a sojourner. It was Jesus who said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” He left his heavenly home to come sojourn on this earth and as He did, He trusted in God, His heavenly Father. He was not so enamored with the things of the world that he could not keep His eyes on His heavenly home. He was the fulfillment of God’s person, plan, and provision to His people as they sojourn on Earth. As we seek to not be conformed to the pattern of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, we look to Christ.

Are you trusting God’s provision of Christ? Are you trusting in the righteous life of Christ on your behalf and the sacrificial death of Christ on your behalf?

It is through Christ that we can trust God in our sojourning. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporal and transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. We trust in Christ and keep our eyes on Him who will deliver us home, where we will live in the presence of God. Where we will glorify and enjoy him forever. There truly is no place like that heavenly home.

Let’s pray.