

CAPITOL STUDIES

APRIL 12, 2023 • WEEK 14



JOSEPH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM EGYPT

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Verse of the Week

Genesis 45:27

When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

God's Abundant Provisions



HERESY OFTEN STEMS FROM TRUTH taken out of balance. A person can emphasize a legitimate biblical truth so much that other biblical truths that balance it are ignored. For instance, the truth that God provides abundantly for His people has been pushed to the extreme by those who have combined it with greed and materialism, teaching that wealth is the God-given right of every believer. This has become known as the “health and wealth gospel,” which teaches that it is always God’s will to heal, and all that is required to get a blessing is to name and claim it by faith. However, it is evident from reading the Bible that this teaching is in error. Some of God’s greatest men of faith were destitute or suffered from sickness. They all died, as do those who teach this false doctrine.

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INTRODUCTION

The pendulum can swing to the other extreme by neglecting a Biblical truth that has been carried to an extreme in the past. For example, since some heretics emphasize the humanity of Jesus to the point of denying His deity, there is a risk that His humanity may not be taught at all because of the desire to keep Jesus' deity foremost. Similarly, when false teachers say that health and prosperity are the divine right of every Christian, the comforting truth that God provides not only the minimum but, as Paul describes it, "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20), may be neglected for fear that people will go overboard into the health and wealth "gospel."

In Genesis 45:16-28, we see God's abundant provision for His people. Jacob sends his sons down to Egypt to purchase more grain so their families can survive the famine. He hopes that his beloved son Benjamin will return safely to him, and his son Simeon will be released by the stern Egyptian governor. Jacob hopes that if his sons return the money from their first trip and bring more money to buy grain, the governor will be favorable toward them. But Jacob truly has no idea of the amazing blessing God has in store for him. **God graciously provides far more abundantly than we could ask or think.**

I. GOD PROVIDES ABUNDANTLY FOR ALL OUR NEEDS

Genesis 45:16-23

Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. ¹⁷Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸and take your father and your households and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you will eat the fat of the land.'¹⁹ Now you are ordered, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come. ²⁰Do not concern yourselves with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'" ²¹Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. ²²To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments. ²³To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey.¹

A. Our Material Needs

You may imagine some poor peasant farmer taking his produce to market on a rickety old wooden wagon, drawn by a donkey. But in Jacob's day, no one in Canaan had carts. You traveled by loading your donkey or camel and walking beside it. Pharaoh sent carts fit for a king. For Jacob's sons to arrive back in Canaan with all these carts and donkeys loaded with provisions would be like driving into a poor tribal



village in a fleet of limousines. The brothers left Canaan in poor shepherds' clothing. Now each has at least two changes of clothes. Benjamin has five changes of clothes, plus 300 pieces of silver (45:22). Remember, this is a time of famine! The neighbors' eyes must bulge out as they see these brothers return.

We do not have a "divine right" to prosperity, as some have falsely taught. But neither do we need to feel guilty about the material things God provides for us. We should hold these things with open hands, remembering that they belong to God, not to us. We are just managers for Him, not owners. "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required" (Luke 12:48). Though we should be careful "not to be conceited or to fix [our] hopes on the uncertainty of riches," when God blesses us materially, we can thankfully enjoy the things He richly supplies. As we are "generous and ready to share," we store up treasure in heaven (1 Timothy 6:17, 19).

B. Our Emotional Needs

Genesis 45:24-28

So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the journey." ²⁵Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. ²⁶They told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." But he was stunned, for he did not believe them. ²⁷When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸Then Israel said, "It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Jacob is emotionally needy. He has lost his favorite son, or so he thinks. For over 20 years he has grieved for Joseph. He feared he might lose his other sons, especially Joseph's brother Benjamin. Jacob has not been as close to his other sons. We can feel the tension in their relationship. Jacob has always suspected that they know more than they have said about Joseph's disappearance.

Now the brothers come back as different men. God has broken them through their dealings with Joseph. Their sin is confessed before God, and they are reconciled to their brother. In explaining that Joseph is still alive and is now the ruler of Egypt, they must admit their sin to their father. The truth is necessary. What emotional healing comes when Jacob hears and finally believes the news that Joseph is really alive! To see his son once more becomes his only goal before he dies (45:28), and although the text does not report it, a new, stronger relationship between Jacob and his formerly treacherous sons is likely established also.

Just as God provides for Jacob's emotional needs, so He provides for us. He wants us to be emotionally whole. He does not always do it instantly or when we think He should. He often does it by bringing healing to relationships with family members and others who have hurt us. But even if they never respond, the Lord teaches us to forgive and find our own emotional needs met in Him. Every believer who walks in the Spirit





will see the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) begin to grow in his or her heart (Galatians 5:22-23). As that happens, strength, healing, encouragement, and rest come to the heart and mind, providing emotional stability.

C. Our Spiritual Needs

God always has a spiritual reason behind any material blessing He provides or withholds. In this case, His chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, who are to be His channel for blessing all nations, are in danger of being polluted by the corrupt Canaanites. God prophesied to Abraham that his descendants would become strangers and slaves for four hundred years in a land that was not theirs (Gen. 15:13-16). So, this famine and the move to Egypt—seemingly ordinary circumstances—work out God’s spiritual purpose for His people and fulfill the prophecy He had made almost 200 years earlier.

Things are not just “happening.” There is a difference between what we see “happening” around us and what is really going on in God’s grand plan for you and me. God is shaping us to bring glory to Himself and to be channels of blessing to those around us, particularly to those needing His salvation. He provides abundantly in Christ for all our spiritual needs, even when we are not aware of them.

Neither Jacob nor his sons could see all of God’s reasons for removing them from Canaan at this time. As an enslaved nation in Egypt over the next four hundred years, Israel probably often wondered why God allowed such trial if they were His chosen people. But God was refining His people, purging off the dross, and bringing out the gold. They were His own prized possession. He wanted only the best for them. He desired to protect them, to grow them, to strengthen them, and to use them as a light to the world around them. In similar ways, God works through trials to mature us spiritually.

II. GOD PROVIDES ABUNDANTLY FOR ALL OUR NEEDS IN HIS TIMING, NOT OURS

You may be thinking, “It’s nice to say that God provides abundantly for all my needs, but to be honest, He hasn’t done that for me. I’m in need of more income. I’m emotionally needy. Spiritually, I don’t feel close to God. So how can you say that God provides abundantly for all my needs?”

The day before Jacob’s sons return from Egypt with their wagons loaded with provisions, with a new walk with God, and with the great news about Joseph, Jacob is a lonely, grieving, almost destitute old man. He saw his sons off, thinking, “I may never see them again.” He wonders if those remaining with him will starve. He is at a point of despair when his sons return. The word “revived” is used to describe Jacob as he finally accepts the good news about Joseph (45:27). It is translated in the Greek Old Testament (called the Septuagint or LXX) by a word that



elsewhere means “stirring up dying embers that have almost been extinguished under ashes.” Jacob’s spirit is almost extinguished when his sons come back with their message of hope. That is how God often works. He lets us come to the point of lowest despair, where we are beginning to wonder, “What happened to God?” Then He comes through. Right at the time Jacob is complaining, “All these things are against me” (Gen. 42:36), God is working all these things together for good for him.

In the early days of Dallas Theological Seminary, all funds were depleted, and creditors were to foreclose on the school at noon. The school’s founders gathered early in the morning to pray. When it was Harry Ironside’s turn, he prayed, “Lord, we know that the cattle on a thousand hills are Thine. Please sell some of them and send us the money.” While they were praying, a Texas rancher strode into the business office saying, “I just sold two carloads of cattle in Fort Worth. I feel that God is compelling me to give this money to the seminary. I don’t know if you need it or not, but here’s the check.” It was for the exact amount of the debt!²

Why does God so often take us right to the brink? One reason is that we often do not recognize our total need for Him until we are desperate. At that point, we know that if He doesn’t come through, we are doomed. So, we trust Him more than we do when we can fall back on our own resources.

The apostle Paul tells the Corinthians of a time when he “despaired even of life.” Why did God let Paul get so low? Paul explains, “Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). God abundantly provides for our every need, but He doesn’t necessarily do it when we think He should. He does it in His timing, often letting us come to the very edge, so that we will learn to trust Him.

III. GOD PROVIDES ABUNDANTLY FOR ALL OUR NEEDS IN WAYS WE WOULD NEVER EXPECT

For Jacob’s sons to return with these fancy wagons, loaded to the hilt with all the finest things of Egypt, and then to be provided for by this foreign king, given the best of his land, is beyond imagination! But the last thing in the world Jacob expects to hear is that Joseph is alive, let alone that he is the ruler of all Egypt.

As a loving Father, God delights to surprise His children in ways they never expect. The best gifts are usually the unexpected ones, aren’t they? We often wrap gifts, so others can’t guess what they are. It’s more fun when they are surprised and, hopefully, delighted by the gifts. Our Heavenly Father has infinite resources and unlimited creativity. We never know how God is going to work, because He delights to provide in ways we never expect, so that we will revel in His abundant goodness.





IV. GOD PROVIDES ABUNDANTLY FOR ALL OUR NEEDS THROUGH GRACE, NOT THROUGH MERIT

Why does Pharaoh provide so abundantly for Jacob and his eleven sons? It certainly isn't because they are wonderful guys. If Pharaoh knows anything about them, he knows that they sold their brother into slavery, though Joseph may have protected them by not telling Pharaoh exactly what had happened to him. Even so, nothing in them earned Pharaoh's favor.

So why did he treat them with such abundant kindness? It is for Joseph's sake. Pharaoh knows and appreciates Joseph, so he pours out these blessings on Joseph's family for his sake. They are blessed only because of their relationship with Joseph. God even takes their sin of selling their brother into slavery and makes it the means of their deliverance from the famine.

We see the parallel. God does not bless us because we are such deserving people. He blesses us because of His Son, Jesus. If we are in Jesus, then we have connections in high places! Many times, God provides blessings for us even when we have not been trusting or obeying Him as we should. Why? Because of our relationship with Jesus. God even takes our sin, which sent Jesus to the cross, and uses it as the means of our salvation. "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5:20b).

CONCLUSION

God does not bless His children because they are deserving but because they are one with Jesus, and Jesus *is* deserving. Despite past mistakes and failures, God's child can still fully receive God's blessings because of his or her relationship with Jesus.

Tourists from a remote, undeveloped desert country visited a large American city. When it came time for them to return, they were found with wrenches in their hands, prepared to remove the faucets. They thought that if they could just get those faucets back to the desert, all their water problems would be solved. They did not realize that faucets are useless unless connected to an abundant source of water.

In Jesus Christ, God has provided all that you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Just as Joseph was raised from the dungeon to Pharaoh's right hand so he could save his family, so Jesus was raised from the grave to save you and me from God's judgment and is now seated at His Father's right hand. Jesus is God's greatest gift to you: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). If you place your trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, you will find that He is the way to God's abundant supply of your every need.

Pastor Arin Hess

Theme Verse

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren,
whatever is **true**,
whatever is **honorable**,
whatever is **right**,
whatever is **pure**,
whatever is **lovely**,
whatever is of
good repute,
if there is any
excellence
and if anything is
worthy of praise,
dwell on these things.

Questions to Consider:

- Is it wrong to enjoy the material things God gives us when there are such great needs in the world?
- Is it too simplistic to say that a Christian can have deep emotional needs met in Christ, apart from psychological counseling?
- Benjamin received more than his brothers. Must God deal equally with His children? If not, is He unfair? Why not?
- How do we explain God’s abundant provision to a person who seemingly didn’t receive it when he needed it?

FOOTNOTES

1. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible (NASB), 1995 Update*.

2. Howard Hendricks, *Elijah: Confrontation, Conflict, and Crisis*, Moody Press, 1972, pp. 19-20.

Some of this material is adapted from Pastor Steven Cole’s work found at <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-75/>.

Personal Study Notes



WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meeting during the
108th Legislature’s
First Session

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STAFF

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