

Revelation

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[0 : 0 0] Thanks very much Fiona. Great to see another great hymn given the modern treatment. Some of these words, these old hymns are fantastic and it's really good when we can revive them. Good evening everyone. We've come to the climax of the story of Joseph for quite a number of chapters now. We've been waiting for it to happen and thinking it would soon.

And now we're going to come to the end where Joseph and Jacob are reunited. The people settle in Egypt and they all live happily ever after. It is happily until a pharaoh comes along who didn't remember Joseph.

Quite a lot to read so I'm not going to read the whole of chapters 45 and 46 but we will read enough to get the thread of it. And if you have Bibles it would be really helpful because you can then follow the rest of it as we go through.

So Genesis 45 starting reading at verse 1. And it says then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants and he cried out, Have everyone leave my presence.

So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him and the pharaoh's household heard about it.

[1 : 1 0] Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph. Is my father still living? But his brothers were not able to answer him because they were terrified at his presence.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, come close to me. When they had done so he said, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt.

And now do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here. Because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land.

And for the next five years there will not be ploughing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

[2 : 0 8] Now hurry back to my father and say to him, this is what your son Joseph says. God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me. Don't delay.

You shall live in the land in the region of Goshen and be near me. You, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds and all that you have. I will provide for you there because five years of famine are still to come.

Otherwise, you and all your household and all who belong to you will become destitute. So Joseph sent his brothers on their way with Pharaoh's blessing.

We picked up again at verse 25. Verse 25. So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him, Joseph is still alive.

In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt. Jacob was stunned. He did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

[3 : 12] And Israel said, I'm convinced. My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die. So Israel set out with all that was his.

And when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, Jacob, Jacob, here I am, he replied.

I am God, the God of your father, he said. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again.

And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes. And so they set off. There's a long list of the people who went down to Egypt with Jacob. And then if we pick up again at verse 29, verse 29, it said, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel.

As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. Israel said to Joseph, now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive.

[4 : 26] And God, I'm sure, will bless his word as we think about it together. I want to start with a small experiment this evening. It's very simple. So, in a few moments, I'm going to put a word up on the screen, and I want everyone to read it out loud straight away.

So, word goes on screen, speed read it, and say what you see. So, here we go. Good. Well done, everybody. You passed the test. Can anyone see any other word? Did everyone see good there?

Evil. Evil, absolutely. If you look at the white inside the black, you get evil spelt out as well. And I guess that's what the beginning, at least, of the passage we're looking at this evening is all about.

It's how you look at it. If you look at the story of Joseph one way, you see great evil. You see great malice and envy by his brothers. You see others you go along who would want to do bad to him.

And he could have looked back and been really resentful about it, particularly to his family. But Joseph looked back and he saw only good. He saw that out of all the evil that had been done, God had worked together for good.

[5 : 35] So, it depends how you look at it, whether it's good or evil. I'm not promoting relative ethics or anything. That's not what's good for you. It's bad for me. It is that sometimes that God allows things that are bad or that people have done that are evil to us to be used ultimately for our good.

I'll let you work that one out for yourself. But if we put something else underneath it to complete it, we can get the picture that God's hands hold you and me.

We are all in God's hands. God is directing our lives. And that's what is the second big thing that's in this chapter. Just looking at it as good or as evil and is recognizing God's hand, God's providence in our lives.

So, Joseph says twice to his brothers, God sent me ahead of you. In fact, he does it almost again in verse 8. In verse 8, he says, it was not you who sent me here, but God.

Looking at it in human terms, how did Joseph get to Egypt? He got to Egypt because his brothers were jealous of him. They put him in a pit and then they sold him to some Ishmaelite traders who took him and sold him as a slave in Egypt.

[6 : 48] Joseph is able to look and he's able to say, actually what was happening? Despite what you thought you were doing, ultimately God was fulfilling his purpose.

I think one of the great things we need to learn from the story of Joseph is that God's providence, God's provision for our lives is in everything that we do and we need to be willing to recognize it.

And sometimes we look back, look back at times that have been really, really difficult for us. Perhaps look back at times when people have done some really bad things to us. And we can say, actually out of that, God brought good.

So let's look in a little bit more detail at these first few verses of chapter 45. So if you remember back to last week or two weeks ago when John was speaking to us, we were looking at the brothers coming to Egypt first time, second time.

And they have the silver in their sack the first time, second time Benjamin comes and they have Joseph's goblet in the sack. And they're really worried about things. They think we're in big trouble now, not to any fault of our own now, but it must be God revisiting on us the sins of the past.

[8 : 00] And then at the end of chapter 44, we have Judah's great speech. Judah who makes it clear to Joseph that he would rather, he was imprisoned and he took the punishment for what Benjamin was perceived to have done.

Then for them to go back without Benjamin and ultimately that might have led to just Jacob's death. And that very emotional and very powerful appeal from Judah was what ultimately brought Joseph to the point of saying, I now need to reveal myself to my brothers because they have shown to me that they really have changed.

Now what they did to me all these years ago, which was very wicked and very evil, they've repented of, they recognize the wrong of it. And it's time now to move on and to put it behind us.

So at the start of chapter 45, Joseph gets very emotional as he's done a few times as we've gone through the last few chapters. And he reveals himself to his brothers.

And he does it in a very emotional and also a very personal way. So he says in verse 3, I am Joseph, is my father still living?

[9 : 10] Now read that the first time and think, hasn't Joseph been listening? Because his brothers have been talking about their father all along and they've made it very clear that their father is still alive. Two things I think in that.

One is that Joseph here, instead of saying your father as he's done in the past, he now says my father. It is a personal thing. And the other thing is he's probably using some kind of idiom of the day.

So when he said, is your father still living? Actually, what it probably was really meant to get the answer for is, is your father in good health? Is he doing fairly well? But he was asking after his father first and then he addresses them as, I am Joseph, your brother.

They hadn't wanted him as a brother. They had been very jealous of him as a brother because of the concern, the care his father had for them. He now wants to identify with them as your brother.

So a lot of human emotion going on here. A family being reunited has been split for so long. And reconciliation and forgiveness. But the thing that's going on underneath and that is very important that we get out is this divine perspective.

[10 : 19] God's providence, God using things for his glory. And while Joseph recognises that the brothers had indeed sold him into Egypt, and he doesn't try to gloss over that in any way, he says what was actually going on here was that God was using your actions to fulfil his purposes.

You thought it was going to be bad. God has made it turn out to be good. And actually if you come to chapter 50, which we'll do in a couple of weeks' time, and Joseph very explicitly says you meant evil, but God has worked it for good.

God uses the evil thing to bring good. And the second thing I think is in these verses is how God saves through his servants.

Verse 5, it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. Verse 7, God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So God is working things for the benefit of his people. And to do that, he is using someone who is willing to be his obedient servant and who will then save others from the famine that they would have suffered.

[11 : 36] Now, of course, we look at that and we think immediately about the Lord Jesus. How evil men put the Lord to death, sentence him unjustly to be crucified.

And yet God made sure that that greatest of evil brought the greatest of good as the Lord Jesus bought our salvation through his death on the cross.

God used the evil intention of men to fulfill his purposes and to bring good. And, of course, he saved through his servant. As he had sent Joseph into Egypt to be the saviour there, particularly of his family, but actually of the whole nation of Egypt, he sent his servant, the Lord Jesus, into the world to be the saviour of the world.

Well, let's think about it in more practical day-to-day terms. What does it mean to be able to recognise God's providence in our daily lives?

How can it be that men plan something and they want it to go wrong or perhaps things just seem to happen and somehow underlying it, God is in control, God's hand is at work?

[12 : 53] I used to play chess. I kind of still know the rules of chess and don't play at all seriously anymore, but occasionally I play chess against my computer. I usually set a very low level so I can make a couple of really bad mistakes and still have a chance of winning the game.

But if I turn up the level a bit and put it at a level which I know is a bit beyond what I'm capable of, then I can be pretty sure that I'm going to be beaten. It won't be that long before there's a checkmate.

If I do a good move, then the computer can respond to it by doing a better move. If I do a bad move, the computer will take advantage of it and make sure that it helps towards winning the game.

Whatever I do, the computer is able to respond to it and to work it for its purposes. That's a very poor analogy in many ways, but in some ways I think it's quite helpful.

God doesn't restrict us in what we do. God gives us free will and he gives us choices to do right or to do wrong. And we can't say, I did evil because I knew that was going to fulfill God's purpose.

[14 : 03] Of course, we couldn't do that. And yet when things are done which are wrong and are evil and done often with bad intent, when things just happen, when we do things perhaps carelessly or without thinking and things go wrong, God can still use that to fulfill his purposes.

Ultimately, God is in control and God is able to take both the good and the bad that we do and to use them to bring glory to his name and to bring good to us.

Joseph's case, he had a rather foolish father. He had jealous brothers. There was a lustful woman in Egypt. There was a forgetful butler. All of them going wrong.

And yet all of them ultimately moving towards God's purpose. And so Joseph can see at the end of it that he, verse 8, he is the father of Pharaoh, not literally the father of Pharaoh.

It was kind of a bit like being called Pope's chaplain or something like that. It was a position to help Pharaoh. Father of Pharaoh, lord of his entire household, ruler of all Egypt. And it had happened because God had worked in his life and the lives of those around him, despite what people were doing that might have been bad for him.

[15 : 27] This last week I've been thinking about the name Joni for obvious reasons. Those of us of a certain vintage probably can remember two Jonis who were well known in the 70s, 80s, and perhaps to an extent still these days.

One of them is the folk singer Joni Mitchell. Joni Mitchell writes a number of very happy, cheerful songs, but when she looks at life it tends to be often through a fairly gloomy lens.

Let me just read some lines that Joni Mitchell's written. She says, Life is bare, gloom and misery everywhere, stormy weather. Just can't get my poor self together.

I'm weary all the time, all the time. And then maybe her best known song, I've looked at life from both sides now. From win and lose and still somehow, it's life's illusions I recall.

I really don't know life at all. Very gloomy perspective on the world, but someone saying it doesn't make any sense, I don't understand what's going on, all I can see is the things that come up that appear okay, and then suddenly they're not, and I'm really not very happy with my lot in life.

[16 : 38] The other Joni, I think she likes to call herself Joni, is Joni Erickson. Joni Erickson, who amazingly is now 65. Those of us who think of her as a kind of teenage girl, she's well beyond that now.

Joni Erickson, when she was 17 years old, was a carefree, perhaps rather immature teenager, I think she would have said that herself, when she was in a very serious diving accident. She broke her neck, and she was paralysed from her shoulders down.

So she can move her face, but nothing below that. Despite that, she's gone on to be an artist, an author, a speaker, a recording artist, and a number of other things as well.

She hasn't let what happened in her life deflect her from enjoying a full and very fulfilled life. Let me just read a few paragraphs from her first book, the book that's called Joni, which is one many of us no doubt have read.

And this is what she says. I'm happy. I really am. I wouldn't change my life for anything. I even feel privileged. God doesn't give such special attention to everyone and intervene that way in their lives.

[17 : 52] He allows most people to go right on in their own ways. He doesn't interfere, even though he knows they're ultimately destroying their lives, health, or happiness, and it must grieve him terribly.

I'm really thankful he did something to get my attention and change me. Someone who has gone through something that for many of us would be almost unimaginably bad, and yet she looks back on it and she says, this thing that seemed so bad to so many people, this was God working for my good, and also for the good of many others, and through the tremendous witness that she's had to God's power in her life.

When we look back, do we see bad or good? If there's someone that you've had a problem with, someone has perhaps done wrong to you in the past, do you look back with bitterness and with anger at that and what they've done to you, or are you able to see how God, even in these circumstances, can work and can do things for your good?

If there's something that's gone wrong, perhaps it's not been someone doing something bad, it's just something that has happened, as in the case of Johnny, can you look back and say, yes, that was really hard?

Perhaps it's illness, bereavement, a problem with the family, anything like that, can you look back and say, that was really bad? But in a sense, it was really good, because God was working, and God was able to help me through it.

[19 : 29] It's very easy to quote Romans 8, and say, God works everything for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. And we would say, yes, we believe that, that is what we believe is the case.

When it comes down to our own lives, when we look back, and when we see things that have caused real hurt, perhaps real pain in our lives, can we look back and say, God has helped me in that, and actually it has been for my benefit that I went through that time of trial.

And if we're in the time of trial at the moment, if there are things that are happening to us we don't understand, perhaps there are people who seem to be so against us, and we can't understand why it is happening that way, can we at least be able to say, well, I trust God.

I trust that God's hand is on my life, and I want to remain faithful to him, and look back someday, and be able to see the bigger picture, and see how God was at work.

Where there is evil, where there are bad things that happen, nevertheless, God can and does work them for our good, and we can ultimately look back and say, yes, that was God at work.

[20 : 44] His hand was on my life. Time's moving on, so let's move on and look at the remainder of chapter 45, and I've given the heading, Reflecting God's Priority.

Chapter 45 is all about grace. It's all about grace. It's all about the grace that Joseph showed to his brothers and to his father, and there are so many lessons in it about the grace that God shows to us, and the grace that we should show to others, even though they don't deserve it.

So what are the components of grace that we see here in the life of Joseph? Well, first of all, there's forgiveness. There is the forgiveness for his brothers that he can say to them, yes, you did a terrible thing, but God's worked it for good, so let's put it behind us.

Let's not worry about it now. And the ability to be able to forgive others who do us wrong is very basic for any Christian.

As we look at the forgiveness that the Lord Jesus has shown to us, shouldn't we far more be willing to forgive the little things that may be done against us?

[21 : 58] And to forgive and forgive and forgive, remember the Lord Jesus, 70 times 7, we should forgive the brother who sins against us. And it's not just a superficial thing, say, I forgive you, and then we allow things to move on, and actually we haven't really forgiven them, and we are still resentful about it.

It is as they recognise the wrong that they've done, as Joseph's brothers did, and they didn't do this until he's convinced that they did recognise the wrong, as people recognise the wrong and are willing to repent of it before God and to acknowledge it before us, then we should be willing to forgive them and to put it completely behind us.

And part of the putting it behind us is a real acceptance of them. Joseph could have forgiven his brothers, given them grain, said, go back, take it away, don't want to see you again, but because you're my brothers, because you repented, then here's the food that you'll need.

But Joseph didn't want to do that. He wanted to be reunited as a family, to accept those who had rejected him, and to show them that greater grace that was evident in the way he acted towards them.

And again, if someone has done us wrong, then we should be willing not just to forgive, but to accept them. So it's not you say to them, I forgive you, and then every time you see them in church, you run in the opposite direction to avoid having to talk to them.

[23 : 30] It's forgiving and restoring relationships and accepting one another. Third thing was evidence of Joseph's grace, was the great generosity that he showed to his brothers.

That he gave them and the family this wonderful land in Goshen, this land which was ideal for them as farming people and as shepherds and cattle minders. He gave them that land, he gave them gifts, he gave them clothes.

Irony, when they had taken the coat of many colours off his back, that he gave them suits of clothes to take away. And there was nothing that was too much for Joseph to give to his brothers.

Again, grace is not just forgiving, it's not just even accepting, it's showing the generosity of the Lord Jesus to others. And then there was the assurance that Joseph gave to them.

Assurance that they'd be welcome back, but there was one other verse that I thought was quite helpful in that when Joseph says to his brothers, when you go on the way, don't argue with one another.

[24 : 35] Verse 34, 24 sorry. He sent his brothers away and as they were leaving, he said to them, don't quarrel on the way. Now that sounds like a bit of a school teacher type lecturer or mum or dad saying, don't have a fight together kids.

I think what it actually means, the word originally meant something like don't be troubled, don't be agitated. It might be he was urging them not to quarrel with themselves over who had been at fault or whatever else.

But perhaps what he was thinking is don't be worried that what's happened the last couple of times you've left Egypt is going to happen to you again. That you'll find something that shouldn't be there or someone will come after you and they'll find that someone apparently has stolen something from you.

So nothing of that kind is going to happen. Don't worry about being accepted when you come back to me. This is not any kind of trick. I have really accepted you.

I want to assure you of my forgiveness. Now, as we said, that message didn't really get home because if you come on to after Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers are really worried.

[25 : 39] Now our father's died. He's going to have all this pent up anger in him and he's going to punish us for the wrong that we've done. And Joseph again had to reassure them. But if we have grace towards one another, if we are willing to forgive, to accept, to be generous, people need to have the assurance that we're doing it genuinely and we're not suddenly going to change our minds.

And why should we show this grace? Well, it's because God has done for us exactly the things that are up there on the screen. God has forgiven us for all these terrible sins that we've done, these wrongs against him through the death of the Lord Jesus and our trust in him.

We have complete forgiveness. God has accepted us. It's not just that he said, okay, I forgive you for all the wrong you've done. He has adopted us as his children.

He has made us his heirs, joint heirs with the Lord Jesus. He has given us an inheritance in Christ. He has been generous to us, generous in the many, many blessings he gives us in this world.

Generous too in the prospect that we have that one day we will go to be with the Lord forever and things will be so much better for us as the trials of this life are behind us.

[26 : 55] And he gives us that assurance. He's given us the Holy Spirit, the deposit, and for what will one day be ours to give us that assurance that we really do belong to the Lord Jesus, that we are his, and that we can have his help and his protection in our lives.

As God has shown grace to us, let's also show grace to one another. Moving on quickly, we're having to move fairly quickly this evening. Let's look at the opening verses of chapter 46.

I call this Receiving God's Promise. And this is God appearing in a vision to Jacob. Why did God appear in a vision to Jacob? Well, Jacob maybe needed reassurance that what he was doing was the right thing.

Remember when Abraham went down to Egypt in the time of famine and got into real difficulties there as he pretended that Sarah was his sister. Remember the Lord appeared to Isaac and said to him, don't go down into Egypt.

And perhaps Jacob would be wondering, well, if God was so against my grandfather and my father going to Egypt, is it the right thing that I should go? And I think he was getting reassurance from God, God telling him, yes, it is the right thing to do.

[28 : 09] Let me look at the verses. The first thing we learn is about God's character. God appears four times to Jacob. Interesting, we have no recorded instances of God appearing in this way to Joseph.

Appearing to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and although he gave Joseph wisdom and discernment, he didn't in that sense appear to him. But four times God appeared to Joseph as recorded in Scripture.

First time was at Bethel, Joseph is running away, he's using a stone as his pillow, and he sees the angels going up and down into heaven. And God appears to him that time to give him the assurance that the covenant will be fulfilled through him.

That his descendants will become like the dust of the earth. That what has been promised to Abraham and to Isaac is also promised to Jacob. And as the Lord appears to Jacob at that point, he introduces himself as the Lord and probably know if you get the Lord in capital letters in the Old Testament, the word is Yahweh.

It's the personal name of God. That's how he introduces himself to Jacob as the Yahweh, as the personal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the covenant. Chapter 31.

[29 : 22] Jacob has gone to be with Laban, his uncle. He's met his match in terms of someone who could scheme and deceive others. And things have begun to go a bit bad because Jacob's been very successful and Laban's family are not very happy about it.

God appears to Jacob again, introduces himself as the God of Bethel, reminding Jacob of what he had had in that vision in the past and he says to Jacob, now go back to where you came from.

So again, taking Jacob in one situation and saying, now it's time to move on and go somewhere else. chapter 35, Jacob has been reunited with Esau, he's wrestled with God at Peniel and at Bethel God appears to him again and introduces himself as El Shaddai, God Almighty.

And that's the point at which God says, your name is no longer Jacob, the deceiver, your name is Israel, the one who struggled with God. Again, a key point in Jacob's life that God says, you're a new person, you're changed now, you're now Israel, you're now the father of the nation.

And number four here, God appears to Jacob at Beersheba and he introduces himself as God of your father. Now part of the significance of that is that many years before God had appeared to Isaac and introduced himself in exactly the same way and actually said many of the same words that he said to Jacob.

[30 : 50] I am the God of your father, he was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob and as I say in this case his purpose is to reassure Jacob that he is doing the right thing in going to Egypt.

A bit of a diversion there but I thought it was quite interesting at least to me. Second thing God talks about here is his covenant. He says, do not be afraid to go down to Egypt for I will make you a great nation there.

So again, God is appearing to Jacob he is reiterating the promise that he has given in the past to Jacob and to his ancestors and saying my covenant with you still stands.

The fact that you're going down to Egypt and you're going to a different place you're going away from the land of promise that doesn't change the fact that I am your God that your family will be my people that my covenant is with you you will be a great nation.

And then finally God promises his company God promises that he will go with Jacob I will go down to Egypt with you and I will surely bring you back again.

[32 : 06] Jacob hasn't been sent to Egypt to get away from God or to be separate from God God will be with him every step of the way and God will make sure not just Jacob who would be buried in the promised land but all his descendants under Moses and Joshua would come back and would reclaim the land again.

Here is God giving his promises again to Jacob and saying I am faithful what I have promised I will fulfill and I will fulfill it through my way and my way at present is for you to go down to Egypt.

God again doesn't appear to us in visions in that sense but God through the promises of scripture and through what he says to us through his word he does reassure us as he calls us into service or into different areas of life and we can rely absolutely on God's promises and on his faithfulness as we are obedient to him.

If we are willing to go where God says to do what God tells us to then we can be sure that God will work it for our good and his faithfulness will be evident in everything that we do.

Finally we are not going to look at chapter 46 in any detail at all but chapter 46 really is about the Israelites and children of Jacob going down to Egypt and it is the start of the great nation.

[33 : 33] It is the start of God's people becoming a great people. Now we have to say there is not very promising material that God is working with here.

There are 70 of them. They are going down to the land of Egypt which no matter there are hundreds of thousands if not millions of people living in it. They would be a tiny, tiny proportion of the people of Israel very weak in number not in that sense very strong in the land obviously Joseph had great influence but God's people were very weak in their number.

They were also weak in reputation there is a bit at the end of the chapter we didn't read and it follows through into chapter 47 which is about the Israelites Jacob's family being shepherds and Joseph says to them say to Pharaoh you're shepherds and I think the idea was that because they were shepherds because the Egyptians despised shepherds for whatever reason whether it was social class or religious reasons whatever it says the Egyptians despised shepherds and therefore they wouldn't want them as part of the general Egyptian society and Cairo wherever the capital was and they would be quite happy for them to have an area of the land that was theirs and to be there and to grow there but to the people of Egypt those nomadic people coming down among them they were not those they would want to look up to they were just shepherds they were just people who found the land and in the great sophisticated land of Egypt they were seen as being nothing and of course they were weak in character don't need to tell you after all these weeks they've been going through the story of the weakness of Jacob and of many of his son some of the little subplots that we've gone through as we've gone through these chapters which just saw how weak and in many ways how ungodly

Jacob and some of his family were weak in number weak in reputation weak in character and yet God took them and he made them strong how did he make them strong he made them strong first of all by bringing them together now if you think of the history of Abraham and of his family it is of sons separating and going their different ways Isaac and Ishmael Jacob and Esau and so on they all set up their own little clans they travelled around independently they had a nomadic existence and in the normal scheme of things that may well have happened to Jacob's sons as well they were split up they had their own little families they would never have become a great nation as they are brought to Egypt as they are given an area of their own where they can live together where they can belong together so they are able to grow into the great nation that Moses ultimately would lead out of

Egypt and those who were weak at the beginning because God blessed them and because God helped them in Egypt as they were together as one people they grew into a great and mighty nation as God had promised to Abraham Isaac and Jacob and they were strong through the gifting that they had directly through the land that they were given a land that was ideally suited for an agricultural lifestyle for raising livestock and so on they were given the ideal circumstances through the gift that was given by Joseph or ultimately by Pharaoh and where they were able to settle and to prosper well the application is obvious isn't it God takes those who are weak today still we can number a very small proportion of the total population of our land and around the world would be evangelical Christians who truly know the Lord Jesus and love him we can reputation you go into the world what does it think of the church it thinks it's only interest in sex and the role of women and not much else because we really in this country the church isn't seen as being something dynamic and that is really relevant to modern society we can character yes we all are aren't we we're all just sinful people brought by the grace of God into his family but still with many many issues each of us

[37 : 52] God has taken those who are weak and yet he makes us strong we're strong when we're united we're strong when we work together when all of us who are different come together in the Lord's church and work together building one another up it's Ephesians and Ephesians 4 building up the body of Christ as each of us uses what the Lord has given us what the Lord has given us includes the gifts that he has given to each one of us which we should use to encourage and strengthen one another and to build the church of the Lord Jesus at Bruntsfield our time's gone so just a reminder of the four key things we've talked about we've talked about recognizing God's providence of seeing God's hand in our lives that even what appears to be bad and may have been intended for bad God can turn to good we thought of reflecting God's priority the grace that God has shown to us the grace that Jacob that Joseph showed to his brothers the grace that we should be willing to show to one another we thought of receiving God's promise as

God reassured Jacob of what was happening reiterated the promise to him God's promises to us are faithful as well and we thought of reviving God's people that weak little group that went to Egypt and which grew into a great nation that weak little group that has come to know and trust the Lord Jesus and yet which the Lord Jesus is building into a nation of priests that is building into his people that bring glory to his name and that ultimately will be with him forever let's rejoice in what we've seen in the life of Jacob and Joseph and let's take it away and let's demonstrate these things in our own lives let's just pray together Father we thank you for your word to us we thank you for Joseph and for the example that he gives us we thank you in many ways he is a picture of the Lord Jesus someone who was rejected someone who lived in your way someone who ultimately saved his people thank you for the grace that he showed to his brothers those who had treated him so badly and yet he had nothing but love and concern for him and thank you that that reflects what the Lord

Jesus has done for us that he was treated so badly by men and yet as he died on the cross he took the punishment for the wrong that we have done we do thank you for your boundless grace in our lives and pray that we too may have grace for others when they fail we thank you for your presence as we've worshipped together and as we've considered your word pray for your blessing on us as we part now in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ Amen to comment have to celebrate