



Daily Devotionals – August 7 to August 13, 2021

By Dr. Charles Qualls and Rev. Steve Gibson -- Franklin Baptist Church

August 7 - Psalm 105 by Rev. Steven R. Gibson *God's Faithfulness to Israel*

¹ O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. ² Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works. ³ Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. ⁴ Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually. ⁵ Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered, ⁶ O offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

¹⁶ When he summoned famine against the land, and broke every staff of bread, ¹⁷ he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. ¹⁸ His feet were hurt with fetters, his neck was put in a collar of iron; ¹⁹ until what he had said came to pass, the word of the Lord kept testing him. ²⁰ The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free. ²¹ He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his possessions, ²² to instruct his officials at his pleasure, and to teach his elders wisdom.

⁴⁵ that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws.

Praise the Lord!

Devotion:

Psalm 105 serves as a historical Psalm, meaning that this Psalm is useful in a creative retelling of Israel's history. The retelling of the story serves as a reminder to the faithful. Because God has acted on our behalf, our natural response is gratefulness. Our grateful response is a result of the "wonderful works" that God has performed for them (vv. 2, 5, 12-43).

The form of this Psalm could be considered a Song of Praise, with an invitation to praise (vv. 1-6) and the reasons to praise God are found in verses 7-45.

Because Israel was in exile, they needed to be reminded of God's actions taken on their behalf. Once they were reminded of God's previous actions, then they could believe that God would once again hear their cries for help.

The invitation to praise states several reasons to praise God: His deeds upon the peoples, his wonderful works, his miracles, and judgements. Once the Psalmist reminds Israel of God's past actions, the Psalmist focuses on the present and the future.

Because of God's mighty deeds, we are invited to join God in this public witness, to testify to God's sovereignty. Sovereignty is naturally met with singing and praise. The "wonderful words" possibly recant the Exodus story where God exhibited sovereignty over the mighty Pharaoh. Surely leading Israel out of Egypt was a strong reminder of God's love and deliverance. Such a memory is useful in times of trial and exile.

Beginning with verse 16, we are reminded of the patriarchs and matriarchs who wandered and were called "strangers or aliens". The story of Joseph, who was sold as a slave and worked as a slave, would fuel hope for

the Israelites. Because Joseph became a free man and was rewarded with his own house and possessions, the Israelites would have much to look forward to. Joseph's rise to power gave hope and voice to those in captivity.

Psalms 105 focuses on God's activity including: God's choice of a people, establishing a covenant with people, serves as a vehicle for God's grace. God's grace is made known following the "wonderful works", and only then does God call for obedience.

What does Psalm 105 teach us?

- It teaches us that we are invited to praise God.
- It reminds us of God's "wonderful works", i.e. our salvation history.
- It reassures us because God's grace is available.
- It foreshadows the work of Jesus Christ, who acted on our behalf.

How do I respond to Psalm 105? My heart and very being can only respond with praise for the benefits afforded to Christians.

Prayer:

Almighty God, instill in us the ability to praise you every day, regardless of our circumstances. Amen.

August 8 - Genesis 37:5-11

by Dr. Charles Qualls

Discernment and Health

5 Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. 7 There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

9 He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, "What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?" 11 So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Devotion:

Discernment and jealousy. Both of them are crucial to manage. When an opponent lacks one of these, and another opponent is afflicted with the other -- things eventually combust. I have always told my assistants, "I never want you to lie for me. Whatever you say, it needs to be true. But we are also in a business where we can't tell everything we know. So, please don't tell everything you know."

Being sure that you act with integrity is of utmost importance. Having the *discernment* (some would call it "judgment") to know what to say and what not to say is a sign of a healthy and mature person. Young Joseph clearly lacked discernment when it came to what he said to his brothers about those dreams.

Genesis portrays him as Jacob's favorite son. Joseph was the eleventh of twelve sons born. Importantly, though, you may recall that he was the firstborn by Rachel, Jacob's true beloved wife. Some of the older sons

came by way of Leah, Rachel's sister to whom Jacob had been deceived into marrying. Yet others came by way of Jacob's concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah.

Joseph was fawned over by his father, which made all the half-brothers terribly *jealous*. That introduces our second crucial element to the story. Some place Joseph at about the age of seventeen by the time today's scriptural episode unfolds. Joseph's dreams placed him as the central character and put all the rest of the family in a subservient role to him. Combined with how easy his life was compared with the brothers', and the gifts their father lavished on him, we can see how rivalry turned toxic.

I wish Joseph had known better. I can't imagine how it felt to be the other brothers, basically viewed as glorified labor. The "*coat of many colors*" was more than a nice garment. It signaled that their father considered Joseph to be the true "firstborn" and the intended one to rule the family and inherit the largest portion someday. They hated him. And Joseph fueled it.

Still, we are responsible for how we react, how we act out and for how we manage even the understandable issues others may create for us. Nothing we may admire about the providence of how God eventually moved in this story excuses the evil harm they did. They sold Joseph into slavery and deceived their father by lying to him. They afflicted Jacob with crippling grief. Wrong is still wrong, no matter what comes of it later. That, we must keep straight.

Joseph should've done better by his brothers. His brothers should've done better by him. Still, though, God used it all for good later. But that's another story. Oh...by the way...I know you're thinking it. The answer is "yes." Joseph would in fact reign over his brothers and his family would one day come and bow down to him.

Prayer:

God of our days, may we live with the wisdom and maturity that is most grounded in you. May the example of Jesus Christ be the shining example of how we make our decisions. Amen.

August 9 - Genesis 37:12-28
by Dr. Charles Qualls
Joseph Is Sold by His Brothers

12 Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." 14 So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, 15 and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" 16 "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." 17 The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. 18 They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. 19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. 20 Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." 21 But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." 22 Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him" -- that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeve that he wore; 24 and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

25 Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. 26 Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. 28

When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Devotion:

Two recurring themes in our Bible are “God’s mysterious providence” and “God’s loving grace.” If you read Joseph’s overall story with God’s providence and grace in mind, it reads powerfully. He indeed paid a steep price for choices he had made, and for the excesses of his own personality. We cannot forget just how young and immature he was. This, we must keep in mind. His life eventually cycled into places and roles mostly beyond his control. Except that he did grow up. He did make better, wiser choices. God also moved in and around him.

But how would we describe or define especially this grace of God? Today, we visit Joseph’s winding, twisting journey. His story is confusing and painful at points, inspiring and instructive at others. His own flesh-and-blood famously sold him into slavery to get rid of him. However, the story makes clear that Joseph was perhaps spoiled and even a little obnoxious as a favored child.

They were tired of him, these half-brothers. The very fact that he wasn’t out in the fields working with them in the first place illustrates that he was treated quite differently from his brothers. Throw in what comes off as his flaunting of his favored status along with his dreams of grandeur, and this thing was destined to go off the tracks.

Please hear me say -- nothing can excuse what the brothers did to him. Evil is still evil, and sin is sin. Now in the hands of other people as a slave, Joseph would have control of only two things from here on: his faithfulness to God and his attitude.

Read this story freshly. Do not let what may be your lifelong hearing of it numb you. Read each sentence anew with an open spirit and curious eyes. Here are some questions:

- What do the details tell us?
- What does his story teach us?
- How do the characters caution us?
- Who all made poor choices that do not excuse the brothers’ actions, but do help to explain them?

This is a rich tale, with the movement of God about to become apparent in Joseph’s life. Oh, and you may recall that Joseph’s life was nowhere near finished yet. He was just getting started!

Prayer:

Lord of our lives, we acknowledge that life is lived in chapters. Whatever chapter we may be in, may we give ourselves over to your providence and grace. Mature us, grow us and may we yield to your guidance. Amen.

August 10 - Genesis 37:29-36

by Dr. Charles Qualls

No, I Shall Go Mourning

29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes. 30 He returned to his brothers, and said, “The boy is gone; and I, where can I turn?” 31 Then they took Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They had the long robe with sleeves taken to their father, and they said, “This we have found; see now whether it is your son’s robe or not.” 33 He recognized it, and said, “It is my son’s robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.” 34 Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 All his

sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father bewailed him. 36 Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

Devotion:

Okay. You can tell we're going to follow young Joseph for a few days by now, can't you. This is such a rich story, but it takes a while to play out. The lessons are many, and the characters and movements fascinating. So, maybe we'll learn a while with Joseph. I sure hope you'll hang with me.

If you're like me, you flip backwards as v29 begins today's text. I wanted to figure out what I had missed. Apparently Reuben took a short trip. Maybe he wasn't there between the time he lobbied his brothers to spare Joseph's life and the time when they sold Joseph off. For me, that's what makes sense. Perhaps Reuben had duties out somewhere in the field with the flock. Maybe he even went to town or back home. We don't get to know.

We do get to see that his conscience is working on him. V22 in yesterday's devotional text already revealed that to us. As a narrative comment, they tell us that Reuben's plan was to buy some time to fool his brothers by sneaking back to the pit and releasing Joseph. Now simply finding an empty pit, he must have assumed his brothers had gone ahead and killed Joseph while he was gone. His visceral reaction is indicated by the ripping of his clothes in grief. "The boy is gone, and I, where can I turn?" sounds like his way of saying, "What have I done?!"

These cold, conniving brothers of his were not choosy about whom they harmed, nor who they deceived. They show Reuben the colorful robe, now having been rubbed with blood from an animal. Even he thinks Joseph is dead. We can presume they kept his "share" of the money they made from selling Joseph off, so in the dark is Reuben. Next, they show once more their penchant for darkness. Because they are willing to break their father's heart.

Predictably, Jacob flies into full-blown grief. No parent is supposed to have a favorite child. All are supposed to be loved equally. But this child had been borne by his beloved wife. Now his favorite child -- his miracle really -- was gone. Notice his response as they attempted to comfort him. "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." It would be like a bereaved someone today who might say, "I'll never get over this. I just want to die." He cannot see life without his Joseph.

You can draw your own lessons from this sad chapter. Here are a few: First, our jealousy can run away with us quickly. It can fuel us to do unthinkable things. Maybe even things normally out of our character. Also, once deception becomes our strategy of choice, further deceptions may have to be born. One lie truly can lead to another. Finally, our selfish choices made over here can absolutely break a heart way over there. We get the notion that Jacob was never quite the same after he thought he had lost Joseph forever. A significant part of him broke. His own boys did that to him. But Jacob might be partly to blame, since his favoritism could not have been easy to bear.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, give us vision to see more fully. Hearts to love others as we do ourselves. And minds that are sound of choice. Lead, guide and shape us for living as reflections of you. Amen.

August 11 - Genesis 39:1-23
by Dr. Charles Qualls
His Master's Wife

39 Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the Lord was

with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking. 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" 10 And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house, 12 she caught hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. 13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 14 she called out to the members of her household and said to them, "See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice; 15 and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside." 16 Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, 17 and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; 18 but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside."

19 When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. 20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. 21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.

Devotion:

"They" say that "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." Whoever they are, they might just be correct on that score, at least judging by Joseph's story. We'll come back to that one in a minute.

I have a preacher friend who used to joke that today's story should give us all hope. Because even a guy with a name like "Potipher" had a wife. Apparently Joseph needed no such goofy hope, for we find out now in his young adulthood that Joseph has grown into quite the desirable young man. V6 reveals that apparently he was so attractive that the writer uses a redundant description, saying he was "...handsome and good-looking."

(Ladies, please clear up the difference for me someday as you have a chance!)

Perhaps now we know an additional reason why Joseph was hated by his siblings. Sometimes, the beautiful are hated by complete strangers and relatives alike for nothing more than daring to be attractive. I'm talking about envy that in his case may have been rooted even deeper than being the favored child. Just piling on, life had also possibly made him "the beautiful child" in the family.

Sometimes also, the beautiful also are pursued for no other reason than their attractiveness. Here is likely a bored housewife, quite literally. Her husband was wealthy and they had servants. Perhaps in his big job, Potiphar was never around. Here comes handsome and good-looking Joseph, who by now has earned an elevated status among servants. He has been given charge of the household. Day after day, he is by necessity around Potiphar's wife among others. She begins to take a fancy to this special young man.

Well, V10-11 makes clear that her pursuit of Joseph was far from a one-time thing. Joseph, both prudent to his life and faithful to God, resists her beckoning. His life is destroyed, then, by her lies that he attacked her. Thus

reminding us that sometimes, despite our best efforts, life can act beyond our control. *Hell hath no fury*, indeed. Our story today ends with Joseph back in prison, having to start over in his story yet again!

Prayer:

Lord, be with us as life sends us back to the start line yet again. Give us hope that our faithfulness matters, despite what sometimes seems evidence to the contrary. May we have faith in you that sees past today. Amen.

August 12 - Matthew 8:23-27
by Rev. Steven R. Gibson
Jesus Stills the Storm

²³ And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" ²⁶ And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. ²⁷ They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

Devotion:

Have you ever gone fishing and encountered a sudden storm? In what seems like an instant, the weather can go from calm, bright and sunny to a wind-filled tempest swelling of the waves. In this instant, our sense of security can be replaced with a sense of fear.

The Sea of Galilee sits some 600 feet below sea level and is in a basin that is surrounded by jagged hills. This stark setting is the scene where violent storms happen frequently, almost without warning. Maybe this was the situation that the disciples found themselves in when they began to cry for their very lives. Remember, among the disciples were seasoned fishermen who had no doubt experienced many storms before. What was it about this storm that shook them to their core? Simon, Andrew, James and John had no doubt fished this area many times before, but this time was different -- why?

One possibility is that an earthquake had occurred. Verse 24 states "that the boat was being swamped by the waves..." In the boat, Jesus was sleeping, but the disciples were very fearful -- such an extreme contrast, all in one boat!

Ancient people often equated sea storms as a metaphor for chaos and evil. Even though they believe that God has power over all of the wind and the waves, they have yet to understand that Jesus has the same power. This is evidenced in verse 27, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and seas obey him?" Surely, this was something out of the ordinary in their lives.

I wonder if they thought of Jonah and his sea story. Both stories involved a violent storm at sea. Both stories involved a main character -- Jonah and Jesus and both characters were sleeping during the storm. But, there are differences also. Jonah was sleeping because of his trying to run away and escape from God. Jesus was also sleeping and by thus doing so, reminds us that "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20) We remember that Jonah was thrown overboard for the storm to subside, but Jesus rebukes the wind and waves and they obey.

When they awoke Jesus, they said, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" The disciples fear had taken over and they were frantic. Despite their desperation, they know exactly whom to turn to for salvation. Jesus' first words were not to rebuke the storm, but to question the disciples' faith -- "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" (v26)

What storms are raging in your life? What fears do you experience? Is your life ravaged by the pandemic? Maybe your storm is a storm of seclusion from family. Maybe your storm is financial or medical.

In every case, Jesus encourages us to replace our fear with faith.

Prayer:

Loving Shepherd, thank you for encouraging us to replace our fear with faith. May we do that today. Amen.

August 13 - Psalm 133

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

The Blessedness of Unity

A Song of Ascents

¹ How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! ² It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.

³ It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

Devotion:

Today unity appears to be a missing component of our nation's character. It wasn't that long ago that people could honestly disagree and still remain friends. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain unity in today's society.

Psalm 133 was written as an attempt to unify both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. The theme is the joy that is found in harmonious relationships. Notice the progression in this Psalm from an opening statement concerning unity between brothers which results in goodness and pleasantness. Verse 2 compares unity to anointing oil: "like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard." This verse has a lot to unpack to begin to understand it.

Expensive oil is reserved for only the most holy of occasions such as when Moses anointed Aaron as the first high priest of Israel and also to dedicate the priests to God's service. Brotherly unity can only be achieved when we are dedicated to serve God wholeheartedly.

Verse 3 details this unity, which comes only from God. The image implies that our blessing showers down to us, like the dew on the mountain. Indeed, our blessing comes down from God alone.

While there are varied areas that this Psalm speaks to (unity in our families, nation, world), I will focus on church unity. Unity is achieved when members all work toward a common goal, which serves as the greatest witness for the church. Unity produces a positive example to the world and as a result serves as a tool for evangelism. Unity allows us to have a glimpse of heaven while cooperating as brothers and sisters in Christ. Unity also renews our energy and revitalizes our ministry.

A very short Psalm that provides enormous impact on the church today. Many blessings have their roots in unity. It is when we find our common theme that the church of God becomes a viable and visible influence in the world.

Prayer:

Remind us, O God that we multiply our mission and ministry when we are unified in our efforts. Amen.