

Being fertile in the midst of famine!

Pastor S. James

www.gracetabernaclehyd.org

Father we just, we just love You Lord. Who are we oh God that You would call us Your children. Who are we oh Lord that You would buy us, redeem us with the blood of Your own Son. Who are we oh God that You would leave Your Holy Spirit with us, within us, until each one is safe home. Help us oh Lord when we doubt Your love. Forgive us Father when we doubt Your love for us. We pray Father daily in our lives there would be a fresh baptism of Your love. That we may love You with all our heart, all our mind, all our strength. Then following You, obeying You becomes so easy, oh God. Speak to us once again, teach us from Your Word. Help us to believe. Help us to know the power of Your Holy Spirit that is available toward those who believe. Speak Father for in Jesus name we pray. Amen!

We'll go back to Isaac. Last week we looked at Rebecca conceiving, and we saw her going to the Lord because there was a struggle in her womb. And when she goes to the Lord, the Lord says, "There are two nations within you." And then God speaks something over those two children. What God says is, "The elder shall serve the younger."

Whenever God speaks something into our lives, remember, that is final. Don't try to pray and intercede to change God's will about something that has been spoken. If you do, you'll be forever fighting God's will in your life. In all of us there are two nations. The old person before we knew Christ and the new person we were born again as, when we came to Christ. Spiritually that is the elder and the younger. Remember God has spoken; the elder shall serve the younger. The old nature shall serve the younger nature. Your old self is supposed to finally come under total control of the Spirit of God. Then if you, like Isaac, try to bless Esau... There's an Isaac in all of us, who likes the things which Esau brings, and we want to bless Esau. God says, "It's not going to work. It's not going to work, because I've already proclaimed over your life, the elder will serve the younger." But we'll come back to it later. But we will also see how Esau will sell his birth right for a pot full of stew. But today let's read *chapter 26* and we will read the first six verses.

Genesis 26:1-6

¹ There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar.² Then the LORD appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you.³ Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.⁴ And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;⁵ because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."⁶ So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

Scripture says that there was a famine in the land besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. Famine means? Famine is in the land, its effect is upon our lives. It is not famine that is so scary. It's the effects of famine that is scary. The effects of famine can be very scary. If you don't have a job, it doesn't matter if your father and mother have a job. The food comes in, the clothes come in. But the problem happens when your father and mother also don't have jobs, and the food isn't coming in. And the pressure starts saying, "Go out and work!" And there is no work. Effects of famine. Famine can be very scary.

There are two kinds of famine. One is natural famine, the other is Spiritual famine. In the morning we were looking at one verse from Scripture which says about the seen and the unseen. And Paul says, the seen things are temporal but the unseen things are eternal. But because we are so caught in the seen things, God uses the seen things to teach us about the unseen things. So there are types in the Old Testament about seen things which are examples, to think about, to us in the New Covenant about the unseen things.

So there will be physical famines in the land and the lessons learnt about those physical famines are to teach us about the reality of Spiritual famine. So there will be a famine in Abraham's time; there will be a famine in Isaac's time; there will be a famine in Jacob's time. All are God's appointed people. And how they reacted, how they responded, is a lesson to us how to deal with Spiritual famine.

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Sarah is barren; Rebecca is barren; Rachel is barren. All are appointed women. How they responded to their physical barrenness is a lesson to us how not to respond to our Spiritual barrenness. So we study the natural to learn the Spiritual. Famines will come, even worse famines are prophesied. It is foretold, therefore it will happen. We'll see in the book of Revelation most terrible famines have been foretold for this world. Don't try to say, "Lord, let famine not come." God says, "I don't change My Word for anything." There's another terrible famine foretold in the world. It is called the famine of the hearing of the Word. It is not that the Word isn't there. Word will be there in plenty - the hearing of the Word, the capacity to discern between the truth and the falsehood, that will go.

Imagine you sit here, you sit here, and I speak. You go to another place, you hear another Word. You go to another place, you hear another Word. But you do not have the discernment to know what is true and what is false. That's what is foretold. The hearing, faith comes from hearing, hearing from the Word of God. Faith is there, hearing is there, the Word is there, but hearing is taken away. The Word is being preached, hearing is taken away, genuine, over-coming faith will never arise in the ears, in the lives of the people in the last days if they are not careful. It won't be faith. The Christians will base their lives on feelings and not on faith. Therefore we have to be prepared for that famine in that hour of famine of the hearing of the Word. I will wax strong because my ears were open in due season.

Remember about famines. Famines are what will happen in this world. But God is not bound by the principles of this world. He's bound by His Word, not by the world. So when you go through famine, do not fall back on your understanding, put your trust in God's Word - What does God have to say? Is my life aligned to the Word of God?

God is never upset with famines. God's hand is never shortened by famines. Consistently in the Old Testament and the New Testament God says, "Famine is no issue for Me, but unbelief and faith is." Jesus can look at a crowd of probably ten to fifteen thousand people because five thousand men and women and children beside. All are hungry, there is famine in terms of lack because you have only five loaves of bread and two fish, but that's not a problem. Because He knows where He is standing and He knows how He is standing. Because He says, 'Father I know You always hear Me, I know You hear Me. This is not a problem for You. You can do anything to meet this need.' God is not bound by the natural laws of this world. He has bound Himself by His Word. Remember therefore I am bound by His Word and not by the natural principles of this world. Are you getting the picture?

The second thing you need to realize. God has to work in my life; I have to align myself to obey the Word of God. There is famine in Canaan and you hear that there is plenty in Egypt and you are on a journey from Canaan to Egypt and you have on the way to cross the land of the Philistines. And when you reach the land of the Philistines in Canaan, God says, "Stop." Now why didn't You tell me to stop a little before? He says, "Stop there, and stop in the land of the Philistines. Don't go to Egypt." And Isaac stops. That's the kind of obedience God wants from us. You don't try to explain to God, why you shouldn't be stopping here. Either I go backwards, O! Lord I need to go forward. But this is a wrong place to be. Because when God says, you and Me to stop at a particular place He has more than one plan for you. There are two things God will tell him here. One thing He will tell him- "Do not go down to Egypt." Two- "Live in the land I shall tell you." There is always when God says something, there is a do, there is a don't. Don't, do. Don't go to Egypt. Stay where I am telling you. What does He say in *verse 3 onwards*?

Genesis 26:3

³ Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.

Actually that word in NKJV is wrong. It is not dwell, it is sojourn. It is not dwell, it is sojourn. Isaac, you are not called to dwell in the land of the Philistines, for a temporary phase stay there. And if you come to verse 6 Scripture says,

Genesis 26:6

⁶ So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

He is sojourned there is Gerar. Isaac stopped and obeyed. If you look into the account of these three people - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, there's so much about Abraham, so much about Jacob, actually very little about Isaac. Though he lived for, how many years he lived, very little about him. The only thing preacher's will come over and over again and tell about Isaac

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is how he tried to bless Esau. If you give me a paper and a pen, (he puts a black dot on the white sheet and asks) what do you see? You see a dark spot, right? How come you missed all the white space? You know why there is so little about Isaac in the Bible? Because if you look into his life right from the beginning till the end. It is absolute obedience, except for one or two spots of disobedience. One thing you look about that man as the young man or a child or an older man that man walked in obedience with what he heard from his father. We hear so much about Abraham and Jacob is because their life is marked with lots of disobedience. So what can preachers bring about Isaac? "Remember how he tried to bless Esau." But if you look at Isaac, he is an incredible character in the Bible. It is because his life is a life characterized by uncommon obedience. In *Colossians 2:6* this is what Paul would say,

Colossians 2:6

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

You received Him right? Now walk in Him, it's not enough to receive. Continue to walk in obedience to Him. God stops him and says, "Don't go to Egypt." And Isaac stops. What does God say? "Don't go to Egypt." Egypt is a good place for Egyptians but not for Isaac. Egypt is not a good place for God's children. It's good place for the people of the world. But it's not a good place for us. Why? Because we have promises, we have purpose and we have a destiny. Isaac was not born because of a man's will. Isaac was born because of a promise. Remember what Jesus says about you and me. In *John 1:12*, everyone who is born again sitting in this room this is what God says. What does He say?

John 1:12-13

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Everyone was born again based on a promise. God says, "You are Isaac, when you were born again you were an Isaac." You are born again because of a promise. What is the promise? *As many as who received Him, He gave them to power to be the children of the living God.* Then if you are born of a promise, then you are also born for a purpose. And therefore, your life and my life is different from all those who are heading to Egypt during the time of famine. Because you have a promise, you have a purpose and you have a destiny and that is not in Egypt. And that's what Scripture says. I'm not getting into the verses but if you read *Ephesians 1*, you will see that we have a plan, we have a purpose, and we have a destiny. It's all in Christ Jesus. God says that in the New Covenant we are all Spiritual Isaacs. Our famines will come, our tests will come, our trials will come but there is something about us that is different. The famine that hits your company or office, hits you too. The inflation that goes up in this country, will hit us too. The floods or the heavy rains that hit Hyderabad, hit us too. All these things are common to everybody. But there is something different about us. Because we are not born because of flesh or the will of man, but we are born again because of the promise of God. Therefore, the tests and the famines of this world should not knock us over. It will hit us too, but we will never be broken. And therefore we will never quit and we will never be abandoned. This is how Paul puts it in

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ⁸ We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed ¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels. What are we? You go outside; all of us look the same. Whether you are a believer or an unbeliever, everybody is an earthen pot and when the wind comes all the pots go rolling. But there is a difference, in these earthen pot there is a treasure and that treasure, is the power of God. We are hard-pressed on every side but we are not crushed. We are hard-pressed on every side; they are also hard-pressed on every side. But they are crushed. Why? Because inside they don't have that treasure, the presence of Jesus when the famine comes, we are also confused, we are also perplexed. But they go into despair. We shouldn't go into despair. When famine happens in this country, farmers commit suicide. Thousands and thousands of them, but we shouldn't. Why? Why? Verse 8.

2 Corinthians 4:8

⁸ We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair

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We are perplexed but we are not in despair. It hits us, but from inside something hits back. What does *verse 9* say? Persecuted, but we are not forsaken. We are struck down but we are not destroyed. Why? Because we are born again because of a promise. Therefore when the famine hits Canaan, and he starts moving towards Egypt, everybody seems to be moving towards Egypt. God tells him, "Stop. Remember I swore an oath to your father. I made a promise to your father. That was a promise of blessings. That was a promise that I will bless him. And you are the inheritor of that blessing."

You know what when famine hits you and me, you know what God reminds us? Don't run into Egypt. Stay in Jesus because I swore an oath to your Jesus that you are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. Stay in Him, don't run to Egypt. Because what do we do? We run out from Christ to the ways of the world. Yet *Ephesians 1:3* will say,

Ephesians 1:3

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

God says, "Stay in Christ, don't run to the world. That is where you are blessed." Yet the children of Israel lived for forty years in the wilderness. They had food, they had water, they had clothes, they had shoes and they had protection all around. But they built nothing, planted nothing and harvested nothing. They built nothing, planted nothing and harvested nothing, meaning forty years they had everything needed for life but nobody was fruitful. Why? Because their destiny was not in the wilderness, it was in the Promised Land. It was not in the wilderness. Their destiny was in the Promised Land. As soon as the next generations reached the Promised Land, God says, "Come on, possess the Promised Land." My destiny of life is not promised in the world, my destiny of life is promised in Christ. So God says, "Don't go into the world, don't go into Egypt." Don't go into the world, because all Isaac's blessings are connected with Canaan, they are not connected with Egypt. All my blessings and your blessing are in Christ. Why would you want to move to Egypt? Famine hits everybody, but we are not everybody. Everybody lives by the law of nature, but Scripture says in *Romans 8:2* that we live by the higher law, which is called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which has set me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2

² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Egypt is a good place for Egyptians, but not for us. God has no purpose for Isaac to fulfill in Egypt. There was nothing that Isaac could do in Egypt that could glorify God. So if God doesn't send you to Egypt, don't go to Egypt. If you go, you must be sent. You're getting the picture? Don't go when you are poor; don't go when you are rich. Abraham went to Egypt when he thought he would become poor. Solomon had an alliance with Egypt when he was rich. And Egypt brought destruction to both their lives. But Jacob was told by God to go to Egypt. All the days of Jacob's life in Egypt nothing touched Jacob, because he was sent to Egypt by God. At 80, Moses was sent to Egypt by God, and Egypt couldn't touch Moses. Though Moses was standing before the most powerful man of Egypt, with all his power and magicians, soldiers and chariots he couldn't do anything to Moses in Egypt because Moses was sent by God.

Joseph and Mary were sent with little baby Jesus to Egypt. They were sent and they were told to go back. Are you getting the picture? When we go to Egypt, it is because we were sent, not because there is a famine in our life. Egypt might look like a very promising land but it is not the land of promises. Often we look at the world as a very promising place, but that is not the land of promises for us. Outwardly it will look like Egypt as the mighty Nile, while Canaan as the dirty Jordan.

Even today the two rivers are there. The mighty Nile and the little dirty Jordan. But the sons of Israel were killed in Nile, while the sons of Israel were born again in Jordan. One had the power of death, while the other had the power of life. It's not how we see, but how it is seen from above. That's why we need to hear from above, when God says, "Don't go," don't go. It is in Canaan, the famished land that you will be fruitful. Why? It is because all the promises are connected with Canaan, not with Egypt. "Not by might, not by power, it is by My Spirit," says the Lord. So refuse to be driven by the famine but be led by the Spirit.

Lot of people within the body of Christ are driven by famine driven. Any kind of famine on their lives, famine starts giving pressure, finally they give into the voice of famine. "Oh my, I am 30, now 35, still not married." "I'm 38, now who will marry me?" "The first one who looks at me I will marry," - Driven by famine. Isaac got married only at 40. He was not driven by

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famine; he was led by the voice of his father. I'm telling you, famine can come in our lives in different ways. Famine can put so much pressure on you.

Famine put pressure on Sarah. Famine was in her womb. Famine put pressure on Rachel. Rachel started fighting with Jacob over it. Jacob is saying, "Why are you fighting with me? The problem is not with me, the problem is with you. Everybody else is delivering, you're the one who is not delivering." You see Rachel is under pressure by the famine. Hannah was under pressure due to famine. Driven by famine, every year she went to God and cried, God did not answer. Then one day she went to Shiloh, she was not driven by famine. She was driven by purpose. She said, "Touch my womb, give me a son and I will give him back to You." God heard her. He's not driven by famine, God says, "I am driven by promises." We are not driven by famine; we are led by the promises of God. Famine can drive you. Fear can drive you, famine will come, trials will come, hardship will come. We cannot stop it. We cannot control what comes into our lives. But we can decide how we will respond to what comes in our lives. That is very important. I cannot stop the famine that comes into my life. But in Christ, I have the power of how to respond to famine. None of you have the power to stop the trials and the testing that come into your life, but what God gives you is the power to respond. Devil will say, "Respond this way," the snake will whisper, "Do this way," the scorpion will say, "Bite this way," but our God will say, "I give you all power to trample upon snakes and scorpions, don't respond that way." How we respond will decide if we go backward or forward.

The old day when I was with the underground Church in another country, they were under tremendous pressure. Pressure also will generate songs; they are different from our songs. And one of the songs they always sang was this. In Nepali it goes like this: *We are not the kind of believers who take one step forward and ten steps backwards.* This is a song generated in famine under pressure. And that's what God was telling Isaac, "Isaac, you are going backwards under pressure. To your eyes Egypt may look forward but you are not seeing the perspective from Heaven. You are not going forward, you are going backward. You are going from the Land of promises to the forbidden land." Now the forbidden land looks like the Promised Land. God says, "Stop." Remember, growth is a result of active resistance. If you never experience resistance, you will never grow. God allows famines into our lives so that we may grow in our relationship and dependence with God. And growth in God's Kingdom is never determined by what we avoid in life. Growth in God's Kingdom is determined by what we have overcome in life. We don't avoid famine, we overcome famine. What does God say? Did He say, 'The water will never come near you'? Did He say, 'Fire will never come near you'? No, He says, "You will go through the water, you will go through the fire but you will not drown, you will not burn. Why? If you live in My promises, you've been destined to overcome, not to avoid." It is sin that we avoid, not testing. We need to avoid sin. Scripture says, "Flee temptation. Resist the devil." What do we do? We flee from the devil and try to resist temptation. God says, "I didn't say that; that way nobody grows." Flee temptation and resist the devil. Remember, growth is not determined by what we avoid, but by what we overcome. At every stage Abraham is overcoming. He is not avoiding, he is overcoming. Finally on mount Moriah he overcomes himself. He did not avoid, he overcame. Are we getting the picture?

Trouble, or trial or testing or famine will make one of two things. It will either make us very aware of God and our dependence upon God, or it will lead to a dependence upon ourselves. In the first case, Sarah and Abraham fell into a dependence of self. Abraham said, "Famine is here, let me go to Egypt." Sarah said, "Ten years is over, you take my servant." Either it will lead you to a dependence of self or it will lead you to more dependence upon God. When God saw Isaac moving and then God stopped him, God wanted Isaac to win two battles. He won one battle and lost another. He wanted him to win the battle against famine, but He also wanted him to win the battle against fear. He won the battle against famine, but lost the battle against fear. Because what did he say? "Rebecca, tell everybody you are my sister." Remember there are many battles within a battle. And God's purpose is that we win each of these battles that in everything Christ is glorified.

And in *verse 3 of chapter 26, book of Genesis*, He says, "Sojourn in this land." Be a sojourner, don't settle down here. Do you know what it means? Be a stranger in this place. Be friends with the people, but don't be friendly with their ways. Go into the world, be friendly with people, but be a stranger to the ways of the world. Sojourner. You know God says, "That's what you are." Be a sojourner in this world. Do not get too comfortable in Gerar. Sometimes we go into the world. God is the one who sent us, he opened a door and sent us there, two months later, three months, we have got so adjusted to that place. Now Canaan and the promises of Canaan and the purposes of Canaan is a faint memory. It happens to young believers always. You cried, "Lord, open a way for me. Lord, Your door. Only Your door. The door that you opened no man can shut."

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And God opens a door, it is God's door. Once you go through that door, after sometime you think you belong there. Are you getting the picture?

I've worked only three times in my life in the secular world. Each time what I always did was write my resignation letter, never put the date and keep it with me always. I gave my best everywhere. No employer of mine in the world would ever say that I was lazy. But the day God told me to leave, I put the date and left. Because I always knew that I was a sojourner. I was not called to stay. That piece of paper always reminded me - do not get too comfortable here. There is money, there are quarters, there is fun, there are parties, there is everything. But remember, you don't belong there. If you are sent for a purpose, finish the purpose and get out. Remember, we are all sojourners, all of us are sojourners. We don't build any houses in Gerar. We don't build deep foundations in Gerar, because we know that we were sent. The one who sent will also call us out. Your work is over, now move. So there, he is in Gerar. Still in Canaan, still famine, God takes him to the next level of obedience.

In *verse 12* it will be written - *Isaac sowed in that land*. That's a very simple verse. It's a very complex spiritual verse. If you look at every farmer, if I am a farmer, I sow, I reap and I take the harvest. Let's say it is paddy, one part I sell to buy other things, one part I keep to eat for the rest of the year, another part I keep to sow for the next season. Isaac, at the time of famine - This (the portion for buying other things) is gone; this (the portion for consumption) is finishing. The land looks the same, there is no rain. The land is still cracked, and you got your seed there. Logically you will think, let the rains come. If this seed goes, and it doesn't grow, there is no chance for it to grow. When actually the rains come, I have no seed, so let me hold on to my seed. That's not how the Kingdom of God works. God says, "Don't look at the land. Even if the dust is coming into your nostrils, and there is no cloud in the sky, this is the time I tell you to sow." Fundamental principle you need to realize: God can bless you anywhere, in any situation if that anywhere is His appointed place for you. That's the appointed place. God, if you are in the wrong place, can make you a beggar in the richest place. He can also make you a blessing in the poorest place. Are you getting the picture?

Often we lose our harvest because during the time of famine, either we move or we stop sowing. Let me tell you this. I'm sure it is true for many. When famine comes into our lives, initially we'll cry out, but, when the famine doesn't go away, I have always noticed, people's praying gets lesser and lesser. Attendance to the Word of God gets lesser and lesser. Stop sowing and they never receive a harvest. And, they blame it on the famine. But, it had nothing to do with the famine. Famine was the test to see, one- you won't move without Me (God) telling you to move. Two - to see whether you will continue to sow in the spirit. That is what is about Hannah. The more her famine increased, the more she prayed. She didn't pray less. She prayed more. Most people, when their trials and tests keep on increasing, their prayer life comes down. What do they say? "What is the point? He doesn't answer anyway."

Jesus talks about that widow - she kept on knocking at the door of the unjust judge. Because of her persistence she got an answer. People get too discouraged fast. Isaac also could have said, no. I will wait for the rain. Famine will pass. I am not going to waste my seed. Are you getting the picture? Doesn't work that way with God. God is moved by our faith, then our obedience. Another thing you need to realize is, always position yourself in the right place in order to receive God's blessings. When God tells Abraham, "I will bless you and I will make you a blessing," the place is also specified. God has a blessing for each one; God has a place also where that blessing is specified. We have to position spiritually to be in that place to receive His blessings.

What did God tell Elijah? "Turn east, go to Cherith, there I have commanded. Nowhere else. For this particular season, I have blessed you. Your blessing is exactly in that place. Nowhere else will you receive that blessing. There are great places where you can have a great ministry. There is Jerusalem, there is Jericho, there is Bethlehem, there are great places. But My blessing in your life for this time is at Cherith." And, one day that blessing was starting to stop. God tells him, "Next stage of blessings is promised to you. It is no longer here. It is at Zarephath. The land of Zidon." All Elijah had to do was to align himself with that place. Go where God tells you to go. Leave when God tells you to leave. Don't stay there anymore. Don't stay. Those are God's principles. Doesn't matter how long you live there and how comfortable you are there- when God says, "Move," move. Often remember, we are children of Abraham. What does that mean? We go without knowing where we are going. Abraham did not know where he was going. But, Abraham knew who was leading him. That is all that is needed. Know Him who is leading you and remember this, another principle, when God says, "This is the time," that *is* the time.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

¹ To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:

There is a season for everything and there is a time for every purpose under Heaven. God has a season, God has a time. Certain things can be done only during certain seasons. Because, when I was young, I never read the Bible, I never memorized the Bible, I still struggle. So there is a season to do certain things and those things can be done only when you are young. There are certain things, after a particular time, you cannot do. Then if you receive it, it will only be a gift. The devil also knows that. He knows God has seasons and God has timings. That is one thing I have noticed in believers, believing children. The devil is after you, he is not after others. There is a time to study; that is when you are a student. There is a season to study, and always we will see young believing students at that cross road in life. It is called class 10, class 12, they will fall in love with somebody and they don't realize that it was a trap. That is why in English, very clearly it is called, *fall* in love. It is a terrible fall. By the time they get up, board exams are over and results are also out. God says, "There is a season. This is not the season for that." This is the season to study and be approved before God as a good workman. There are seasons for everything and a time for every purpose. A lot of young people struggle. They are waiting for a door to open. These doors don't naturally open, they need a miracle. Because, when the resume is taken, then you will see, crucial stages, there is an issue. They were believers then, but they were set up. At that time, they wouldn't listen to any godly counsel. These are things which we need to learn. You don't write class 10 exams at 40. It is written at 15 and that is the time and season for that. You get married in your late twenties, not at 18. If you are a man, at 18 you don't even know what life is. Are you getting the picture? There is a time, a season and a purpose under Heaven for everything. Isaac moved according to God's time. Remember, there is an appointed time called *today* even for salvation. Salvation is never tomorrow. A day of salvation in God's Kingdom is always *today*, never tomorrow.

Another thing, principle: give God the liberty, in your life, to choose whatever means He may choose to bless you. "Lord, I don't want to be blessed in Gerar at the time famine. I have already decided in my mind, You have to bless me, but in that fertile valley next to Nile." No. Let God choose how He will bless you. If it is Cherith through a raven, so be it. If it is in Zarephath, through a poor widow, so be it. Or if you are Elisha, you are blessed through a rich widow, so be it. Let God choose the method. Jesus healed people using different methods. If they had rejected the method, they have lost their healing. Some of the methods, we may not have liked- Spat, put it. Give God the liberty to choose the method to bless you, because to reject the method is also to deny the blessing. Understand these are all principles in the Kingdom of God. Oh, I am Elijah, the prophet of God. I have never eaten from a raven. Well, that is the purpose I have chosen, that is your way, then it is well with my soul.

"I have never heard about a woman who had not known man, to conceive, but if you are going to do it that way, I don't even know about the consequences, but I am Your handmaiden. Let it be unto me according to Your will." God could have told her, "I will make it easy, you marry Joseph and I will tell Joseph. You have married to her, stay away from her and I will bring my Son into her womb and I will speak to you and I will speak to her, the baby will be mine, nobody will say anything." He could have done it that way, right? Then He wouldn't be fulfilling a promise because the promise says: **a virgin shall conceive** and if you are married to Joseph, who will believe you are a virgin. "Lord, you made a promise. I surrender to that promise and to Your method." Are you getting the picture?

You must do what God tells you. If you are told to dip seven times in Jordon, dip seven times, not six, not eight. If you are told to borrow all the empty vessels there, go borrow all empty vessels. Don't bring half full or full vessels, empty vessels. If you're told to make this valley full of ditches, then make it full of ditches. If you are told to roll away the stone, don't say, "Four days old, it is stinking," roll away the stone. If you are told to fill the water pot, fill the water pot because behind that blessing, that miracle, God has His method and His methods may change. "But Lord, when Moses parted the Red Sea, he just stood there and lifted the rod. But Lord You are telling me in the raging Jordan, 'Ask the priest to step in the raging water'." Not the ordinary priest, the priest who are carrying the Ark of the Covenant. "Lord, they are carrying, there is a flood, how can they swim?" "That's My method." And if they had tried any other method, the water wouldn't have parted. Shut up, don't talk, walk around the walls, "Lord it has never happened before." "Doesn't matter, that's My method, will you obey Me?" You need to understand what that simple line means.

Isaac sowed in the land, what does it mean to sow in the time of famine? You are just standing on the Word of God, just obeying the Word of God and leaving the result to Him. That's what Paul says, "We plant," can you promise anything? "We water," can we promise anything? We can only obey. One who brings increase is God but if God has to bring the increase I

Being fertile in the midst of famine!

have to plant at God's appointed place, at God's appointed time, God's appointed seed. Then God says, "You leave it to Me, I will bring forth the increase." These are the principles in God's Word, don't depart from it.

You know one last principle? During famine, during breaking the hard ground and planting your seed, though you see nothing, praise God through it all. The harvest is not faith. Shall we look at that verse? *Isaac sowed in that land*, that is faith. What you see is the result of faith. Faith is always now. There is this singing when you bring the sheaves home; that is the song of victory after you see your harvest. There is a different song that arises from your heart when you are breaking that fallow ground when there is no sign rain from God. That other song anyone can sing but the first song, only God's children can sing. Paul and Silas were not singing when the chains came off and the prison doors opened. They were singing when the chains were on and the doors were shut. That's when God moved, when those songs rise, God cannot sit still in His throne room. Scripture says that the jail was shaken, their chains came off, every body's chains came off and the doors fell open, you know why? That was a real song; it was a song of victory, a song of faith.

Church, it is easy to sing songs when things are going for us; that is not our song. The Psalmist says, "When the children of Israel, they will say, 'we are by the bank by the river Chebar in Babylon, we hung our harps, we couldn't sing anymore.'" You know that? The children in Israel in captivity, in Babylon couldn't sing anymore and they hung their harps, "We have no song." Yet, there was another man by the same river. *Ezekiel 1:1*, this is what it says,

Ezekiel 1:1

¹ Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

Think about it, aren't they all Jews in captivity? Positionally, are they not at the same place? One set of people, their songs are gone and they have hung their harps. Another man knows, he is right there in the center of God's will and he is able to sing and he sees the heavens open and he sees visions after visions. What is written? "I was among the captives by the river Chebar. He was among the captives, stopped singing and hung their harps but the heavens were open and I saw the visions of God." This is how it works. We serve an awesome God. For Him all of you are the same. He loves you the way He loves all His children. He's got a plan, He's got a purpose and He's got a destiny as soon as you were picked up by Jesus. Every blessing that you need to fulfill that purpose is already there in Christ but God says, "Isaac, don't go to Egypt. Place for your blessings, is in Canaan, not in Egypt." So what does He tell the Church? "Stay in Christ, place where you have been promised and blessed with everything is in Christ." In Christ there is no condemnation; in Christ you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; in Christ you are more than a conqueror, everything is there in Christ, stay in Christ, don't go to Egypt. Egypt might look like a promising land but it is not the Promised Land. We are just sojourners, we don't dwell in Egypt, we are just sojourners. Remember about all these people it is written, "They looked forward to that city without foundation." They were looking forward to that city, God says, "What city are we looking forward to?" Shall we pray?

Closing Prayer:

Father we just come to You because Your plans and Your purposes for all of us are based on Your promises for each and Your promises are yes and Amen in Christ Jesus. And I pray Father each one of Your children here, will find their position here in Christ Jesus and will function in Christ and the power of God and the provision of God will be poured into their lives. For in Christ we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Thank You Father, we are absolutely sufficient in Christ. We need nothing more for in Christ fullness of God is there, fullness of wisdom is there, fullness of power is there, fullness of provision is there, fullness of protection is there, everything is there and we are hidden in Christ. Keep us there Lord, help us not to go back to Egypt. Famines come, when times of testing come, let us not stop sowing. Let us not stop praying, let us not stop studying and meditating on Your Word. Let us not stop attending Your house of worship. Help us to sow in the hour of famine, then we will reap our harvest. Thank You Father, for You are not moved by our problems, You are moved by our faith. Thank You Lord, we bless Your holy name, bless Your children, empower them that they would be a blessing wherever You have placed them. Thank You Father, for in Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us, Amen!