

**Genesis 48: 1-22; “The Father’s Gracious Blessings”, Sermon # 115 in the series –
“Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 2nd, 2020,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

At this hour, I want to draw a parallel between the blessings which Jacob gave to Joseph for his sons, with some of the rich spiritual blessings which God the Father has given to our Lord Jesus Christ; the blessing which the Father gives to all of us, who will believe in His Son for eternal life. We should understand that even though these blessings of grace are no surprise to God the Father, and to our Lord Jesus, they are often a great surprise to those who receive them. The Father and the Son have had plans to bestow saving grace upon sinners, from all eternity. But when the promise of salvation comes to us personally, or to our children, it is often an unexpected revelation. This was no doubt the case with Ephraim and Manasseh on this occasion that we have just read about. Well, what are these unexpected blessings which Jacob gave to Joseph at this time? They are very much like the spiritual blessings which we who believe will receive from God the Father, because He has blessed our Lord Jesus Christ, for all that He has done for sinners like us. I think that we can find four unexpected blessings in our text. It is my prayer that you will better understand the greatness of the grace of God and Christ after you have heard this message.

1st of all – Let’s think together about the Father’s blessing of Adoption. (verses 1-6)

It appears that after having sworn to his father that he would bury his body in Canaan, that Joseph went back to his duties of ruling over Egypt. He evidently did not think that Jacob was going to die immediately, or any time soon. However he was wrong in this assessment, because someone came and told him – “Indeed your father is sick”. So he took he took his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh with him, and he went to his father directly. It is always good for us as Christians to remember, that the time of a father or mother’s death is entirely in the hands of God. And if that father is a godly father, as Jacob was, it was imperative in Joseph’s mind that if his father had spiritual things to communicate to him, that he would not put it off by saying – My earthly business is being interfered with by my going to my father’s side to hear what he has to say to me and to my sons.

No, Joseph was wiser than this. He took off work and he went. We should also remember the high position that Joseph held. He was second in command to Pharaoh. He had many important responsibilities. But to Joseph, the last words of spiritual blessing and counsel from his godly father were worth more to him than all other earthly considerations at that time. Please remember, dear Christian, that God the Father may have something for your father to communicate to you; something of great value, somethings which are quite wonderful in his death bed instructions and counsels. When the time comes, you should not make up excuses; you should be there, to receive your father’s last words. In the case before us, there was much to receive. When Jacob heard that Joseph was coming to him it says – “Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed”.

Now, you can also see from these words how important it is, for a sense of responsibility for a godly Christian man to strengthen himself, even upon his death bed. Jacob could have made excuses in his own mind as to why he didn't need to sit up in the bed to speak, but he had the Lord’s business to take care of; and he knew that it would be better done by his sitting up in the bed. My beloved brethren, let us learn to live our lives in such a way, that when it comes our time to die, that if God will give us the fortitude of spirit, we will continue to exert ourselves. We will continue to fulfill all our responsibilities to do the Lord’s work. We will seek to do His good will until the Lord takes all our strength away. When Jacob came into the room with his sons, he

had them sit down next to him. And immediately Jacob began to speak what was on his mind, and his heart, to his beloved son.

He first reminded him of the great and mighty promises that God had given to him when He had appeared to him at Luz in the land of Canaan, years before, and had blessed him. God had said to him, “Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and *I will* give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.” So, we must ask ourselves – Why does Jacob treat Joseph here as the first-born; the one who would inherit the double portion of all the earthly blessings, and receive the promises of the coming Messiah? Well, it was because there was another man in this family who had forfeited the blessing of the first born. Listen to 1st Chronicles 5: 1 and 2. “Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel – he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s.”

So, we see from this that it was God’s great purpose to transfer the birthright from Reuben to Joseph, because Reuben acted in a way unbecoming of receiving the blessings of the right of the firstborn. He lay with his father’s concubine. And even though the Messiah would come through the tribe of Judah, yet the Lord would overrule this consideration as well, in Jacob giving the blessing of the firstborn to Joseph. Judah was not a worthy son of Jacob either. In the line-up of Jacob’s sons he came from Jacob’s first wife Leah. And yet God would still have Joseph, his second wife Rachel’s oldest son, to inherit the birthright. When we think about it, Judah was not worthy in himself to have the Messiah descend for his line any more than the rest of his brothers. He too, sinned in breaking the 7th commandment sin and was unworthy of being honored with being the first forefather of the Messiah among the tribes of Jacob.

But Joseph was a man of righteousness and dignity and honor. He was not guilty of any outward seventh commandment sins. He showed forth in his person, more than anyone else in the family, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He was not a perfect man, like Jesus Christ would be, but he was a very good type of our Lord in every respect. This is why the birthright came to him. It was all of grace for him to come to have it. And even then, he did not inherit the privilege and honor of having the line of the Messiah descend from him; that was reserved for Judah. But nevertheless, He typically shows forth the beauty of Christ’s righteousness in the way that he lived his life.

You see, all of this is good instruction for us, of how you and I may come to have salvation and receive the gift of eternal life from the Father, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. It was because of the blessing of Jacob to Joseph, that Ephraim and Manasseh would come to be adopted as Jacob’s own sons, and stand to inherit a double portion of the land of Canaan later on when Israel entered the promised land under Joshua. It was God the Father’s choice, according to Sovereign grace, that this adoption would take place. Listen to the text again. “And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.”

Jacob explains this further in verse 7. “But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is Bethlehem).” So, we need to see here that it was Jacob’s great grief that Rachel died, and that he could not have more children by her. But God would make up for this loss through this adoption. It was an adoption all of grace. It was all so unexpected. The blessing to Joseph was the blessing to his sons; that they would be his father’s by adoption, and thus they would inherit all of the promises of everlasting life. And it is just that same way for every Christian. Our Joseph, our Lord Jesus Christ, was chosen by the Father to inherit all the blessings of the firstborn. He is not only the “firstborn over all creation” in that by Him all things were created through Him and for Him. He is, as it says in

Colossians 1: 18 – “The head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things that He might come to have the preeminence.” So as we think of this theologically; our having any right to the spiritual birthright of eternal life has been forfeited to our race by Adam’s sin in the garden of Eden. And there is no hope of its recovery by any of our own acts of righteousness, or by our any having any inherent dignity and honor. We are all unrighteousness. We are unworthy of these blessings of salvation.

But I want you to see that God is pleased with His Son Jesus Christ. And He will bless you with eternal blessings if by faith you believe in Him. The Father blesses us because of His obedience to His law, and His sacrifice which pays the punishment for our sins. Galatians 4: 4 and following says, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." God blessed Him for His righteousness and gives us all spiritual blessings because of our relationship to Him. He is the firstborn; and God calls us His because we are Christ's. Galatians 4: 26 – “For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.” It is the Father's purpose to adopt all those whom He has chosen to eternal life. We are His if we believe in Jesus.

All adoption into the family of God is a matter of grace and God’s choice. It is a very great spiritual privilege to be called a son or daughter of God. It has nothing to do with your natural birth or privileges. John 1: 12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” How precious it is to every Christian to be God's adopted children and have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot have it naturally; we cannot be God's children simply because He created us and we call Him Father because of that first creation. There must be a new creation that must take place in your heart. But that is all of grace and not of yourself. It comes because of the Father’s will in relation to His Son Jesus Christ.

2nd – The blessing of being brought near to God the Father, to know His love through Jesus Christ our Lord. (verses 7-10)

“Then Israel saw Jacob’s sons, and said, ‘Who are these?’” “And Joseph said to his father, ‘They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.’” “And he said, ‘Please bring them to me, and I will bless them.’” “Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see.” “Then Joseph brought them near him and he kissed them and embraced them.” Jacob had a very deep and spiritual love for these two sons of Joseph. I am sure that these two boys had come to know and to understand the love that their father Joseph had for them. But this was something new for them; to come to understand the deep spiritual love and concern for their souls that Jacob their grandfather had for them. This affection that he demonstrated to them in having Joseph bring them near to him, and in his kissing them and embracing them, this was foreign to them. They no doubt received it because they knew that Jacob was their father’s father and that they should submit to this affectionate display.

Children, when your parents tell you all about their godly father or mother, and you get to come and meet them, I hope that you will not think it a hard thing. If your grandparents know the Lord, they will be very sincerely concerned to show you their love. And they will be very concerned for the welfare of your soul. This is only right. It is one of the greatest gifts that God will ever give to you in this life. It is a tremendous blessing to have such a rich spiritual heritage; a father and a grandfather who both love you, and who will both demonstrate their spiritual concern and affection for you. This is not something to be disdained or to look down upon. It is something to be received, and to be thankful about. It is a demonstration of the Love of God toward you.

Sometimes when a person becomes a Christian they either forget or they do not realize that God the Father has a deep and spiritual love for all those who have faith in His Son the Lord

Jesus. Joseph brought his sons near to his father. Spiritually speaking, it is Jesus who will bring you near to God. And one of the great reasons is so that you might come to know His love personally. It was the love of Father that He gave His Son, for sinners such as you and I. "For God so loved the World that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Sometimes a person may have a false impression about the Father; that He is distant and cold, they think of Him simply as a God of Justice. But if you think this way, you need to understand that it is because the Lord Jesus has satisfied the Father's justice, that He is not only propitious to you, (that is, that He grants you favor and all the spiritual blessings of Christ to you, for Jesus sake), but that the Father Himself loves you.

Turn with me to John Chapter 16 and I will show this to you. Jesus is telling His apostles and disciples that He is going to the Father. He will go via the cross and the grave, and then be resurrected from the dead. In verse 22 Jesus says – "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take away from you." "And in that day you will ask me nothing." "Most assuredly I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you." "Until now you have asked nothing in My name." "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father." "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."

So, Jesus is not saying that we do not need His intercession to come to God in prayer. We most certainly do. But what He is saying is that, having brought us near to God, that we should understand that the Father will hear us Himself, because He loves us. All of the answers to your prayers, our Lord is saying, come to you through the Father's accepting them, through Christ's finished work and His intercession on your behalf. Yes, but Jesus is saying that when you know that fact, you should go on to conclude that the Father's love for you is deep and abiding and spiritual; and that He delights to hear your prayers to Him. He delights to answer your prayers for that very reason that Christ mediates them.

Indeed you need to understand that if you come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, it is the blessed truth that He has always loved you. He has loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness He has drawn you," He says in Jeremiah 31: 3. And so, we should understand that in drawing us to Christ, He draws you to Him with a very deep and affectionate love for you. This is why you and I ought to rejoice greatly in the great salvation which has been bestowed upon us in Christ. The Father Himself loves us. "Behold what manner of love that Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God; and such we are."

Who was it, O believer, who looked upon your soul in love, when you were at enmity with Him; when you hated the thought of becoming a Christian, and did not like it when your parents or others told you that you needed to repent, and that you needed to believe in Christ? Who was it who gave you the gift of life when you were dead in your trespasses and sins? It was the Father Himself. Ephesians 2: 1 – "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...." And it didn't stop there. He has loved you in bringing salvation to you so that, "in the ages to come He might show you the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward you in Christ Jesus." What great love is the love of the Father, towards undeserving sinners.

3rd – The blessing of our knowing that the Love of the Father for the Son is infinitely great. (verses 11-13)

This was the great and unexpected blessing which came to Jacob as he was now old and ready to die. He says to Joseph – "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!" And as for Joseph, he was now so very joyful about his reinstated relationship with his father, he now had such great satisfaction in it, that he knew that it was the

fulfillment of his dreams of years before, now being understood. He had such great happiness now, that it was almost inexpressible. There must have been many times, while Joseph was in the prison years before, when he thought to himself how unlikely it would be, that humanly speaking, he would ever see his dear father again. But now all had been restored. There was now, there at that time, a very great love that was being displayed between Jacob and Joseph in front of Joseph's sons.

This leads me to ask whether you think much about the great love that exists between the Father and Son. It was a love from all of eternity which caused them to decree that they would create man in the Beginning. They did so because there was a love in the Godhead itself. How great a love it is can be seen in John chapter 17, just before Jesus went to the cross. He is in prayer and He is praying for His disciples, and He says in verse 20 – “I do not pray for these alone; but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me.”

This is the kind of love that Jacob and Joseph had for each other, except this love is on a much greater level. Ephraim and Manasseh came to know and to see this great love that existed between their father and their father's father. And through it, I believe, they came to behold and to know something of the love of God the Father and His Son through that love that they were witnessing. The love of the Father for the Son, and the Son for the Father is that which we first come to really know when we are converted. And after that, as we keep learning of it by our study of the word of God. But Beloved, we will keep learning of it to all eternity. Christ was saying, in that prayer that He was praying, that His disciples, all of us who believe in Him, will behold the glory of this love more and more. And we will be perfected in that love which we should come to see is the true basis of the unity of the Church.

And our being perfected in this love which exists between the Father and the Son in regard to the outworking of our salvation in all its details, will then be a witness to a watching world, when we speak of it. We speak of it so that others might know of this same infinite love and come to believe in the gospel, and be saved. It is really a very great thing to think about, to meditate upon, and then to speak to others about; the love of God. Jacob loved Joseph so very, very much, and he was instructed by God to make Joseph the firstborn among all his brethren and to give him all things, in regard to his family, into his hands. John 3: 35 says – “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.” “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” What a witness is the love that exists between the Father and the Son.

4th – The blessing of the Father's having a predestined purpose for each one of Christ's children. (verses 14-22)

“Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.” Here Jacob knows something prophetically that Joseph does not know. Joseph had positioned the boys in front of Jacob; Manasseh on Jacob's right so that he could receive the blessing of the firstborn, and Ephraim on his left. But Jacob crosses his hands in giving the blessing. Joseph doesn't think that it should be this way, because of the natural order of their birth. He thought that his father was making a mistake. But Jacob “guided his hands knowingly”. He was guided by a most certain prophetic impulse which was communicated to him by the Spirit of God. He knew by the Spirit's insight being given to him, that the younger would be greater than the older. This was in accordance with the purposes of God; that Ephraim would be greater than Manasseh as a people and a tribe in Israel.

Why was this an unexpected blessing? Well, it was unexpected to Joseph, because God in His sovereignty had hidden it from him until this point. Both of these tribes were to be great in Israel, but the younger would be blessed by God, to be greater in numbers, greater in strength and influence in Israel, and greater in battle, on behalf of Israel, in the future. The lesson that we should learn from this is that God is always guiding the crossed hands of our blessings. We think that as we look at our children as they are growing up, that this particular one of them is to be great, while another is not, and we think that all of our expectations should stand. But God will often cause things to go contrary to all of our wisest observations. We think that what will become of a child or a young person can be judged before the story is told; when it is only at its beginning. And actually, God has something quite different and much greater in mind.

Why is it that will we keep second guessing the Almighty in terms of what He will do with certain people, or certain tribes, or even certain nations? Your faith in believing in God's sovereign choices and decisions is always best, rather than your trying to second guess God. God knows who He will give certain blessings to, and in what measure. We ought to rejoice in this today. It will be best if we simply pray for all of our children; that they will walk in His ways and keep His commandments, and live by faith in the Son of God. Let Him raise them up to be what He would have them to be, and to make them great in the measure that He decides. I think it will be good for us to remember the prayer of David in 1st Chronicles 29: 10 – “Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.” “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all.” “Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all.” “In Your hand is power to make great and to give strength to all.”

Holding these thoughts in our mind ought to be the thing that we strive for. Greatness is not what you and I need to strive for, either for ourselves or for our children. Greatness is given by God to people and nations according to His wisdom and His plans. It is God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ who are the Ones who are truly great. It is this God before whom Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who led Jacob all his life long. It is the Angel who redeemed Jacob from all evil who blessed the lads that day, and He does the same for each person who will trust in Him today. May God make each of you as Ephraim and Manasseh! And whether there are other brothers or sisters that are greater than you, rejoice and be glad over it. God is giving you both the blessings of the firstborn, if you have the blessings of Jesus Christ. Greatness and glory belong ultimately to Him alone; and not to any mere man. But because of Him we who believe shall one day be lifted up to be with Him forevermore. Let us strive to be faithful to His will and faithful to keep His Word. It is faithfulness that God will reward.