

GOD OF OUR FATHER'S BLESSINGS

Joseph's Blessing – Genesis 49: 22-26 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful. We all are tempted to quit before we finish. Yet there is a worse sin than quitting our God-given task. It is the sin of being afraid to begin a task God puts before us. It is the sin of opposing God's challenge or His dream for us. This sin of being afraid to start walking by faith, being afraid like the Jews in the days of Haggai to rise-up and build the house of the Lord, being afraid to give tithes and offerings to the Lord, or being afraid to marry the man or woman God has given to us—these are but a few examples of being afraid to begin by faith. Years ago, in the early 1970's, in Bloomington, Illinois, a wonderful couple in love, finished their six pre-marital counseling sessions. We were a week from the wedding, when the man got cold feet. I cannot tell you the tragedy and shambles he left behind in that beautiful woman, in her family, in his family and in our church family. The story of Joseph is the story of a man who faced impossible challenges. By trusting in God, he overcame those challenges. That's what made his earthly story so captivating for us all. Are some of us here today, burned with life, afraid to begin, or are you unwilling to begin again? Joseph had to begin again in the pit, then begin again as a slave, then begin again in Potiphar's house, then begin again in prison, and finally, he began again as the prime minister of Egypt.

As Joseph knelt before his father, Jacob, to receive his blessing, he was the brother who overcame giants of pride, fear, unbelief, unforgiveness, doubt and lust. This favorite son with the coat of many colors, was stripped of his coat and cast into a pit to die. What a humbling lesson where Joseph had to overcome the giant pride! Then as he could probably hear his brothers arguing, over whether to kill him or sell him, he had to face the giant, fear. In Potiphar's house, when he rose to the top, he had to face the giants of pride and lust, and run from Potiphar's wife. As he sat alone in prison, he had to face the giants of unbelief and doubt, and trust God. When Joseph saw his starving brothers, who had sold him into slavery in Egypt, and he recognized them, they had no idea who he was. Joseph had to face the giant of unforgiveness and win. What a saga he lived beginning by faith over-and over again. The author of Hebrews calls Joseph forward to say, in Hebrews 11: 22, "By faith, Joseph at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites—a clear prophecy from God, and he gave directions concerning his bones." As Jacob reached out his trembling, dying hands to bless Joseph, what would he say to this son, as Genesis 49: 26 states, "this son set apart from his brothers?" I see in Jacob's blessing four poignant images. I covet these four images to be upon all of us. Do you long for a Joseph blessing today? What are the four images?

JOSEPH IS A FRUITFUL SON—A FRUITFUL TREE GROWING WITH DEEP ROOTS BY A SPRING. IS THAT WHO YOU ARE? (I.) Notice verse

22. “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall.” What an image this is of Joseph as a type first of our Lord. Like our Lord, Joseph, this fruitful bough or tree, literally, the Hebrew word is **ben**, which means son. Many of us have seen the awesome movie, “Ben Hur,” meaning son of Hur. But in the context of growing by a spring with deep roots into the moisture there, Hebrew readers see ben contextually as tree, such as the father of a family tree. Joseph, like our Lord, was also hated by his brothers. Jesus came unto His own and His own received him not. To be hated by family members is a terrible and tragic circumstance, but Joseph is a type of Jesus. Joseph as Jesus was sold for pieces of silver, Joseph—20 and Jesus—30. Both Joseph and Jesus were condemned on false charges, Joseph to years of prison, and Jesus to death on the cross in our place. Imagine the pain of being condemned by lying witnesses who posed as servants of God doing His will! Both Joseph and Jesus were brought up out of prison, Joseph after many years from the Egyptian prison house by the hand of Pharaoh, and Jesus after three days, from the prison house of a sealed tomb. Joseph like Jesus was made second in command of all Egypt as Jesus has received a name above all names and sits now at the right hand of the throne of God. Joseph like Jesus was the administrator of power, Joseph over all Egypt, and Jesus all power in heaven and on earth.

The comparisons never seem to end. Joseph was a fruitful beloved son, and Jesus is the only begotten son of God, our tree of Life and the Vine from which we are the branches. Joseph never quit loving his brothers and forgave them when they repented of their sin. Jesus loved the world so much that He gave His life as ransom for all who repent, believe and receive Him. Joseph sustained his brothers and their family before they knew who he was, as Jesus sustains the whole world, but multiplied millions don't know or acknowledge who He is. He girds and feeds all flesh, even as Joseph gave grain and corn to all who were hungry in Egypt. Joseph loved his brothers despite their sin and Jesus has commended His love toward us, in that while they were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5: 8) Joseph was in charge, of all the disposing of blessings in Egypt and no one received the fullness of those blessings except through him. Jesus is in charge, of all the blessings of heaven and no one will ever receive the fullness of His gifts and graces except, through Him. (John 14: 6)

Joseph is also a type of the sold out born again believer, set apart from his brothers, v. 26. The graces of the Holy Spirit shone in Joseph as God means for His gifts and graces to shine in us, as His representatives, as fruitful boughs on a tree or fruitful branches on Jesus, the Vine. Notice Joseph's fruitfulness has a source in the same one as we have for our spring of love and joy is Jesus. Psalm 1 calls us to be like a tree planted by rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. To be fruitful as Joseph was in lip and in life and in heart and in soul, since his youth, the grace of God had to have visited his soul, and God did visit Joseph, even giving him

prophetic dreams. When Joseph knew bad things his brothers were doing, and he reported it to his father, how was he to know it would begin half a life-time of rejection, hatred, and persecution? The Lord from adolescence, set Joseph apart, with a call on his life, as a fruitful bough with deep roots running beneath God's divine spring. Put your roots down deep into Jesus, into reverence of Him, in faith and love and grace, and you will be mocked as Joseph was.

As a fruitful tree bough of a tree, we know the source of our fruitfulness. It is the well of water in Jesus, the living water springing up into eternal life. (John 7: 38-39) Jesus is the One, Isaiah 44: 3 tells us, who pours out His well of water on our thirsty land and thirsty souls. Joseph's branches grew and grew and ran over the wall. This wall is the Lord, for the Wall supported this fruitful bough. Laden with fruit, this bough could not break for God was supporting Joseph. Like a grapevine is supported by a trellis, so Paul wrote in Romans 11: 18, "Remember it is not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you." Is Joseph's fruitful bough beside the spring an image of you? Notice the 2nd image.

JOSEPH IS AN ATTACKED ENEMY SHOT AT BY BITTER ARCHERS, BUT HIS OWN BOW IS UNMOVED. IS THAT WHO YOU ARE? (II.)

Notice verses 23-24a. "The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed or grieved him severely, yet his bow remained unmoved..." The figure or image has now changed and Joseph the fruitful bough or son, is Joseph, hated by his brothers, they hated him as their enemy. Jacob is looking at Joseph now as a man, His favorite son, but his brother's hated enemy. These archers were Joseph's older brothers. That's what made Joseph feel the arrows in his heart so keenly. You would think that this fruitful bough could have looked with scorn on the archers who shot at him and hit him with their arrows and harassment and persecution. No, by having his brothers whom he loved, shoot at him, severely grieved him. To be sold by his 10 older brothers into Egypt; and to have his dreams and visions from God derided; to be cast into a pit as a thief or murderer, to be left to die, no, these arrows hit Joseph in the heart and severely wounded him.

Because of his reverence of the Lord, because of his tender feelings, the arrows of those archers found a cruel resting place—in his broken heart. If Joseph would have had on the vest of a policeman, or had he had a heart of stone, those arrows and their tips might have been blunted and pointless, doing no damage. Because Joseph had tender feelings, for God and his brothers, because he had a quickened, living conscience, with warm affections, godly fear, and a work of grace in his soul, his heart was a huge bulls-eye, representing a tender spot for those arrows to penetrate. So, we read in verse 23, the archers not only bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and grieved or harassed him severely." Yet, Joseph's bow remained unmoved. Did the archers do Joseph in? Did they destroy his life? Did they

together drain out his life blood? Did Joseph sink under fire, bleed and die like a wounded animal? Did he, fall down, and gasp his last breath?

We read in verse 24a, “Yet his bow remained unmoved, steady, and his arms were made agile, limber by the hand of God. There is hope for Joseph. He too had a bow in his hand. What did Joseph do with his bow and if he shot back, how did he direct his arrows to spare his life? I agree with the mighty pastor J. C. Philpot, who left the Church of England to become a Baptist preacher in the mid-1800s. Joseph removed those arrows from his wounded side, from his chest and heart, and he aimed them upward to the Lord. Joseph’s arrows were shot upward towards the throne of God, toward the Majesty on high. Joseph turned “the assault on him, all his brother’s bitter shafts and arrows, he turned into prayers, supplications, and petitions.” He refused to return evil for evil—Romans 12: 21, but he rather “overcame evil with good.”

Have you been shot at by the archers? Do not shoot at them again! Take your arrows and bring them to Jesus before the throne; present your wounded hearts to Jesus, your groans, and your sighs. Spread out all those arrows before God, who hears and answers prayer. You and I will be gunned down if we shoot back. People who are sinners, or believers with little conscience at drawing the sword or shouting in our faces, will gun us down. They can use language God won’t let us use. Don’t pick up one arrow and fire it back. Turn the fight into a prayer to God. In due time, sweet answers of God’s mercy and peace will come to you. Notice, Joseph’s bow remained unmoved. Joseph was probably very capable of fighting back, but he would not. His bow was unmoved. An unmoved bow can remain a strong bow, if we keep shooting the arrows of others to heaven to land before His throne. Beloved, to be shot by our own brothers or sisters in Christ leaves deep wounds in us. Those wounds heal slowly. Despite the volley of arrows, when we turn our enemy’s arrows to heaven, no one can break our bow or beat it out of our hand. Beloved, sometimes the arrows that wound us, and when it happens, it is sadly so, is when our own arrows boomerang. When we have winged an arrow that comes back to wound us, few wounds are as bad. I read a tale of an eagle that was once mortally wounded by an archer in its bosom. The eagle lay on the ground dying, when she recognized the feather on the arrow that was stuck inside her. It was an arrow taken from her own wing. A poet turned that into these haunting words. “Keen were her pangs, but keener far to feel she owned the pinion which impelled the steel. While the same plumage which had warmed her nest drank the last life-drop of her bleeding breast.” Beloved, if we are shot and wounded by archers, may the wounds not come from our own bow with arrows or bullets that ricochet back at us. Joseph’s bow remained unmoved, and yet his arms were made agile from the Lord to shoot, but not shoot back. His shooting was done in prayers to His Helper in heaven. The third image:

JOSEPH IS STRENGTHENED BY THE MIGHTY ONE OF JACOB, THE SHEPHERD, THE STONE OF ISRAEL, THE GOD OF HIS FATHER, THE ALMIGHTY. IS THAT WHO YOU ARE? (III.) Notice verses 24b-25. “His

arms were made agile (1) by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, (2) by the God of your father who will help you, (3) by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb.” The strength of Joseph was a gift from heaven. It was divine strength to be unjustly treated, thrown in a pit, sold into Egypt, falsely accused, forgotten in prison, and thought by Jacob to be dead for 22 years. How did Joseph’s bow remain unmoved and how were his arms made limber and agile? Any archer that got a direct hit on his enemy might try to knock the bow out of his wounded enemy’s hand. Joseph was not successfully disarmed, and robbed of his bow. Amazingly, when his brothers came to Egypt, though Joseph had never fired a shot back at his brothers, he witnessed that his godly conduct had been used of God to shoot back arrows into the consciences of his brothers. They were vexed, guilty and admitted God had found them out. When Potiphar’s daily solicited Joseph with passes day by day, God shot arrows into her guilty conscience, and in her rebellion and lust, her desire turned from lust into a deadly hatred of Joseph, for he would not take the enemy’s bait. Beloved, if one of us as pastors take the Word of the Lord and point it to heaven, those arrows of truth and warning and rebuke and reproof can be used of God as His arrows to strike us like Ahab was struck in the joints of the harness. David said to God in Psalm 45: 5, “Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; the peoples fall under You.”

So what was Joseph’s strength? Notice it is all divine—and Jacob called God by five names, one was like a three in one with two others. Jacob said, “Your bow remained unmoved and your arms were made agile by—and Jacob fills in those blanks (1) by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel. Why were Joseph’s arrows of faith and arms of prayer strong? His father’s God was keeping Joseph unmoved in not fighting his brothers or Potiphar’s wife. By the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, Joseph was made strong, unmoved in his bow and agile in his arms, like Moses’ arms being lifted by Aaron and Hur, the mighty God of Jacob was lifting Joseph’s arms. Earlier in blessing Joseph in Genesis 48: 15, Jacob called his God, “the God who has been my Shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil. There is a third name Jacob uses—“the Stone of Israel.” Moses later used this term, the Rock of Israel in Deut. 32: 4, 18, 31 and David called him “My Rock, in whom I take refuge in Psalm 18: 2 and in Psalm 19: 14, David called God, “My Rock and my Redeemer.” Isaiah 8: 14 had another take on Joseph’s Stone or Rock. He said, “And He will become a Sanctuary and a Stone of Offense and a Rock of Stumbling to both houses of Israel. Who lifted up Joseph’s bow and kept it unmoved and his arms agile in lifting his hands in prayer? It was the mighty God

of Jacob, the Shepherd, and the Stone of Israel. (2) The second word of strength Jacob said was Joseph was made strong by the God of your father who has helped you and will help you. Imagine! God is willing to be called the God of Jacob, the God of Daniel. Is this your blessing? Is He the God of Mike Shaw or of you? (3) Joseph's hand and bow were made steady, unmoved, agile, and strong, by the Almighty. This in the Hebrew is El-Shaddai, who blesses you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. These blessings were predictive prophecies to Joseph. The blessings of heaven were rain, sunshine, and pleasant breezes. The blessings of the deep speaks of the water stored in the earth, subterranean waters, crouching beneath the ground's surface. The blessings of the breasts and of the womb meant Jacob was prophesying abundant offspring to Joseph, in sons, daughters, and generations to come as well as productive flocks. Look at these blessings, not spiritual blessings as some would say, but physical blessings which, frankly, are very spiritual. How often do we pray for children and for God to open the womb? Spiritually, the sons of Joseph, sadly turned astray. From the tribe of Ephraim came Jereboam who instituted calf worship, making Israel to sin. Is God the strength of holding you back from revenge, and making you a person of prayer? Fourthly and lastly,

JOSEPH IS BLESSED OF HIS OWN FATHER JACOB, WITH BLESSINGS MIGHTIER THAN HIS FATHER JACOB WAS GIVEN. IS THAT WHO YOU ARE? (IV.)

Notice verse 26. "The blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers." Joseph's blessing is especially abundant. The two tribes that bore his name, Ephraim and Manasseh, saw this fulfillment even though during his lifetime, Joseph had faced so much opposition. Judah received the leadership of the tribes, but Joseph now obtained the double portion of the birthright--1 Chron 5:2. Ezra the scribe wrote, "Though Judah became strong among his brothers, and a chief came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph." Jacob recognized this blessing of Joseph, set apart among his brothers, far exceeded what Isaac had given to him—"up to the bounties of the everlasting hills." The Latin Vulgate translates this "until the desire of the everlasting hills should come"; that is, Christ, who is the desire of all nations, in whom all nations of the earth are to be blessed. Thus, Jacob was unloading every conceivable and desirable blessing of heaven and earth on Joseph. I don't know all Jacob meant, or all the Holy Spirit meant, but I know what Jacob gave Joseph, --"The blessing of your father...Up to the bounties of the everlasting hills," and the greatest bounty of the everlasting hills and mountains is Jesus! Is Jesus the greatest blessing of your life? Do you know the Lord? May God seal His word to our heart! May no one leave this sanctuary today without the blessing that landed on Joseph's head and on his brow, v. 26, also resting on your soul, your spirit, and your heart, setting you apart for Jesus! Every believer washed in the blood is set apart as Joseph with the blessings of the Lord. I love you all! Amen!