

**Genesis 48: 1-22; "The Blessing of Jacob to Joseph", Sermon # 115
in the series - "Beginnings", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on November 11th, 2007, in the Morning Worship Service.**

We are studying the close of Jacob's life. A few weeks ago now I preached to you a sermon on how he made preparations for his burial. He asked Joseph to swear to him that he would not bury his body in Egypt, but rather he should take him back to Canaan, the place where his forefathers Abraham and Isaac were buried. He was looking to the promise of God, that God would in the fullness of time send His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ into the world; and that he believed that salvation from all of his sins would come through that person. He wanted to be buried in Immanuel's land, the land to which his future Savior would come. He wanted to show forth, in the choice of this burial site, his full identification with the promise of God, who had said that He would send the Messiah to that land of Canaan. And now, having made preparations for himself, he wanted to give his paternal blessing, the blessing of the first-born unto his son Joseph. The blessings which Jacob gave to Joseph; his spiritual first-born son, were of the good things to come which Joseph and his sons did not expect. I want this morning to draw a parallel between the blessings given to Joseph for his sons, with the blessings which God the Father has given to our Lord Jesus Christ to give to all who believe in Him. Even though the blessings of grace which are given by God the Father to the Lord Jesus Christ are no surprise to Him, they are an unexpected revelation when we first come to believe in Him. This must have been the case with Ephraim and Manasseh on this day. Let us compare the blessings of Jacob, which he gave to his son Joseph, to the blessings which God the Father has given to His Son Jesus Christ; blessings which are unexpected to us who believe in Him." What are these unexpected blessings which Jacob gave to Joseph which have their parallel in the blessings which we receive from God the Father because He has blessed our Lord Jesus Christ? I think that there are 4 unexpected blessings which Jacob gave to Joseph's sons which are types of the unexpected blessings which God the Father gives to all those who believe in Jesus. They are 1st- The blessing of adoption (Verses 1-6); 2nd- The blessing of His love for Joseph's children (Verses 7-10); 3rd- The blessing of His love for Joseph (Verses 11-13); and 4th- The blessing of God's Sovereignty. (Verses 14-22).

Let's look 1st at the blessing of Joseph's sons coming to be adopted by Jacob. (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, thinking

that Jacob was not to die immediately or any time soon. However he was wrong in his assessment, because someone came and told him, "Indeed your father is sick". So he took his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh with him, and he went to his father directly. It is always good for 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 in this matter than many are in our busy days. He took off work and he went. We should remember the high position that Joseph had; 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 earthly considerations. Let us remember that God has often something to communicate to us, of great value, in the death bed instructions and counsels of a godly father. We should be there to receive them and not make excuses. 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." You see here how important is a sense of responsibility for the godly Christian, even upon his death bed. Jacob could have made many 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 require his sitting up. Let us, my beloved brethren, learn to live our lives in such a way that when it comes our time to die that if God will give us fortitude of spirit we will continue to exert ourselves to fulfill all our responsibilities to do the Lord's work and the Lord's will until the Lord take that strength away.

When Jacob came into the room with his sons and had sat down next to him, Jacob immediately began to speak his mind and his heart to his beloved son. He reminds 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 and blessed him. God said to him, "Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendents after you as an everlasting possession." 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? It is because another in the family had forfeited the blessing of the first born. Listen to 1 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." 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 Judah, who was not a worthy son either; of Israel, in the line of sons that came from his first wife Leah; 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 committing 7th commandment sins and was unworthy of being honored with being the forefather of the Messiah. But Joseph was a man of dignity and honor, 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, but he was a very good type of Jesus Christ 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 the line of the Messiah descending from him; that was reserved for Judah.

You see, all of this is typical of how you and I may come to have salvation and eternal life in Jesus Christ. It is 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. This was the choice of Sovereign grace, that this adoption took 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)." It was Jacob's great grief that Rachel died and that he could not have more children by her. But God would make up 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, and thus inherit the promises of everlasting life.

And it is just that way for every Christian. Our Joseph, the 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." 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 righteousness, or by any dignity and honor on our part. We are all unrighteousness. We are unworthy of these blessings. But God is pleased with His Son Jesus Christ, and He will bless Him 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 has nothing to do with our 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.

Now the 2nd unexpected blessing we find here in the text is the blessing of Joseph's sons coming to know Jacob's love for them.
(Verses 8-10)

"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 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, and they are very sincerely concerned to show you their love, and very concerned for the welfare of your soul; do not think it a distasteful thing. 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 will demonstrate their affection to you. This is not something to be disdained or to look down upon. It is something to receive and to be thankful about. It is a demonstration of the Love of God toward you.

Sometimes when we become true Christians we either forget or we do not realize that God the Father has a deep and spiritual love for all who will have faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Joseph brought his sons near to his father. Spiritually speaking, it is Jesus who brings us near to God. And one of the great reasons is so that we might come to know His love. It was the love of Father that 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 we get the false impression that the Father is distant and cold, and that He is simply a God of Justice. But we need to understand that because the Lord Jesus has satisfied God's justice, that the Father is not only propitious to us, but that He Himself loves us. Turn with me to John Chapter 16 and I will show this to you. Jesus is telling them 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." 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 the Father will hear us Himself because He loves us.

All of our prayers to God, our Lord Jesus is saying, come through the Father's accepting them through Christ's finished work. Yes, this is true, but this should not limit us in recognizing the fact that because of Christ, the Father's love for us is deep and abiding and spiritual, and He delights to hear our prayers to Him and to answer our prayers for that very reason. 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 in bringing us to conversion, He comes to love us with a very affectionate love Himself. 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 sinner who became a Christian, 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 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. "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 loved us in bringing salvation to us so that, "in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." What great love it is, toward undeserving sinners.

The 3rd blessing of Jacob to Joseph's sons was their coming to know of the great love of Jacob for Joseph. (Verses 11-13)

This was unexpected to Jacob because as he says in verse 11, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!" And to Joseph this whole time of the blessing of his sons in this way was unexpected because he must have thought many times while he was in the prison years before; how unlikely it was, humanly speaking, that he would ever see his dear father again. There was, here, great love that was being displayed between Jacob and Joseph in front of Joseph's sons. I wonder if 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 goes 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 on a much greater level and scale. Ephraim and Manasseh

came to know to see this great love between their father and their father's father, and through it, I believe, came to behold and to know something of the love of God the Father and His Son through that love.

The love of the Father for the Son, and the Son for the Father is that which we come to know when we are converted; and after that we keep learning of it, and will keep learning of it to all eternity. Christ is saying in his prayer that He is praying that His disciples, all of us who believe in Him, will behold the glory of this love and that we will be perfected in this love which 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; that they might see this same love and be saved. It is a great thing to think about, to meditate upon, and then to live out; the love of God. Jacob loved Joseph very, very much, and 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.

And then 4thly and finally - The 4th unexpected blessing to Joseph's sons was their coming to know the blessing of God's Sovereignty .

(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 communicated to him by the Spirit of God. The younger would be greater than the older. This is in accordance with the purposes of God; that Ephraim would be greater than Manasseh as a people and a tribe in Israel. Why is this an unexpected blessing? It is unexpected because of God's sovereignty. Both were to be great, but also because the one who was the younger would be blessed by God to be greater in numbers, greater in strength and influence in Israel and on behalf of Israel in battle. The lesson that we should learn from this is that God is guiding the crossed hands of our blessings. We think that as we look at our children as they are growing up, that one of

them is to be great while another is not, and we think that 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 person can be judged before the story is told; when it is only at its beginning; when God has something quite different and much greater in mind.

Why will we keep second guessing the Almighty? Faith in believing in God's sovereignty is always best, rather than our trying to second guess God. He knows who to give blessings to, and in what measure. We ought to rejoice in this today. Why don't 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; and let God raise them up to be what He would have them to be, and to be great in the measure that He decides? I think it is good to remember the prayer of David in 1 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." This ought to be, to all of God's people, the unexpected blessing that it is intended to be. Greatness is not what you and I need to strive for. Greatness is given by God to people and nations according to the wisdom and plan of God. 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 fed 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 one trusting 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; 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 rewards.