

Legacy & Blessing

A special message from Man in the Mirror Vice President Brett Clemmer

Unedited Transcript

Genesis 48

Good morning! If you ever doubted God's providence, this week would be a good week to see the proof of it. Pat on Tuesday evening started not feeling good, and by Wednesday morning had a full blown sinus infection. Word came in, can you cover for me on Friday? I said sure, I'll do that, because I don't have anything else to do! Then we knew that Jim Seibert was leaving us soon, and by the end of the day Wednesday Pat thought he was going to die because of the sinus infection. Yesterday he woke up feeling remarkably better, and I talked to him in the afternoon and he was almost 100%. Then Jim passed, and Pat's exactly where he needs to be helping Jim's wife Ginny with things. God is good, and he uses anything he pleases to help us out. I'm glad that Pat's there.

I was also thinking this week what we would talk about this morning, and a couple weeks ago I taught our senior adults at Willow Creek Church where I go to church on this chapter. I do that every 6-8 weeks, there's a rotation of us and it's one of my favorite things. They're a great group of folks, they've lived like you wouldn't believe, this group of about 40 seniors at my church. There's so much wisdom in the room, and they're not a stuffy group at all, they're a blast to be with! This chapter we're going to look at today is about the end of Jacob's life, and I thought I'm going to do something I did with the men's group at church. When you come and do one of these at the last minute, you don't always have time to do something new, and the Spirit of the Lord was like I really think you're going to teach on Jacob at the end of his life. I kept saying I really don't think I would like to do that this week with all that's happening with Jim Seibert and the Spirit kept saying no, I'm pretty sure that's what you're going to speak about on Friday. So here we are!

Genesis 48, the end of Jacob's life. This is especially poignant and perhaps an especially good thing for us to look at for many of us that knew Jim. For those of you who didn't know him, Jim was one of the first at this Bible Study back in 1986 and he and Pat have been friends since that time. Up until very recently, they went to a movie every Friday afternoon together. They were much better than Siskel and Ebert, you could always go to them to find out what the great movie to see was. I know we're going to miss Jim to, because he volunteered in our office for 20 hours a week in addition to what he did here. Also, as you keep his wife Ginny in your prayers, keep Pat in your prayers as well. I know it has got to be a loss for him as well. I can't wait to go see Jim on that day! Jim's been healed! He died basically of liver failure, but he's been healed now! He's in the presence of Christ! I don't think he's thinking about us much at all, so we will carry on with what God has for us here until he calls us home, too.

Genesis 48, this is a great look at the end of a man's life. This is Jacob. Jacob is also called Israel. Jacob's sons became the 12 tribes of Israel, and at the end of Jacob's life, there's two chapters here that are a very interesting look on the way a man dies well and the legacy he leaves. For Jacob, the blessing that he spoke into his sons and a couple of his grandsons' lives are particularly interesting. So let's look at Genesis 48. I'm going to read a section and then we'll talk about it, and we'll go through it that way:

Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed.

Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.'

Commemorate

Here we have Jacob, he's in bed. What we're going to see here is Jacob is going to commemorate his life. It says he struggles to get up in bed, so he's laying in bed, he's very ill and knows that he's at death's door. So he struggles to get up, and is told his sons are here. Which son? Joseph. You're not supposed to have favorites, but Joseph was his favorite. I'm sure you can imagine the relationship that Jacob and Joseph had after he lost him and then found him again, and what an amazing thing that must have been for Jacob. The first thing he does is that he shares what's called the theophany, he shares with Joseph this vision that he had of God. He's got a very short period of time, he's weak, he's got to figure out what do I want to say to Joseph. What's the most important things that I could say to Joseph? And so he shares this theophany, he reminds Joseph God appeared to me in Canaan, he blessed me, and he said behold I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples. I'm going to give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession. So Jacob is reminding Joseph this is what God is going to do through our family. What you're going to see in a second is he's not just reminding him, he's sort of putting it in Joseph's hands. He's saying all right, this is what God's going to do with our family, and what's already happened. Joseph has been sold into slavery, falsely accused of trying to sexually assault his boss' wife basically, and then ends up in the household of Pharaoh. And because of Joseph's foresight, because of the training God gave Joseph through helping to run his father's businesses, Joseph comes to the point now where he's not just running a vast business, but he's running the empire of Egypt! And he makes sure that they store up the grain so that when famine hits Israel, Jacob's family is saved because Joseph is in Egypt making sure there's enough food for everybody. For the whole region! And so Jacob is reminding Joseph this is what God promised me, and you can just hear all of the sort of back story that must be coming into everybody's head. It's shorthand for look how God has been faithful to us! Look what God has promised us! God is faithful to his promises, and all that is tied up in a couple of sentences here. God appeared to me and he made these promises and look Joseph at what has happened. He's going to bless us through our offspring and Joseph you're my offspring. Then he says, verse 5:

"Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers.

So the second thing he does is he talks about his first two grandsons, and he claims them. This is kind of weird if you think about. He says to Joseph you know those first two boys that you had? They're not yours, they are mine. In fact, what I'm doing is I'm elevating them equal to Reuben and Simeon, two of your older brothers. Think about this culture. Remember what happened with Jacob when he was the second brother? Stole his brother's birth right. So culturally this is a very important thing that Jacob is saying, he's saying I'm taking your sons and making them my sons and I'm going to treat them equal to

your other eleven brothers. Actually, we're going to find out that he's actually treating them equal to ten of his eleven brothers. We'll talk about that in a second. So he's saying God's going to bless us through our offspring. Now I'm going to take two of your offspring and elevate them equal to two brothers that he picked intentionally. He did not say equal to you and Benjamin, the two youngest ones. He said equal to the two oldest ones. So Joseph has got to be thinking wow this is pretty amazing! Then this next verse is so sweet. He says:

As I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem).

So he's in bed, he's dying, he's got to figure out the right things to say to Joseph. So the three things that he does is he talks about God's vision for their family, he talks about how he's going to elevate his grandsons equal to Jacob's own sons. Then he says your mom, man I loved your mom! I loved your mom so much that in these last times I have with you where I can speak to you, I still miss your mom. I'm so sorry she's gone. So you can see this love that Jacob has for Rachel. You remember the work Jacob did to get Rachel? Remember seven years he worked for Rachel's dad, and what does he do? Tricks him! Gives him the ugly daughter! Something wrong with her, I don't know what it was. I mean, in seven years nobody else came for her! I'm thinking that's what her dad was thinking, I'll give Jacob seven years. Somebody's got to come for the older one! Then he works another seven years for Rachel! Imagine! Fourteen years of his life he gave so that he could get this woman! Of course he loved her! So it's just interesting; these are the three things that Jacob wants to focus on with Joseph at the end of his life. This vision of God for his family, bringing his grandsons up into the hierarchy of a direct son, and then reminding and sharing with Joseph how much he loved his mom and how much he misses her. It's a sweet way of commemorating his life.

Putting the House in Order

The next thing he does is he begins to put his house in order. Verse 8:

When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, "Who are these?"

So Jacob is close to blind in his old age, just like his dad was. It was how he tricked his dad into getting Esau's birth right, he took advantage of his semi blindness. Then he says:

"Bring them to me so I may bless them."

Now Israel's eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them.

Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too."

Then Joseph removed them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel's right hand, and brought them close to him. But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn.

Then he blessed Joseph and said,

“May the God before whom my fathers
Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully,
the God who has been my shepherd
all my life to this day,
the Angel who has delivered me from all harm
—may he bless these boys.
May they be called by my name
and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,
and may they increase greatly
on the earth.”

So he speaks this blessing. I need some help, can I get three of you to come up here? You’re going to be Manasseh and you’re going to be Joseph. You’re going to be Ephraim. As Joseph, I want my father to bless my sons. Think about the culture of the day. Which hand do you think he would bless the older son with? His right. So what I’m going to do when I walk up is put my older son on my left and my younger son on my right so that when my dad reaches out to bless my two sons, he’s got his hands the right way. But Jacob didn’t do that! What’s the scriptures say? He crossed his hands! So you see this picture? It’s kind of weird, but Jacob knew exactly what he was doing. Thank you guys, you can have a seat. Give these guys a hand for helping me out here.

So Joseph brings his sons up. He’s like Dad, you’re going to bless my sons, you just told me that they are going to be equal to my brothers! What a great amazing blessing! And Jacob goes whoop! Switches his hands! Look what Joseph does. He gets this great blessing, he blesses them equally, but then it says:

When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim’s head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. Joseph said to him, “No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.”

But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.” He blessed them that day and said,

“In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing:
‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.’”

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

He blesses Joseph, but then he does this interesting thing. To show you what’s going on I’ve put this together for you [refer to PowerPoint presentation]. These are Jacob’s twelve sons. In 1 Chronicles 5:1 what we learn is that Reuben tried to sleep with one of Jacob’s concubines, tried to steal a woman from his dad. When Jacob found out about it, he took away his birth right. We see that the chronicler actually says Reuben lost his birth right, lost the right of the first born son. So here’s Joseph at number twelve, and he brings up Ephraim and Manasseh, and by doing so you notice that first the white part is 1/12 of the inheritance. Now they actually get 2/12, because he’s raised Ephraim and Manasseh equal to Reuben, and so through Joseph now he’s getting 1/6 of the inheritance instead of 1/12. Jacob is putting

his house in order, deciding exactly how to divide up his inheritance the way he thinks God wants him to do that. I'm pretty sure the other ten brothers are keeping their mouths shut. They know what happened, they know what they did and what Reuben did. So you see this interesting thing happening here. He doubles Joseph's birth right, he takes Ephraim and makes him equal to the oldest. If you go and read 1 Chronicles 5, 6, and 7 it actually gives the genealogies like who came from who. And Ephraim it goes his sons were these, whose sons were these, etc. And his son was Nun, and Nun was the father of Joshua. So you see through this lineage of Joseph through Ephraim who was treated as the oldest, then you go down a few generations and you get to Joshua who does what? Leads his people into the Promised Land! So you see God's redemption through this lineage of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Ephraim, and eventually through Nun to Joshua. This is a foreshadowing of this concept of a redeemer, of a kinsman redeemer. A foreshadowing of Jesus! Jesus is our kinsman redeemer! If you keep following the line down, eventually you get to Jesus. So we see how Jacob putting his house in order would have long term ramifications.

Read these last couple of verses with me:

Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers. And to you I give one more ridge of land than to your brothers, the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

He's saying to Joseph by the way there's this special piece of land that's not going to be part of what's divided up, I'm giving that to you directly. He's singling Joseph out, doing something special for him in setting aside this place for him. This idea of a blessing is kind of an interesting concept. When you think of blessing, and look at the one we just read starting in verse 15, I mean this is a *blessing*:

"May the God before whom my fathers
Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully,
the God who has been my shepherd
all my life to this day,
the Angel who has delivered me from all harm
—may he bless these boys.
May they be called by my name
and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,
and may they increase greatly
on the earth."

That's a blessing! That's a great blessing isn't it? Go to chapter 49, though:

"Reuben, you are my firstborn,
my might, the first sign of my strength,
excelling in honor, excelling in power.
Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel,
for you went up onto your father's bed,
onto my couch and defiled it.

He went up to my couch... that doesn't sound like a very good blessing! You may want to read through chapter 49 this week. You'll see what we think of blessing, as in let's bless the food... A blessing isn't necessarily well wishes. A blessing is almost prophetic, but it's speaking into the life of someone. It's

telling them what's going to happen based on who they are. You can't bless an evil person with good things, you just can't do it. If you look at some of the blessings that Jacob gives to his sons, some of them you'll be like man! I wouldn't want that blessing! And if you look at chapter 49, almost half the chapter he does bless two sons with good things, Judah, and basically Israel becomes known through Judah later in history, and Joseph. Almost half the chapter is the blessing for Judah and Joseph, and those are great blessings. Some of them are like a sentence. You're kids are going to be good looking. That's one of them. Like does of a fawn or something like that. It's interesting that Jacob speaks these blessings, because what he's really doing is he's speaking truth, he speaks prophetically over his sons and tells him what God has told him to tell them about what's going to happen in their lives.

A few years back, my in-laws had their anniversary. I think it was their 50th, and my wife has a sister and two brothers, so all four of the siblings, their spouses and kids got together in Tennessee for a family reunion. That's what her folks asked us to do for it. So we all went up, and on Sunday, the last day of the week we spent there, my father-in-law gathered us around and he read this chapter to us. He was a preacher for 42 years, and it was Sunday morning. Somebody had to preach something! And he blessed each of our families. He started with my oldest brother-in-law and then my sister-in-law, then my wife, and then her little brother, brought us up in birth order. He did a Jacob style blessing! A couple of things he said I was like ouch! But he did it in love, because he really wanted each of us to understand what God could do or would do in our families based on who we were and the life we had lived to that point. So it wasn't a well you screwed it up now talk, it was this is the path you are on, and this is where that path leads. Now that's a blessing! For a man who at that point was in his late 70's to look at his children, and his children's children, and to speak into their lives and say based on what I know about you this is the path that you are on. I have wisdom and I know where you are headed. What a great blessing! That's what Jacob does here.

Remember, Tell & Bless

I told you I was teaching this to our seniors, and I said I don't want to be indelicate but a few of you are getting close. I look around this room and I see the same, a few of you are getting close. Some of you that don't look like you're close are close. You just don't know! If you knew that the time was imminent, what would you do? What would you say? I watched over the last six or nine months as my friend Jim, knew the end was coming. He was very intentional in the way lived, and I watched him connect with people and say things into their lives. He said things into my life. If we're going to live in such a way that we know the end is coming, I look at Jacob and see that he did these three things.

First is that we need to remember. Jacob commemorated what God had done in his life for Joseph, and he made sure that the legacy of God's blessing in his life was passed on. You can see verses all throughout the Old Testament where the writer of the Psalms, Proverbs, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and all these other places where the lesson is taught. It says teach these to your sons, pass this on to them. Remind them of the great deeds that God has done, and we need to do that for those that are behind us. We need to remind them of God's faithfulness, we need to tell them the stories of what God has done in our lives so that they are not forgotten. So that the next generation and the generation after that can learn from what God has done in our lives and their faith can grow. In this way their faith can deepen and their trust in God can be developed. If we just take all those things that God has done for us and hold them in, never sharing them with anyone, it's fruitless. So that's the first thing we need to do, remember.

Then we need to tell. We can't keep it to ourselves! And then we need to bless! We need to bless our kids, we need to bless the people God brings into our lives. We need to remind them of what will happen in their lives based on the path that they are on, good or bad! God may be calling you to speak difficult truth into your children's lives, into your children's children's lives! Into your spiritual children's lives, people that God brings in your path, who he calls you to speak into the life of. That's a blessing! When you who have a different outside perspective can say to them I see what's down this path that you're on, stick to it! Or I see what's down this path that you're on and you're headed to destruction! That's what we're supposed to do, speak blessing into our children's lives, into your children's children's lives, into our spiritual children's lives, people God brings across our path. So let's do that! Let's be bold, let's remember what God has done for us, let's tell our children's children what God has done for us, let's show them what's down the path they are on so they can follow God, so they can be faithful and live the life God has called them to. A powerful life! Transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Big Idea is this:

Live like you're dying

- Remember what God has done for you
- Tell of God's blessing & work in your life
- Speak blessing – good or bad – into your children's lives

Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Father, we're grateful for these words, grateful that you would give us men like Jacob that we can learn from the way they lived their life and the way that they died. Men like Jim Seibert, that we can learn from the way that he lived his life and the way that he died. Lord, I pray that you would help each of us to remember what you've done in our lives, to tell our children and our children's children and those around us of your faithfulness, of your great deeds and acts, of your mercy and grace, of your power and miracles, of your love. That we would speak boldly into our children's lives, that we would speak boldly into the lives of those you call us to Lord. Not that we can be know it alls, certainly not the we would be hypocrites, but that we would be faithful to the calling, that we would draw people closer to you, that we would build your kingdom on earth. In Jesus' name we pray, amen!