

GOD'S ORDER IS NOT ALWAYS OURS

Genesis 48: 8-22 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

The truth is, Jacob as he comes to his death, and his death-bed confessions and his death-bed blessings, finally came to the very pinnacle of his walk with God. The Holy Spirit did this for sure in this patriarch. Hebrews 11: 21 includes Jacob in the heart of his Hall of Faith. What great act of faith would the author of Hebrews point to---be it whether Apollos, Barnabas or Paul? Would the author point to Jacob's encounter with God at Bethel? No! Would the author point out Jacob's wrestling match with the angel of the Lord? No! Would the author remember the hard struggle Jacob had in Beersheba going on down to Egypt and would he point out the faith of Jacob to go to Egypt to have his grand reunion with Joseph? No! Would the author remember the two times Jacob blessed Pharaoh himself? No!

For those of us who have studied the life of Jacob, his words in his earlier years, often sounded like the crooning of a country singer. His words were often mournful and sad and even pitiful. In Genesis 37: 35, after Joseph was gone, sold into Egypt as a slave, and thought to be dead, Jacob refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall do down to Sheol to my son, mourning." When Jacob sent Benjamin down to Egypt, he said, in Genesis 43: 14, "And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." When Jacob stood before Pharaoh, he told him, in Genesis 47: 9, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life." It reminds me of many country songs.

A couple weeks ago, as I drove through Kansas, I channel surfed a bit and I assure you, Kansas has a couple Christian radio stations, but it has dozens of country stations. So I listened to a few of those sad country songs—"Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying; Nighttime Is The Time For Tears." Or--"Have You Heard Of The Lonesome Loser, Beaten By The Queen Of Hearts, He Gets Beaten Every Time, But He Just Keeps On Trying." Or—"Tell Me Why You Aren't My Fire, My One Desire; Tell Me Why." Or—"I Know A Place Where The Grass Is Greener." Or—"She's Got Me Mesmerized; She's A Heartache On My Mind." I once was asked the question, "What do you get when you listen to a country song played backwards?" You get your car back, your dog back, your job back, your house back and your wife back. Yes, Hebrew 11: 21 lets us know that Jacob was transformed as he came to his death-bed confession and his death-bed blessings. In this story of Joseph, I have kept wanting to put words of praise on Jacob's lips, but despite all his mournful, despairing crooning in life, Jacob finished well. He died on fire for God. Hebrews 11: 21 is clear: Jacob won the race, like Secretariat, going away. He left the pack behind. Hebrews 11: 21 states, "By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his

staff.” The difference in Jacob’s prior words and his words here to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, are like night and day. After listening to a half-dozen country songs that day in Kansas, I turned to my favorite Christian station out of Hays, Kansas—KRPD—88.9 FM, same as KNOP—Rock Springs. The first song I heard sounded like the confidence of Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh. It was a Chris Tomlin song, Jesus. I love the song. “There is a truth older than the ages There is a promise of things yet to come There is one born for our salvation Jesus There is a light that overwhelms the darkness There is a kingdom that forever reigns There is freedom from the chains that bind us Jesus, Jesus Who walks on the waters Who speaks to the sea Who stands in the fire beside me He roars like a lion He bled as the lamb He carries my healing in His hands Jesus There is a name I call in times of trouble There is a song that comforts in the night There is a voice that calms the storm that rages He is Jesus, Jesus Messiah My Savior There is power in Your name You’re my rock and my redeemer There is power in Your name In Your name.”

Jacob’s death-bed confession and blessing truly is and was Jacob’s finest moment—his finest hours. He died a victor. In his past, Jacob wasn’t always consistent. Oh, but how strong Jacob finished! As we come to this blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, I ask you today, “When you come to die, will you be passing your confession of faith on, or is your confession of faith going to be passing with you? There’s no doubt, Joseph had often brought his sons to see their grandpa over the past seventeen years. What a blessing it is when we link our children to our parents, as their grandchildren! Never forget the word of the Lord in Proverbs 17: 6, “Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.” Parents, don’t selfishly rob your parents of time with their grandchildren. Imagine the forever loss of Joseph not bringing his two eldest sons to the death-bed of his father. As we study Jacob’s death-bed blessing, I want us to see this blessing in a three-fold way—(1) as a kind of life challenge to model in our homes, (2) and as a kind of praise to model, magnifying the Lord to the highest heaven? (3) as a kind of prayer language to model in our prayers, Do we bless our children in this three-fold way? Let’s ask ourselves these three questions.

DO WE ACCEPT JACOB’S DEATH BED BLESSING AS A LIFE CHALLENGE TO MODEL IN OUR HOMES? (I.) Notice verses 8-14.

Just like Jacob’s father Isaac suffered the affliction of poor eyesight in his later years (27:1), Jacob’s vision also had grown dim with years. He had seen these sons often before, but in the past 17 years, these toddlers had grown up. Jacob could make them out, but he may have specifically struggled in identifying them. Joseph immediately presented them both to his father Jacob, who drew them up between his knees as Jacob must have been seated now on the side of his bed. Now Jacob

embraced them, and kissed them. Concluding that he would not see Joseph and his sons again, Jacob now looked upon his grandsons. God's goodness to him was not overlooked in this event (v. 11) as Jacob said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face; and behold, God has let me see your offspring also. Joseph, knowing that his father was about to bless them, v. 9, drew the boys, now near the age of 20-22 back from his father, in order to arrange them properly, for the blessing. Manasseh, the eldest, he had at his left hand (Jacob's right), and Ephraim was at Joseph's right hand (Jacob's left). This was intended, by Joseph, so that Jacob's right hand would rest upon Manasseh, the oldest. Israel surprised and displeased Joseph by crossing his hands and pronouncing the eldest son blessing upon Ephraim. By crossing his hands, Jacob was granting supremacy in the blessing to Ephraim, the younger, over Manasseh, the older son. We must not forget that Jacob's pronouncement of his blessing on Joseph's two sons was primarily a blessing upon Joseph himself, as Moses reminds us in verse 15, saying, "And Jacob blessed Joseph and said."

This part of our text is the laying out the details of the formal adoption ceremony, referred to in Genesis 48: 5, when Jacob, said, "Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are." We read in verse 8, "When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, 'Who are these?'" This question is not an indication of Jacob's blindness, though his eyes were dim, but this was the beginning of the official adoption ceremony. In weddings today, near the beginning of the ceremony, as pastors we ask an obvious question. We aren't blind and we aren't fishing for answers as we ask, "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" The ceremonial response, most generally is, "Her mother and I do!" This pattern was also paralleled in Joseph's ceremonial response to his father. Jacob knew who Joseph's sons were. But in this case, he asks, "Who are these? And Joseph responded in a true ceremonial way, saying, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." Jacob said, 'Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.'" This was the beginning of this ceremonial adoption.

As the adoption process continued, Joseph, in verse 10, brought his sons close to their grandpa Jacob, and Jacob kissed them and embraced them. This is an incredibly moving scene. We dare not skip over it. Jacob's blessing began not with words, but with physical touch as he hugged and kissed his grandsons. Beloved, there is a profound need in every child to be touched, hugged and kissed by his father and his mother. Mothers seem to find this easier to do than fathers. Nevertheless, boys and young men as well as girls and young women desperately need to be touched, in love, by their fathers and their grandfathers. Such blessings are crucial. For dads, it's too easy to tell our sons and daughters about all their failings and weaknesses. We as dads and grandpas need to see Jacob as our model

in the Word of God to rise above the snake line that bites most children in America. Sons and daughters are snake-bit by the devil through fathers. Instead of encouragement, blessing, kissing, and hugging, fathers are well known for dishing out crippling words of criticism, rejection, and contempt on their children.

What is the blessing? Do you bring the blessing of God down on your sons and daughters, dads? You may ask—how do you do it? We bless our children and grandchildren as we identify and share with them the gifts of God we see in them. Our privilege is to give them a vision of what God can do through them. Yes, they need our verbal affirmation. But they need more!! Much more! They need the kisses and hugs of their fathers and grandpas. What I have done with all my children is to practice what we've come to call the Sunday morning blessing—which comes to each of them, sons and daughters, is I kissed them on the cheek—both sides, and hugged them as I gave them a Sunday morning blessing in the Name of the Lord. After I bless them, Jinny, as their Mom gave the blessing to the Father of every son and daughter who knows Jesus. It takes time—it's a blessing we've given our children. When they were home, we often passed on the blessing by washing each other's feet in obedience to Jesus' command. When I came home from work, often the seven children of all ages, (47 -30 now) ran down the hall and jumped into their dad's arms. Even in our last will and testament, both Jinny and I have spent much time writing out specific spiritual blessings for each of our children. Jacob's blessings have been the biblical inspiration for my blessings.

Then don't overlook what Joseph did. Joseph removed his sons from standing between Jacob's knees. Jacob had acknowledged, "I never expected to see your face; and look, behold, God has let me see your offspring also." Now Joseph as a dutiful father showed his respect and honor to his dad. He bowed himself with his face to the earth. Then he placed his boys in such an order that Jacob would place his right hand on Manasseh. Nevertheless, Jacob, led by the Lord, crossed his hands, and gave the supremacy to Ephraim, the younger. Joseph was the second most powerful man in Egypt, but he never ever lost his respect for his father, and he never ceased to be gracious toward him" Joseph knew well the story of his dad, that Jacob deceived his father, and never honored him. Perhaps one of the primary reasons, Jacob's life was so hard was that he had not honored his dad. Joseph made sure he did not make that same mistake. May we learn from Joseph to honor our father and our mother, and never find any reason to withhold our honor from them. Beloved, be a bless-er of your sons and grandsons and of your parents. 2ndly,

DO WE ACCEPT JACOB'S DEATHBED BLESSING AS A PRAISE TO MODEL, MAGNIFYING THE LORD TO THE HIGHEST HEAVEN? (II.)

Notice verses 15-20. First, double back with me to the thing that displeased Joseph,

Jacob's crossing of his hands, on Joseph's sons. This laying on of hands was a symbolic transferring of power, and in praise to God, a passing on of a gift, a spiritual power to the two sons—it was a transferring of blessing from God to Jacob, and on to Joseph, specifically through him to Joseph's sons. Once uttered, these blessings from God were irreversible. We aren't told why God led Jacob to do the reversal, but Jacob deliberately, knowingly, even to the displeasure of Joseph, Jacob deliberately gave Ephraim the privileged first-born blessing and he prophesied Ephraim's pre-eminence. Strange as it was, don't miss it. This was the fourth consecutive generation of Abraham's descendants, as the normal pattern of the firstborn assuming prominence over the second born was reversed by God: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, and Ephraim over Manasseh. Second and third and fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh born children. The Bible is full of hope for you in your home. Isaac was the younger child, So was Jacob, Moses, Gideon, David, and list goes on. What a praise this is to God, that he is no respecter of persons, regardless of birth order or background. The eighth son of Jesse, the overlooked youngest son, spurned by his older brothers, killed the giant and became the king of Israel.

Do you feel rejected, overlooked, passed over and wondering if God has anything for you to do? Look at Jacob crossing his hands and bless the Lord. Thus, Jacob put Ephraim before Manasseh. It took Jacob a whole lifetime of divine discipline to learn that he must only speak the Word of God. Now Jacob dared to trust God and believe His plans were best. Jacob dared to do God's will despite the wishes of his illustrious, godly son Joseph. When we agree to do God's will, to speak His Word, His prodding, His promptings, and His leadings, our praise reaches to the highest heaven. Notice verses 15-16 that Jacob invoked God, the God of his fathers, the shepherd of his life, and the redeemer of his life from evil, to bless the boys. This is the first use of the Hebrew word redeem in the Bible—**gaal**, and it means to buy back a relative's lost property through the next of kin. It means to redeem, deliver and to avenge as a kinsman. This is the highest praise—God as our Shepherd and Redeemer. Dads, call on our great Shepherd of the sheep, and our great Redeemer by His blood on Calvary to bless your children and grandchildren. Don't be ashamed to bless them with carrying on your name—Jacob said, “Let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac. Then Jacob never stopped. Dads, grandpas—don't be afraid to pray for children for your sons, daughters and grandchildren. Notice, this is the highest praise to God, to give Him credit, Him who alone opens the womb, for bringing children. Genesis 29: 11—God opened Leah's womb and Genesis 30: 22, God opened Rachel's womb. V. 16—“And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.” Fathers, don't hesitate to pray down the blessing of God opening the womb of your daughters and daughters-in law. That is using blessing for the highest praise.

When Jacob called the God of his fathers in v. 15, “my shepherd,” that was the highest praise. Jacob no longer was cursing the darkness and his affliction. Jacob had come to see every event in his life as a part of the will of God for him and that God had been guiding him and shaping him through adversity. So Jacob is passing on to Joseph and his two sons this shepherding blessing—and this redeeming blessing of redeeming us from the evil planned against us as Joseph was plotted against. God’s redemption takes what others mean for evil and uses it for our good. Today I ask you, “Are you trusting in Jesus’ eternal protection, provision and salvation? If not, today, trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. His promise is eternal life, His free-gift to you when you depend upon Him alone to save you. I watched it happen this week to a 46-year old man, Gauvin Maldonado, who never heard the Gospel before. When he received Jesus, the tears ran down the face of this security guard from Ft. Collins. Then, Billy William Nichols who is one of thousands who lost his home in Santa Rosa, California where 150 people are missing and 31 are dead. Billy is 60, and Sybil, his wife has prayed for him for years. Friday, the redemption available in Jesus’ blood was applied to Billy’s life. He sent me out to his wife, puppy and all they could grab in a half hour before they looked from a few hundred yards away as their home on Morgan Street burned their home to cinders. They left here praising God with the highest praise. Sybil said, “If this northern California is what it took to save Billy, it’s worth it all. 3rdly,

DO WE ACCEPT JACOB’S DEATHBED BLESSING AS A PRAYER

LANGUAGE TO MODEL IN OUR PRAYERS? (III) Notice the entire passage and we’ll close with verses 21-22. This deathbed blessing was a looking back at a life of prayer. It was a reflection on Jacob’s (1) past supplications in prayer. When Jacob said in verse 11, “I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your offspring too.” I call this down on all of us, beloved. Part of Jacob’s model in his death-bed blessing is reminding us of the God who answers our past prayers, perhaps over many years of time—the God who is able as He sees our tears, the God who is able to reach down and defy our resigned prayers—realizing we may never see our children or grandchildren again—or a mother or dad again, and God says—“With men this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.” (Mt. 19: 26) This deathbed blessing was a present invocation of God blessings coming down. Notice v. 20. “So Jacob blessed them that day, saying, “By you, (speaking of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh) Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, “God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh. This blessing wasn’t only looking back in past supplication, but thinking about the present time—(2) it was a present invocation. using the present tense to say—God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh. Lastly, we have in this deathbed blessing a future benediction. Listen—Yes, this suggests that Jacob once was a warrior and God gave him a mountain slope he kept to give to whom—to Joseph—a mountain slope

Jacob took from the hand of the Amorites with his own sword and bow.” This was some of the gravy with the biscuits of God’s blessing. But the future biscuit can easily be missed. Look, Jacob reminded Joseph that though he was about to die, God he said, “will bring you again to the land of your fathers.” But I skipped over the huge blessing that goes beyond, “God will protect, guide, and provide for you, Joseph. Jacob provided Joseph with the reassurance of God’s presence—the greatest blessing of all—“God with us:” “God will be with us. The One in Glory who told Jacob “I am with you” (28:15).“I will be with you” (31:3).“God...has been with me” (31:5; 35:3). Now said to Joseph in this final, yet future prophetic benediction “I am about to die, but God will be with you” (48:21).

Blessings once uttered could not be undone (27:34-37). Why did God more than once seem to repeatedly choose the younger over the older? God’s order is not always ours. 1. To highlight God’s election (Rom 9:11-12). In His sovereignty, God is absolutely-free to choose some over others. As the clay, we have no right to argue with the Potter. 2. To highlight the mercy of God (Rom 9:15-16). God’s mercy does not depend upon our works. God chooses whom He will have mercy upon and compassion on and to what degree. 3. To highlight the glory of God (1 Cor 1:27-29). One of the reoccurring themes throughout Genesis is the pleasure God takes in glorifying Himself. As a result, He shames the wise and strong “so that no one can boast in his presence.” (I Corinthians 1: 29) God doesn’t answer all our “why’s” but we can trust him as Jacob did as he died. In the mystery of God’s will, like Jacob, may we live and die trusting Jesus. Amen. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him, how I proved him o’er and o’er, Jesus Jesus, precious Jesus, O for grace to trust Him more. I love you all. Amen.