



The Sermon

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Genesis 49:22-26

"Living a God-Centered Life"

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TRANSCRIPT

I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to the book of Genesis. We don't have many more of these to go in Genesis; I'm going to be sad. Genesis chapter 49, and today we're going to look at verses 22-26. I was scheduled to go to the end of the chapter, but we're not going to the end of the chapter because there's too much gold in these mountains here. And we're going to dig into this and I think you're going to be encouraged and it's going to have an affect on your Christian life. And the title of this message is "Living a God-Centered Life."

And that really should be the banner over every one of us here today. I mean, who among us today does not want to be living a God-centered Christian life. And we see it exemplified here in Joseph, who has been the main character starting in Genesis 37, and now extending all the way here, so it's only right that we will pull over and draw our attention and our focus upon Joseph. And so beginning in verse 22, this is the word of the living God.

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; its branches run over a wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him; but his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile, from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), from the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies

beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers." This is God's word for us today. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Father in heaven, it is so good to hear Your word even read. And now we long to hear it expounded and taught and applied. We are in need of what these verses say to us and require of us. So help us this day to put ourselves into the place of Joseph in what is said of Joseph. Help us to identify in a very real and personal way what is spoken concerning him. And so, bless my brothers and sisters in Christ today as we have gathered together for this Lord's Day. May this be a crowning day in our individual spiritual lives and in the life of this church. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. [End]

In these verses that I have just read for you we have heard the last words spoken by Jacob as he lay on his deathbed to his son Joseph. Jacob has just addressed the previous ten sons; we've looked at that these past weeks in the previous verses, and they came in the form of a prophecy. As a spirit of prophecy rested upon Jacob, he peered into the future, and God enabled him to see what would be the outcome of the descendants of his sons.

But as we come now to Joseph there is a prophecy, but it's more than a prophecy; it's a survey of his life. In fact, what we have here is a brief biography of Joseph who has been the main character of these last many chapters. And what we discover about Joseph is that really this is more about God than it is about Joseph. Would to God that be true of my life today? Would to God that would be true of your life, that in describing my life or your life it would really be more about God than about you. That's something to what John the Baptist said when he said, "Jesus must increase and I must decrease."

And what we see here with Joseph is a God-centered life, a God-dominated life. And the only explanation that we have for the amazing life that Joseph

lived is God, (G-O-D) God. I mean, he suffered so unjustly. He led a hard life. He was betrayed by his brothers. He was sold into slavery. He was taken hostage as a teenager to a foreign land. He was falsely accused. He was condemned for a crime that he never committed. He was imprisoned for years. And yet, he never played the victim card. He never asked for reparations. He didn't dissolved into self-pity. He wasn't emotionally paralyzed because he had God. He had God in the center of his life, (G-O-D) God.

And that's the only explanation for his life, how he was able to live, really, in such a consistently faithful way is because God was upholding him and God was strengthening him and God was enabling him to remain faithful through, really, very difficult, very difficult circumstances. I mean, God was the foundation of his life. God was the pillars of his life. God was the anchor of his life. And you and I need the exact same thing, because none of us go through life where everything just it falls into place perfectly. We all face challenges and trials and difficulties, we do, and it becomes the real test of where our life is; and there must be God to be holding us up.

And so Joseph really becomes one of the premier examples in the entire Bible about how to live a God-centered life in the midst of difficulty and challenge. He lived dependent upon God. He lived trusting God even when he couldn't make sense of these circumstances that were throwing him into the deep end of sorrow. But for Joseph, he remained stable and faithful, and has come out the other end, really, an example of what each and every one of us needs to be like, and it's because of God at the very center of his life.

Now as we look at these verses I need to make one more comment. This is written in what we call poetic language. We've been narrative for the whole book of Genesis. And narrative is very straightforward. It is what you see that it is. We're not looking for hidden meanings in narrative. It's a plain interpretation straightforward.

But as we come to this, this is no longer narrative or a story or a historical account, this is prophecy. And prophecy is recorded with signs and symbols

and images that are intended to paint a picture in our mind of the reality of what they represent, so as we go through this, part of our challenge is going to be to understand what these signs and symbols actually mean. But it's a very potent form of communication, it's a very vivid form of communication, and so we want to get into the understanding of what these emblems represent. So, I have three headings to set before you today as we walk through this, and I just want to tell you how excited I am to look at these verses with you because of what they say. These are great verses.

The first thing I want you to note is "the survey of Joseph's life," it's in verses 22 to the first half of 24. And what this is, it's almost like a fly over his life. And he begins by saying, "Joseph." These were the words of Jacob his father on his deathbed with the other sons surrounding the bed, and he calls out Joseph's name now, "Joseph," and he will now describe what has been his life with two images. And a picture's worth a thousand words, and the few words that we have here communicate volumes about Joseph's life.

And the first image is of a fruitful vine. We see that here in verse 22: "Joseph is" - not will be - "is a fruitful bough." Now a bough is a vine. But what's interesting here is this word in the Hebrew. When Moses wrote this and recorded this, this word that is translated "bough" here is used over 3,600 times in the Old Testament; that's a staggering number. And the word literally means son. If you have a reference Bible as I do, out in the margin the translator has even put what the real word is: son.

And so Joseph is a prolific son, fruitful son. This word "fruitful" means productive and industrious and prosperous, prolific. That's Joseph, more than his other brothers. I mean, God just gifted him with abilities and capabilities and an inner drive and an intellect to be able to do what ten other men would do, fifty other men would do, and to extend an influence that goes far beyond just one man. There are certain people that God puts on the planet who are able to be like this, like a fruitful bough. And he reinforces it by saying a second time, "a fruitful bough by a spring." Again, the word "bough" is literally translated son. "You are such a fruitful son, such a productive and prosperous son. You're not passive, you're not a

sluggard, you're not a time-watcher. Your shoulder is to the plow, and the plow is in the field, and you are doing so much."

And this really typifies Joseph's life. Wherever you put Joseph, things just grow and happen in a positive way. You put him in a prison, he gets it organized, and he's in charge. You put him in Potiphar's house, and Potiphar's how now is running well. You put him now in charge of the Egyptian nation, he is the Prime Minister of Egypt, and now commerce and the military and the arts are flourishing.

Yeah, he is a fruitful bough, a fruitful son, and he's here planted, notice, by a spring, which means he's well-watered. Even in times of drought, even when the circumstances in the nation or in his own life are hard and dried up, he, nevertheless, flourishes even in the midst of difficulty, because "he's planted by a spring and his branches run over a wall." The picture here is of a garden that has a wall that is around it, and so it's a secluded courtyard, and he is so flourishing that the branches that come out from him cannot be contained within the courtyard, and they extend over the wall into the outward surrounding area.

He's a dynamic person, Joseph. And the word for "branches" – Do you see it there in verse 22? – literally in the Hebrew, it is daughters, sons and daughters. You'll probably find it in your margin of your reference Bible where it's literally translated. And the translators is they have translated this into the English language have really gone more with the imagery of the context as opposed to what the actual word is. But Joseph, he's a fruitful vine. He's hard-working, he's a make-it-happen person, and whenever he walks into a room things just seem to become organized and operate at maximum efficiency, even if it's the nation.

But as we come to verse 23 there's a second image. There's two images that we see here. First, a fruitful vine. But now in verse 23 we see that he is also an attacked warrior. Notice verse 23: "The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him." We've gone from an agricultural

metaphor now to a military metaphor, and what we see here is what has been true of Joseph's entire life.

He has been under attack and under assault for virtually his entire adult life. His brothers have attacked him with bitter lies and falsehoods and wicked words. And those within Potiphar's house, Potiphar's wife has just lied through her teeth about Joseph attacking her. No, that's who these archers are; and Potiphar as well who had him thrown into prison. He's lived his whole life under attack. He hasn't been dealt an easy hand to play. He's been a big target. He's been unjustly and maliciously attacked on many fronts, Joseph; and as he has prospered, he has also been persecuted.

And we continue to read, verse 23, "and shot at him." The picture of the archers sending their arrows at him, and they really try to do great harm to Joseph. That's been his life. There's been attempts to take him down and take him out.

And then we see, "and harassed him." This word "harassed" literally means hated him and opposed him with much animosity. This word is used in Job 16:9 for "hunted me down." And in Job 30:21, "persecuted me." Same word right here: "harassed." It's more than just some unkind, unpleasant words that were spoken to him. No, these were harsh, hateful words by his brothers, by Potiphar's wife, by Potiphar. This has been his whole life. He was left for dead in a pit, sold to traders, taken to a foreign land to be enslaved, sexual attacked, lied against, imprisoned.

And verse 24 tells us his response: "But his bow." So the imagery here was of the archers in verse 23 firing hateful words at him. And so, "But his bow." He picks up his bow in self-defense and remained firm. He didn't emotionally collapse. He didn't spiral down into a self-pity. He remained firm. The word "firm" here in the original language means constant, permanent, enduring. He's been faithful through all of these years to these assignments. He hasn't regressed, he hasn't backslidden, he hasn't retreated.

It says here, "he remained firm, and his hands were agile." And so the picture is he's picked up his bow and he is aiming back at those who are persecuting him, not retaliating, but having to give some kind of a self-defense, "and his arms" - it says here - "were agile." And the word "agile" means nimble, limber, flexible; and the idea is skilled, because it's a moving target out there. And as he has his arrows, the circumstances are constantly changing in front of him and people are attacking him out of side corners, and he's had to, with the bow in his hand, to be skillful and nimble and be able to respond to each situation according to the need of the moment.

This is Joseph. He's able to shift his aim really skillfully. So he really becomes for us a picture of your life and my life in this regard: life is full of both good times and really hard times; and these two images of Joseph reveal that. It really debunks the lie of the prosperity gospel, does it not, that if you have faith in God there'll be no bad times. In fact, you'll be healthy and wealthy and successful.

No. If you have faith in God, as we will see here shortly with Joseph, you will actually inherit a new set of problems. Now you will have the capacity to handle those because the Lord will be with you, but none of us get a free pass through life. None of us have an easy cruising into glory from here. We need to understand that as Christians God does not deliver us from the trials, He takes us through the trials.

You remember Jesus on the Sea of Galilee that night, He sent His disciples out into the Sea of Galilee into the storm, and He went up to the top of a mountain to observe, "How are you doing?" It was a pop quiz to see if they were really learning and assimilating what He has been teaching them.

That's the way the Christian life works. There's both success and suffering. There are both victories and defeats. There are steps forward, and at times there are steps backwards. It's the best of times, it's the worst of times; and that's the way life functions. That's the way the Christian life functions. And it would be not true; it would therefore be false if I told you that when

you commit your life to Christ, it's all going to be easy sailing for the rest of the way. No, the Christian life is not a bed of roses; and if it is, there are thorns in those roses. It's filled with tears of joy and tears of sorrow. And this is a realistic view of life.

So seeing Joseph, what Jacob says of Joseph is so true about Joseph; it's so true about you and me as well. And before I press on let me just simply say that the real test of our Christian faith is how we respond in the midst of these tough times, how we respond in the dark nights of the soul.

So that's a survey of Joseph's life, and that's a divinely inspired survey in just a few economy of words, and yet it told the whole story of Joseph. And in a sense, it tells your whole story as well.

But this leads us now, second, "the strength of Joseph's life." And this is where it really becomes good. And before I read beginning in the middle of verse 24 and then verse 25, I need to set it up by saying this to you. As Joseph has advanced to the front lines of the battle, as these archers have been continuously shooting at him throughout his adult life, there's now a second figure who's introduced into the imagery.

There's a second warrior who now comes alongside of Joseph in the battle and advances to the frontlines with Joseph and stands there shoulder to shoulder with Joseph. As Joseph picks up his bow and with agility is able to pull back on the arrow and to let it go, this second figure now comes along next to Joseph and places His hands over Joseph's hands and holds the bow with him and helps him pull it back and helps him direct it at the target; and this second figure is none other than God Himself. And what I love about this is God is not represented here as distant, far away, up in heaven, uninvolved, detached, and separated from Joseph in his hour of need, but that what we see here is God advancing to the frontlines with Joseph to stand with him in the midst of the difficulties that he has faced.



And as I said in the introduction, how has Joseph been able to maintain all of these years of adversity and difficulty thrown at him? And the answer is found right here. This is the secret of Joseph's life: it's God. It's God. And so as we look at this, if Joseph had tried to face these archers in his own strength, he would have been shot down and he would have been defeated and he would have withdrawn to the corner of a dark room just to lick his wounds. But God made the difference. And God enabled him to stand strong when mistreated, when maligned, when tempted, when confronted. When unjustly suffering, God made the difference.

Now I want you to see in your own Bible: God. And at the end of verse 24 and the beginning of verse 25 there are five names for God, five, and each one of these names brings out a different aspect of God.

You'll note, He's the Mighty One of Jacob; that emphasizes His power. He is the Shepherd; that emphasizes His tenderness and His care. He is the Stone of Israel; that emphasizes His sturdiness and His unchangeability. In the midst of circumstances changing all around Joseph, there was one stone that remained immovable to which he attached himself, and that is God.

And then in verse 25, He is the God of your father. Do you see that? Speaks of His divine faithfulness from generation to generation, from father to son to grandson, forever the same. We just sang "O God, our help in ages past." He is the same from century to century and from generation to generation. The culture is changing, society is changing, morals are changing; God has never changed. Malachi 3:6, "I am the LORD, I never change. I change not." And then the fifth name for God in verse 25: Almighty, the Almighty. Underscores His power again; and as we will see in a moment, the nourishment that He gives us.

But let's walk through this and let's look at these one at a time. Beginning in the middle of verse 24, here's the first name for God. And Jacob now is affirming his son Joseph that "you have walked with this God, and this God has sustained you through the difficulties of your life, and it is this God

who has made you such a fruitful vine." So notice he says, "From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob."

Why does he mention "hands"? Because as, in this imagery, as Joseph picks up the bow and pulls back the arrow and his hands remain firm and there is agility, the hands of God are placed upon Joseph's hands, and God now is the real strength. In Joseph's weakness God's strength has enabled him to be the mighty warrior that he's been. And so from the hands of the Mighty One.

Mighty One: God's might enabled Joseph to prevail through all these difficulties. It was God who kept Joseph's hand firm on the bow. It was God who kept Joseph's arms agile as he pulled back and aimed the bow. In the imagery and the symbolism that is taking place here, it was God who made the difference. It is God who makes the difference in your life. There should be no explanation for any of our Christian lives apart from God.

And so regardless of the difficult situation that you may be facing - a difficult work situation; a difficult physical situation involving a doctor's office, hospital, surgery - God is able to hold you up and to carry you through this difficult time. You will never enter into a dark and demanding place but that God is yet greater and is the Mighty One to enable you. And for proof, look at Joseph.

But the second name is immediately there after. It is the Shepherd: "From there is the Shepherd." The "there" refers to the battles of life, the conflict, the difficulties, the unjust suffering; and there is the Shepherd. And this is a different side of our understanding of God. He is the Mighty One, powerful; but He's also the Shepherd, tender and caring and compassionate, who leads and feeds His people, and provides and protects them. Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want," because He takes care of everything. Whatever the sheep need, the shepherd provides. And God has been the Shepherd for Joseph all of these years. And as a shepherd, He doesn't drive us like a rancher from behind, cracking the whip at the herd of cattle. No, He's a shepherd out ahead, leading by His voice.

In John 10, Jesus is represented as the good shepherd. You have a good shepherd. And we read, "He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. He puts forth His own, and He goes ahead of them." Anything that comes into your life has to come through Him first. He's the Shepherd who laid down His life even for us.

The third name for God immediately follows thereafter. It's the Stone of Israel. "Stone" here representing His stability, His solidness, His firmness. When all around Joseph was swaying and shifting and changing, almost like an earthquake under feet, Joseph was attached to the Stone of Israel, and he had a firm foundation and a firm place to stand. God was that to him. And this really speaks ultimately of the Lord Jesus Christ again.

Listen to Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone." And here's the picture of this. The first stone to be put into place to build an ancient temple, it starts with the chief corner stone. You put it right there where the two wall will eventually meet. And then every stone in the foundation has to be brought into perfect alignment with the chief corner, and then the walls, and then the pillars, and then the crossbeams. It will all be put in place. But the chief corner stone has to go first, and everything else in the entire building brought into alignment to the chief corner stone.

And so under this imagery in Psalm 118, which will be quoted by Peter in 1 Peter chapter 2, it is as Israel, apostate Israel, sees the Lord Jesus Christ, they pick Him up and evaluate Him, and "You have no desire to us," and so they cast it aside. And God comes along through the disciples and through the apostles and pick up the rejected corner stone and put it into place. And now the whole church is built around the chief corner stone: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every sermon we preach, every hymn we sing, every prayer we offer, every time the Lord's Supper, it all has to be brought into alignment to the Stone of Israel: the Lord Jesus Christ. And He becomes our firm foundation. And

in the midst of shifting, swaying, troublesome times, we have a place to stand upon Him. You need the Stone of Israel. And when he says "Israel," that actually means Jacob, which is an alternate name for Jacob is Israel. And so that's the third name.

Now look at the fourth name, verse 25: "From the God of your father," stop right there. That's the fourth name. These are just in rapid-fire staccato succession: boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. "The God of your father," that's Jacob again. And what's interesting, the Stone of Israel, that's the Stone of Jacob; the Mighty One of Jacob, that's obviously Jacob. And so now, "the God of your father," that's the third reference that Jacob makes to himself; but now he doesn't even use his own name, and that's a mark of humility.

That's like John. The apostle John never mentions his name in the entire gospel of John. And he never mentions his own name in 1 John, nor in 2 John, nor in 3 John. It's not until you get to the book of Revelation that he even mentions that he's the author of this, because he knows he's not in the spotlight. He pulls back so that it's God and God alone, the focus is upon Him.

And something like that is taking place here. "The God of your father, the father who's talking to you right now, Joseph." The name for God here is El and it means a mighty one, a strong one, a powerful one, and it really double-reinforces what was said earlier, "the Mighty One of Jacob." But please note the end of that line, "who helps you. He comes to your aid." He doesn't remain distant, He doesn't remain detached or far away. When you need help, He comes to you, He draws near to you, and He helps you."

The word "helps" here means to support someone who is weak. It's the idea to come alongside of someone who's in difficulty to help. And that's what God has done every step of the journey with Joseph. No wonder Joseph has been able to go through all these difficult circumstances. He's been standing on the Stone of Israel. He's been attached to the God of his father. He has put his faith in the Mighty One of Jacob.

And there's a fifth name for God that's here, it's the second line of verse 25, "and by the Almighty who blesses you." Now there's an interesting play on words here with Almighty. One option is to translate it as El Shaddai, the Almighty God; though that's already been emphasized with the Mighty One of Jacob, and then the God of your father. Both of those emphasize the power of God. And there may be a play on words going on here in the Hebrew: Shaddai. Here the root is "shad" which means a woman's breast. And in the context, that really may be the more proper translation of this, because you'll notice the last line of verse 25: "blessings of the breasts and of the womb." And context is always a key in interpretation. And so if that is the way to understand the Almighty, it would be that God is tender like a mother nursing her children with her breasts, giving the milk and the nourishment that she needs to be sustained and to be satisfied. Many commentators bring this out at this point, and it is this Almighty, or this nursing God, who blesses you.

Now the word "bless" is a Hebrew word *barak* which means to kneel down. And so the imagery here is so vivid. I mean it would almost take multiple chapters to communicate what just one line of pictures and signs and symbols here represent. But the picture here is that this Mighty One, this Almighty God, as Joseph is in the fire of affliction, this Mighty God kneels down and reaches down and puts His hand upon Joseph to comfort him and to sustain him and to nurture him. It's an amazing thing that is going on here, this God who is high and lifted up now drawing near to Joseph when he needed God the most. This is how God is in our lives; He draws near to the brokenhearted.

We continue in verse 25. He says, "to bless" - notice he says - "with blessings of heaven above." Please note, "blessings," plural. In fact, the word "blessings" here, you'll see in your Bible, is used five times, just right here also in rapid-fire succession. And "blesses" is also used, so that's six times: bless, bless, bless, bless, bless.

Now for these blessings to be of heaven above, that means these blessings are not of this world, that these blessings have come. They're an out of this

world blessing, that they have come down from the hand of God and from the throne of God. The word "heaven" literally means heights, and "above" adds another dimension to it; and literally these blessings come from the heights of heights, at the very apex of the universe, since God. And these blessings, like a waterfall of blessings, just come flooding down and cascading down from the throne of God onto Joseph. And the higher they originate from, the greater the force when they come down upon the life. These are not little mercy drops, these are oceans of blessings that are pouring out of heaven down upon Joseph's life. This is how chapters 37-50 have worked out in Joseph's life; he's been drowning in blessings from God.

And then he describes these blessings at the end of verse 25, "blessings of the deep that lies beneath." Now what does that mean? Well again, this is poetic language with symbols. And "deep" is not to be understood like the depth of the ocean in a literal sense. The number one feature of poetic language in the Bible is what we call parallelism. There's a first line and then a second line that immediately follows, and this second line becomes, many times, the interpretive key to understand the first line. It's restated with different words. And so the deep here, "blessings of the deep that lies beneath," this is a poetic allusion to the womb of his wife; and that becomes obvious as you look at the next line, "blessings of the breasts and of the womb." This is talking about Joseph's wife. And the order here, the breasts are what satisfied Joseph.

That leads to what follows, that there is something that will then take place in the womb, and it's in the womb where Joseph's children were conceived and cradled, and from which his sons would be delivered and born. These are the blessings of God upon Joseph, that God has given to him what money cannot buy and what death cannot take away. "He's given you sons and daughters." And that plays back to verse 22, "fruitful son and a fruitful daughter." And so the blessings upon Joseph being acknowledged by Jacob here are the blessings of children.

Our world does not see it this way. And as I've said before, so many young couples today don't have children, they have dogs, and they fail to understand the blessing that children are. And dogs are - I love dogs, so

don't send me emails on that; but I love children a whole lot more, and so does God.

Psalm 127:3, "Behold, children are the gift of the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward." Verse 5, "How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." And it's possible to understand this quiver as another allusion to his wife's womb, that her womb is like a quiver with arrows that are being pulled out of her to put into the bow to fire into the world. An arrow can go where the warrior cannot go, as the children become an extension of the man, as well as the woman, an extension of Joseph. Ephraim and Manasseh will be sent out to extend over the wall the influence of Joseph.

So what we see here is God is actively involved in Joseph's life. And God has been actively involved throughout the entirety of his adult life. We haven't always seen the invisible hand of God in all of these circumstances, but God, nevertheless, has been there, and it has been the invisible hand of God that has ministered to Joseph, though unspoken at times; but God was there the whole time in his life, just like God is with you right now. Jesus said, "Lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age."

There's one last verse that we need to look at, and it's verse 26, and we'll wrap this up: "The supplication for Joseph." Jacob now comes to the blessing that he will pronounce upon Joseph. Here comes the blessing, and the blessing, really, comes in the form of what we would say an intercessory prayer on behalf of his son Joseph.

But he begins with himself, Jacob does, in verse 26: "The blessings of your father." So he starts with himself and acknowledges that "blessings - plural - has surpassed the blessings of my ancestors." Who are those ancestors? Well, Abraham and Isaac for two. And the blessing that rested upon Abraham and Isaac, the blessing upon Jacob has been even greater. In what sense? Well, he doesn't tell us here. But for one obvious way, he had twelve sons. He had more blessing that way than Abraham or Isaac.

And so how much greater does Jacob consider these blessings to be? And you'll see in the middle of verse 26, "up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." The word "utmost" means, literally, boundary or limit; and what this is saying, that these blessings rise up to the limit. It's almost like his cup is full of water and there's just no room to take in anymore water in the cup. Jacob's life has been so blessed by God that he can't take in any more blessing.

He's here with Joseph now who he has not seen in all these years, and he's on his deathbed, he's surrounded by all of his other sons: "Oh my blessings have risen up to the uppermost limit" - and then he adds - "of the everlasting hills." And this is a metaphorical illusion to the heights of heaven. To the heights of heaven God has poured out blessing upon him that is immeasurable.

So now here comes what he prays for Joseph: "May they" - the "they" refer to the blessings of the patriarchs and the blessings that have come upon him as Jacob - "may they be on the head of Joseph. May these blessings come squarely upon your head so that they will flow down to the entirety of your entire life, your entire body." It's like when the kings of Israel and the priests were entered into their office, they were anointed with oil. And the high priest would take the flask of oil and pour it onto the head of the one being anointed onto the head, and there would be a sweet perfume in the oil, and it would just flow down until the entire body was covered with oil.

What Jacob is saying, "O Joseph, I want the blessings of God. I want God to open the windows of heaven and pour out the fullest blessing and for it to come down upon your head and for it to flow down to every inch and every part of your body representing your entire life. I want you to be engulfed in God's blessing." But not just on the head of Joseph, he says, "on the crown of the head." And "the crown" literally translated is the scalp. Like at the very top part of your head, your skull is your hair. And he's just asking for the highest point in Joseph's life to be inundated with the blessing of God that would then extend down to every part of his life. And he recognizes



him here in this way: "of the one distinguished among his brothers," the one most distinguished.

The word "distinguished" here literally means to be consecrated, to be set apart, to be separated from your other brothers, meaning, "You just stand out head and shoulders above your brothers, that God has so gifted you, and God has so enabled you, and God has so made you and molded you, that you are the one most distinguished brother in this family. You are the preeminent one."

And Joseph as a teenager had been separated from his brothers and sold into slavery. He now is separated from his brothers by his father's own words, that "you have risen to the top, and you are the leader in this family, as I am now about to die." These will be the last words that Joseph will hear from his father, the request for blessing upon his head.

Now as I conclude this, God is ready to pronounce blessing upon your life. But there's one condition. You must be a believer in Jesus Christ. You must surrender your life to Him. And if you will come bow the knee to His lordship and confess your sin and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, God will pronounce the fullness of His blessing upon you. He will pronounce forgiveness of sin. He will pronounce the righteousness of Christ. He will pronounce reconciliation with Himself. He will pronounce redemption from the power and the pollution of sin. He will pronounce that your eternal destiny will be with Him forever. Would you not desire that blessing to rest upon your head?

As great as Jacob's request was for Joseph, an earthly father for an earthly son, how much greater would be the blessing of a heavenly Father, to open the treasure vaults of heaven and to pour out His blessing upon you. Though He is high and lifted up, He would kneel down to where you are right now, and He would lay His hand upon you, and He would impart the blessing of salvation by His grace to your life. If you have this blessing, you have everything that you need. And without this blessing, you really have nothing. And so if you've never committed your life to Jesus Christ, the

Bible says, "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, today is the day of salvation." I would urge you to believe this moment upon Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for what we've looked at today, Jacob pronouncing this blessing upon Joseph. And thank You for the blessings that You have pronounced upon our head and upon our soul. We are extraordinarily blessed this day, in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

As we are dismissed, it was the preaching of John Calvin in the Reformation in Geneva. Virtually every sermon ended with the same paragraph. And after Calvin had expounded the Scripture, it was as though he put his arms around the whole congregation and lifted them up into the presence of God, that as they would leave and depart, they had been *coram Deo*, in the face of God. And so I leave you today in the face of God.

Now unto Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. I leave you with God. God bless you.