

(Gen. 48:1-2) - Jacob is now about 147 years old and on his deathbed. He is very sick and his eyesight is very dim. After hearing of his father's condition, Joseph, along with his two sons, came to Jacob. When Jacob is mentioned in *Hebrews 11* in the hall of faith, this is the incident used to speak of that God-given faith expressed here -- *Hebrews 11 - (21) By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.* Jacob's words and actions are guided by God's promise and God's sovereign providence.

(Gen. 48:3-4) - Jacob speaks his past at Bethel when he dreamed of a ladder which typified the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way for sinners to come to God. This is the significance of all history for God's people (*Isa. 46:9-13*). Notice how all these promises are based on God's sovereign will, purpose, and power, not Jacob's - "*I WILL make thee.*" In spite of all his failings, the Lord preserved Jacob through it all. Our covenant-keeping God has preserved us unto Himself. Now, Jacob is recounting the covenant promises and mercies of God in Christ that were given to his grandfather, Abraham, his father, Isaac, and to himself and his people - the people of Israel.

(Gen. 48:5-6) - Jacob now says to Joseph, "Your two sons are mine." This is more than saying, "They are my grandchildren." This is a legal act of ADOPTION indicated by, "They are mine 'AS REUBEN AND SIMEON' (Jacob's eldest sons) are mine." He is declaring Manasseh and Ephraim to be his sons by adoption. Why would he adopt them, and why would Joseph not refuse? First, it was the Lord's will that Joseph be given the double blessing of the first-born through his two sons. Reuben had forfeited this position because of his adultery (*Gen. 35:21-22; 1 Chron. 5:1-2*). Joseph was the first-born of Jacob with Rachel. Secondly, Joseph's sons were Gentiles as they were born of an Egyptian mother in Egypt. They were not citizens of Israel. How, then, could Joseph have a posterity in the nation of his father, Jacob? It was only by Jacob adopting Joseph's children. Jacob adopted them as his own for Joseph's sake. This is a picture of our adoption and salvation by God's grace in Christ. By nature, we are strangers and foreigners to the commonwealth of SPIRITUAL Israel. But we have been legally adopted into God's eternal family for Christ's sake, i.e. based on HIS righteousness imputed to us. Thirdly, it was the Lord's intention that one of Joseph's sons would receive the blessing of the firstborn from Jacob, all according to the sovereignty of God Who blesses and saves whom He will according to His sovereign grace and mercy in Christ. Jacob knew well the God of sovereign mercy and grace (*Rom. 9:10-16*).

This is how the two boys were legally introduced into the inheritance of Joseph. Joseph is the rightful heir of Jacob, so they are introduced into the heirship of someone who is living and is the heir. Now that is the precise way in which we are introduced into the heirship of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says that we are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (*Rom. 8:14-17*). He is the heir, and we share his heirship. As children of God, we share in all of Christ's rights and privileges. The adoption and blessings of heirship were given to the sons of Joseph because of Joseph who was the savior of his family (*Gen. 45:5,7; 50:20*). The blessings of heirship are given to us because of Christ Who is the Savior of His family.

This is biblical adoption, and this is also imputation. These two sons are reckoned, from this time on, to be the sons of Jacob. Now they are not physically the sons of Jacob. They are the sons of Joseph. But they are reckoned by God to be the sons of Jacob. That is precisely what happens when we who are sinners are, as children of God, reckoned righteous by virtue of the merits of Christ. Some call this a "legal fiction," but it is not fiction, and those who call it such do not understand the biblical truth of imputation. They also do not

understand the Gospel doctrine of justification before God. Jacob adopts Manasseh and Ephraim as his own sons, and they are to be accounted, not only as Jacob's grandsons, but also as his sons. Joseph does not object because he too knows that this is all according to the providence and promise of God.

There is an important lesson here for those who do not think it is possible for God to look at a person and reckon him righteous even though that person is unrighteous in himself. There are some who believe that God would be unjust to reckon or account a person righteous by virtue of the merits of another person unless God first makes that person righteous within. They call it "legal fiction." They say that God would be unjust to look at an individual and reckon to him the benefits of the merit of someone else when he is a sinner in himself. But the Bible makes a great deal of this fact, and it is the heart of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. The Bible says that by virtue of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are justified, but the Bible also goes on to say that we are still sinners and sinful within ourselves. Christ has come as the representative man, and He has died bearing the punishment of our sins and that justly so based on our sins reckoned (imputed) to Him. And by virtue of God's grace, God reckons to those who are His people the legal benefits of the death of Christ. They stand righteous in the righteousness of the Son of God - accepted in the Beloved. Consider also that not only did Jacob legally adopt the two boys as his sons, and not only were they to be reckoned as his sons, he also gave them the blessing of Joseph. So, in the same way, not only did God legally adopt His elect as His sons, and not only are they reckoned (imputed) to be righteous in His sight based on Christ's righteousness imputed to them, they also receive the blessings of all grace here and all glory hereafter (*Eph. 1:3*).

What a blessing it is! When God looks down from heaven on His children, He does not see them condemned in their sins, though they are sinners. He sees them clothed with the righteousness of God in Christ. They have been made joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. They possess the righteousness of God because they have identified with him. In their Surety and Substitute, they have already borne the judgment for all their sins. And because they have borne the judgment for sin in their Surety and Substitute, the law can bring no charge against them (*Rom. 8:33*). Christ died for them (*Rom. 8:34*). The penalty has been paid in full (*Heb. 10:14*). This is why we rejoice and glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has borne all of our judgment, and, therefore, the Lord brings no charge against the people who are united with Christ. All who have been blessed with God-given faith stand before God in Christ. We have been legally adopted into His family and legally reckoned righteous in Him. We are justified in Christ. To justify means to declare righteous individuals who are not righteous in themselves, but stand in righteousness because someone has borne their judgment. Call it "legal fiction" if you will, but the Bible does not. The Bible calls it a reality. We do possess the righteousness of God in Christ. It is not legal fiction. As a matter of fact, the Bible is full of this truth, and we have it again right here in the adoption of Joseph's sons. This reality is what insured that Manasseh and Ephraim would receive all the blessings of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This reality for the spiritual children of God is what insures that they all receive all the blessings that come to them through Christ - even spiritual life.

(Gen. 48:7) - "*The same is Bethlehem*"—Whether these last words are the words of Jacob or Moses, we need to realize this is the Word of God. This focuses our attention of how all of this is connected with God's promise of salvation for His chosen people by sending His Son into the world for our salvation. "*Ephrath*" is the same as "*Bethlehem*" where our Savior was born (*Micah 5:2*). So this is all stated with a view to the Messiah, the famous seed of Jacob that should be born there, and was.