

## Lesson 18 - JACOB BLESSING JOSEPH'S SONS    *Genesis 48:8-22*

**(Gen. 48:8-9)** - As Jacob had adopted Joseph's sons, he now proceeds to bestow the blessing upon them. We can see the spiritual parallel here in God the Father adopting His people into His family when He chose us before the foundation of the world in Christ and for Christ's sake. First, there was a legal adoption based upon a righteous ground - the imputed righteousness of Christ. And just as these boys were now reckoned to be Jacob's sons, it was necessary that they now receive the blessing. As sinners saved by grace, we are reckoned by God to be His children in Christ, and legally justified in His sight based on the redemptive work of Christ. It is necessary that we receive the blessings of adoption (*Gal. 4:4-6*). We must be personally brought into God's family through God-given faith.

**(Gen. 48:10-14)** - Notice how Joseph arranged the two boys so that Ephraim would be on Jacob's left and Manasseh on Jacob's right. He had in mind what all of Abraham's children would think - that Manasseh being the eldest would receive the blessing of the firstborn. But by God's sovereign purpose and providence, Jacob "*wittingly*" (knowingly, with understanding) crossed his hands. He laid his right hand (intended for the firstborn's blessing) upon the head of Ephraim and his left hand upon the head of Manasseh. This was no accident. Again, it was God's sovereign purpose and providence.

In bestowing this blessing, we see another great example of God's sovereign will, mercy, and grace. Manasseh was the firstborn, but, as with Jacob and Esau, God had determined that the elder, Manasseh, would serve the younger, Ephraim. The reason for this is explained in *Romans 9:13-16*. God did this to show His glory in saving whom He will according to His sovereign will and His sovereign mercy and grace in Christ. This shows us that salvation is never conditioned on sinners but on Christ and Him alone. It is not of our willingness or our goodness because by nature we are not willing to submit to God's way of salvation, and we have no goodness to recommend us unto God (*Rom. 3:10-20*).

**(Gen. 48:15-16)** - Notice that Jacob first pronounced blessing on Joseph. It was through Joseph, and because of Joseph, that the two boys would be brought into Jacob's family and receive blessings from Jacob. This is a picture of every sinner who is saved by God's grace being brought into God's family and receiving all spiritual and eternal blessings from God through Christ and because of Christ (*Eph. 1:3*). In blessing Joseph, Jacob attributes all glory, power, goodness, and righteousness to God alone. He is the God "*fed me all my life long unto this day.*" The word "*fed*" is the verb form of a Hebrew word that is sometimes translated "*shepherd*" as in *Psalms 23:1*. God saves, feeds, and preserves His people by His power, goodness, and grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the good, great, and chief shepherd of His people (His sheep). He died for them, He saves them, and He preserves them unto glory. Christ is the "*Angel which redeemed me from all evil.*" Our whole salvation stands firm and sure upon the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the merits of His redemptive work as our Surety and Substitute. It is His blood alone that cleanses us from all sin and evil. It is His righteousness imputed alone that justifies us and from which we have spiritual and eternal life, including all graces and gifts of the Spirit.

Jacob gave the boys his own name as well as the name of Abraham and Isaac. The adoption made them legally and truly members of his family. When God brings us to faith in Christ, we give evidence that we are identified legally and spiritually with the spiritual family of God. We are spiritually "*sons of Jacob*" (*Mal. 3:6*), the spiritual seed of Abraham (*Gal. 3:26-29*), and citizens of spiritual Israel, the family of God in Christ (*Rom. 9:6-8*). We who are sinners saved by grace have Jacob as our name as well as Israel, and we bear the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (*Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16*).

In light of this, compare what Jacob stated here to what he stated before Pharaoh in *Genesis 47:9*. Notice the difference. In *Genesis 47:9* Jacob speaks of himself and his failures. It is all about Jacob. But here Jacob speaks only of God and His power and mercy towards Jacob. In *Genesis 47:9*

Jacob describes his pilgrimage on earth as “*few and evil.*” Like Job stated, “*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble*” (*Job 14:1*). Viewing life from the human point of view, we can see all of our sins and our failures. But viewing life from God’s point of view, it is all about Christ, our Surety, our Substitute, our Redeemer, our Intercessor, and our Keeper. This is why we are commanded to walk by faith, “*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (*Heb. 12:2; cf. 2:9-18; John 16:33*). Our assurance, comfort, and peace does not come from looking within ourselves or from looking at our circumstances. It all comes from looking to Christ and resting in Him.

**(Gen. 48:17-20)** - As stated above, this is all the sovereign providence of God to show His sovereign glory and majesty to work HIS will in spite of what people naturally think. The right hand was that hand of blessing normally placed upon the firstborn, but here Jacob places his right hand on Ephraim. He blessed Manasseh, and Manasseh would benefit greatly in this, but the blessing of the firstborn went to Ephraim. Not only do we recognize the greatness and glory of God’s sovereign will and grace in these blessings, we see also a very important spiritual lesson here in the names of these two boys. “Ephraim” means “caused to be fruitful” (*Gen. 41:52*), and “Manasseh” means “caused me to forget” (*Gen. 41:51*). Ephraim points to the future of the fruit of God’s grace which would be brought in through Christ. These are the fruits of being justified by God’s grace in Christ. It is all the fruits of salvation - spiritual life and faith in Christ. Manasseh points to the past which is the repentance of dead works and idolatry. God says that because of Christ, “*their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*” (*Heb. 10:17*). This means that because of the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to us, and which we receive by God-given faith (*Rom. 10:9-10*), He will not charge us with our sins (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33*). God will keep no record of our sins because they have been washed away by the blood of Christ.

**(Gen. 48:21)** - This shows us the nature of the blessing Jacob bestowed upon Joseph through his two sons. It was connected with the promise God had made to Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham, of giving his descendants the land of promise and keeping them in that land until the promised Messiah would come to redeem His people - God’s elect out of every nation (*Gen. 17:1-9; cf. 12:1-3*). This was the land of Canaan, where their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had dwelt, and which was given to them and theirs for an inheritance. It was where Joseph and his brethren had lived, and they would be brought there again as the bones of Joseph were, and as all of them in their posterity were in Joshua’s time. This is connected with the blessing of the firstborn as the one who received this blessing was given the responsibility of being the spiritual leader of the whole family. It was his responsibility to teach and to guide his family in recognizing and embracing the promises God made to Abraham, especially concerning the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of God’s people He would accomplish. For example, Esau despising his birthright (*Gen. 25:34*) meant that he had no interest or faith in the spiritual promises of God concerning Christ and salvation by God’s grace based on His righteousness.

**(Gen. 48:22)** - By giving Joseph this portion above his brethren, Jacob emphasized that the birthright has truly become Joseph’s and his two son’s through him. This is where Joseph’s bones were buried upon their return to the promised land (*Joshua 24:32*). This was a God-given token of His faithfulness to keep His promises, especially His promise of the salvation of spiritual Israel by His grace through Christ.