

**Genesis 47:27-48:22**  
*The Sovereign Blessing of God*

*Things aren't always what they seem*

Each one of us could testify to the truthfulness of that statement

- In our own lives
- In our families
- In our jobs
- In the local church

Sometimes, God does things that are completely contrary to what we would expect

- And He certainly has that right

We have a bad habit of attempting to put God into a box

- We have a good idea of what God should do in any given situation
- But when He does something out of the ordinary, we are surprised

Of course, the more that you walk with God, the more you begin to appreciate the sovereignty of God

- God is not limited by our finite understanding of Him
- He is much bigger than our thoughts of Him

The prophet Isaiah records these words of God, “**For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’**” (Isa 55:8-9)

- On one level, we can know God – with obvious limitations
- On other level, we can't fully know God – He is infinite and eternal

This morning, we return to our study in Genesis

- This is the ancient book of beginnings

This book gives us the first hint that a Redeemer would come and rescue sinful humanity from the effects of the Fall of man

- Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, all of mankind has been affected and infected with the curse of sin
- Every child, with the exception of Jesus Christ, is born with a sin nature

But immediately after the Fall of man, God promised Satan, “**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel**” (Gen 3:15)

- God would come to the Earth in human form and rescue sinners from the grip of sin

The book of Genesis traces the lineage of this Messiah

- He would be a Jew who was born in the right family at the right time

Abraham was Divinely selected to be the father of this special family

- We have studied his life
- We have studied the lives of his family members

In this morning's passage, we see that Abraham's grandson, Jacob, is about to die

- Another patriarch will soon pass off the scene

But as we observe the last days of Jacob's life, we notice that things aren't always what they seem

- God oftentimes does the unexpected
- That is certainly the case this morning

### **Let's read Genesis 47:27-48:22**

God is sovereign in His blessing of humanity

- His decisions are right because of who He is

A danger exists when we try to anticipate what God will do, both in our lives and in the lives of those around us

- God can't be put into a box
- God can't be limited by our limited understanding of Him

This portion of Genesis highlights three (3) cautions as it relates to understanding the sovereign blessing of God

- Don't forget the promises of God (47:27-31)
- Don't doubt the power of God (48:1-11)
- Don't dismiss the sovereignty of God (48:12-22)

### **I. Don't forget the promises of God (47:27-31)**

<sup>22</sup> Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous.

We are reminded that Jacob is living in Egypt, not in Canaan

- The famine that struck the lands of Egypt and Canaan caused Jacob to move his family to Egypt

God had given Joseph a high position in Egypt

- He was second only to Pharaoh

Pharaoh had arranged for Joseph's family to live in the fertile area of Goshen

- Even though the famine was quite severe, this family was provided for

Verse 22 also reminds us of one of the themes in Genesis

- God's blessing upon His chosen people<sup>1</sup>

This is remarkable that even though there is a severe famine occurring in this part of the world, God's people

**“were fruitful and became very numerous”**

- I am sure that some people died from starvation
- Yet Jacob's family was not only surviving, but thriving!
- *Obviously, this was God's grace*

God's promise to Abraham back in Genesis 12:2 was being fulfilled, **“And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing”**

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews, *NAC, Vol 1B*, 861.

<sup>28</sup> And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

We are told that Jacob spent seventeen (17) years in Egypt

- The last seventeen years of his earthly life

He was 130 years old when he came to Egypt

- He was 147 years old at this time

Jacob lived long enough to see the end of the severe famine that had plagued this area for so long<sup>2</sup>

<sup>29</sup> When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place."

Verse 29 brings us to a sobering realization of the brevity the human life

- All humans will eventually die, unless the Rapture takes place

Israel knew that his death was imminent

- So he called for Joseph

Jacob did not want to be buried in Egypt

- He wanted to be buried in Canaan

Verse 30 records the words of Israel, "**but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place**"

- Notice the personal attachment, "**when I lie down with my fathers**"

Jacob understood the promises of God

- Egypt was only a temporary shelter for God's people
- Eventually, God would move His people back to Canaan

We know that this took place during the Exodus

- God's people went back to Canaan

Jacob wanted Joseph to promise him that he would bury his father in Canaan

And he said, "I will do as you have said." <sup>31</sup> And he said, "Swear to me." So he swore to him.

Joseph gladly agrees to this request from his father

- Joseph even swears, making this a binding agreement between father and son

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<sup>2</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 642.

Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed.

In response to Joseph's agreement to bury Jacob in Canaan, Israel "bowed in worship at the head of the bed"

- This was a sign of great gratitude and thanksgiving on the part of Jacob

Israel realizes that his earthly life is nearing its end

- He is definitely anticipating the sunset of his life

Yet we find Israel displaying gratitude for what God had done in his life

- Certainly, Jacob was grateful for what Joseph agreed to do

Jacob was a man who knew the promises of God

- He was an imperfect man
- But he was a man who had been extremely blessed by God

How much do you and I think about the promises of God?

- How grateful are we when God acts in faithfulness toward His Word?
- Do we give thanks for what God has done in our lives?

Jacob is an example to us of how we should live

- As each of us grows older, we should become more and more grateful
- We should also meditate on and rehearse the promises of God

The first caution that this passage presents is

- Don't forget the promises of God (47:27-31)

**II. Don't doubt the power of God (48:1-11)**

48:1 Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is sick." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him.

Some time passed after this first conversation between Jacob and Joseph

- We are not told how long

Joseph was told that his father was sick

- So Joseph took his two sons with him

Genesis 41 told us that Joseph fathered two sons

- Manasseh was the first-born
- Ephraim was the second-born

Moses is careful to list these brothers in their birthorder

- Manasseh first
- Ephraim second

Both of his sons were around twenty years of age<sup>3</sup>

- They were grown men

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<sup>3</sup> Leon J. Wood, *A Shorter Commentary on Genesis*, 143.

<sup>2</sup> When it was told to Jacob, “Behold, your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed.

Jacob was told that Joseph was coming to visit him

- So Jacob gathered his strength and sat up in bed
- He had something important to tell his son

<sup>3</sup> Then Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, <sup>4</sup> and He said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.’

It is clear that Jacob has been thinking about his life

- He has been reviewing the highlights of his life
- He has been reviewing the blessings of God

Jacob tells Joseph about the incident when God appeared to him at Bethel (also called Luz)

- God had promised to make Jacob “**fruitful and numerous**”
- God had also promised to give land to Jacob

I trust that you understand that God’s promise to Jacob was simply a fulfillment of the promise that God had originally made to Abraham

- Jacob was Abraham’s grandson
- Jacob was the one who would carry on the promises and blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant

<sup>5</sup> And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. <sup>6</sup> But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance.

But then Jacob makes an interesting statement in verse 5

- He tells Joseph, “**now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are**”

Jacob declares that he is adopting Joseph’s two sons as his own

- He states that Manasseh and Ephraim would be on the same level as Reuben and Simeon – his own children

Joseph would not have a tribe named after him

- Rather, his two sons would each have a tribe named after them<sup>4</sup>

Any sons born to Joseph after this time would belong to Joseph

- But Manasseh and Ephraim would be adopted by their grandfather Jacob

This was not unheard of during this day and age

- There are various law codes that we have from this time period that state the rules of adoption
- So Jacob was not doing something totally out of the ordinary

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<sup>4</sup> Wood, 143.

But for Joseph, this must have come as quite a shock

- Joseph was enjoying a very good life
- He was second in command over Egypt
- I am sure that his children enjoyed many blessings and privileges as well

<sup>7</sup> Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

Jacob continues to rehearse his life to his son, Joseph

- Jacob speaks of the day when Rachel died, giving birth to Benjamin

Even though it had been years in the past, this sorrowful day was very vivid for Jacob

- His body may have been giving out
- But his mind was still very sharp<sup>5</sup>

<sup>8</sup> When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" <sup>9</sup> And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here."

All of a sudden, Jacob is made aware that there were others in the room with his son, Joseph

- So Israel asks Joseph, "Who are these?"

Genesis 47:28 told us that Jacob spent 17 years in Egypt

- It would be very hard to believe that during that period of time Jacob never saw his grandchildren

But it is entirely possible that Israel could not clearly identify who these individuals are

- We will discuss this more in verse 10

Joseph responds to his father by saying, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here"

- These are Manasseh and Ephraim
- These were the very children who Jacob was talking about adopting!

In verse 9, Joseph attributes God as the Source of his children

- God had been gracious in allowing him to become a father

So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them."

Hearing that Manasseh and Ephraim were in the room, Jacob asks them to come forward so that he might bless them

- It was quite popular for an elderly family member to bless the younger generation

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<sup>5</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis 18-50*, 629.

<sup>10</sup> Now the eyes of Israel were *so dim from age that he could not see*. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them.

Verse 10 helps us to grasp the condition of Jacob's physical condition

- Israel couldn't see clearly
- For all practicality, he was almost blind

Joseph brought his two sons close to Jacob

- Grandfather Jacob "**kissed...and embraced**" his grandchildren

This account reminds us of an earlier time when Jacob tried his father Isaac

- Isaac's eyesight was weak
- Jacob and his mother Rebekah concocted a plan whereby Jacob would steal the blessing that was intended for Esau

But Jacob knew better

- He demanded that his two grandsons come close to him
- He wasn't about to be deceived

<sup>11</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well."

For many years, Israel had been told a lie about his son, Joseph

- Israel had been told that a wild animal had killed him
- But in reality, Joseph's brothers had lied about this when they sold him to the Ishmaelites

When Israel learned that Joseph was truly alive, he was stunned (45:26)

- It seemed too good to be true

Israel never expected to see Joseph again

- Now he is living near Joseph
- And, now he has the privilege of seeing Joseph's two sons

God is powerful

- He can do things that are humanly impossible

God "**is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think**" (Eph 3:20)

- God can do things that we can't even imagine!

Israel never thought that he would see Joseph again

- He had given up hope of seeing him alive

But God orchestrated events so that Israel not only saw Joseph

- But Israel was able to see the two sons of Joseph

As we think back upon our lives, there are definitely times when God has done things that we never thought possible

- These are times when we are stunned, like Israel
- Many times, we are speechless

That's why this portion of God's Word cautions us, "*Don't doubt the power of God!*"

Don't limit God

- Don't put restrictions on what He can and cannot do

What is impossible with man is possible with God!

- He is the God who specializes in bringing glory to Himself!

Two cautions have been given to us thus far

- Don't forget the promises of God (47:27-31)
- Don't doubt the power of God (48:1-11)

### III. Don't dismiss the sovereignty of God (48:12-22)

<sup>12</sup> Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground.

After seeing his father embrace his children, Joseph takes his children and prepares them for the blessing from Jacob

- Joseph himself "bowed with his face to the ground"

Here is Joseph, second-in-command over Egypt

- Yet, he is showing tremendous respect for his father<sup>6</sup>
- What an example!

<sup>13</sup> And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him. <sup>14</sup> But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the first-born.

It was customary for the firstborn son to receive a double blessing<sup>7</sup>

- So Joseph positions his children according to this mindset

Joseph positions Ephraim on Jacob's left side

- Joseph positions Manasseh on Jacob's right side

Throughout the Bible, the right hand is the hand of blessing<sup>8</sup>

- Thus, Manasseh would be on Jacob's right side

But then Jacob does something unexpected

- Verse 14 says that he crossed his hands

In other words, Jacob's right hand was now on Ephraim

- Jacob's left hand was on Manasseh

Even though Manasseh was the first-born, Jacob was placing his right hand – the hand of blessing – on Ephraim

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<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, 635.

<sup>7</sup> Morris, 646.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 2*, 464.



<sup>15</sup> And he blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, <sup>16</sup> the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

We would expect to hear Jacob’s blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh at this point

- Instead, we hear Jacob blessing Joseph

In verses 15-16, notice the strong emphasis that Jacob places on God

- “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked”
- “the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day”
- “the angel who has redeemed me from all evil”

The God of Jacob is the same God of Abraham and Isaac

- Each one has walked with this faithful God

God has also been “my shepherd all my life to this day”

- A shepherd guides the sheep
- A shepherd guards the sheep
- A shepherds protects the sheep

Of course, Jacob and his family have been shepherds

- They know what is involved with caring for the sheep

This analogy from Jacob is filled with richness

- It anticipates Psalm 23, which speaks of God as our Shepherd

After giving praise to God, Jacob blesses the lads in verse 16

- Notice the plural reading, “bless the lads”

Jacob wasn’t giving an exclusive blessing to Ephraim

- He was giving a blessing to both grandsons!

Jacob prays that his name may “life on in them”

- We have the rest of the OT that bears out the fulfillment of this desire

Jacob also desires that “they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth”

- There is that repeated emphasis on blessing and multiplication
- Once again, the rest of the OT bears out the reality of this

<sup>17</sup> When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. <sup>18</sup> And Joseph said to his father, “Not so, my father, for this one is the first-born. Place your right hand on his head.”

But Joseph interrupts his father during the middle of the blessing

- Joseph thinks that his father Jacob had made a mistake

After all, Jacob can barely see

- Perhaps he didn’t realize that his right hand was on Ephraim

So Joseph “grasped his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head”

- This wasn’t a gentle nudge
- This was a forceful attempt to reverse the intent of Jacob

Joseph even verbalizes his complaint, “Not so, my father, for this one is the first-born. Place your right hand on his head”

- Said another way, “Dad, you are making a big mistake! You are putting Ephraim before Manasseh! Don’t you understand that Manasseh is the first-born?”

<sup>19</sup> But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”

Jacob responds to his son by stating, “I know, my son, I know”

- Jacob has full understanding of what he is doing
- There was no mistake or misguided intentions

In order to reassure Joseph, Jacob tells him that Manasseh “shall become a people and he also shall be great”

- It’s not that Manasseh would not have any blessing

But Jacob tells Joseph that Ephraim “shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations”

- The younger Ephraim is clearly given pre-eminence over the older Manasseh

This isn’t the first time in Genesis that the younger has been elevated over the older<sup>9</sup>

- Abel over Cain
- Shem over Japheth
- Abraham over Haran
- Isaac over Ishmael
- Jacob over Esau

This is yet another reminder that God is sovereign in His decisions

- God doesn’t make mistakes
- No one needs to come along and correct what God has done

Yet we are all guilty of thinking that way

- “But God, I thought that You would...”
- “God, that’s not what I expected...”
- “God, are You sure that...”

These subtle thoughts creep into our thinking

- And we need to remind ourselves of God’s total, perfect, sinless ability to rule the Earth

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<sup>9</sup> W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 463.

<sup>20</sup> And he blessed them that day, saying, “By you Israel shall pronounce blessing, saying, ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!’” Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

For years to come, Ephraim and Manasseh would be singled out as blessed tribes of Jacob

- Nevertheless, Ephraim would be more blessed than Manasseh
- The younger would be greater than the older

<sup>21</sup> Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. <sup>22</sup> And I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.”

Israel speaks once again to his son Joseph

- The blessing ceremony is now completed

Israel returns to the subject of which we began this morning

- Death

Israel is a man who is at complete rest with the thought of death

- He is ready to meet his God
- He has made preparations to be buried in Canaan, the land of promise

With this great confidence in the Lord, Jacob tells Joseph, “**God will be with you**”

- When Joseph first arrived in Egypt, Genesis 39 told us that “**God was with Joseph**” (39:2, 21)
- God had promised that His presence would be known by Joseph

Here is Jacob, Joseph’s father, reassuring Joseph that God would be with him

- God would be his Shepherd!

Jacob also tells his son that God will “**bring you back to the land of your fathers**”

- Egypt was not the land of promise
- Joseph needed to be reminded that Canaan was the Promised Land
- The children of Israel would leave Egypt and return to Canaan

When they did return, Joseph would receive “**one portion more than your brothers**”

Isn’t it interesting how various themes are repeated?

Why was Joseph brought to Egypt in the first place?

- Because his brothers hated him

Why did they hate him?

- Because Jacob loved Joseph and preferred him more than the other siblings
- Also because Joseph claimed to have dreams whereby his brothers would bow down and worship him

What is Jacob promising Joseph near the end of his life?

- That Joseph would be promoted over his brothers

Things aren’t always what they seem

- At first glance, this portion of Genesis may seem to be insignificant
- But that would be a wrong analysis

The author of Hebrews included chapter 11 to chronicle some great acts of faith throughout the OT

- Of all the great things that Jacob did in his life, do you know what act the author of Hebrews noted?
- It was his act of blessing the two sons of Joseph<sup>10</sup>

Listen to the author's comment, "By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning on the top of his staff*" (Heb 11:21)

- Even in the face of death, Jacob had the faith to trust God's promises
- Remember, Jacob chose Ephraim over Manasseh – the younger over the older

This took great faith on Jacob's part

- He acted with full confidence that his actions were in alignment with the will and purpose of God

This isn't just an OT thought<sup>11</sup>

- Listen to the teaching of 1 Corinthians 1, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; <sup>27</sup> but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, <sup>28</sup> and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> that no man should boast before God. <sup>30</sup> But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, <sup>31</sup> that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord'" (1:26-31)

Oftentimes, God does the exact opposite of what we think should happen

- Look at who He chooses!
- Look at who He uses!

Paul said it best, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord"

What would happen to the other sons of Israel?

- Would they receive a blessing?

They sure would

- Next week, we will study Genesis 49 which records the blessing of Jacob toward his other children

I wonder where you are spiritually this morning

- I wonder what your view of God is

Do you have an accurate view of God?

- Do you look to the Bible for your theology?
- Or do you try to figure out things on your own?

This portion of Genesis highlights three (3) cautions as it relates to understanding the sovereign blessing of God

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- Don't doubt the power of God (48:1-11)
- Don't dismiss the sovereignty of God (48:12-22)

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<sup>10</sup> Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentary*, Genesis, 212.

<sup>11</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 695.

It is easy to overlook the obvious, isn't it?

- It is easy to take matters into our own hands

But God is much bigger than our expectations

- He can, and oftentimes does, what we don't expect

I am glad that things aren't always what they seem

- I am glad that God is sovereign in His blessings

Perhaps you are here this morning and you have never trusted in Jesus Christ

- You may know many facts about the Bible
- But you don't have a relationship with God

Jesus Christ is the Savior

- By trusting in Him, you can have your sins forgiven
- By trusting in Him, you can have hope for the future

The great news is that you don't have to wait until you have everything figured out

- Only God has everything figured out

Turn to God today

- Trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

Israel was ready for death

- Are you?

For those of you this morning who have trusted Christ, I would challenge you to examine your heart in relation to these three cautions

- Have you forgotten the promises of God?
- Have you doubted God's power and ability?
- Have you dismissed God's sovereignty?

If so, return to full fellowship with God today

- Ask God to forgive you of your misguided theology
- Ask God to teach you more about His true nature