

Genesis (2011) 48B

A lawyer was reading out the will of a rich man to the people mentioned in the will:
"To you, my loving wife Rose, who stood by me in rough times, as well as good, I leave her the house and \$2 million."

The lawyer continued, "To my daughter Jessica, who looked after me in sickness and kept the business going, I leave her the yacht, the business and \$1 million."

The lawyer concluded, "And, to my brother Dan, who hated me, argued with me, and always said I would never mention him in my will - well you are wrong.

Hi Dan!"

- Everyone in the family expects to be included in the father's will
 - Though hopefully more than just a mention
 - Jacob has determined it's time to appoint his inheritance to the next generation
 - Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he has determined to give Joseph, the first born of his beloved wife, Rachel, the birthright privilege
 - His family will receive the double portion of the inheritance
 - But Jacob assigned the double portion in a unique way
 - He adopted Joseph's two sons, making them his own
 - And then assigned each a single portion of the inheritance
 - In that way, Jacob's 13 portions were divided equally among 13 sons
 - This method had several consequences for the family of Israel
 - First, it removed any inheritance from Joseph's family
 - He and his Egyptian wife receive nothing from Jacob
 - His children receive the inheritance directly

- Secondly, the nation continues forward without a single patriarch leading the nation
 - The promises of God are divided equally among the thirteen tribes of Jacob
 - Israel is no longer a single tribe ruled by a single man
 - It has become a company of tribes, each ruled by elders
 - Together it forms a nation
- Finally, the seed promise continues to live on in a single tribe, Judah
 - And eventually the nation will receive kings from this tribe
 - Culminating in Christ's reign over the nation
- Since Jacob has promised to adopt Joseph's sons, he immediately moves to the adoption ritual, which includes pronouncing a blessing on each of his new "sons"

[Gen. 48:8](#) When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"

[Gen. 48:9](#) Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them."

[Gen. 48:10](#) 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.

[Gen. 48:11](#) Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well."

- Let's begin by noting that Jacob has been called Israel at key moments in the chapter, including in this passage
 - Earlier, Jacob was called Israel as he worshipped God on his staff and decided to adopt the sons of Joseph
 - As we know, the use of the name Israel is Moses' sign to the reader that Jacob was operating fully under the direction of the Holy Spirit
 - He is acting according to the will of God
 - Now we see Jacob making a surprise decision, but he does so in the will of God according to v.14

- First, Jacob asks Joseph who are these boys
- Before you imagine two young school boys, remember these two sons were born before Jacob even entered Egypt
- They are probably in their late teens or early twenties by now
- So you might think it odd that Jacob would not recognize his own grandsons, the very boys he agreed to adopt
 - But v.10 explains why Jacob couldn't recognize the boys
 - His eyes were so dim at his age he couldn't see except very close
 - So he knew someone was in the room, but he wasn't sure who they were
- Joseph brought them closer to Jacob, and Jacob kissed the boys and embraced them
 - At this point, Jacob reflects on God's goodness
 - He never expected to see Joseph's face again, much less to see grandsons from Joseph
 - So Jacob gives the Lord credit for this blessing
 - If we were in Jacob's sandals, would we have this attitude?
 - When Jacob first learned Joseph was gone and thought him dead, he suffered greatly and spent years in mourning
 - But he now knows his suffering was a consequence of God's eternal purposes
 - By this point, Jacob knew God was the One who led Joseph into Egypt
 - Yet here's Jacob thanking God for the chance to see Joseph and his grandsons
 - Jacob might have harbored resentment toward the Lord
 - Had God not taken Joseph in the first place, then Jacob wouldn't have needed to be reunited
 - In other words, Jacob might have accused God of creating the problem in the first place, rather than crediting the Lord with the blessing of a solution

- In my experience, it requires a lot of spiritual maturity to do what Jacob does here
 - To look upon the calamities in our life, both large and small, recognizing they come from the Lord
 - And rather than curse at God for our grief, we sincerely thank Him for the good these events may ultimately bring us
 - We might be able to understand the principle that God uses sin and evil to create something good
 - But it's another thing entirely to actually feel a peace when we see the Lord bringing hardship into our lives
 - And then to thank the Lord when He gives us relief from those very same hardships, which He delivered in the first place
- This kind of spiritual maturity is built in part through experience, but primarily it comes from an understanding that our sin requires God work through suffering to bring blessing
 - We gain this understanding in our study of God's word, through a deep and abiding understanding of what God can accomplish through suffering
 - And scripture points us to Christ to help explain why the Father will bring us grief in order to establish a blessing

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Rom. 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Rom. 8:33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

Rom. 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

- Paul teaches that God is for us, and if God is our friend and advocate, then there is nothing to stand against us
 - Nothing stands against us if God is for us
 - And since we know God is for His children by faith, then logic requires we conclude that even the worst circumstances of our lives find their source and purpose in the Lord

- Everything that happens to us, no matter how painful or traumatic, no matter how surprising or senseless, is brought by God
 - Therefore, they have a good purpose
 - And Paul's best proof of this truth is seen in the life of Christ
 - He received the most unjust penalty ever assigned to any human being who ever lived
 - And this unimaginably great injustice was accomplished according to the Father's will so that an equally immeasurable blessing could be granted to us
 - And just as Christ's suffering gave way to His resurrection and glory, so too will our griefs give way to blessing in due time
 - Knowing this truth from scripture, then we can respond like Jacob
 - As he looked dimly upon the faces of his grandsons, he didn't bear resentment toward God for the lost years
 - He was filled with gratitude for the Lord's goodness
 - Jacob's suffering for a time led to the salvation of Jacob's family from a famine, the opportunity for a nation to be born, and the fulfillment of God's promises
 - What will the Lord accomplish in your suffering? Be sure to thank the Lord for that blessing
- Next Jacob adopts the sons formally

Gen. 48:12 Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground.

Gen. 48:13 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.

Gen. 48:14 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 firstborn.

Gen. 48:15 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,

Gen. 48:16 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.”

- Joseph recognizes that his father is about to speak as the patriarch, as a man with the Lord’s authority, so he bows in respect and begins to prepare his sons for the formal adoption ritual
 - First, it says he removed the boys from his knees
 - Up to this moment, the sons had been sitting on Jacob’s knees, not Joseph’s knees
 - We already established that these boys are fully grown men at this point
 - So Jacob isn’t bouncing them on his knees
 - The reason they were on Jacob’s knees was a part of the adoption ritual
 - It symbolized that the boys were now seen to be from Jacob’s loins
 - And by sitting on his knees, they create this image
 - But now the time comes for Jacob to speak words over the boys, and so Joseph removes the boys and places them before his father
 - He purposely places his sons in a particular way
 - His oldest son, Manasseh is positioned on Jacob’s right and the younger son, Ephraim, is placed on Jacob’s left
 - Once again we see the culture’s appreciation of prominence and honor driving Joseph’s actions
 - Joseph feels that his oldest son must be shown a greater degree of honor than the younger, for this is the culturally accepted practice
 - Even though both sons were to receive the same inheritance, nevertheless the oldest son should receive greater honor, or so Joseph assumed
 - In the Eastern culture, the right hand is symbolically greater than the left
 - We see this principle reflected in both scripture and in our culture still today

- Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, the position of highest honor
 - Most if not all cultures greet one another with the right hand
 - In the military, the highest ranking officer always stands or walks on the right, and our national flag is always on the right of state flags, etc.
- So in the adoption ritual Jacob is about to conduct, Manasseh and Ephraim were to replace Reuben and Simeon as first and second among the brothers
 - Joseph wants Manasseh to receive the greater honor over his younger sibling, which was symbolized by Jacob's right hand
 - But once again, the plans of God diverge from the plans of men
 - The Lord wants to make clear that he retains all authority and control for how this people will develop
- Defying the culture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Jacob decides at the last minute to criss-cross his hands above the heads of the grandsons
 - Jacob knew Joseph would position his sons in the traditional way
 - So Israel acts according to God's will in going against this tradition
 - He places his left hand on Manasseh and his right hand on Ephraim, elevating Ephraim above Manasseh
 - Then he pronounced a blessing upon Joseph
 - By adopting his sons, Jacob was honoring Joseph with the birthright
 - So this action was indeed a blessing for Joseph
 - In the blessing, Jacob says the Lord has been his shepherd all his life
 - In both the low points and the high points, Jacob's life has been under the care of the Lord
 - And that care came as a result of the Lord's promises to his fathers

- Then in v.16 Jacob reveals his faith in the Messiah
 - The beginning of v.16 is a continuation from v.15
 - In v.15 Jacob acknowledged the Lord was his shepherd
 - Then in v.16 Jacob describes the Lord as the angel who has redeemed me from all evil
 - This angel is none other than the angel of the Lord, Who appeared to Jacob
 - The angel of the Lord is the Old Testament reference to the Second Person of the Godhead, a pre-incarnate Christ
 - Furthermore, Jacob says the angel of the Lord is the One Who redeemed him from all evil
 - The Hebrew word for redeemed is *goel*, which is commonly translated kinsman redeemer
 - Jacob is calling the angel of the Lord his kinsman redeemer
 - Jacob understood that God Himself, the Angel of the Lord, was to become his kinsman
 - A Redeemer to rescue him from all evil
 - Here we see the patriarch acknowledging the coming Christ, calling Him his Redeemer
 - And his faith in that promised redeemer was the source of his salvation
- Knowing the faithfulness of the Lord and the salvation He promises, gave Jacob the confidence to pronounce a blessing on these boys
 - He asks the Lord to bless his newest sons
 - That Jacob's name would live on in them
 - They would be known as children of Israel, rather than as children of Joseph
 - They would likewise grow into a multitude just as Jacob's other sons
 - Since we know Joseph has no more children in Egypt, then Joseph's line dies out apart from these boys

- And though they collectively are the tribe of Joseph, these two sons become known forevermore as sons of Jacob
- Now as Jacob pronounces these words over Joseph's sons, Joseph watches on in horror
 - Perhaps he wonders if dear old dad has gone senile
 - So Joseph tries to intervene to correct his father

Gen. 48:17 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.

Gen. 48:18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head."

Gen. 48:19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

Gen. 48:20 He blessed them that day, saying,

"By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying,
'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'"

Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

Gen. 48:21 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."

Gen. 48:22 "I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

- Joseph reaches out to grab Jacob's right hand, trying to remove it from Ephraim's head
 - Joseph tells his dad you're doing it all wrong
 - What a classic response to God at work
 - We know Jacob's action was the Lord working, because we have the benefit of Moses' narration
 - We can sit back objectively and laugh a little at Joseph's presumptuousness, trying to "fix" the Lord's "mistake"
 - But physician heal thyself
 - The only difference between us and Joseph is the eye makeup (and maybe not even then)

- We commonly defend culture, tradition, and other human institutions over defending scripture and the work of the Spirit
- Never is this more true than in church practices
- As a simple rule of thumb, if you ever find yourself defending the world's point of view over the Bible's teaching, then you know you've become Joseph trying to lift Jacob's hand off Ephraim's head
 - Christians who love the Lord and the Bible, suddenly switch positions to argue against the word of God to defend ways of man they hold dear
 - Disputes over evolution, water baptism etc.
 - We cling to our preconceived thinking, our preferred practices, our denominational traditions
 - Rather than following God
- And if we've learned anything in our study of Genesis, it should be that the Lord delights to show Himself doing the unexpected
 - He wants us to recognize Him at work, which means doing differently than men would naturally do
 - Because whatever men seek in their flesh and pride will always run opposite to what is holy and proper
- Jacob responds to Joseph's attempts to correct him by saying, I know, I know
 - Jacob is explaining to Joseph that he fully understands what he's doing
 - This is no mistake, it's intentional
 - Manasseh will also become a great people
 - The fact that he is not receiving the greater blessing doesn't mean he still won't receive great things
 - Nevertheless, the younger boy Ephraim is selected by God to be even greater
 - In fact, the name Ephraim will become a synonym for the northern tribes in total
 - In the same way that the southern tribes are named for their greatest tribe, Judah

- Ephraim won't necessarily be larger than the other tribes, or even larger than Manasseh
 - But Ephraim will be more honored
- In this way, the birthright and seed promise holders become the two most prominent tribes in the entire nation
- In v.20, the blessing on Joseph is that he might be made great through his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh
 - But by placing the name Ephraim before the name Manasseh, Jacob makes Ephraim the more honored son
- Finally, Jacob ends with an important prophetic statement to Joseph
 - Jacob reminds Joseph what the Lord first spoke through Abraham
 - Though they are in Egypt for a time, there will be a time when the nation leaves Egypt
 - And Joseph will go with them, though in a coffin
 - Secondly, v.22 records Jacob giving Joseph one portion more than his brothers, which is true in the way his sons each received a portion
 - But the word for portion is literally shoulder, which in Hebrew is the word Shechem
 - This is name of the town where Simeon and Levi murdered all the inhabitants
 - This is the place Jacob purchased for his burial plot
 - So in this verse, Jacob is giving to Joseph ownership of this piece of land
 - Later, we see the bones of Joseph buried in this location, since he owned this land
 - In John 4 we see the woman at the well refer to this location in Samaria as the parcel of land Jacob gave to Joseph
 - So Jacob is giving Joseph land in anticipation that Joseph and the rest of Israel will one day leave the land of Egypt
 - Here again is a beautiful example of faith turned into action

- Jacob was making decisions about his life and even his death in complete trust that the Lord would keep his promises
- And his faith was certainly rewarded