

The Greatness and the Work of Jesus: Jacob's Blessing

Houses of Light • April 29-30 • Pastor Netz Gomez

Hebrews 11:21 *"By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, "bowing in worship over the top of his staff."*

Before dying, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph pronounced God's blessing over their next generation. Even though each passing generation meant more time had gone by for God's promise to be fulfilled, each of these parents blessed their descendants and proclaimed the hope of the fulfillment of God's covenant.

While last week we spoke about the decay of Isaac's discernment in his final days, Jacob is the opposite; by faith he was able to remain with discernment and spiritual clarity even in his last days. **Faith in God strengthened believers so they can end well**; so they can die in the Lord, honoring Him by being patient and filled with hope and joy, awaiting the fulfillment of His promises, leaving their descendants with a testimony of the truthfulness of the word of God and the excellence of His ways.

God is glorified when His people leave this world happy to go to heaven, but for this we need faith. In this verse the Holy Spirit presents us with the example of Jacob's faith at the end of his life so we remember that He who has begun a good work in us will finish it; and God's support will not fail us when we need Him the most. **He who has allowed us to exercise faith during the prime of our lives will not decrease His power in the weakness of death.**

A faith that is given and sustained by God is not only enough for us to overcome the desires of the flesh, the seduction of this world, and the temptations of Satan, **but also to triumph through the valley of death.** In **Hebrews 11**, the Holy Spirit highlights the works, accomplishments, and fruits of faith, and here we see the importance of His power in comforting the heart and enlightening the understanding in the last earthly struggle of dying.

For every Christian who has walked with God, their last hours on earth are the most blessed of all:

Acts 7:55, 59-60 *"But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God... And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep."*

Jacob's victory was not easy but we see him in victory as he is closing the final chapter of his life.

"By faith Jacob, when dying..." *To die in faith, you have to live by faith.* Faith does not emerge when everything is easy, but rather it is forged in the difficulties. **Jacob walked by faith but he encountered many difficulties and had to fight fiercely for every victory.** In spite of his failures, **Jacob valued God's promises and trusted Him. His old nature was very strong, but stronger still was the work of God in his heart.**

Even though his weaknesses took him to employ illegal methods to receive the blessing of his father, **his heart valued the "birthright,"** which Esau irreverently despised. (**Genesis 25**) Even though Jacob gave into the mistaken suggestions of his mother in order to deceive Isaac, **it was his faith that longed for God's promises.** Even though he could have been a bit fleshly in his vow, **Jacob was anxious that the Lord would be his God** (**Genesis 28:21**). Even though he fled from Laban with fear, when his father in law caught up to him, **he glorified God in the covenant that he made with him** (**Genesis 31:53**). Even

though he was terrified of his encounter with Esau, **he sought the Lord and begged for his promises (Genesis 32:12) and he prevailed with God (Genesis 32:28)**. Jacob, just like his grandfather Abraham, and his father Isaac, "by faith" remained in the land of promise, just as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents. **Jacob did not just ask to be blessed, but he also imparted blessing:**

- **He blessed Benjamin** by accepting that he go to Egypt to recover his other son Simeón **Genesis 43:14** " *May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.*"

Jacob was referring to God as He was introduced by his grandfather Abraham. Genesis 17:1 "the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless." **And just like Abraham blessed Isaac in Genesis 28:3 "God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples."**

- **He blessed Pharaoh Genesis 47:7** " Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, **and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.**" **He conducted himself as an ambassador of the Most High God. Hebrews 7:7** "It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior." Jacob was able to bless Pharaoh because before God he was greater than Pharaoh and Pharaoh accepted it.

"he blessed each one of Joseph's children..." Genesis 48:15 "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 long to this day,"

The birthright of the firstborn was to receive a double portion (**Deuteronomy 21:17**) and what we see here is that Jacob gave it to Joseph, as he assigned to Ephraim and Manasseh a part of the tribes of Israel in the place of their promised inheritance.

By right, this blessing belonged to Joseph, even though the enemy had tried to frustrate this plan using Laban to deceive Jacob, substituting Leah in Rachel's place, Joseph was Jacob's firstborn **and now God's promise reinstates his birthright**. Ruben's sin made a way for this blessing to reach him.

1 Chronicles 5:1 "The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son;"

Unlike Isaac, who had lost his spiritual discernment, Jacob sees God's plan clearly and pronounces a powerful blessing over the twelve tribes and over Joseph's sons. The more we follow God's ways and submit to His will, the more blessed we are and the more blessings we can impart on others. Humankind cannot impart God's blessing if they have not received it, that is why Jacob's blessing had so much weight. It came from God to Abraham, Isaac, and then to Jacob and his children and grandchildren.

At the beginning of the encounter between Joseph and Jacob, he said: "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.**" (**Genesis 48:5**).

These two sons of Joseph had been born of an Egyptian woman, in a foreign land, but now they would be adopted and incorporated into the body of the holy seed. Note that when Jacob blessed them, he said:

*“the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, **bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.**” (Genesis 48:16).*

Through that blessing, Jacob sought to remove their hearts from Egypt so they could be added to the people of God. The blessing that each one received was different. When Joseph brought his two sons before their grandfather to receive a patriarchal blessing, he put Manasseh, the eldest, at his right hand so he would receive a greater blessing. **That was when Jacob’s faith was put to the test.** In this time, Joseph was governor over Egypt, second to Pharaoh in authority and power; he was also Jacob’s favorite son, but the dying patriarch remained firm.

Genesis 48:14 “And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn).” Here we see the way that the blessing was given. Once more, the younger son, by the will of God, was preferred over the elder.

Genesis 48:17-19 “ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. And Joseph said to his father, “Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head.” **But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.”**

It was no coincidence that Jacob crossed his hands to bless his grandchildren, but in fact an understanding of faith, because though his physical eyes were so affected by age that he could not actually see his grandchildren, he knew exactly what was happening (Genesis 48:10).

In spite of his physical weakness due to age, Jacob was not spiritually weak and he remained in faith until the end. This is the life of faith: to cling to the promises and walk in His light, because this is the foundation of all of our blessings and the guarantee of our glory and eternal joy. It is by faith that we can continue to be grateful for divine provision throughout our lives. **In spite of all the difficulties and dangers that Jacob went through, he kept his faith and a sense of the goodness and mercy of God who rescued Him from it all.**

When Jacob blesses his grandchildren, he does not show any kind of ambition that they would continue to make themselves great in Egypt, **but he desired that they would be blessed within the covenant of Abraham and Isaac.** Joseph could have thought that the trove of wealth that they would receive from the Egyptian government would be enough for them, but Jacob brought them into another blessing. **Spiritual blessings supersede the value of temporary things.**

Joseph wanted the older to be blessed in a greater way, so he expressed that to his father, **but Jacob remained firm; he had learned to recognize God’s voice and knew what He had said about them, so he submitted to God and not his son.** Jacob had already allowed himself to be influenced by the will of men during his life, and he was not willing to die that way. **Sometimes faith clashes with the desire or will of a loved one.**

“his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.” By faith Jacob blessed each one of Joseph’s sons. It definitely was not by sight because in human eyes they looked more like Egyptian princes. How would they

forget Egypt, the land where they were born, where they prospered, and immigrate to Canaan? What was more unlikely than the fact that they would be two separate tribes and that the younger would be exalted over the eldest in importance and numbers?

"Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed" This is what happened in **Genesis 47:29-31**. *"And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. **Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.**" He answered, "I will do as you have said." And he said, "Swear to me"; and he swore to him. **Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed.**"*

That Jacob wanted them to bury him in the promised land was much more than nostalgia, **it was total confidence in that God would return them to the place He had promised and Jacob worshiped God and rested in His faithfulness.** In asking that he be buried with his parents he shows the unity of the covenant; he expresses his faith in God's promises about Canaan and not remaining in Egypt, living by example before his children. They would go to the promised land and possess it, a piece of heaven on earth (**Hebrews 11:16**). The place of rest next to the trinity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1. What impacted you the most in this teaching and why?**
- 2. What was the biggest difference between Isaac and Jacob regarding their discernment and the blessing of their generations?**
- 3. What are the good examples that Jacob gave us as parents and believers?**