

Genesis

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[0 : 0 0] I want to speak from, as the Lord may help me this morning, you will find in the 48th chapter of the book of Genesis.

Now read by way of text. The 17th, so the first part of the 19th verses. Genesis 48, verse 17.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he held up his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father, for this is the firstborn. Put thy right hand upon his head.

And his father refused and said, I know it, my son. I know it. It was indeed a miracle that the need of Jacob and his family were supplied during those terrible years of famine that affected the land of Canaan.

[1 : 3 1] God, in the wonder of his providence, caused Joseph to be found in Egypt. Joseph being possessed of sufficient wisdom to interpret Pharaoh's dreams that there should be seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine.

God, in the wonder of his father, for this is the firstborn. And we find that through the wisdom given to Joseph, interpreting the dreams as he did, that God went before Jacob and his family, providing for them in a place that they never would have chosen to receive their sustenance.

But God is a covenant God. And God is a sovereign God. And the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must live because God had entered into a covenant with Abraham and with Isaac prior to Jacob that of their seed there would be a multitude.

A multitude. A multitude as the stars of the heaven and as the sand at the seashore. Now God always will make provision against the fulfillment of his promises.

And God had promised to Abraham and to Isaac and before, as Jacob records, that he would bless them and make a multitude of them in their posterity.

[3 : 2 3] So he made a provision that when the famine threatened the life of Jacob and his children, God had provided by sending forth Joseph before them that they should find plenty to meet their need in the land of Egypt.

Now, I've said many times concerning Jacob that really the last place he would have chosen to live and die on the earth was Egypt.

But he had to come to the will of God. And my friends, until he submitted to the will of God, he never found any prospect and he never found any peace.

I cannot go into the history too deeply because that is not my line of thought for this morning. But you remember when it was suggested that Jacob should go into Egypt, the reticence of Jacob's heart and spirit was obvious.

He sent forth his sons. He sent forth his sons. They came back. They wanted to take Benjamin with them to get a further supply. And all these things, Jacob says, are against me.

- [5 : 07] And my friends, we must be very careful in interpreting the dealings of God with us, lest we be found in that bondage and that hardness of spirit.
- All these things are against me. We can read our Bibles and we can see all those things were for him. And he was diametrically opposite to the mind of God as he pursued his own will and purpose.
- But now, Jacob comes into Egypt and God had gone before him in the person of Joseph.
- And Pharaoh's mind was so directed toward Joseph that whatsoever Joseph decreed should come to pass.
- Joseph wanted the best in the land of Egypt for his father and his brethren. And to the land of Goshen, they were directed by the good providence of God.
- [6 : 32] Now, can we not see how an overruling hand of the Almighty governs and directs the steps, so to speak, that lead Jacob to be here in Egypt at the end of his days, having spent 17 years in Egypt.
- He now comes to the end of life's way and he is in the presence of Joseph as well as his other sons and Joseph's two children, Ephraim and Manasseh.
- And I suppose every gracious father and grandfather would wish for their children and grandchildren nothing else but the blessing of God.
- Jacob had proved throughout his life that the greatest asset with which we can be favoured in this world is to be under the blessing of the Most High.
- Jacob, yes, as I've already suggested, misinterpreted, the pure and perfect leadings and dealings of God. But nevertheless, the leadings and dealings of God prevailed in that true nature of divine favour and Jacob was blessed wherever he went.
- [8 : 12] Joseph partook of the same blessing wherever he went. Joseph's life was made prosperous. My friends, do remember this principle.
- The blessing of the Lord make him rich. The blessing of the Lord make him rich. You may be partaker of many favours of this world, but when you come to the end of life's journey and do with Jacob, you must die.
- You'll be a poor person unless you have the blessing of God. That's imperative to your future if you are to go to heaven when you die.
- The blessing of the Lord. Now, Jacob had proved it. He desired it for his posterity. And I believe every gracious father and mother have this as a prevailing desire in their hearts, in their prayers, and in their dealings with their offspring.
- They want them to receive the blessing of God, knowing that that is the crowning favour of all favours that may be experienced under the sun.
- [9 : 44] I hope among the young people here present this morning, that you've got such an understanding of relative values by God's grace, that you're seeking an interest in the blessing of God through Jesus Christ.
- My friends, there's nothing to compare with it. There's nothing to compare with it. Let the world boast of its joys.
- Let the world boast of its possessions. Let the world boast of its power. It's all passing away.
- But everlasting life is under the blessing of God, a possession eternal.
- Never will it pass away. Never will it falter. Never will it fail. Well now, with those remarks, let me come closer to the text.

[10 : 52] We have two gracious men, Jacob and Joseph, both having experienced very much of God's blessing in their lives, knowing that grace prevails over all the sins and shortcomings of God's children.

And there they are in the experience of what I might term spiritual brotherhood, witnessing the movement of the Spirit, that prophetic things shall be set before them in the blessing of God, resting upon Ephraim and Manasseh.

You say, well surely, these men, gracious men, having experienced what they have experienced, are going to be absolutely united in what is transpiring or taking place under the good hand of Jacob as he is preparing to leave time for eternity.

Jacob's sight is bad. We might say, naturally speaking, he's inadequate to meet the need of the moment.

Joseph was fit and well. He inclines the two lads to what he realizes or feels is necessary under the circumstances.

[13 : 09] So he directs Manasseh to Jacob's right hand. And he directs and he directs Ephraim the younger to the left hand of his father.

Now, you and I know surely sufficient of scriptural teaching to realize the right hand is the superior instrument.

The left hand is the inferior instrument. So, according to his own traditional outlook that the elder should have the advantage, he directs Manasseh to the right hand of Jacob.

He, in opposition, directs Ephraim to the left hand of Jacob. Now, that is what Joseph expected to come to pass according to the general practice of the tradition which he had been brought up to receive.

Jacob, though we may say was weak in many areas and almost insufficient to fulfill the responsibility God, by his spirit, from within him causes him to cross his hands.

[15 : 07] and exactly opposite to what tradition would dictate, exactly opposite to what Joseph conceived would be the development, absolutely opposite to, as it were, natural, natural intonation, natural established tradition, we find old Jacob weak and dying through sickness.

He crosses his hands, he lays the right hand upon Ephraim, the younger, and he lays his left hand upon Manasseh, the elder.

Now that's an absolute contradiction of form and ceremony in that particular period of history.

But, he was the Lord's servant doing what God had decreed should come to pass, and what subsequently was proved by the ascendancy of Ephraim over Manasseh as the history of Israel developed and continued generation by generation.

God obviously used failing Jacob as his instrument to decree what should be there and then, and what should come to pass in a consequence of those things there and then enacted.

[17 : 04] This tells us first of all that the weaknesses of men are subject to the overruling power of Almighty God.

it also proves to us that such a wise man made wise by God's grace as Joseph was not perfect in his judgment.

He could verily speak and act as bound by a tradition when the will of God was otherwise.

The will of God being made manifest by the simple crossing of hands in the case of Jacob. You see my friends interpretations belong unto God.

God is an absolute sovereign and in absolute sovereignty we have perfect freedom.

[18 : 32] God is not bound. God is not bound to tradition. Joseph could be wrong because Joseph was unwilling as it were to leave the principle of tradition.

And he had to come to this point and place to realize that his father was under a divine influence.

The influence of the Spirit of God. And what he was doing was right and Joseph's expressed opposition must essentially be wrong.

Now I said initially they're gracious men. They've both got a wealth of experience. One seems to be in weakness and the other seems to be in strength.

But God works in his sovereignty through the weak instrument of Jacob to bring as it were into submission the strong man Joseph.

[19 : 43] And the verification of the mistake as Joseph saw it is proved by the subsequent history that Ephraim possesses under the hand of God and Manasseh also experiences under the hand of God in an inferior degree.

I hope you're following me in this. Sometimes things that are very clear to my mind I find rather difficult to convey and you must bear with my infirmities.

But my effort is placed under God in this to come to the point when we must bow to that which God decrees.

Sometimes so opposite it to what we expect. Now let's look at the text a little closer. When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim it displeased him.

It displeased him. Now is God doing something that's displeasing you. It's displeasing you. You're not reconciled to it.

[21 : 30] I say this and it's I say it from solemn experience as well as reading my Bible too. there's no profit and peace in a rebellious spirit.

The rebellious dwell in a dry land and while you're fighting against God and the unfolding of his sovereign decrees you're not going to prosper.

You're not going to prosper. the spirit of submission to the revealed will of God is essential to peace and spiritual prosperity.

Now what did he do? Well it displeased him so he held up his father's hand to remove it.

He took an active effort to change the situation. And my friends we can fight against God not only in the spirit of our hearts but in a kind of active endeavour to rectify the very thing that we judge is going wrong.

[23 : 00] But it's fruitless. fruitless. Because the counsel of the Lord that shall stand. Now we find Joseph here.

Joseph said unto Israel father not so my father not so my father father. Oh how many times you and I in life may have come to that point.

Not so my father. This is not the way for me. This is not the circumstance that I would have chosen.

This is alien to my mind and to my purpose. Your mind is a discord with God's mind.

That's the trouble. That's the trouble. But I tell you whose mind will ultimately prevail. It will be God's mind. God's mind.

[24 : 06] You know sometimes in a natural illustration a child can cry and use all its might to object to a parent's stronger overruling in regard to a particular circumstance.

But does that crying and that physical expression of objection cause the parent to change his or her mind?

If the parent knows it's for the well-being of the child to insist that objection in the child doesn't prevail, if I can use an illustration from my own little life.

When I was a lad, I didn't like greens, cabbages, brussels sprouts or anything like that. We had a mother who was a disciplinarian and she said, you'll sit there until you've eaten it.

and you know, it was a long time before I would cave in and decide that for my liberty, I'd got to eat the cabbage or whatever it was on my plate.

[25 : 46] I didn't want to, I didn't like my mother, thought it was for my good to eat it. And she insisted. it. And all my attitude to the contrary had to come down and in humble submission to parental authority, I had to eat it.

When I ate it, then I was free to go, to leave the table and go. You see, this rebellion, this challenge to authority, God is the sovereign authority.

God has a right to do with each one of us, as is pleasing in his sight. And Joseph must come to it. You say, but Joseph is the ruler of all Egypt.

He's at the right hand of Pharaoh. He's got every reason to impose his authority. Ah, but there's a higher authority. And a higher authority was present here at this time that says Ephraim should have the right hand blessing and Manasseh should have the left hand blessing.

And Joseph said to his father, not so my father, for this is the firstborn. Put thy right hand upon his head. what did Jacob do?

[27 : 24] He refused. He refused. Now, when you think of what a blessing Joseph had been made to Jacob, that he'd been the instrumental instrumental, as it were, of saving his life, of bringing him from the distress and poverty of famine in Canaan into the land of Goshen in Egypt, that he'd been in the instrument in God's hand, so to speak, to verify the covenant that God had made with him as to the future and the multiplication of his posterity.

Joseph was a vital link in the golden chain of divine purpose and grace toward Jacob and the future promise of seed.

his father refused and said, I know it, my son, I know it. He was not expressing in what he did something that was a personal satisfaction.

It wasn't as moved by his own mind and his own spirit, naturally speaking. He was moved by the superior authority of heaven to do what he did.

It's a wonderful word, that word wittingly. I can't just spot it in the subject of the text.

[29 : 32] But he ordered his hands wittingly. God was moving him. God showed to him his will that Abraham should have the advantage of Manasseh.

And my friends, Joseph must submit. Joseph must submit. And it was his wisdom when he did submit to the revealed will of God in this particular.

Now that's a principle to which I want to bring you forcibly this morning. God moves in a mysterious way.

His wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. My thoughts are not your thoughts.

Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. for as high as the heaven is above the earth, so high are my ways than your ways, my thoughts than your thoughts.

[31 : 00] You see, a monarch has a liberty. There is that sense in which our queen, Elizabeth, has a freedom freedom that is not enjoyed by any of her subjects.

Perhaps that's not so easily understood in the parliamentary situation that obtains in our so-called democratic society, but really the monarch rules.

the monarch has the last say and a sovereign god has a perfect right to do as he will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

None can stay his hand or say unto him what doest thou? As for God, his way is perfect.

There's no question of the Lord not fulfilling his perfect will for want of strength or power or provision.

[32 : 34] The Lord of hosts is his name. here he's using feeble Jacob to convey to Joseph and Joseph's family too that Ephraim should have the preference over Manasseh which is contrary to the general run of things.

As I'm speaking I hope there may be some purpose under the hand of God in delivering you from a strong attitude concerning some dealing of God with you that is holding your spirit in bondage because until Joseph came to acquiesce in the whole sovereign development of God in those circumstances Joseph was in bondage not so my father not so my father but when he bowed as it were to the will of God as Jacob said I know it my son

I know it Joseph was in trouble Joseph was in bondage he couldn't find peace in spirit until he acquiesced in the sovereign right of God to use his father and to cross the hands of his father in bestowing the blessing upon the relative blessing upon his two sons oh my friends what fools we are to fight against God can you give me one instance anywhere in scriptural history can you give me any instance in the history of mankind that where someone fought against God they personally won the battle it's not a it's it's a foolish endeavor it's an obvious result from the very commencement because the king of kings and lord of lords has every power and authority and facility to accomplish his decrees humble humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of

God now someone here I don't know your circumstances and I'm only too thankful I don't because I'm more free to speak to you because I'm ignorant of your suit but if you're determined to have your way and your conscience is speaking and it may be there are counselors speaking wisely tenderly affectionately to you to the contrary of your own spirit I say you will not prosper until you're brought to submit we speak of things that we've handled tasted and felt of the word of life and I'm going to make a confession to you this morning there was a period in my life my brother

David in all probability will recall it when I was keeping company with a young lady who didn't fear God but she worked for me in the department over which I was head at that particular time and she had a natural attraction to me and eventually I over I over set the mark in saying would you walk out with me you see and she agreed and I can only think that the relationship between us strengthened and I I and I I and I am not much and eventually obviously my father and other members of the family began to get worried my brother

[38 : 04] John who is now in heaven he was getting worried about the way I was going and the company I was keeping well to cut a long story short I was absolutely determined that there was nothing wrong in what I was doing and yet I wasn't altogether satisfied and the Lord sent his servant Mr. John Green to Coventry and I was in the I was a hearer then to preach on Samson and Delilah and he preached such a sermon that perfectly suited the circumstance in which I was found but you know I was so proud that I I said I expect everybody in the chapel thought that that sermon was for me but I know it wasn't

I rejected the judgment I remember my brother John talking to me personally as we were very intimate in our relationship together he gave me warning that if I continued I should suffer I said John there's nothing wrong in it and I was absolutely hard in opposition it went on to the Thursday of that week I would took this I went with this girl to a concert on the Thursday Thursday after the concert I came walking home on my own and all the family had gone to bed and on the organ in our dining room we had a Bible

I was feeling most uncomfortable really most uneasy in spirit and I took the Bible down from the organ and I said Lord I said if I'm wrong do show me I'm wrong do show me I'm wrong I was uneasy I let the Bible open in hoping that the Lord would direct my mind or my eyes to a certain scripture that would be relevant well it fell in somewhere somewhere in the middle of Jeremiah or something like that and there was nothing near what I was doing and so I put the Bible back on the organ I remember and so it said well obviously there's nothing wrong so I went to bed and you know I hadn't put the light out in that bedroom many seconds before that bedroom was filled with a light that I can't describe

I wanted to get away from that light I went under the sheets in bed to get to escape the bright light that seemed to fill the bedroom and I couldn't escape it it was as much in the bed as it was outside of the clothes it was it was the Lord that's who it was I'll say that with conviction it was the Lord and he come down to show a proud young man that he was wrong and my friends under the conviction that I was in in that bedroom at that time I expected to go straight to hell straight to hell and there was one word which is the most attractive word in the English language to me was mercy and I cried mercy mercy mercy mercy the Lord heard my prayer and he spoke this to my heart and I shall never forget it my grace is sufficient for thee and I saw that the grace of

God in Jesus Christ was sufficient to save me from going to hell and would take me to heaven in that same bedroom within a matter of a little while I was transported as it were from the gate of hell to the gate of heaven that was I'll tell you this I knew I was wrong I knew I'd been wrong I knew I was fighting against God and God came and he won the fight so much so that I feared he would send me to hell but blessed be his holy name he brought me heaven what did I do I went to that girl as soon as I could conveniently talk to her I went I said I could never come out with you again

[43 : 57] I could never come out with you again she said oh why I said well I find it difficult to explain but I've had such an experience that I can never come out with you anymore you see there's such a thing as practical repentance practical repentance but now when I say to you you can't fight against God and prosper I know what I'm talking about Joseph knew what he was talking about because he tried to as it were override in his strength and authority he tried to override the power of God in his all aged weakened father but Jacob was possessed of an authority from heaven I'm going to just bring this to a conclusion this morning you come and hear ministers preach

I'm not the only one that occupies his pulpit I'm glad for any anointed servant that serves you in the gospel you may say well they're old men they don't see like our generation they don't see like our generation you tend to despise the fact and we can imagine Joseph despising the fact that his aged father had got it wrong now you may think we've got it wrong we don't know this generation we don't know the pressures you're under we don't know as it were the way that naturally you choose in a self-pleasing self-serving spirit you think we've got it all wrong my friends be careful be careful you don't fall into the same snare that

Joseph fell into and get it wrong because God was leading Jacob we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power should be of God and not of us it's not what I say that I want you to listen to it's I want you to listen to what God says through a feeble instrument through a sinful old man if you like and this I leave with you this morning my final affectionate testimony be careful not to fight against God be careful not to fight against God he may have grace and deliver you but if he doesn't exercise grace to deliver you you'll perish in your rebellion and go to hell when you die we've got to be brought in the issue to submit to a sovereign

God and to rejoice in the provision that he makes against our need in life in death and forever in and through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the saviour of sinners amen thanks yes to the church and their■■■■■■■ a opportunity