

Genesis Ch49v1-28 - Undeserved Blessing - Symphony of Grace

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Date: 19 May 2024

Preacher: Sam Ross

[0 : 00] The reading this morning is from Genesis 49, verses 1 to 28, and that's on page 55 of the Church Bible.

So that's Genesis 49, beginning at verse 1.

Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel.

Dan will be a snake by the roadside, a viper along the path that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backwards. I look for your deliverance, Lord.

[3 : 13] Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels. Asher's food will be rich. He will provide delicacies fit for a king.

Napthali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns. Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring whose branches climb over a wall.

With bitterness, archers attacked him. They shot at him with hostility. But his bow remained steady. His strong arms stayed supple. Because of the hand of the mighty one of Jacob.

Because of the shepherd, the rock of Israel. Because of your father's God who helps you. Because of the almighty who blesses you.

With blessings of the skies above. Blessings of the deep springs below. Blessings of the breast and womb. Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains.

[4 : 18] Than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph. On the brow of the prince among his brothers. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf.

In the morning he devours the prey. In the evening he divides the plunder. All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. And this is what their father said to them.

When he blessed them. Giving each the blessing appropriate to him. Thank you very much Chris. Well let's pray as we start. Oh Father God.

We ask you. By your Holy Spirit. To make your grace so real. And so precious to us. That we receive it for ourselves.

[5 : 24] And that it will become the song of our lives. Lord in all this. We pray that you would receive. Highest praise and glory.

In our lives. Amen. Well this is a chapter full of blessings. In his dying moments. Jacob takes the opportunity to bless.

His sons. Now everybody wants blessing. Right? We ask God for health. Safety. Joy. Forgiveness. And so many other good things. Every day. But we often think that God's blessing towards us.

Depends on how faithful or obedient we are to him.

Right? So. If I live a good life. If I give of my time and money to church. Read the Bible and pray every day. Then God will bless me.

[6 : 25] But if I don't live that obedient life. Well. Then I can't expect God to bless me then. Can I? In essence. We think that God's blessing is something that is earned.

Rather than received. And I think we tend to think this way. Because that's how society around us works. Isn't it? I mean. In our world.

You get what you deserve. The worker who turns up late for work. And spends more time on his phone than doing the job. He doesn't get the promotion. The sports person who's lazy in training during the week.

They don't get picked on the team at the weekend. The student who doesn't study hard. Won't get the top grades. In our culture. Blessing comes to those who deserve it.

But in this chapter. That idea of blessing is turned on its head. Because blessing comes to those. Who don't deserve it.

[7 : 32] And the Bible calls this grace. And grace is the theme of this whole chapter. Grace can be defined as this.

God's sovereign undeserved favor. Given to those. Who only deserve his wrath. God's sovereign undeserved favor.

Given to those. Who only deserve his wrath. Now we've been hearing faint echoes. Of God's grace. All through Genesis. Since humanity first rebelled against God's blessing.

In the Garden of Eden. And there. God promised that the seed. Or descendant of Eve. Would crush the serpent. And reverse the curse. And he then made promises.

To a series of imperfect people. Abraham. Isaac. Jacob. To bless them. And through them. To send a son. Through whom all nations. Would be blessed.

[8 : 38] The volume of grace. Has been getting louder. And louder. The more we go through this story. And now. Like a soaring symphony. Booming out your car windows.

On a summer's day. Grace. In all its beauty. Is resounding. From this chapter. Once we truly hear it. And receive it for ourselves.

That grace. Becomes a song of your life. And mine. And my prayer today. Is that we. Would live our lives. To the symphony. Of grace.

So in this chapter. We're going to hear four amazing parts. Of that symphony. There are so many others. But these are just. Four. That we're going to tune into. We're going to hear of. Grace that chooses the undeserving.

Grace that redeems sinners. Grace that enables. Obedience. And grace that glorifies. The giver. Firstly. Grace.

[9 : 33] That chooses. The undeserving. If you look in verse one. Jacob calls his sons near. To tell them. Everything. That will happen to them. In the days to come.

And if you look. At the end. In verse 28. We're told that. In everything he said. Jacob. Blessed. Them. Giving each. The blessing.

Appropriate. To him. Now that might strike you as strange. Because some of the blessings. Jacob gives. Don't sound much like blessings at all. These sons.

Are scoundrels. If you've read the story. Up until now. You'll know that. And Jacob. Who in this moment. Is speaking on behalf of God. In a special way. Jacob is real.

About their sin. And he's real. About the consequences. Also. Not just for them. But for the generations. After them. But did you notice.

[10 : 31] That all. Twelve. Of Jacob's sons. Regardless. Of whether they did good. Or evil. Are truly blessed. By being included.

In God's. Chosen. Nation. Now. If you were forming. A nation. Of people. To declare God's glory. To the whole world.

Would you really choose. These guys. As its founding. Fathers. I mean. We'd have no problem. Selecting Joseph. He ticks all the boxes. But definitely not.

Unstable. Reuben. Verse three. Who slept with his father's. Concubine. That's how unreliable. He was. Not violent. Simeon.

Or Levi. Verse five. Who lost control. Of their anger. And committed. Mass murder. You wouldn't choose. Comfort loving.

[11 : 26] Issachar either. Verse 14. Who wanted something. So bad. He ends up. Selling himself. Into slavery. To get it. Nor would you want.

Dangerous. Dan. Verse 16. Or Benjamin. Verse 27. Who. Based on this text. You wouldn't want to meet. Alone.

Down a dark alley. The outlook. Is so bleak. That in verse 18. Midway through the list. Jacob cries out.

In desperation. Did you hear it? I look. For your. Deliverance. Lord. These brothers. Are utterly. Undeserving. Of the blessing. Of being included. In God's. People. But the whole point. Of grace. Is that you get a blessing. That you don't.

[12 : 22] Deserve. And God. In his grace. Chooses. The undeserving. Each of the 12 tribes. Of Israel. Would be fathered by.

And named after. These men. And this is truly good news. For you. And for me. Because it shows us. That our gracious God. Does not go searching. Through the world. For the best. And most faithful. People to bring. Into his kingdom. Rather. He comes seeking. And saving. Lost. Sinners. Like us. People who could never. Earn his love. Nor ever. Pay it back. If this blessing. Was earned. Well the. The brothers. Would never qualify. And if acceptance. By God. Was something. We could earn. By our works. For God. Or some. Innate goodness. Well we would never. Qualify. Either. On the board.

[13:20] Paul actually. Picks this up. In 2nd Timothy. Chapter 1. He says. God. Has saved us. And called us. To a holy life. Not because of anything. We have done.

But because of his own purpose. And grace. And when do we receive that grace? This grace was given us. In Christ Jesus. Before the beginning. Of time. Isn't that amazing? If you are in Christ today. God chose you before time. To be brought into his kingdom. Knowing. Knowing. That you would never. Deserve it. That. Is. Grace. And we don't have to earn. Something today. That's been given to us.

Since before time. When grace becomes. A song of your life. And mine. We live. In the sure certainty. That we are chosen by God. Loved by him.

[14:18] And we don't have to earn it. We can. Rest. So the question. For us all. Are we still trying to earn our way. Into God's love? Listen to the symphony of grace.

That chooses undeserving sinners. Like us. And let that grace. Be the song of your life. Secondly. We hear of the grace. That redeems. Sinners. Now even though we know. That God chooses undeserving sinners. There are times. When we may think. We've fallen too far into sin. To ever make a return. Or. We look at others. And we see them. Spiraling. In sin. And we write them off. We think there's no chance.

God could redeem their life. But look at the example. Of the tribe. Of Levi. Verse six. Jacob remembers. How Levi.

[15:16] And his brothers. Had killed men. In their anger. And hamstringed. Oxen. As they pleased. I mean. How wicked is that? He says.

In verse seven. He says. Cursed be their anger. So fierce. And their fury. So cruel. I will scatter them. In Jacob. And disperse them.

In Israel. Now Levi. Deserved that. For his sin. You can have no complaints. And what's sad. Is that the generations. After him. Suffered the consequences.

Also. They were scattered. Through the promised land. And yet. Despite the hopeless. Outlook. For Levi. You can actually read.

In Exodus chapter 32. How. About 400 years later. God. Redeems this tribe. Completely. Levi's descendants.

[16:11] They had a bad start. But they became. Servants of God. And his temple. And the teachers. Of God's law. To the whole nation.

Of Israel. I mean. What. A redemption. That is grace. Totally. Undeserved. Favor. On those who. Only. Deserved. God's wrath. And does that not. Teach us today. That God's grace. Can redeem. Any situation. No matter how hopeless. God uses.

Our sinful past. And he. Redeems it completely. For his glory. For our good. We've all got mistakes. That haunt us. But we don't have to despair.

About them. Because it's never. Game over. With our redeeming. God. Who gives new life. And a new start. To everyone. Who calls.

[17:05] On Jesus. For forgiveness. So just to ask. Do you think. That you've fallen. Too far. To ever come back. To God. Or is there someone.

That you're writing off. For that same reason. Listen. To the symphony. Of the grace. That redeems. Sinners.

And let that grace. Be the song. Of your life. Thirdly. We learn that. Grace. Enables. Obedience. So we've mentioned. The sons who failed. But what about. Joseph. He seems to. Have lived. A very faithful life. Through terrible.

Times. I mean. Let's think about it. As a slave. And prisoner. He was honest. And trustworthy. He refused. To sleep. With his master's wife. Even when put. Under tremendous.

[18:01] Pressure. To do so. He shows kindness. And mercy. To his offending. Brothers. When they show up. In Egypt. Joseph. Is a good guy. And the big question.

In Jacob's family. Is which son. Will carry. The promised. Seed. The one foretold. Way back. In the garden. Of Eden.

We know that it's. Jacob's line. It's got to be one of his sons. But which son. Will God choose. And from our human perspective. What are we thinking? Well. Joseph. The obvious choice.

Right? He deserves it. Compared to his brothers. He's the most faithful. But that's not how God's grace works.

It's not about earning it. Or deserving it. It's a blessing. It's a gift. It's a gift. That is freely given.

[19:01] And as we read. Joseph's. Jacob's blessing of Joseph. In verse 22. We're also going to find. Something very interesting. About why.

Joseph was so faithful. In all he did. Let's pick it up. At verse 22. Joseph is a fruitful vine. A fruitful vine. A spring. Whose branches.

Climb over a wall. With bitterness. Archers attacked him. They shot at him. With hostility. But his bow.

Remained steady. His strong arms. Stayed limber. Why? Was that because of some. Innate goodness. In himself.

Or his own strength. No. Let's read on. Because. Of the hand. Of the mighty. One of Jacob. Because of the shepherd. The rock of Israel.

[19:59] Because of your father's God. Who helps you. Because of the almighty. Who blesses you. With blessings. Of the skies above. Blessings. Of the deep springs below. Blessings.

Of the breast. And the womb. Was it to Joseph's glory. That he stayed faithful. Well it's an emphatic. No. The only reason.

Why Joseph stood in the storm. Was because God was his shepherd. His rock. His helper. Who blessed him abundantly more. Than he could ever imagine. Joseph is not the hero of this story.

God is. God's grace is the sustaining. Strength behind Joseph. And behind you and I. God's grace. God's grace. Enabling us. To obey.

Even through. Terrible. Suffering. So there is no room for Joseph. Or for any one of us. In our times of obedience. And faithfulness.

[20:55] To say I did this. I deserve the credit. No. It was God's grace. That enabled us. To do it. Now a wrong response to this.

Would be to say. Well. If God is enabling me to obey. Well I don't have to work hard at it. Do I? I mean if it happens.

It happens. I just have to sit back. And wait for God's enabling. So that I can obey him. Well.

Let's hear what the Apostle Paul would say. In response to that. First Corinthians. 15. It's on the board. It's what he says. He says. By the grace of God. I am.

What I am. And his grace to me. Was not without effect. No. I worked harder than all of them.

Referring to his fellow workers.

[21:55] For the gospel. Yes. Not I. But the grace of God. That was with me. Do you see the way Paul. Balances those two realities.

He says. I worked hard. Yes. It's true. But. It was God's grace. That enabled me. To do the work. I did. So God. Gets the glory. For anything. Good. In me. Our sinful nature. Is to seek our own good.

Not God's glory. Or the good of others. When we do live a life. That glorifies God. And loves.

Others. That is God's enabling grace.

At work. In us. And. By the grace of God. You are the person. Who you are. God was sovereign.

Over. All the circumstances.

[22:50] Of your life. The people that came across. Your path. The experiences you've had. All of which have shaped you. Into the person. You are today.

By the grace of God. You are. Who you are. So here's the question for us. Do we take the glory.

For the times we are faithful. And obedient. Or do we realize. That it was God's grace. That enabled us to obey. In the first place.

Without it. We would never. Choose his way. Listen to the symphony of grace. That enables.

Obedience. And let that grace. Be the song.

Of your life. Lastly. We hear of the grace. That brings glory. To the giver. At the end of the day.

[23 : 47] Joseph. Isn't. Chosen. To continue. The line of the promised seed. And why is that? Well. As we just saw. It wasn't all to his credit. That he lived such a faithful life.

It was ultimately God's grace. At work in him. Because in Jacob's final. Blessing. This is the perfect moment now. For him to. Pile praise.

On his favorite son. He directs it all. To God instead. God in his grace. Gets the glory. Not. Joseph. One author. Puts it this way. I think it's helpful. We get the help. God gets the glory. That's the deal.

That keeps us. Humble. And happy. And keeps God. Supreme. And glorious. And I don't think that God is being.

[24 : 47] Egotistic. Or something. Here. God knows. Our joy. Can only be made complete. In bringing. Glory to him.

His glory. Really is. Our ultimate. Good. And when Joseph. Isn't chosen. To carry the promised seed. God is. Reminding. All of us.

That he will bring his salvation about. By his grace. And not by any human effort. How do we know that? Well he chooses Judah.

Instead. Now let's think about Judah. I mean he. He was the man who slept with a prostitute. And later discovered. It was his daughter-in-law.

The daughter-in-law that he had previously. Abandoned. Basically left for dead. This is the same Judah. Who came up with the idea. Of selling Joseph.

[25 : 43] As a slave. It was his idea. Judah gets blessed here. In a way that he never deserved. Playing all over his life.

Is this beautiful symphony of grace. Which brings glory to God. Let's read Jacob's blessing. Over Judah from verse 8. Judah.

Judah. Your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's sons will bow down to you. Isn't that interesting? Joseph.

Once had a dream about his brothers bowing down to him. And that came true. Now at the end of the family story. Judah is the one receiving his family's homage.

Not Joseph. Even though Joseph is second in command in Egypt. Isn't that interesting? Judah is described in the next verse like a lion. A symbol of kingship.

[26 : 41] And again we think surely Joseph deserves this. Not Judah. But here it is. Let's read in verse 10. The scepter will not depart from Judah.

Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet. Until he to whom it belongs shall come. And the obedience of the nations shall be his.

Another king has come into view here. A descendant of Judah. But this king he won't simply reign over Israel. He'll reign over the whole earth.

Verse 11. He will tether his donkey to a vine. His colt to the choicest branch. He will wash his garments in wine. His robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine.

His teeth whiter than milk. This is vivid poetic imagery here. Simply describing the unparalleled wealth. And beauty of this king to come.

[27 : 48] So who is this king? Well none of the kings recorded in Judah's line. Actually fit the bill. Because they were all broken people. Just like their forefathers.

Think about David and Solomon. But there is a descendant. Of the line of Judah that does match the description. It is Jesus Christ.

Who in Revelation is described as. The lion of the tribe of Judah. And this is what John said of him. In his epistle. First chapter. It's on the board. The word became flesh. And made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory.

The glory of the one and only son. Who came from the father. Full of grace. Grace. And truth. John continues.

[28 : 50] From his fullness. We have received grace. On top. Of grace. Jesus. Is a living.

Breathing picture. Of God's grace. And the ultimate source. Of that grace. He showed himself to be king. Over all. When he healed the sick. Calmed the storm.

And in the most gracious act. Ever known. Gave his life. For sinners. Who deserved only God's wrath. Rising from the dead.

He defeated. Satan. Winning the victory. Over sin and death. So that all who put their faith in Jesus. Would be made right. With God.

Welcomed in. As his children. Jesus. Is God's ultimate act of grace. Towards this. Broken world. And what does all this.

[29 : 48] Grace. Result in. Finally. Well. In Revelation 5. You can read about. The angel. Who says. See the lion. Of the tribe. Of Judah. The root of David.

Has triumphed. And in heaven. Right now. Day and night. Angels. Saints. And living creatures. Are pouring out.

Endless praise. Upon this conquering. King. Saying worthy. Is the lamb. Who was slain. To receive power. And wealth. And wisdom. And strength.

And honor. And glory. And praise. grace. We've heard of the grace. That chooses the undeserving. The grace that redeems sinners. And the grace that enables obedience. But perhaps the most beautiful part. Of the symphony of grace. Is that. It brings.

[30 : 45] Endless. Glory. To the giver. Jesus Christ. Christ. Is he worthy of it. More than we can imagine. The God who wrote the symphony of grace.

Before time began. Is the one who gets the glory forever. Not us. And that is why. He designed us to be so utterly.

And happily. Reliant. On his grace. For all of life. And this grace. Has so many implications.

For. Our worst days. And also. Our best days. On your worst days. Remember. God chooses people. Who don't deserve him.

And he redeems. Your brokenness. On your best days. Remember. It's God's grace. That enables you. To live a life.

[31 : 46] Pleasing to him. And. Every day. Give glory. To God. For the grace. That he so freely. Lavishes on you.

In Christ. We've heard the symphony of grace. Ringing out. In the story of Jacob. And his sons. Here's the question.

For you and I. Is that grace. The song. Of our lives. Is that grace. Is that grace. Is that grace. Is that grace. Or are we living. To the deathly.

Drone. Of trying to make it. On our own. Receive. By faith. In Jesus. The grace. That he freely. Offers you. And live your life. To the symphony. Of that grace. Let's pray. Lord.

[32 : 51] You leave us. Humbled. And amazed. By your. Extraordinary. Grace. We are all like Judah. We don't deserve.

Your blessing. And yet. We realize. This is just. The way you planned it. We give you.

All the glory. For giving us. What we never deserved. So help us. Lord. Every day.

To tune our ears. To the symphony. Of grace. That grace. Would be the song. Of our lives.

Amen. We're going to sing. What gift of grace. Is Jesus. My redeemer. And when grace.

[33 : 50] Becomes the song. Of our lives. We live a life. Which brings glory. To our savior. And that's what this song. Is all about. So please.

Stand if you're able. As we sing. Yet not I. Thank you.