

Suitable Blessings

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- [0 : 00] This morning we have two passages of scripture, well really just one. Genesis 47 beginning at verse 29 and going through to Genesis 48.
- ! So Genesis 47 beginning at verse 29 and going through to Genesis 48.! So Genesis 47 beginning at verse 29.
- And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said, 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 die 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.
- [1 : 07] Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed. Chapter 48. After this, Joseph was told, Behold, your father is ill.
- So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And it was told to Jacob, Your son Joseph has come to you.
- Then Israel summoned his strength and sat up in the bed. Sat up in bed. And Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me.
- And he said to me, Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you. And we'll give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.
- 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.
- [2 : 22] And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. As for me, when I came from Paddan to my sorrow, Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way, where there was still some distance to go to Ephraim.
- And I buried her there on the way to Ephraim, that is, Bethlehem. When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, Who are these?
- Joseph said to his father, They are my sons whom God has given me here. And he said, Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.
- Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. So Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them.
- And Israel said to Joseph, I never expected to see your face. And behold, God has let me see your offspring also.
- [3 : 32] Then Joseph removed them from his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand towards Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand, Ephraim in his right hand towards Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand towards Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.
- 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. 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 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.

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.

[5 : 02] And Joseph said to his father, Not this way, my father. Since the 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.

So he blessed them that day, saying, By you, Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.

Thus, he put Ephraim before Manasseh. Then Israel said to Joseph, Behold, I am about to die. But God will be with you, and will bring you again to the land of your fathers.

Moreover, I have given to you, rather than to your brothers, one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites, with my sword and with my bow.

[6 : 28] Thank you very much, Faye. You probably never heard of Caring.com. Caring.com is the website of a company in the U.S.

that focuses on helping elderly people and their family to navigate the complexities of senior living and care.

And this year they did a survey. And what they found in this survey was that only 24% of the persons surveyed had made a will.

So three out of four had not made a will. And I suspect if we did a similar survey here in the Bahamas, we'd probably get similar results.

I was talking with a friend this past week, and we were talking about wills, and she said to me that one of the reasons that a lot of people don't make wills is that they believe that if they make a will, they will soon die.

[7 : 38] And as odd as that seems, there are a lot of people who operate that way. They feel if I make a will, in a short time, I will die. Clearly not reading their Bibles.

But there's another reason that a lot of people do make a will. One of the reasons that some people don't make a will is that they are concerned about upsetting family members.

They're concerned that if they leave more or less or nothing at all for some family members, that they would be upset. And that's kind of odd because when the will is read, they're not here.

They can't see the reactions on people's faces, and they will be gone. But still, that's one of the reasons that some people don't make a will because they have a hard time really saying hard things that sometimes are expressed in a will.

Well, this morning, as we are approaching the conclusion of our sermon series in the book of Genesis, we come to the last two chapters where we find the final words of Jacob.

[8 : 57] Jacob's final words function very much like a will. It's almost an oral will read to those who are present.

Unlike the written will that we would write and secure it somewhere and family members only hear it after we are gone, we get this kind of oral will from Jacob in Genesis 48 and 49, but 49 in particular.

And what we see, if we have forgotten, is that Jacob's family is complicated. Jacob has two wives.

He has two concubines. And between them, he has fathered 12 sons and one daughter. And if we have forgotten about some of the sins that were committed, they come graphically in these last words of Jacob that we find in Genesis chapter 49.

But again, these words of Jacob are, they're like a last will. But the way they are framed is they are referred to as blessings.

[10 : 22] In Genesis 49, we're told, verse 28, what we're told is that each son received a blessing that was suitable for him.

In fact, what the narrator says in verse 28 is that the blessings were suitable to each of his 12 sons and the 12 tribes they represented.

So there are two different things going on in chapter 49, which we didn't read, but we're covering as well this morning. Jacob is uttering blessings, but not just to his sons, also to the tribes that they represented.

As I pondered verse 28, the question that comes to my mind is, how are these blessings suitable?

How are they suitable to these 12 sons and 12 tribes? And that's the question that I want to seek by God's grace to answer in the remainder of this morning's sermon.

[11 : 40] But first, let's pray. Father, would you draw near to us as we open your word? Would you draw near to us by the power of your spirit?

Would you give us attentive hearts and minds? And Lord, would you speak to us as only you can. Use your word, Lord, for the building of this local church and most of all, for the glory of your great name.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Well, now our remaining time, I want to consider how and why the blessings we find in Genesis 48 and 49 that Jacob bestows upon his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and also his 12 sons in chapter 49, how they are suitable blessings.

How are they suitable blessings? And I want to do it from two vantage points. And the first is from a human vantage point.

From a human vantage point, I think the first thing we can say is that Jacob's blessings, they're human blessings. They are blessings that are rooted in the nature of his relationship that he had with each of his sons and indeed, even with his two grandsons.

[13 : 28] What we see in the opening verses in Genesis 48 is that Joseph is told his father, Jacob, is ill. He goes to see him and he brings along his two boys, Manasseh and Ephraim.

And in verses 3 and 4 of Genesis 48, the stage is set for all that's going to transpire, what Jacob is going to do in blessing Manasseh and Ephraim and what he's going to do in blessing his 12 sons in chapter 49.

Look again at verses 3 and 4 in Genesis 48. And Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me and said to me, Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you and I will make you a company of peoples and will give you this land and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.

what Jacob does is in these words he shows that he has the right to pronounce the blessings that he is about to pronounce.

God Almighty appeared to him and blessed him and promised to give him the land of Canaan and promised to give it to his descendants after him as an everlasting possession.

[15 : 03] And previously this blessing came to Abraham and then it came to Isaac and then it has come to Jacob but it initially came down in a singular way.

But now what is about to happen is Jacob is going to divide that blessing in 12 different directions. And he's establishing that he has the right to do that.

He is at the end of his life and he has this responsibility now as the fathers before him had he's now going to transfer this blessing onto the descendants of Abraham to whom it was actually also promised.

And interestingly he starts with his favorite son. He starts with his son Joseph. Now in Genesis 48 it's kind of difficult I shouldn't say it's kind of difficult but it's easy to miss what is actually happening in Genesis 48.

So let me just try to summarize what's happening in Genesis 48. What's happening in Genesis 48 is that Jacob is displacing his first born son Reuben and taking away from him the birthright that belongs to him as the first born son that he not only gets a share in the inheritance but he gets a double share a double portion of the inheritance.

[16 : 35] And Jacob is displacing him. Jacob is giving that place the right of that inheritance of the first born taking it from Reuben and he's giving it to Joseph.

But the way he's doing it is he's giving this double portion to Joseph but through his to the sons of Joseph the two sons of Joseph.

So he's giving it to these sons but ultimately he is really giving it to Joseph. And so what he does is he adopts them.

He adopts the sons of Joseph Manasseh and Ephraim and that's what he does in verse 5. Look at verse 5 again. He says to 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 mine. And notice also in verse 6 that as a consequence of adopting Manasseh and Ephraim as his sons he says that they will have an inheritance alongside his biological sons.

[17 : 57] So this is two grandsons he's adopting as sons and he's saying they're going to have an inheritance along with my other sons. Just as Reuben is mine then they are going to be and Simeon is mine they're going to be mine as well.

Look at how he says it in verse 6. He says and the children that you fathered after them shall be yours they shall be called by the name of their brothers and their inheritance. Now Joseph is Jacob is a man of faith.

Here he is he's been promised the promised land. He's living in Egypt he's about to die but he is so certain that God's word is true that God is going to perform his word and the land of Canaan will become the property the everlasting inheritance of his descendants and he is talking about that inheritance right now and what he says to Joseph is you have other sons your other sons they are going to inherit through these two boys whom I'm adopting as my own.

Not going to inherit through you Joseph because what we see is Joseph gets no named inheritance in the land. The inheritance that is received is in the names of Manasseh and Ephraim so Jacob is saying to Joseph any other children that you have any other sons that you have they're going to inherit through their brothers.

What incredible faith Jacob has And this is why he is mentioned in the book of Hebrews in Hebrews 11 that he is speaking with certainty about something that God has promised even though he himself has not held it in any permanent kind of way.

[19 : 59] Now again Jacob is giving the double portion that belonged to Reuben he's giving it to his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim and so these two get the two allotments that really would come to Joseph but he's giving it to them.

Now what's the reason for him doing this? Why is Jacob doing this? Well Jacob is doing it first of all because he favored Joseph.

Joseph was his favorite of all the sons and by extension he's showing that same favoritism to the two sons of Joseph Manasseh and Ephraim.

But there's another reason that he's doing it. He's doing it because he's displeased with Reuben and as we'll see shortly as we go over to chapter 49 he is displacing Reuben because Reuben slept with one of his father's concubines and so Jacob dispossesses him of the right of the double portion of the firstborn.

Now this is a very important development in the history of the nation of Israel. A failure to understand what's happening here prevents us from having a full appreciation for the history of Israel as it unfolds.

[21 : 35] So for example in 1 Chronicles chapter 5 verses 1 to 2 in the chronicles of the genealogy of the tribes this is what it says the sons of 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 though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him yet the birthright belonged to Joseph that's what Jacob does here in chapter 48 and brothers and sisters this is an instructive lesson for us this is an instructive lesson what happened to

Reuben because Reuben for a moment's pleasure forfeited the birthright that belonged to him that place of leadership that place of prominence that double portion he forfeited it for a moment of pleasure and when the pleasure of that sin had long been gone here we see Reuben paying the price a lasting price for just a few moments of pleasure the next significant thing that happens in Genesis 48 is that Jacob blesses Manasseh and Ephraim Joseph brings them to Jacob and he places the eldest Manasseh next to his right hand he places the younger to his left and as Jacob is blessing them

Jacob crosses his hands and he places his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left hand on Manasseh's head and he blesses them and Joseph is displeased and Joseph reaches out and he holds his father's right hand to move it over back to Manasseh's head and Jacob refuses he refuses to allow him to do that look at what it says in verses 19 and 20 but his father refused and said I know my son I know he meaning Manasseh he shall also become a people and he shall also be great nevertheless his younger brother shall be greater than he and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations so he blessed them that day saying by you

Israel will pronounce blessings saying God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh now why did Jacob out of the eleven sons that he had why does Jacob choose to give the birthright that he decides to take away from Reuben why does he give it to Joseph why does he skip over all those other sons and go down to number eleven which Joseph was he does so because he was his favorite out of all of his grandsons we see in Genesis 46 that 46 grandsons he had 52 sorry not 46 we see this in chapter 46 52 grandsons he had and of the 52 of them he chooses two he chooses

Manasseh and he chooses Ephraim and again he does it because they are the favorites of Joseph and why does he choose Ephraim over Manasseh I think it's because just naturally looking at it Jacob remembers his own experience where he was put and where he fought to be put before his brother and he elevates Ephraim over Manasseh I think that's a human observation and understanding of what Jacob does he makes his choices based on preference he makes his choices based on favoritism and in doing so he begins to set the stage now for what takes place in chapter 49 and what he does in chapter 49 is he is blessing his 12 sons but he doesn't bless them in a biological order or a chronological order in the way that they were born he groups them together he first blesses the sons of

[27 : 06] Leah then he blesses the sons of his two concubines and then he blesses the two sons of Joseph of of Rachel sorry towards the end those two were Benjamin and Joseph now remember that from back in Genesis 29 and 30 we saw how these boys were born we saw the mothers they had and time doesn't permit us to look at what Jacob says about all of his sons but I do want to consider what he says about some of the sons I want to make a few observations about what he says the five sons that he actually says some specific things about and there are five of his sons that we know things about based on the previous chapters that we have read the other seven sons the names are just there but we don't have any details about them but these five that we have details about we are able to get a window into his motivation for saying the things that he says because we have these details about them the other seven we don't have the details and so he starts with

Reuben in verses three and four and what we see is he rebukes Reuben look at what he says to Reuben he says Reuben you are my first born!

my might and the first fruits of my strength preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power unstable as water you shall not have preeminence he's essentially telling him what he just did by dispossessing him of the position of the first born and having the privilege to the double portion he says you will not have preeminence because you went up to your!

bed then you defiled it he went up to my couch and then verses 5-7 he rebukes Simeon and Levi for their vengeful anger that they inflicted on the men of Shechem back in Genesis 34 because of the ruler's son Shechem raping their sister Dinah they killed all the men when they were very vulnerable they took captive all the women they took all the children they took all their herds and their flocks but here in verse 6 Jacob reveals something that we didn't get to see in chapter 34 he reveals something else that Simeon and Levi did he says that they they hamstrung oxen now they were not cattlemen they were herdsmen and so they had no use for the cattle and it seems that in their rage and in their cruelty they went and they cut the hamstring tendon of all of these oxen and made them of no use to anyone because they were either crippled or they couldn't bear any kind of load they could not plow in any way and what

Jacob is doing is underscoring their cruelty and underscoring the anger and the rage that marked them I wonder when you think of these words that he utters to his first three sons Reuben Simeon and Levi you're almost saying well he didn't bless them he cursed them he didn't bless them but scripture calls all the words that he utters blessings again if you look at verse 28 Genesis 49 verse 28 the narrator says this all these are all these are the twelve tribes of Israel this is what their father said to them as he blessed them blessing each with the blessing suitable to him as hard as these words are these are blessings these are blessings that

[31 : 59] Jacob utters over Reuben over Simeon and over Levi because we are aware of the reasons that he gives them we can we can say that they're motivated by human instinct they're motivated by human circumstances these are in some ways human blessings there's another observation we can make and it's about the two sons so it's five of them that he says things about three he rebukes two he praises in Genesis 49 he bestows blessings on two of his sons Judah and Joseph and they stand out from the others in graphic ways you can almost call them compounded blessings the combined words that

Jacob utters concerning Judah and Joseph they constitute 49.6% of all the words that he said so approximately 50% of what he had to say in terms of blessing and no doubt about it they were blessings they are to they are to two sons and then the other 50% to 10 sons Judah's blessings are recorded in verses 8 to 12 and Jacob speaks these words about Judah Judah and he points out that Judah is a leader in Israel he tells Judah his brothers are going to praise him he points to Judah's fearlessness likening him to to a lion to a lion and then in verse 10 he makes it clear that

Judah's leadership will not just be informal that it will be formal that he would have the sign of formal leadership you have a scepter that will not depart until a later point in verses 11 and 12 he poetically describes the prosperity that is Judah's portion and you can see that it has all the trappings of royalty associated with it why does Jacob bless Judah in such a generous and a liberal manner but I think humanly speaking it's because Judah's leadership was already evident remember back in Genesis 39 that although Judah was not the eldest brother he was the persuasive voice that his brothers listened to he said to them why are we going to leave him in the pit just to die why don't we just sell him and they agreed and they sold him to the

Midianites rather than leaving him in the pit to die from starvation then in Genesis 43 when they needed to go back to Egypt to buy more grain they needed to make a second trip the food was gone and Joseph had told them you must bring Benjamin if you don't bring Benjamin you're not going to see my face and they were trying to persuade Jacob to let Benjamin come and he wouldn't listen to them Reuben said to him allow him to come with me if I don't bring him back safely kill my two sons and when you read the account you're able to see how Judah is able to speak to his father and he's able to assure his father that if you entrust Benjamin to me I will bring him back but Judah does what Reuben does Reuben offers

Jacob kill my two sons if I don't bring Benjamin back Judah offers himself he says to his father he says I don't bring him back you require him against my hands at my hands you require him of me and then there's another account very short and easy to overlook about Judah in Genesis 46 when Jacob and his whole family was going into Egypt of all of his sons of the 11 sons who were with him he sent one son ahead to make arrangements and make preparations for them to be situated in Goshen one son he doesn't send another son with him he sends him by himself he sends Judah by himself Judah you go ahead it's

[37 : 25] Genesis 46 and verse 28 and he chooses him to go and make these arrangements for them to settle in Goshen it was an incredible expression of confidence that Jacob had in Judah to give him that responsibility by himself to go in to Egypt ahead of them to make preparation and so I think it's fair to say that when we look at Judah's life these words that Jacob speaks about him about the leader that he's going to be in the place of prominence that he's going to have among his brothers it just seemed right I don't think there was a brother there who was objecting in their mind Judah I think it all just made sense to them it made sense that Judah would be this one that he would speak about in this particular way and I think the same thing can be said about

Joseph's blessings which are recorded in verses 22 to 26 there was no secret that Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob but at this time when Jacob is blessing Joseph all the things that had happened Joseph is now prime minister of Egypt I don't think there was a brother there who had a problem who was objecting in his mind to the things that Jacob was saying about his son how he was fruitful how he overcame adversity how clearly the Lord's hand protected him and how blessed he was going to be with multiplied blessing there was no one present who would have been offended or troubled by what Jacob was saying and in that sense it's a human blessing it looks at the circumstances he's prime minister and no doubt for the foreseeable future he was able to say all those wonderful things and all those blessings about about

Joseph well those are the five sons of Jacob that we learned something about in Genesis the other seven we just see their names we don't know any particular details about them well we know Zebulun Issachar Dan Gad Asher Naphtali Benjamin you hear these names but you can't associate any particular deed with them whereas for the others when we hear their names we can associate things with them now here's what I believe is fair to say I think that in the same way that Jacob blessed these five sons about whom we know things I think in a similar way he blessed these seven sons about whom we don't know anything he gave them all blessings that were suitable to them these were suitable blessings that he gave them as their father as he observed them and he watched them live so

I would say when we consider these blessings they are indeed human blessings the blessings of a father who knows his sons who bestows on them the blessing that's suitable for them but these blessings that Jacob bestows on his sons they're more than just human blessings they're more than just human blessings these blessings that Jacob bestows on his sons these are divine blessings and this is my second and final point the blessings of Jacob are divine blessings the blessings he pronounces over Ephraim and Manasseh the blessings that he pronounces over his twelve sons these are more than just a father or grandfather who knows these grandchildren knows these sons of his and is blessing them no these are also the words of

God's prophet who is blessing God's people and the divine nature of these words is seen in the fact that they are not just uttered about these men in an individual way he's speaking about their whole tribes and that's the point that the narrator makes again in verse 28 these are blessings that are suitable to them and to the twelve tribes notice what he says to them in verse 1 of Genesis 49 he says to them gather yourselves together that I may tell you what shall happen to you in the days to come gather yourselves together that I may tell you what shall happen to you in the days come he's speaking as a prophet he's one standing in the present looking to the future he's going to tell them what is to come these are divine blessings more than just human blessings in his excellent commentary on the book of

[43 : 21] Genesis theologian Bruce Waltke in commenting on these words in the days to come in verse 1 of Genesis 49 this is what he says there is a thickness to the expression embracing both the near and distant future here it embraces the entire history of Israel from the conquest and distribution of land to the consummate reign of Jesus Christ Christ this might sound like a stretch but these words are truly accurate to the text before us and what they have in view these words of

Jacob what they have in view is 460 years down the road when Jacob is talking about the blessings that they're going to have and what's interesting is to see how Moses does a very similar thing at the end of his life in Deuteronomy 33 where he pronounces similar blessings over the 12 tribes but as Jacob is uttering these words the fulfillment of them in terms of getting inheritances in the land is about 460 years away they're going to be in slavery for about 400 years and there's a transitional period there when Joseph was still alive the Pharaoh who knew Joseph was still alive and so they were not experiencing the same kind of slavery and kind of oppression at that particular point now to help us to see how these blessings of

Jacob are more divine blessings spoken by a prophet than they are human blessings spoken by a father I want to make two general observations and then I want to make two specific observations and then we'll be done first the first two general observations there are two evidences that these blessings are divine blessings that I want to share the first one is in them we see the marks of divine sovereignty and these words of blessing by Jacob that we find in both Genesis 48 and 49 we see marks of divine sovereignty what we can say the outsiders all of them all of these words they are in conformity with

God sovereign will without exception every word that Jacob utters the words he utters to Manasseh and Ephraim the words that he utters to his 12 sons all of these words and conformity with a sovereign God who is sovereign over all things but more specifically when Jacob dispossesses Reuben and he chooses Joseph above all the other brothers to inherit the birthright of the firstborn this was an expression of their sovereign sovereignty this was not just Jacob's personal choice and see one of the things that we get to appreciate as we consider this passage in Genesis and others as well we get to see how human responsibility and human action is at work and above that there's the sovereignty of

God if you'd ask Jacob why he did what he did he'd say because he was my favorite and that's what I wanted to do but there was still a sovereign God over all of that who was bringing his purposes to pass not just a personal choice it was a divine choice we can say the same about the 52 grandsons that Jacob had he would probably say well I chose Manasseh and Ephraim because they were my favorite son's children but above that there was a sovereign God who was choosing them and a sovereign God who made the younger to be before the elder one of the other ways that we see the sovereignty of God in these blessings is that all of the children of each of the sons shared in whatever blessing was given to their father whether that was a blessing of prosperity like Judah and

[49 : 05] Joseph whether that was a blessing of adversity like Gad and Issachar whether it was large or small whether it came in the context of shame and sin as it was for Reuben and Simeon and Levi all of their descendants shared in that because they were their head they were the federal ones they were their representative and they came under all of that whatever it was and all of that is a sovereign act of God they had no choice what tribe they were in they had no choice in the land that they were going to get none of that actually as this works out what we find is that the Levites don't even get any land Jacob said to Simeon and Levi he said I'm going to scatter you through Israel and the way they were scattered they were not allotted land like everybody else in the case of

Simeon Simeon's land Simeon was given land in the midst of Judah's allotment Simeon did not get a separate allotment and in that sense Simeon was contained Levi they were distributed in 48 cities or towns throughout the land of Israel but they got no land for themselves and so all of their descendants all who belonged to them that was their lot and see this we can see this with Adam as well in Adam we all died Adam was our federal head Adam was the one who represented us and so we see this we see the sovereignty of God in having these sons to be as heads of their whole tribes and everyone under them would come under whatever that blessing was whatever that suitable blessing was that is what they received and that is the sovereignty of God and so we see a sovereign

God working upsetting what seems to be the order of the day where the firstborn is going to get it and he causes Jacob to change and to switch his hands reminding us that it's not always going to be the way things are cut out reminding us that a lot of our lives they decided for us we don't get to decide it ultimately it's the sovereign God who is deciding what the boundaries of our lives are going to be but not only do we see the marks of divine sovereignty in these blessings the second observation I want to make is that we also see the marks of divine grace grace and that hints that helps us to see that this is more than just some human thing that is going on with Jacob as he is about to die no this is a divine thing that is taking place and we can see it with the marks of divine grace when we think of the blessings that came to

Manasseh and Ephraim we see God's grace to them that out of the 52 grandchildren they were chosen not because they were special they received grace that as grandsons they would be alongside their uncles receiving actual allotments in the land that was an expression of the grace of God we also see God's grace to Levi although they didn't receive an allotment of land although they had this stigma of anger and violence and revenge that was on them they were the tribe that God selected the priests and the workers of the tabernacle those who would be near to the!

the Lord says I'm not going to give you an inheritance I'm your inheritance and we see God's mercy to them in the midst of that yes they were scattered but they were the ones who tended to the temple they were the priests and they were the workers!

[54 : 14] and he come and Judah and there was no element of rebuke there was no raising of his sins and yet when we think about Judah Judah was the persuasive voice that caused Joseph to be sold to the Midianites Judah committed sexual immorality with Tamar and slept with her thinking that she was a prostitute and when he discovered that she was pregnant he said let her be stoned and in doing so he was being hypocritical because he was calling for her to be punished for not just an act of sexual immorality but the very act of sexual immorality that he himself committed because he committed it with her and he was calling for her to be stoned he was indeed guilty but Judah's words but Jacob's words about

Judah are silent about sin and more than that of all the options that the Lord had to choose through whom the Messiah would come he chooses Judah and his line because Perez was one of the sons who was born to Tamar out of that illicit union and when we go to the very last chapter of the book of Ruth we see how the lineage comes from Perez down to David in the 10th generation and so God's grace abounded to Judah in this particular way God allowed the son that Judah gave birth to in that sinful circumstance to point to the king of

Israel David and then also ultimately to point to David's greatest son the Lord Jesus Christ and what we're looking at here in Genesis 48 and 49 they're not isolated we should know from working our way through Genesis that acts of divine sovereignty acts of divine grace are littered through the book of Genesis we see them displayed repeatedly throughout Genesis from the moment that God said let there be light and God created this universe he created this world he created human beings and made them to be the most precious part of his creation that he is mindful of them and even after they sinned he vowed to redeem them and worked out his plan of redemption and

I think this is important for us to see because if we don't see these things foundationally in Genesis somehow we're not on good footing to read the rest of our Bible and to understand it but you see the marks of divine sovereignty and the marks of divine grace in these blessings Let me close by looking a bit more closely at Joseph and Judah and the blessings that they received received the blessings that these two men received they are just screaming with marks of divine blessing in verses 9 and 10 of Genesis 49 Judah's likened to a fearless lion or influential leader and we're told in verse 10 that the scepter will not depart from Judah until tribute comes to him or as the King James version says until

Shiloh comes the scepter was the sign of authority in the ancient near east it was a staff or rod that a king or prince or ruler would have to show that he had the right to rule and verse 10 is it's a very important verse the way the ESV reads it is it says the scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him the King James says until Shiloh comes and you can look at the footnote there there's footnote number four that gives some different translations of what that tribute means but verse 10 is understood to have found its fulfillment initially in the

[59 : 28] Davidic dynasty through David and Solomon and their royal line but ultimately verse 10 points to and finds its fulfillment in David's greatest son the Lord Jesus Christ who in the book of Revelation chapter 5 verse 5 is described as the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David and so this verse verse 10 ultimately points to Christ it had its initial fulfillment in David and his kingdom but ultimately it points to Christ and we can see the language of it in verse 10 it also talks about how the peoples would be obedient to him not just the nation of Israel but the peoples of the earth every tongue and tribe every nation would be obedient to this one who is going to come and so these are not just human blessings they are also divine blessings when we consider the blessings of

Joseph we see in verse 22 he's described as a fruitful vine he was fruitful in the face of adversity like a vine growing over a wall in verses 23 to 25 he's attacked and harassed severely but he perseveres with divine help with the help of the mighty one of Jacob and these words echo back to Genesis 39 when Joseph was enslaved he was enslaved in Potiphar's house and was falsely accused thrown in the prison and during those difficult days we remember back in Genesis 39 we had this repeated phrase but God was with him God gave him favor in verses 25 and 26 Jacob compounds the blessings of himself of Isaac and Abraham and he said may all those blessings be on

Joseph notice how he says that in verse 26 he says the blessings of your father me or Jacob are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents meaning Isaac and Abraham up to the bounties of the everlasting hills and he says this may they be on the head of Joseph and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers Joseph was set apart from his brothers because he was the favorite son but by now his brothers are able to see it wasn't just because of that it wasn't just that he was favored all that happened to Joseph could not have been just because he was favored by

Jacob these are compounded blessings these are divine blessings that has come his way so how are these blessings to Judah and to Joseph how are they suited to them how are they suited to them based on all that we know of them again we know that Joseph was no saint Joseph was the kind of brother that none of us would want I think father gave him a special coat and he wore it among his brothers but I think it should be immediately obvious to us that these blessings that Judah and Joseph received these are gracious blessings not human blessings these are gracious blessings that are not earned and they are not deserved and brothers and sisters these blessings that

Judah and Joseph received they're pointing beyond Judah and Joseph they're ultimately pointing to Christ Christ is the ultimate ruler to whom the scepter belongs and Christ is the one who is set apart among his brothers he is the one who endured adversity he is the one who was betrayed by the very ones he came to save he was the one who was sold not just into slavery but into death and he is the one who has compounded blessings beyond anything that Joseph could have ever experienced because he is the blessing of the father upon him he is the only one about whom a voice spoke from heaven this is my son in whom

[65 : 00] I am well pleased listen to him he is the one who forgave his brothers he is the one who forgave us he is the one who forgave from his cross and reconciles sinners like you and me who put the nails in his hands because of our sin these twelve sons of Jacob they all received blessings suitable to them again we know five of them we know details of five of them so here's what I want us to think about suppose you were to receive blessings that are suitable to you would it be of the order of

Reuben and Simeon and Levi that's pronounced by sin or would it be of the order of Judah and of Joseph let's not think about the other sons because we don't know the details about them but those two which would it be here's the good news this morning the good news this morning is that God doesn't give us blessings that are suitable to us since I think if we're honest our blessings would probably read like Reuben's in some way like Simeon's like Levi's in some way and I'd imagine a few of us would think that my blessings would read something like Judah's my blessings would read something like

Joseph's God doesn't give us the blessing it's suitable to us that we deserve he gives us one that we don't deserve and the apostle Paul talks about that blessing that God gives us all those who put their trust in Jesus the blessing that we don't deserve in the opening verses of Ephesians chapter 1 starting in verse 3 this is what he says blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love he predestined us for adoption through

Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved in him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him things in heaven and things on earth brothers and sisters that's the blessing that we have it's a blessing in Christ it's a blessing that comes to us because God has adopted us our sons and daughters all of us who have put our trust in Jesus and to this all we can say is what glorious blessings and what amazing grace let's pray father we are so thankful that you bless us in

Jesus Christ thank you lord that you don't give us the blessing that is suitable to us in and of ourselves but you give it to us that is suited in Christ a blessing that none of us deserves lord may this be our confidence and our assurance not just today but every day we pray this in Christ's name amen a sign for closing song!

[69 : 58] Tammy! Tammy