

Your Future Told by Your Past

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Alright, take your Bibles a few and open to Genesis chapter 49. Genesis chapter 49 and verse 1.

And we come to an interesting part of the chapter now, or the book of Genesis. We are fixing, Joseph, or excuse me, Jacob is dying. And he's got his 12 boys all around the bed.

If you can just imagine a man laying on a bed, probably on the floor. I don't think they had a sleep number, not positive. But it was probably a much more rustic bed than what I'm accustomed to.

And he gathers all his sons around. And he's going to tell them, he's going to talk to them a little bit. And tonight I want you to look at the life of only two of them. And he sees their future as told by their past.

Read with me, Genesis 49.1 down through about 7 or 8 here. Look at what it says. And Jacob called his son to his sons and said, Gather yourselves together that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

[1 : 01] Gather yourselves together and hear, you sons of Jacob, and hearken unto Israel your father. Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.

Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel. Because thou wentest up to thy father's bed, then defilest thou it, he went up to my couch. Simon and Levi are brethren.

Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou unto the secret, unto the assembly of mine honor. Be not thou united. For in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they dig down a wall.

Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce. And their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. There you go, that scatter word. All right, let's have a word of prayer.

Father, I pray that you work in our lives. I pray that you show your power. And I pray, God, that you help us to learn from your people tonight. And what you did in the book of Genesis. We'll give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

[2 : 03] First thing I want to talk to you about, I want you to look at this. Jacob is dying. And he gives these last words. And I want you to see what he was doing it for. This is actually where I get the idea of a blessing service and everything else. Look at verse 1.

He calls me together and he says in the last part of verse 1. That I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Let me tell you what's going to happen to you. Verse 28. Genesis 49.

Verse 28. All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. That is that their father spake of them and blessed them. Everyone according to his blessing, he blessed them. He commanded them in these verses.

He blessed them in these verses. He told them their future. So what you're going to read of is also going to tell you about human character and conduct. Their past is going to cost them in the future.

Whatever you do, you're still going to reap consequences. We reap what we sow in more ways than anyone can explain. Our children learn from us. Grace keeps you saved, but it doesn't get you out of the consequences of sin.

[3 : 02] You know, you'll stay saved. You'll go to heaven. But if you think because you've got the grace of God, you can sin and get away with it, you've made a foolish assumption. Every decision you make is more than a step you are taking, but a direction you're taking.

So every decision you make, you're taking a step in a direction. I want to die and instruct my children the way it says in this verse here. I dream of my last days being them coming near to here, me instructing them and my grandchildren to follow Jesus and do right.

Verse 33. It's all over. He gets through Genesis 49, 33, and he says, And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his people.

Jacob died. The story of Sam Jones, a Methodist evangelist that was raised in Cartersville, Georgia, was a part there, on his dad's dying bed. Sam was a drunkard.

Sam lived a very wicked life. And his dad on his dying bed said, Boy, straighten up your life and live for God. That's when Sam got right, became a great evangelist and preacher traveling across America.

[4 : 09] Dying words. I have a question for you. What preparations are you making for your children's future? Are you leading them right now? Are you giving them a good example?

Are you preparing a life that will keep on leading after you die? Do you know that what you do says more to your children than what you keep saying to your children? You and I make a major difference in the life of our kids.

You're going to find that out in the passage of Scripture. It affects things even in the future. You make a difference. Dads make a difference. Moms make a difference. Parents make a difference.

And Jacob is preaching to his kids and telling them what's going to happen in Genesis 49. Now look at the second thing here. Go to verse 3. He addresses Reuben. And this is what I wish you'd write down.

Instability will cause you to fail. That's our truth that we learn from old Reuben's life. Verse 3. Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.

[5 : 07] Look at verse 4. They'll underline it in your Bible. Unstable as water. Thou shalt not excel. You're as unstable as water. You cannot make a decision and keep it.

You can't put your hand to the plow and keep your hand on the plow. You are unstable. He's the oldest. He should get all the privileges of being the firstborn. Dignity and honor ought to fall on him.

He should be able to lead the family. But old Reuben messes up. Old Reuben messes up. And his sin catches up with him. In chapter 35 and verse 22, Reuben went and lay with Bill had his father's concubine.

And all of Israel heard about it. And the sons of Jacob were 12. In his arrogance, Reuben took his dad's concubine. Kind of like a second class wife.

He wasn't just lusting and having sexual relations. He was making a declaration for everybody. In the custom of the day, when the dad died, the son, the oldest son, or the son that had the privilege of being the blessed son, he took over.

[6 : 10] He was declaring, I'm now the head of the family. And King David, when King David becomes the king, 2 Samuel 12, verse 8, he gets Saul's wives. The Bible said, I gave thee thy master's house and thy master's wives into thy bosom.

Absalom took David's wives when he took over the kingdom. Reuben was refusing to wait to get his inheritance. He wanted it now like the prodigal son. And grace keeps you eternally.

But you do reap the consequences of your sin. And that's exactly what happens. You make a wrong decision, you will pay the price. And that's what happens. So he says to him, you're unstable.

You're as unstable as water. And instability, unstable like water, speaks of turbulence and weakness, passion, boiling water. He was quick to make decisions, yet not strong enough to follow through.

Quick to make a decision, not strong enough to follow through. And so I would just like to say to you, instability, not being a stable person, not making good decisions, you'll pay a price for that.

[7 : 10] And you and I need to learn from old Reuben here about that. Look, if you would, in James chapter 1 and verse 5. And I know I'm flying, but just keep up here. James chapter 1 and verse 5. When you put your hand in the plow, you ought not look back.

James 1, 5. Unstable people don't get anything from the Lord even. Look at what it says in James 1, 5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that give to all men liberally.

But an upbraid of not, it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith. Nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything.

A double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. Get firm. Decide. I believe Jesus. I trust Jesus.

I serve Jesus. I've decided to do what's right. I've decided to live for him. I've made up my mind. I've put my hand in the plow. And I will keep believing one day and doubting the next. Trusting and then distrusting. Believing and then getting discouraged.

[8 : 10] Those are good signs you're not fit for the kingdom. Basically what it says, Luke 9, verse 62, the Bible says, Jesus said, no man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom.

So when you make a decision for Jesus, it's an all-out decision. It's not one day I love him and the next day I don't. It's not one day I'm in. The next day I'm out. It's not one day I'm on and the next day I'm not on. I mean, you make a decision.

Trust Jesus. Live for Jesus. Be stable. Be in there. You can't serve two masters. The Bible says in Matthew 6, 24, no man can serve two masters. Either he'll hate the one and love the other, or else he'll hold to the one and despise the other.

You can't serve God and money. You can't have two masters. You can't be on and off. You can't be at church and God and the world and money. It doesn't work. Make up your mind to serve God.

Die to yourself and your life. That's the only way to serve God. In Luke chapter 9 and verse 23, the Bible says you're to deny yourself. If you try to save your life, verse 24, you lose your life.

[9 : 11] So many of us are like, I've got to take care of number one. I've got to watch out for me. But those who try to save their life, they lose their life. Old Reuben, his story's told in the Bible.

And the stories of his kids. And his kids don't do well either. His kids tend to do what their dad did. That's a terrible thing. You get all the way over to Numbers chapter 16.

And Old Korah is going to raise up. And the Bible says in Numbers 16. And Korah, the son of Ishhar, the son of Colbat, the son of Levi, and Nathan, or Dathan, and Abiram, and the sons of Eliab, and on, the son of Peth, sons of Reuben.

They took men. They raised up themselves against Moses in verse 3. And they said, Moses, you take on too much. Reuben's family, messing up. Same sin.

Falling under dad's steps. They don't go into the promised land. When Reuben's family arrives at the promised land, right across the river is where God wants them. That's where God's taking them. They stop.

[10:10] And two and a half tribes say, we don't really want what God has for us. We'd like to stay on this side. And God said, okay, we'll let you stay here. But again, old Reuben doesn't follow through. They don't go to battle with Deborah.

The way you live has an effect on your children and your grandchildren. They are watching and learning. I can't think of any bigger responsibility.

Than being a dad. I can't think of any greater responsibility than being a dad. I can't think of any responsibility greater than saying, I have children. I'm going to show them how to live.

I'm going to show them how to trust. I'm going to show them how to treat their mom or their wife. I'm going to show them. I'm a living example. I mean, I preach messages with my mouth. But they watch me. Old Reuben set a bad example.

And it came through. Don't think you can get away with sin even though you're in grace. Don't think that you can arrogantly take care of yourself and forget the things that God has ready to give you on your own.

[11:11] If you have a problem following through, then start with something and finish it. That's maybe something bad wrong with the younger generation. I know it was wrong in my generation.

My generation was still a, was it was and is a generation that would like to start and not finish. Old Reuben was an unstable guy. If you have a problem, start something and finish it.

Learn to keep going. Don't make excuses. Don't look for reasons to quit. Decide what to think. And don't get discouraged. Accept those thoughts or that way of reasoning. Here's the big lesson before we get to the last two guys and we quit for the evening.

First off, first off, I tried to show you that Jacob's talking to his kids. The second thing I want you to see is old Reuben. And Reuben is unstable. And you realize that instability is a great sign you're probably not really saved.

Boy, that sounds terrible. I shouldn't say it that way. If you are unstable in your faith and in your trust for Jesus Christ, if you believe one day and you don't believe the next day, if you're serving God one day and you're not serving the other day, if you're constantly living a life of I'm on and I'm off and I'm, I'm not talking about, I'm not talking about you're up and down emotionally.

[12:15] I'm talking about some people are like, man, they really love God for a year and then all of a sudden you don't see him for two years and then they show up for another year and then they quit for another two years. That's a good indication maybe something just ain't quite right in your faith.

I don't know, that probably made you mad at me. But I really think that's true. A disciple or true believer says, I'm in. I'm all in. I give up my life and I let Jesus live his life through me. I put my hands on the plow and I don't look back.

I have decided to follow Jesus. And I'm not talking about church attendance. Please don't get me wrong. If you skip a service, that doesn't mean you're unstable. I'm not trying to give any indirect things there.

I'm just telling you that when you, but you know, can you just imagine me saying, I love Betty and I'm going to live with her the rest of my life and I live with her a year and I love her for a year and I tell her I love her for a year and then for the next couple of years I just don't come around the house, don't talk about her, don't show any love for her, don't show any expression to her.

The fact is I may be going out with another woman for a couple of years and I show back up at the house. Everybody in this room will be like, that guy's unstable. I wouldn't trust him, Betty. But maybe you ought to look at your relationship to Jesus. The second thing is I'll just say this to you.

[13 : 15] The same way it works with every other thing you're doing in your life. Get stable. Put your hand in the power and follow him. The next one, we should look at self-will and anger destroying a family. Verse 5, 6, and 7.

And I'm only going to hit the high tops as I read, but you can check me out later. Simeon and Levi are brethren. They're instruments of cruelty. In verse 6, in their anger they slew a man.

And the word I wish you'd really circle is self-will. It says, and in their self-will, in their selfishness, in their own decision-making, in the God-you-don't-tell-me-what-to-do word.

That's self-will. Self-will is I will run my life. I will do what I want to do. And you don't stick your nose in their self-will they dig down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce.

And the wrath, it was cruel. What happens in Genesis 34, 25? And the guys, I'll just tell you the story, but the guys, the brothers, they're like, nobody's going to do this to our sister and get away with it.

[14 : 17] And so they make this plot. They go up to the guys and they lie to them. And they say, if you guys are getting circumcised, we'll do business together. We can get married together. We can be family together. And so they all get, they all have a surgical operation and a very tender spot of their body.

And three days later, when everybody's really sore, the two brothers come in saying, glad y'all can't fight good. And they kill them. And they just go in there and they destroy the city. They break down the walls. They take all the stuff.

They take all the cows home with them. They take all the sheep home with them. They take all the women home with them. They just totally destroy the city. And Jacob's upset about it. Of course, he doesn't appreciate it.

No doubt the brothers should have protected their sister. No doubt they should have judged those that mistreated her. But they lied to take advantage of the men, telling them to be circumcised to be in a league. It appears that justice wasn't their goal, but rather an excuse to take wealth.

It was covered up by their sister's tragedy. They were like, hey, I'm glad they raped my sister because now I've got a good reason to kill them and steal all their junk. And that's what ends up what happens. Every dad seems to have been worried about his, even dad seemed to be worried more about his own health than wherefore.

[15 : 23] The dad says at the end of the story, he says, you guys are really messing with me. If there's a whole bunch more of them than there are of me, and they're probably going to kill me, I wish you wouldn't have avenged your sister. Cruelty speaks of being hard and severe and fierce, stubborn.

They made up their minds and they would not be stopped. They would not only repay, but they go over and above giving them more than just repayment. Anger is something every Christian ought to avoid.

We ought to get our anger under control. Proverbs 22, 24, For make no friendship with an angry man and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest you learn his ways and get a snare to your soul.

It's right to be angry in a certain way against sin. You can be angry and sin not. There's a way to be angry and sin not. Self-will, however, in the verse, I hope you marked it, that's the opposite of God's will.

Since the very beginning, Adam and Eve said, no, God will do it our way. And everybody's been living life their way, doing things the way they see fit and the way it pleases them. It's placing yourself in God's place to make decisions.

[16 : 29] It's rebelling against their dad and doing what they want to do. The majority of the problems I have in my life is me making decisions I want to make. When I'm on the throne and I'm deciding and I'm figuring it out, then I'm disobeying God.

It's pretty obvious. I'm my own God. You rather recognize that self-will is making yourself with a God. You're like saying, I don't need a wise one to tell me I am the wise one.

I don't need outside direction. I'm doing pretty good myself. You have set yourself up in a major way. Simeon and Levi were cruel and they were angry, but I think the biggest thing that jumps off the page to me is their self-will.

They said, I'll run my life and I'll make decisions. I'll just be honest with you. I'm afraid the great majority of us live that way. I'm afraid the last thing we ever think about is what does God want me to do?

I doubt very seriously the majority of us have sat down anytime recently with your money and said, God, how do you want me to handle this money? I think we say, God, I'll give you your cut. I'll do the tithe bit. I mean, that's a bare minimum.

[17 : 29] I'll do that just because I got to. You and the IRS, I mean, it's the two of you. You come after my money, but I'll do what I want to do. Blunt and honest truth is I really don't think it's how God wants it.

I think God wants you to sit down and take your money and say, God, what do you want to do here? I think, when's the last time you took your calendar and said, God, what do you want to do with my calendar? How do you want to handle my time? How do you want me to live? I mean, when's the last time you said, God, how do you want me to do that?

How about when you're raising your children, when you're planning your education, when you're planning all your activities? How many times do you say, God, what do you want? Self-will. They said, we'll go kill a whole city and take everything they got.

Self-will. Because it's what we want to do. The blunt truth is that's exactly what old Lucifer did. And that's exactly what everybody who sends us, we stand up and we say, this is what I want.

And this is how I plan it. And this time I'm going to run things. Jacob's a wild and crazy dad. I mean, number one, he looks at his oldest boy and he said, son, you ain't going to cut it. You're a loser from the get-go, buddy.

[18 : 25] You're unstable. You slept with my wife. You thought you could take over the family business. You thought you could push me out of Dodge. You thought you could take over. It's over with you, bud. You're never going to accomplish anything with your life.

And he looks at Simon and Simeon and Levi. And by the way, grace steps in. As soon as you know grace steps in, you do know that this Levi is the guy that's going to become the men of God. And they're going to be scattered. And even the mess up of Levi doesn't condemn his kids to not be used of God in a great way.

But I want you to realize something. Old Reuben affected his family. I want you to realize something. Oh, Simeon and Levi affected their family. My decisions affect my family. Two big things to go home with.

One, don't be unstable. Make up your mind. Decide now you don't quit. You know, I always tell people, if I'm going to quit, I'm going to quit when I'm on top. If I'm going to step away, if I even feel like God's leading me somewhere, I'm not going to let God kill my ministry, kill my work, put me in the toilet, and then quit.

I'm going to fight back, and I'm going to win and do what God would have me do, and I'm going to make a decision. And in the light, I'm going to make a decision when things are going good. Be careful. Don't fall into the trap of self-will. Don't fall into the trap of instability.

[19 : 34] Stick to it. Do what God's called you to do. Carry it out. Anybody can get started. Everybody gets started. I mean, if everybody who ever said they love God and said they were going to serve God really carried that through, churches would be packed everywhere.

Everybody gets saved. Everybody, quote, unquote, in the southeast. Everybody, quote, unquote, gets saved. It's amazing. It never really affects every day of their life. I hope that you'll take that home.

My last main thing, and I really wish you got this, and that is the first point. I'm speaking to my kids. I'm speaking to my kids every day of my life.

They look at Daddy, and they watch what Daddy does. Though my kids are all grown and married and away from my house, they watch every move I make. They listen to the way I talk. They listen to the way I act. They watch the way I spend my money.

They know the real Dad. They know the Dad nobody else knows. They know the Dad in the home. And I definitely want to be very careful. I want to be very careful that when it's all said and done, Dad put his kids on the right path and tried to tell them to stay on that path.

[20 : 36] Now, they may do stupid stuff, but I want to make sure that Dad, I do the right thing. Father, help us. Magnify Yourself. Work in our lives for Your honor and glory. Build a work for Your name, and I'll give You praise for all You do.

God, thank You for Your goodness, and thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Your kindness. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com, where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.