

TWO SONS AND TWO COVENANTS

Genesis 21:1-21
(Galatians 4:21-31)

Intro: In going through the book of Genesis it is good for us to keep in mind that there are three great themes that we are following:

- 1) The unfolding of the great doctrine of salvation.
- 2) The revelations that are given to us of Christ.
- 3) The spiritual life truth -- here as it is given to us in the life of Abraham.
- 4) God's purpose ~~by~~ for Israel.

As we come to chapter 21, we are introduced to 4 chapters which are especially important in typifying to us the Lord Jesus Christ and the purposes of God in this present age:

- 1) Gen. 21 -- the birth of Isaac -- a marvelous type of the birth of Christ, miraculous, of God. Paul even says in Gal. 4:29 that Isaac was "born after the Spirit" -- "after" meaning, according to, or by.
- 2) Gen. 22 -- the sacrifice of Isaac, picturing the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.
- 3) Gen. 23 -- the death of Sarah, foreshadowing the setting aside of the nation Israel in the present age.
- 4) Gen. 24 -- Abraham seeking a bride for Isaac, showing us wonderful details having to do with the Church today as the Bride of Christ.

If we were approaching this from the standpoint of Abraham's life as a child of God, we could show the importance of faith, and how the Lord strengthens our faith by making us wait -- in Abraham's case, over 25 years!

-- Relating it all to Abraham, Paul says in Rom. 4:20, 21, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

-- Of Sarah, it is written, "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11).

BUT this morning, let us take the emphasis in Gal. 4:21-31 and see how we have here some of the outstanding truths relating to our salvation. "An allegory" - not just a fanciful story, but true history with deep spiritual meaning. Cf. too 1 Cor. 10:11

As we turn, then, to Gen. 21, concentrating especially on the ^(over) first 12 verses, note first of all the twofold emphasis in v. 1, each of which is repeated (for emphasis -- to reassure us of its truth -- cf. Gen. 41:32 which tells why Pharaoh dreamed 2 dreams which meant the same thing:

"And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it

is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.")

I. SALVATION IS OF GOD (Gen. 21:1).

Note: "And the LORD visited Sarah . . . ,
and the LORD did unto Sarah . . ."

This shows us that salvation is . . .

-- not of man,
-- according to the emphasis in Galatians, not as a
result of our obedience to the Law,
but by the Spirit (Gal. 4:29), by God Himself.

Cf. John 1:13,

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the
flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Salvation is not a human work; it is a divine work. It is
not something which we do for ourselves; it is a work which
God does for us.

II. SALVATION IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WORD OF GOD (Gen. 21:1).

Again, twice it is stated:

-- "as He had said . . .
-- "as He had spoken."

The Word of God can never be separated from what we know of
Christ, nor can it be separated either from our knowledge of
salvation or from the work of salvation!

Cf. 1 Pet. 1:23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed,
but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth
and abideth for ever."

We are hearing the charge of Bibliolatry today -- that we
worship a book. Listen to these words of J. C. Ryle, a
bishop in the Church of England, written about 100 years
ago now:

" . . . let us resolve from this day forward to prize
the Bible more. . . Men cannot make an idol of the
Word. Let us regard all who would damage the authority
of the Bible, or impugn its credit, as spiritual robbers.
We are travelling through a wilderness: they rob us of
our only guide. We are voyaging over a stormy sea:
they rob us of our only compass. We are toiling over a
weary road: they pluck our staff out of our hands. And
what do these spiritual robbers give us in place of the
Bible? What do they offer as a safer guide and better
provision for our souls? Nothing! absolutely nothing!
Big swelling words! Empty promises of new light! High

sounding jargon; but nothing substantial and real! They would fain take from us the bread of life, and they do not give us in its place so much as a stone. Let us turn a deaf ear to them. Let us firmly grasp and prize the Bible more and more, the more it is assaulted" (Old Paths, p. 34).

Cf. Job 23:12; Psa. 119:97; Jer. 15:16.

III. SALVATION COMES IN GOD'S TIME (Gen. 21:2) -- "at the set time of which God had spoken to him."

The Lord always works according to His own time. This was even true of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. Cf. Gal. 4:4, 5,

"But when the fulness of the time was come . . ."

It was also true of our Lord's death. Note the ref's to His "time" or His "hour" in John's Gospel.

But look at the way in which Paul speaks of His own salvation in Gal. 1:15,

"But when it pleased God . . ."

Often we hear people lamenting because they were not saved earlier in life. It is surprising that the Lord does not save all of us who are going to be saved while we are children. But He doesn't! The time is in His hands.

Let us remember this also as we witness to others.

IV. SALVATION IS PERSONAL (Gen. 21:3).

All along Abraham and Sarah had been looking for a son. Ishamael was a son, but he was not the particular son, the promised son.

From Gen. 17:19, 21 and after God had called him by his name: "Isaac."

We are elected to salvation -- personally, individually, in such a way that no one can take our place.

Paul certainly must have had this in mind when, in 2 Tim. 2:10, he wrote,

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

How could a truth possibly be more comforting to us than this is!

V. SALVATION IS ETERNAL (Gen. 21:4).

We really need chapter 17 for this.

The covenant which Abraham was recognizing was the covenant contained in part in Gen. 17:7,

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

Salvation has always been eternal; it is never any other way.

"I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him" (Ecc. 3:14).

VI. SALVATION BRINGS JOY (Gen. 21:3, 6).

"Isaac" means laughter.

There never had been a happier moment in the lives of Abraham and Sarah.

Note also what David says in Psa. 40:2, 3,

"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

This is how Sarah felt -- only she felt that way about everyone!

Isaiah predicts of Israel,

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3).

VII. SALVATION PROVOKES PERSECUTION (Gen. 21:9).

This is seen by Ishmael's attitude toward Isaac -- when Isaac was about 3.

According to the comparison that Paul makes in Gal. 4, this shows the conflict between those who believe in salvation as a work of God as compared with those who believe in salvation by human works. This stirred up the hatred of the scribes and Pharisees toward our Lord, and ultimately ended in His death. It was the basis of the conflict that the Apostles faced in their ministry. Men do not want to believe that there is

nothing that they can do -- and yet that is the way it is. Men are saved by pure, sovereign grace, or they are not saved at all!!!

It is the same conflict that we have today.

VIII. WITH SALVATION THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISE (Gen. 21:10, 12) -- first, the words of Sarah,
and then, the words of God.

We are not called to preach a Gospel according to that which is pleasing to men. We are called to preach the Gospel which the Lord has appointed for our salvation. It is a Gospel which gives no glory to man -- none at all! We do not even help the Lord to save us. All of the glory for our salvation belongs to the Lord.

Concl: But are you inclined to say that God was not being fair with Ishmael?

Read Gen. 21:13-21.

What do you find?

That in spite of all of God's promises,
all of God's goodness,
all of God's blessings, and even God's
neither Hagar nor Ishmael appearances,
manifest any interest in things
having to do with salvation!

God has every right to do as He pleases, but we can see that if He did not choose some, bring them to Himself, and then keep them -- all by grace -- certainly no one at all would be saved because no man of himself, and even with all of the blessings God may give him, will ever choose to be saved.

But are you saved?

I am authorized, even commanded to preach, that "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17b). We do not know how the Lord is going to work, or when. It is ours to proclaim the truth, trusting Him to work in the hearts of those who hear "to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

If you do not know Him, may you be drawn by the Spirit of God to Christ today.

THE LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE
Genesis 21:22-34

Intro: When one first reads this passage, it seems that this is a part in the life of Abraham that we could easily omit. It does not seem to have anything to do with Isaac.

But then we remember that Moses was writing under the direction of the Spirit of God -- so it has to be important!

And so we read and re-read and read it again, over and over. What do we discover?

We find that this was another testing time for Abraham.

More than that, we see in this passage, two very important things about Abraham:

- 1) His testimony to the people in the world about him.
- 2) His own personal growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.

Martin Luther wrote the following words about the passage we have this morning:

"Here Moses speaks of a new trial that befell Abraham. God leads His saints on earth in strange ways, for He afflicts them with one trial after another. But by their afflictions God's saints are moved to prayer and so their faith is strengthened. Then when they have been delivered from their troubles they are moved to magnify the tender mercies of their precious Lord."

Let us see how the Lord brought this about with Abraham.

Note first . . .

I. THE TIMING: "And it came to pass at that time . . ." (Gen. 21:22a).

We often think of Genesis 22 as giving us the most difficult time in Abraham's life when the Lord asked for the sacrifice of Isaac (and it probably was), but it was very, very hard for him to give up Ishmael, too.

But he did! -- in obedience to the Lord.

As a result, the blessing of the Lord was evident in his life, and it was "at that time" that Abraham himself was to realize a little more about the impact his life was making on the greatest men among the Philistines.

As a side light on this passage, it is interesting to see this background of God's dealings with the Philistines --

especially in the light of the Philistines' future relationship with Israel. They had had a witness!

II. ABRAHAM'S VISITORS (Gen. 21:22b-32).

A. Who were they? See v. 22m.

It is not every day that even Abraham was visited by a king and his military chief-of-staff!

Quite obviously Abraham was to be impressed . . . and it would seem that Abimelech's concern was so great that it might include the use of force with Abraham!

But note . . .

B. The first comment (v. 22b).

Read it: "God is with thee in all that thou doest."

What an amazing testimony to the life of the patriarch! Abimelech (a title like Pharaoh) and Phicol had seen things in the life of Abraham which could not be explained in any other way except in relation to the presence and power and blessing of Almighty God!

Obviously they came with a feeling of fear . . .

but probably also with the idea in mind that they might have to resort to force to try at least to protect themselves as a nation. All would be dependent upon Abraham's response to their request.

In reading your Bible, pay special attention to this little preposition, "with" -- especially when it is used to describe God's relationship "with" His people.

See Joshua 1:5, and 1:9.

This is more than omnipresence. This is the manifest presence of the Lord -- bringing all of the blessings of God that a person may need in facing the circumstances of his life.

No greater testimony could be given to Abraham. Without this, nothing else could possibly be enough!

C. Their request (Gen. 21:23, 24).

What a crucial time this was for Abraham. He must not displease the Lord, nor must he grieve the Lord by a

proud, haughty attitude toward the king of Gerar. After all, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31b).

Note that they were really afraid of Abraham -- and they were out to make a permanent treaty with Abraham.

It is surprising that they did not try to do away with him, or at least to drive him away -- like Pharaoh's hesitation to do anything to Moses!

What did Abraham say in response? "I will swear."

What an excellent illustration this is of Paul's word in Rom. 12:18:

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Or, we are reminded here for the words of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 5:9:

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the sons of God" (NSRB).

We can never compromise with sin or with the world, but we must be ready to do all that we can to be at peace even with those who do not know the Lord.

But most of this visit was taken up with what Abraham had to say to them. In Abraham's words we see . . .

D. The boldness of Abraham's faith (Gen. 21:25-31).

When a man walks with the Lord, he no longer is afraid of man. Cf. Psa. 27:1. Also Prov. 29:25,

"The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

Or Psalm 23:4,

"I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

Also -- Psa. 56:11,

"In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."

But one feature of this situation which we must not miss is that the confidence of Abraham was based upon the fact that the Lord had given to him and to his seed the land that was in question -- just as this was the basis for Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah in Gen. 23 -- the Lord had given them the land.

But -- it is obvious that the Lord had already taught Abraham the truth of 1 Cor. 14:40,

"Let all things be done decently and in order."

How important it is for us as the people of God to do things the right way, the legal way.

And so we have Abraham giving to Abimelech, not Abimelech giving to Abraham.

And so they part in peace! And Abraham had seen the hand of the Lord in protecting him.

But note how the chapter ends:

III. ABRAHAM'S FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD (Gen. 21:33, 34).

Four things are stated:

A. "Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba."

A better translation seems to be that he planted a tamarisk, or even that he planted a grove of tamarisks.

Two things are characteristic of the tamarisk which are brought out by the following quotations:

1) K & D (I, 247) say,

"The planting of the long-lived tree, with its hard wood, and its long, narrow, thickly clustered, evergreen leaves, was to be type of the ever-enduring grace of the faithful covenant of God."

2) Masterman in ISBE (V, 2908) says,

"Some varieties (of the tamarisk) flourish not infrequently in salty soil unsuited to any ordinary vegetation."

So we see Abraham's faith in the promises of God:

1) That they are eternal.

2) That they will flourish where no other word can.

B. He "called there on the name of the Lord."

He did this in 12:8; he is still doing it. This is a habit of Abraham's life. This statement is found first in Gen. 4:26.

Wherever we are, this is always the most important thing, and this is always that which is most important.

Have you done this this morning?

C. He was given an added revelation of the character of the Lord -- "the everlasting God."

This is the first time we have this revealed of God -- but not the last!

It obviously means that the Lord was never born, He was not created, He had no beginning, nor will He ever cease to exist. It is related to His Name, Jehovah.

It also means that He does not change. At this very moment you and I can have fellowship with exactly the same God Abraham was worshipping here in Gen. 21.

BUT -- if you will read the passages that have to do with God's eternal character, you will find that they are related to the power of God!

We could look at Ex. 15:18;
Deut. 33:27;
Psa. 90:2;
Psa. 93:2;
Psa. 102:24, 27;
Isa. 40:28;
Hab. 1:12;
and many others.

But let me take just two:

- 1) Please turn to Deut. 33:27, reading vv. 26, 28, 29 with it.
- 2) Next -- read Isa. 40:28, and 29-31.

It is a most profitable study to take the names of the Lord that are used during Abraham's lifetime. (Review them.) Pray that you may be able to enter into the reality and glory of this in your own life.

Is it any wonder that we have the final verse of this chapter?

- D. "And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days" (Gen. 21:34).

It was a time of peace, a time of rest, a time of absolute safety under the protecting care of "the everlasting God."

Concl: The Lord always orders our steps that we may grow in our knowledge of Him.

And -- we soon learn (or should learn) that there is never a circumstance that can arise but what the Lord is absolutely sufficient to meet our needs.

In our BMA assignment for this week -- these words from Long-fellow:

"Be Armed" --

Let nothing disturb thee,	Patient endurance
Nothing affright thee;	Attaineth to all things;
All things are passing;	Who God possesseth
God never changeth;	In nothing is wanting,
	Alone God sufficeth.

THE GREAT TEST
Genesis 22:1-19

Intro: Verse 1 gives us the basic facts about this chapter -- about this testing of Abraham. Note:

- 1) The timing: "And it came to pass after these things."
- 2) Who did it? "God."
- 3) What did He do? "That God did tempt," or prove, or test, but not tempt to sin. Cf. Jas. 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted . . ."
- 4) To whom did He do it? God put "Abraham" to the test!

What can we say about "after these things"?

Some point out that this was after all of the others testings that Abraham had had -- and this is right! The Lord did not begin with this one.

We could also mention that it was after Ishmael had been sent away -- so Abraham could not go back to Ishmael if he lost Isaac.

But probably the most appropriate answer at this point is that it came after the revelation which God had given of Himself to Abraham in 21:33 -- "the everlasting God." The Lord always tests us regarding the ways in which He has made Himself known to us!

And then -- like in all of our circumstances, "God" was not only in control, but He was initiating what was done.

And He was testing His servant, His child, to show what was being done in His heart -- probably most surprising to Abraham himself!

And note: The testings do not stop, nor do they get any easier!

But let us look at the passage in connection with 4 particulars:

I. THE NATURE OF THE TEST (Genesis 22:2).

Nothing could have been more difficult for Abraham.

It looked like a flagrant denial of Genesis 21:33.

II. THE OBEDIENCE OF ABRAHAM (Genesis 22:3-10)

Note three things about his obedience:

A. His promptness -- in v. 3.

There is no argument. There is no praying. There is

no delay of any kind. And, in spite of the fact that it took Abraham 3 days to get to "the place," he kept going until he got there!

- B. His attitude -- as seen in v. 5: "worship"!

Henry Morris gives this excellent explanation of "worship":

"The word 'worshp' . . . means simply 'bow down,' and is often so translated. Singing hymns and giving testimonies, hearing a preacher and enjoying fellowship is not worshipping, although we speak of such activities as a 'worship service.' To worship God is simply to bow down to His will, recognizing and acknowledging that His will is best. What He does is right . . . whether we understand it now or not. He will may involve waiting and suffering, even dying; but if it is His will, then we must bow down to it and accept it with thanksgiving. It is then, and only then, that we worship God" (The Genesis Record, p. 378).

- C. His faith -- as seen in the last 5 words of v. 5: "and come again to you" (we will is understood).

At this point we need to turn to Hebrews 11:17-19:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall they seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

And this was without any preceding example of resurrection in Scripture.

What an example of Jer. 33:3 and Eph, 3:20, 21!

Thirdly, we have . . .

III. THE DIVINE INTERVENTION (Genesis 22:11, 12).

Note the evidence that this "angel of the Lord" is CHRIST!

Spurgeon once said,

"The nearest way to be at the end of tribulation is to be resigned to it. Give up all, and thou shalt keep all. Give up thine Isaac, and Isaac shall not need to be given up; but if thou wilt save thy life thou shalt lose it" (Vol. 15, p. 252).

Faith is never stronger than when it gives all to God.

Finally we come to . . .

IV. THE REWARDS.

There are 4:

- A. Isaac spared (v. 12).
- B. The ram provided (v. 13).
- C. A new revelation of God (v. 14).
- D. The promises enlarged (vv. 15-18).

Instead of losing them (as it might have seemed in the beginning), they are now seen to be more wonderful than ever before!

Concl.: Why did the Lord do this?

It was:

- 1) A test of Abraham's love for the Lord. Even he needed to know that he loved the Lord more than he loved Isaac.
- 2) A test of Abraham's knowledge of the Lord. Could he take what the Lord had taught him about Himself, and then apply it to the most trying circumstance that he had ever faced? Can we? This always leads to greater knowledge of the Lord.
- 3) Since our faith in the Lord is always determined by our knowledge of the Lord, this was a test of Abraham's faith. How great it was -- greater than even Abraham must have realized!

We need to remember that the grace of God can carry us far beyond what we ever thought possible.

- 4) A MARVELOUS PICTURE OF THE COMING CHRIST -- GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN AND MOST BELOVED SON -- Who was not spared!

What believer can possibly miss what was in the heart of the Lord as these words at the beginning of our chapter were being spoken?

These give us the supreme proof of God's love for us!
Cf. Rom. 5:8; 8:31.

If the Lord loved us like that, can we ever love Him too much -- even as much as we should love Him?

"AND SARAH DIED"
Genesis 23

Intro: Sarah is the first one in the family of Abraham to die in the land of Canaan. LOT'S WIFE

She is also the only woman in Scripture whose age at the time of her death is given.

Death came when she was 127 years old -- 37 years after Isaac was born. If she were 25 when she and Abraham were married, then they had been married over 100 years!

What a terrible loss this was to Abraham!

It is not only mentioned that Abraham mourned, but also that he wept -- the first time this is mentioned of a man in the Bible. And it would seem that Sarah's death was quite sudden, unexpected. "Abraham came" seems to indicate that he was away, and so he was not with her when she died -- which probably added to his grief.

Let us think for a moment on the words . . .

I. "AND SARAH DIED" (Gen. 23:2).

We do not like to talk about death, or even think about it -- but we need to.

A person may live a long time (like Sarah did), or not so long -- but eventually death comes.

And it may come after a long illness, or as the result of an accident, or quite unexpectedly (as it seems to have been the case with Sarah), but eventually death comes.

This indicates at least two very important things:

- 1) Let us keep our affairs and our relationships in order. We need to remember this about our families, about our neighbors and friends, about the people we work with, etc. Life is so completely uncertain that we must not put off until tomorrow things which we need to do today. Tomorrow may never come!
- 2) Let us be sure that we are ready to die.

There is only one way we can really be ready, and that is by having received the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. Have you?

How wonderful it is to be able to turn to Hebrews 11:13 and to be able to read about Sarah and about many of those who were in her family, "These all died in faith."

This means more than one thing, but it certainly

means that she was saved!

If you cannot be sure of this when a person dies, there isn't anything else that can possibly compensate for it.

Oh the grief that has been caused to families when a member of the family dies without Christ!

But note a second thing:

II. THE GRIEF OF ABRAHAM (Genesis 23:2).

"And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her."

Do believers cry? Do they mourn? Do they grieve?

YES -- and probably more deeply than people who do not know the Lord, because the relationship is usually much stronger with those who belong to the Lord.

It is even written that "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

BUT -- we also have this wonderful truth in Scripture: While we sorrow, and sorrow deeply, and sorrow over a long period of time, yet we "sorrow not . . . as others who have no hope." See 1 Thess. 4:13.

While death is always terrible -- an enemy -- yet it is never as bad as it is for the person who has "no hope"! What despair there is in those words!

Remember Paul's words in Eph. 2:12 when he describes a person who is not saved: "having no hope, and without God in the world." Nothing could be worse.

We probably cannot fully understand Abraham's grief, but, thank God, we can share his hope!

Do you?

But the NT tells us another thing about Sarah:

III. SARAH AS A WIFE. See 1 Peter 3:5, 6,

"For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves (that is, from v. 4, with "a meek and quiet spirit"), being in subjection unto their own husbands, Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, as are not afraid with any terror."

Sarah may have made her mistakes, but she was a good wife,

a humble wife, an obedient wife, an example of what every wife should be.

You wives could do no better (according to the Word of God and according to the Spirit of God) than to follow the example of Sarah. It is old fashioned, but it is God's way, and it will bring the blessing of God.

But now let us turn to consider what it was that brought comfort to Abraham in this sad, sad time in his life.

The evidence is given here in Genesis 23; the explanation, in Heb. 11:13-16,

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off . . . and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

Both Genesis and Hebrews make it clear that Abraham and Sarah lived by faith, and that they died by faith. What did this mean to Abraham when Sarah died? The same truths are good for us in life, and when we face death.

IV. ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

What did it do for him?

- A. He was comforted and strengthened and encouraged for the future by the Word of God -- actually, "the promises."

Abraham had a hope for the future. And the fact that the promises were God's promises to him made them just as certain as if they had already been fulfilled!

- B. He was reminded again of his status in the world -- "strangers and pilgrims in the earth" (Heb. 11:13b).

But cf. also Gen. 23:4.

And this is what gave him his testimony among the sons of Heth: "Thou art a mighty prince among us," or, a prince with God, or, a prince of God.

Abraham did not live like a citizen of this world, or even as though he expected to become one! He knew about

the heavenly city, and he was looking for it.

And so we can say that . . .

- C. He was made to look with greater expectation toward his heavenly hope.

Life was not over for him. It really had not yet even gotten started. The best was still to come!

And this is true for us, too! The death of our loved ones makes us look forward to that hope with greater joy than ever before.

Consequently,

- D. He made plans for the body of Sarah.

Have you noticed this even in the OT -- they believed in resurrection!

That was apparent with Abraham when the Lord called upon him to sacrifice Isaac. He believed that the Lord could and would raise Isaac from the dead.

The burial of the body expresses our belief in not only life after death, but life after death in a resurrected, glorified body.

All of the patriarchs shared in this faith. Note Gen. 49:29-31 -- the words of Jacob.

Even Joseph "gave commandment concerning his bones" (Heb. 11:22) -- and the children of Israel carried them for 40 years until they could be buried in the land.

They all believed that some day they would be alive in the land again! The land was not even in their possession at that time, but Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah believing that some day God would give it to them.

Concl: Death is certain even for a Christian (unless the Lord comes). Death is our enemy.

But is that any reason for despair?

NO! That makes us realize even more the glory and power of our Saviour who has conquered death and "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10b). That is why Paul could conclude Romans 8 on such a triumphant note!

A BRIDE FOR ISAAC
Genesis 24

Intro: From the time that Abraham was 100 years old (when Isaac was born) until his death at 175 years of age, there are only two things which he did which are recorded by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. (You could say three things if you include his marriage to Keturah.) They are:

- 1) What he did to get a burial place for Sarah when Isaac was 37 years old (Gen. 23).
- 2) What he did to get a bride for Isaac 3 years later when Isaac was 40 (Gen. 24).

Both of these events are important even to us because of what they had to do with the redemptive plan of God -- but it should cause us to reflect on those events in our lives which are of real importance. What are they?

This is the longest chapter in Genesis.

It can be approached several ways:

- 1) To see how this fits into the redemptive plan of God -- leading, as it does, from Abraham to Christ.
- 2) To study the types in this chapter -- types being a way in which the Lord has chosen to present NT truth in the events or teachings of the OT. Thus:
 - a) Abraham would be a type of God, the Father.
 - b) Isaac -- a type of Christ.
 - c) The unnamed servant -- a type of the Holy Spirit.
 - d) Rebekah, a type of believers in our day, the Church, the Bride of Christ.
- 3) To look at God's dealings with Abraham and his family so that we can learn lessons that will be helpful for us in our lives today.

I believe that Lord had led me to do the latter -- and to concentrate especially on what this passage teaches us regarding:

- 1) Finding the will of God, and what makes it especially interesting,
- 2) Finding the will of God regarding marriage.

Now, if you think that the American way is the only way, you have another the opportunity to see something else this morning. And let me say that this in itself should open our eyes to some things that are going on today. It is this: Just because Christians in America are doing things a certain way does not mean that that is the right way. I am not suggesting that we change our marriage customs, but I am suggesting that we as Christians probably are more under the influence of American customs in the way we go about courtship and marriage than we are under the influence and direction of the Word of God. More is being written today about courtship and marriage

than ever before, and there are more seminars on the subjects, more counselling being done, and yet it continues to be about the greatest problem that we face not only in the Church, but outside of it.

Hollywood and Madison Avenue have found their way in the Church today, and most of us do not recognize what is going on. There is an ignorance of the Word of God that is appalling, and we need as much as ever to get back to our Bibles and to learn from the Lord things that we have failed to learn.

May I give you a warning -- a double warning:

- 1) Be careful about what you read.
- 2) Be careful about what you hear, the people you are listening to.

People are motivated by a love for popularity, a love for power, a love for money, and are all taken up with their little schemes which often have little or nothing to do with the Word of God!

We are like sheep. Illus: Lara and Dwight, Jr. and "all we like sheep."

But we are like sheep -- and the possibilities that we will get error are much greater than the possibilities that we will get the truth and be open to the truth!

What can we learn from Genesis 24?

I. ABRAHAM'S CONCERN.

Our culture may be different, but the principle applies. Without trying to manipulate your children's lives, how do you plan for them, pray for them?

Abraham showed deep concern for the person Isaac would marry -- an example to all of us.

II. ABRAHAM'S CONVICTIONS.

The very fact that he had convictions is something that we must not overlook.

A. Convictions about what should NOT be done.

There are two:

1. Isaac must not marry a Canaanite (Gen. 24:3).
2. Isaac must not be taken out of "the land" (Gen. 24:5, 6).

Abraham was conscious of the problems that could develop if a believer married an unbeliever. It would seem that Abraham wanted a wife for Isaac who was not only a child of God, but a mature child of God, and even one who was a second or third generation believer.

He wanted one also who was morally pure. See Gen. 24:16.

- B. A conviction regarding the will of God for Isaac.

See Gen. 24:5, 6, 8 -- "the woman."

Possibly Abraham had learned from what the Lord had done at creation -- He made Eve specifically and only for Adam. And there was no one else that Adam could possibly have gotten.

- C. A conviction regarding the Lord's guidance (Gen. 24:7).

We have every right to believe the same today.

And note the human aspect: "And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee . . ." He was not to look for another, but to come back -- and he would be free from his oath.

III. THE SERVANT'S MISSION.

Note:

- 1) His promptness -- both in going and returning.
- 2) His prayerfulness and worship.
- 3) His patience and thoroughness -- contacting all involved.

Here we see the effect in the life of the servant of living with Abraham. Whether or not this was Eliezer, we do not know. But the people who live with us probably will become like we are.

- A. His promptness in going (Gen. 24:10, 11).
- B. His prayerfulness and worship (Gen. 24:12-14, 26, 27, a review of his prayer in vv. 42-44, 48, 52).
- C. His patience -- contacting all involved (Gen. 24: 21, the explanation to Bethuel and Laban, Rebekah's consent in v. 58).

What an illustration of Rom. 8:28!

Concl: Note how the story ends. See vv. 64-67.

Rebekah did not know what wonderful plans the Lord had for her -- to become the mother of Jacob, who became Israel, and whose name to this very day (and for all eternity) will be attached not only to the nation of Israel, but with the One Who came of the nation Israel to provide salvation for lost men.

How amazed we, too, can be at the providence of God, and at the goodness of God!

We turn from the chapter encouraged and inclined to believe in and trust the Lord with greater confidence.

CB - 3/5/78 a.m.

God's Choice of Rebekah's Sons
Genesis 25:19-34

Related passages: Mal. 1:1-5
Rom. 9:6-18

Intro: Our passage in Genesis, then, brings us face to face with the doctrine of election!

This is a strange doctrine today because we hear so little about it. Basically it means (at this point) that, if we are to understand the lives of Jacob and Esau, we must begin with God and not with Jacob and Esau.

It is strange also because it is so contrary to the way we think about our lives, and about the lives of others. We are so indoctrinated with the idea that we can do anything that we choose to do, that our wills are absolutely free, that we immediately take the doctrine of election to be an infringement upon our freedom.

But let me appeal to you on this basis this morning:

1. The doctrine of election is a Biblical doctrine, i. e., it is clearly taught in Scripture, therefore we must believe it because it is a very definite part of the Word of God.

This is where we must begin with any truth of Scripture. We believe it because it is in the Bible, and not because we are able to understand it all.

This is where we must always begin.

Illus: Our Lord's dealings with Martha after Lazarus died over the question of the resurrection. Cf. John 11:40, "Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

No one understands it all. But we can believe it, and enjoy it. There is hardly a more basic doctrine in the Word of God! We are dishonoring God and His Word if we do not believe it.

A second teaching of this passage is this:

11. All of us owe our very existence to God.

Psa. 100:3 says, "Know ye that the Lord, he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves . . ."

This does not surprise you, does it?

The Lord determines when we will be born, where we will be

born, who our parents will be, whether we will be male or female, what our race will be, what our health will be -- the Lord determines it all!

And that is brought out in our text by the prayer of Isaac in v. 21. Why pray if it were not up to the Lord?

They had waited for 20 years, and the Lord finally gave them 2x as much as they had asked for: twins!

What did Job say about his seven sons and three daughters? "The Lord gave" (Job 1:21). This was true of all 10 of them!

But there is another very interesting thing in our text. It is this:

111. The Lord does not deal with all of us in exactly the same way.

That was apparent even before Jacob and Esau were born. When Rebekah felt the babies struggling within her, she asked, "If it be so, why am I thus?"

And this brought her to the Lord in prayer! See Gen. 25:22.

What was the Lord's answer? See v. 23.

The part that we are interested in is the last statement of the verse:

" . . . and the elder shall serve the younger."

And Paul carefully explains in Rom. 9:11 that this was before either child was born, and so it was before either of one of them had done anything either bad or good -- which might have made it easier to understand why the Lord said what He did!

And to prove the point that he is making, Paul quotes from our text this morning, Gen. 25:23, and from Mal. 1:2, 3:
"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Before you get upset about that, and before you turn your back on it, just think about it. Take it in. The Lord is telling us something here. You and I have no right to take anything out of the Word of God.

Even with respect to our relationship with God, He does not deal with all men in exactly the same way. His blessing is on some; it is not on others.

The Lord even exercised the right to choose the second-born

over the firstborn -- and He could have easily made Jacob to be born first, if that had been His purpose.

But now let us look at another interesting thing in our text. Why do you suppose we have the story that is given to us in vv. 27-34?

It is to show us that . . .

- 1V. The eternal purposes of God are always confirmed in human experience.

The very first thing that we learn about Esau is that he despises that which has to do with the blessing of God!

And let us be careful not to say that the Lord knew what Esau would do, and so that is why the Lord said what He said.

Do you know what is wrong with that?

It means that Esau had more to do with the purposes of God than the Lord did. God is not waiting to see what we will do so that He will know what He is going to do. Just the opposite is true. Our very steps are ordered by the Lord, and thus our lives are in the sovereign will and purpose of God brought into harmony with that which the Lord has ordained.

That is the teaching of Scripture. We start with God, not with Esau, or with Jacob, or with you, or with me! We start with God, or everything will be hopeless confusion, and we will not be able to be sure of anything.

But the point here is that it is as though it were all Esau's idea.

But now let me move ahead through the rest of Genesis (literally) just to look at Jacob's side of this.

On what basis could and did the Lord choose Jacob? Was it because he was so much better than Esau was?

In fact, rather than drawing our own conclusions, let us let Jacob tell us the basis upon which God chose him, saved him, and worked through him in such an amazing way.

- Read Gen. 32:10. "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shown unto thy servant . . ."

What does this tell us?

It is this:

V. "The purpose of God according to election" (Rom. 9:11) is based 100% on the grace of God.

In fact, Paul states it exactly this way in Rom. 11:5,
"Even so, then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

I am not saying that Jacob was worse than Esau, or that he was a lot worse than any of us is. But I am saying that, if you are looking for the reason for Jacob's election to salvation in the life or character of Jacob, you are looking in the wrong place. The answer is not to be found in Jacob, but in God!

This is what gives hope for you and for me.

Concl: Let us forget about the problems connected with Esau for the present. Many of them we cannot answer. But we can rejoice in what the Scriptures teach about Jacob, and we can see the hope that this holds out for us.

If our election were based upon our merit, our character, our works, not a one of us would be saved.

How can we know if we are chosen of God?

It will be borne out in our experience. There is no doubt about it for those of us who have come to Christ -- those of us who are saved this morning. And we give all of the glory to God, taking none of the glory for ourselves.

But, if you have never trusted the Lord as your Saviour, do you feel your heart drawn to Him? Are you conscious that your sins stand between you and God, and that only God can forgive you?

Then, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Tonight I intend to deal with that other aspect of this great truth of salvation -- "whosoever will"!

But I can say this this morning: That just as certainly as the Word of God teaches that the Lord has chosen from all eternity those who are to be saved, so we are commanded to go into the whole world to "preach the Gospel to every creature."

We do not know who the elect are until they believe. If you have not believed in Christ, will you?

Our Lord said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6: 37).

ANOTHER FAMINE, ANOTHER FAILURE
or
ISAAC, THE BLESSED OF THE LORD
Genesis 26

Intro: This is the Isaac chapter -- the only chapter in the Bible devoted exclusively to Isaac.

The emphasis in the chapter is on the fact that Isaac was a man who, without question, enjoyed the blessing of the Lord. See:

- 1) V. 3 -- where we see God's promise to Isaac.
- 2) V. 4 -- where we see how extensive that promise would be: to "all nations of the earth."
- 3) V. 12 -- how the Lord blessed the work of Isaac's hands: "an hundredfold."
- 4) V. 24 -- a special appearance of the Lord, confirming the divine blessing -- a time of reassuring Isaac.
- 5) V. 29 -- what Abimelech said about Isaac: "thou art now the blessed of the Lord.

What does blessing mean?

It is an expression with many important meanings:

- 1) It means to give joy.
- 2) It means to protect.
- 3) It means to make prosperous in a spiritual way, and sometimes in a material way.
- 4) It means to use a person in the lives of others.
- 5) Perhaps most of all -- it means to bring glory to God.
- 6) It means that God's will is being accomplished. Thus, it points to the accomplishment of real purposes, God's purpose.

But notice one thing that it does not mean:

- I. THE BLESSING OF GOD DOES NOT MEAN A LIFE WITHOUT TRIALS AND TESTINGS.

It is very significant and instructive that this chapter which speaks so much of blessing has in it so much of trouble.

Why?

Because trouble, trials, testings are God's chief way of bringing blessing. When you pray for blessing, do not be surprised if you get troubles like you have never seen before. It is God's way.

What kind of troubles did he have? Let me point out 5 of them?

- A. There was a famine -- reminding us of Gen. 12 and 20 in

the life of Abraham!

This is not what you would normally expect when you do the will of God!

- B. He was troubled with fear -- fear for his own safety, fear so great that he would sacrifice the safety of his dear wife, Rebekah.

With all that the Bible says about trusting the Lord, and about the peace that the Lord gives us, it sometimes seems that the people of God are the most fearful of all.

Abraham had had trouble here. So did Isaac. And so did Jacob.

- C. He was troubled by his own failure.

Here is evidence that he had learned some wrong things from his father, and he did the same thing even though he knew the problems that this had created for Abraham both in Egypt and in Gerar!

How prone we are to follow the mistakes of others.

- D. He had fightings with people -- the people of Gerar.

They sent him away.

They pursued him. They took wells away from him, and stopped up others. Instead of being a blessing to them, it is obvious that the Philistines did not want him to stay around.

How is it, and why is it, that, when you want to be a blessing, it so often turns out the other way?

And finally,

- E. He had problems in his family -- especially with Esau.

See vv. 34, 35.

Application: As you look down this list, how many of you feel that, with some change in the location and in the people involved, with the change from Isaac's name to your name, this could be your chapter?

Then perhaps you can look for blessing.

In fact, before we look at the blessings which the Lord was bringing into Isaac's life, look at what the three

Philistines said to him in v. 29b:

"Thou art NOW the blessed of the Lord."

What does this tell us? How does this help us?

In this way: It tells us that blessing does not ^{just} follow trials (although it does follow them, too), but there is blessing right along with the testings -- "NOW."

Look for the blessings and it will be a great source of strength to you.

But, let us go on to look at:

II. THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD BLESSED ISAAC.

There are at least 7 ways.

- A. By restraining him, i.e., by keeping him from doing what he seems determined to do. v.2.

He was about to make the same mistake that Abraham made in Genesis 12.

How often the Lord is blessing us when He says, "No!"

Remember how He restrained Abimelech in ch. 20,
 how He restrained Laban when he went
 after Jacob,
 how He restrained Joseph's brothers when
 they wanted to kill him,
 and many, many other examples in Scripture
 -- plus the times He has restrained us!

This is one way the Lord blesses us every day.

- B. By the Word -- the promises, the greatest of which was the promise, "I will be with thee." (v.2-5)

The testings are bad enough, but what if we had the testings without the Word?

Cf. Jer. 15:16.

- C. By giving him the father he had.

Abraham was not perfect (neither are we). And on at least 2 occasions he gave Isaac a bad example. Yet note what the Lord gives as the reason for the I will's of vv. 3, 4. See v. 5, "Because . . ."

How long has it been since you specifically praised

the Lord for your parents -- your father and your mother, even though they may not know the Lord?

- D. By the way the Lord blessed his work while there was a famine in the land. See vv. 12-14.

Note the expression, "in the same year" (v. 12).

The Lord did this during the plagues in the land of Egypt, sparing the animals of the Israelites while the Egyptians' animals died, giving them light while the Egyptians were in darkness, etc.

- E. By continually giving them water wherever they went -- thus overruling what the Philistines were doing to harm them and to drive them away.
- F. By the fellowship that he continued to enjoy with the Lord.

See vv. 24, 25.

- G. By the impact he had on the Philistines.

See vv. 28, 29.

Thus, there was evidence that the Lord was using Isaac as a testimony of the faithfulness of the Lord. While our character and conduct are being strengthened, the Lord is using our witness for the glory of His Name.

Concl: Undoubtedly these are all here for our encouragement and blessing because the Lord will be working, perhaps in different ways, to do the same things for us. Learn to say, I am NOW the blessed of the Lord.

Do not give up. God is faithful. God is working now, and He will continue to work. We may make our mistakes, but He has never made one, and He never will!

Before we go . . . What about those of you who do not know the Lord?

We have been talking about a man who did know Him! That is where we must start -- in knowing Him as Savior -- so that the blessing that David speaks of may be ours,

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity . . ." (Psa. 32:1, 2a).

Trust Him today as your Savior.

RUNNING AHEAD OF GOD
Genesis 27

Intro: In some ways Genesis 27 is like the book of Esther. God is mentioned in this chapter, whereas He is not mentioned in Esther, but there are no appearances, no new revelations from the Lord either in the book of Esther, nor in this chapter. It is as though God had given His Word, and we are reading to find out what the people involved are going to do with that Word!

We really cannot understand the book of Esther if we take it by itself. Neither can we understand Genesis 27 if we do not have some of the earlier chapters in Genesis.

We need, for example, the statement of the Lord's Word given to Rebekah in Gen. 25:23 before Esau and Jacob were born,
"The elder shall serve the younger."

Put into the context of all that we have seen of the Lord's dealings especially from Genesis 12 on, this means that it was God's purpose for the promise of salvation to be fulfilled through Jacob's part of the family instead of Esau's -- even though Esau was the firstborn!

And Paul calls this in Rom. 9:11,
"the purpose of God according to election."

This pre-determined plan of God was not because Jacob was better or because of anything bad that Esau had done. It was decided before either of them had "done any good or evil" (Rom. 9:11).

It was decreed of God as a part of His eternal plan.

We cannot understand the Bible, nor can we understand God's dealings with us today unless we understand that God has a plan, a plan that is not determined on the basis of the character of men, nor even of God's knowledge of what men would do, but a plan that has been sovereignly determined by God Himself -- in eternity past!

And so as we come to chapter 27 we are faced with 2 questions:

- 1) What will Isaac and Rebekah do about that plan?
- 2) Is the Lord sufficient to carry out His plan if Isaac and Rebekah happen to do the wrong thing?

In answering the first question we can say that all of the problems in this chapter started with Isaac who begins to act one day as though the Lord had not indicated His will concerning Esau and Jacob -- and he begins to make plans to give the Abrahamic blessing to Esau!

This throws Rebekah into a panic!

And she flies into action to save the divine plan.

The amazing thing is that she succeeds -- even though she used all kinds of deception to do so, resulting in a separation which was never healed during her lifetime. Jacob has to leave home for what Rebekah thought would be "a few days" (Gen. 27:44). He was gone for 20 years! And when he does come back, there is no mention of Rebekah -- so we seem to be safe in assuming that she was dead!

So, in that respect, it is a tragic story.

But thinking of the second question . . .

Although we do not see any appearances of the Lord in this chapter, nor do we have any words from Him, who can fail to see the evidence of His providential actions in the following:

- 1) The fact that Rebekah hears what Isaac is planning to do.
- 2) Rebekah and Jacob's ability to deceive Isaac.
- 3) In the fact that Jacob gets the blessing just before Esau gets back.
- 4) The decision of Esau to wait to kill Jacob until Isaac dies.

WHILE WE MUST NEVER MAKE GOD THE AUTHOR OF SIN, NOR EVEN AN ACCOMPLICE IN IT, yet we have in all of these things an evidence of His providential interventions.

And so the answer to our second question is, Yes, the Lord is sufficient to carry out His eternally determined plan! If He could not, and did not overrule man, nothing that the Lord ever determined would come to pass!

And, what is perhaps the most amazing of all is the record that is made of this chapter in Hebrews 11:20. Listen to these words:

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

How can we explain this when it seems that Isaac was determined to ignore the plan of God when he prepared to bless Esau?

The answer seems to be this: Heb. 11:20 is the record of how the Lord brought Isaac to faith.

Does it not point to Genesis 27:33 which was one of the major turning points in Isaac's life? Did he not tremble because he suddenly realized that he was dealing with God -- and so he said to Esau concerning Jacob, "I . . . have blessed him. Yea, and he shall be blessed"?

What wonderful evidence of the work of the Lord in the heart of Isaac! He started out with his little plan disregarding the

will of God, but the Lord brought him to faith!

What an illustration of Phil. 1:6!

But now let us take just a look at the 4 people in this chapter to see what we can learn from them:

- 1) Isaac.
- 2) Rebekah.
- 3) Jacob.
- 4) Esau.

I once heard Dawson Trotman of the Navigators say, "I never met a person who did not teach me something."

Perhaps this is one reason the Bible contains so much in the way of biography -- with some good examples, and some bad examples, but all designed to teach us something.

First of all, let us look for a moment at . . .

I. ISAAC.

Isaac's experience here teaches us that it is absolutely impossible for us to overrule the will of God as revealed in the Word of God.

Listen to Isa. 14:24, 27,

"The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: . . . For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall annul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

What a tragedy when ^afather acts like Isaac did!

How sad that that home which had started out so well (see Gen. 24:67) had become divided over the children (see Gen. 25:28).

Adam's sin was a deliberate, conscious violation of God's Word -- and so was Isaac's. Men beware! This seems to be our main problem.

We cannot get away with disobedience!

II. REBEKAH.

What should she have done?

Would it not be a wonderful thing if we could read here that Rebekah took this whole problem and gave it to the Lord in prayer? Or that she went to talk to her husband? Perhaps

you wives feel that she had tried this many times before, and it did no good. You may be right. But at least she should have waited!

You see she needed to have more faith in the Lord than she did in herself, or in the ability of her husband. She was zealous for the will of God, but she ran ahead of the Lord as everyone in this chapter was doing in a different way!

What is a wife's tendency? It is to be a manipulator.

Have you wives ever tried that? You feel that you have to do something when the Lord wants you to WAIT. "Be still . . . (Psa. 46:10). See also Isa. 40:31.

III. JACOB.

Jacob teaches us several things. Let me mention two:

A. We must never act against our consciences.

To do so is always to sin.

See Jacob's apprehension in Gen. 27:11, 12.

Man must not violate his conscience even if his own mother encourages him to do so!

B. Notice how one lie leads to another until ultimately Jacob involves God in his sin.

Cf. Gen. 27:18-20.

Adam did this, too, when he said to the Lord, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me . . ." (Gen. 3:12).

Calvin wrote:

" . . . when any one has transgressed the proper bounds of duty, he soon allows himself unmeasured license. Wherefore there is nothing better than for each to keep himself within the limits divinely prescribed to him, lest by attempting more than is lawful, he should open the door to Satan" (Commentary on Genesis, Vol. II, p. 88).

Our Lord expressed what we see here in John 8:34, "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

Finally,

IV. ESAU.

The story of Esau probably compares only with that of Judas in the NT -- for tragedy.

Did he think that he could set the time for God's blessing in his life? Did he think that he could overturn the purpose of God by his agreement with his father, or with his own murderous intent against Jacob?

He had grown up under the parentage of Isaac and Rebekah, had received the same training as Jacob -- but he did not know the Lord!

Isaac, tragically, was more concerned about what Esau was going to give him, than he was about what he could give to Esau!

He shed tears of disappointment and bitterness, but there was no repentance in his tears. Cf. Heb. 12:14-17,
 "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and by it many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For ye know how afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected (by the sovereign, providential act of God); for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it with tears."

What a warning is here for those who do not know the Lord!

Calvin also wrote: ". . . repentance, if it be true and sincere, will never be too late."

(Repeat Isa. 55:6, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him . . .")

Concl: Have you seen yourself this morning in one of the four persons of Genesis 27?

If so, then you not only know your problem, but you know the answer!

JACOB AT THE HOUSE OF GOD
Genesis 28

Intro: The heart of this chapter is obviously the Lord's appearance to Jacob at Bethel -- which means, the house of God.

But to appreciate the appearance of the Lord as we should, let us notice some of the details arising out of the first 11 verses:

1) Why was Jacob going?

This reminds us of all of the unfortunate circumstances of Genesis 27 -- when everyone got ahead of the Lord, making it necessary for Jacob to flee for his life!

2) The overruling hand of "God Almighty"!

Man's sin can never nullify the purposes of God.

In fact, most of the time we can see that our only hope is in the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God.

Note that "God Almighty" is the subject of the verbs in vv. 3, 4.

Isaac was talking about things which he had not really learned, and now Jacob is going away so that he can learn how completely sufficient the Lord is when we leave things in His hands!

3) The spiritual blindness of Esau -- thinking that the main difference between himself and Jacob was the wives that they had, or would have (in Jacob's case)!

Unregenerate men will often hope that things could be different in their lives, but they never get to the heart of the matter. They cannot without the help of the Holy Spirit. They are always dealing with surface matters.

4) The loneliness of Jacob -- "And Jacob went out . . ."

How different this was from the time that Abraham sought a bride for Isaac.

Jacob goes out alone, and apparently with nothing! The only pillow he has are "the stones of that place."

It must have even looked to him as though he were leaving everything to Esau!

Little did he know that the Lord was going to turn that lonely, barren place into a Beth-El -- the house of God! Often the places where we seem to have the least, or even seem to have lost everything, become the places where the Lord meets with us and blesses us far beyond anything that we have ever imagined. Jacob was not seeking anything, nor expecting anything, but it was here that the Lord met him!

Look now especially at vv. 12-15. We have three things:

- 1) What Jacob did.
- 2) What Jacob saw.
- 3) What Jacob heard.

I. WHAT JACOB DID: "And he dreamed" (v. 12a).

This means first of all that he was able to go to sleep.

Do you remember those first 2 verses of Psalm 127?

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

Here is Jacob in a place where he was lonely, where there doubtless were wild beasts -- but the Lord put him to sleep! "And he dreamed." How good the Lord is!

II. WHAT ^{JACOB}(HE) SAW: "And behold a ladder." See v. 12a.

Now there is no question as to what is symbolized by the "ladder." Cf. our Lord's words to Nathanael in the last verse of John 1 -- v. 51,

"And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Therefore, the ladder is a type of Christ -- "the Son of man!" He is our means of connection with heaven. And it was with this contact that Jacob was involved in the purposes of God.

III. WHAT JACOB HEARD. Cf. vv. 13-15.

He also saw "the Lord," and then he heard the Lord speak. And so we have an emphasis, to begin with, on . . .

A. The Person of the Lord: "I am the Lord" (v. 13a).

Angels are there, even closer to Jacob than the Lord is, but it is the Lord who speaks.

How wonderful this is! And what a wealth of truth is bound up in that name, "Lord," Jehovah! Jacob's circumstances have changed, but the Lord remains the same!

B. The God of the past: the "God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac."

How important it is for us to know the past, and to remember the past!

C. The God of promises (vv. 13, 14).

Do you see what the Lord had done with Jacob? He had taken Jacob out to a place where all he had was the promises of God -- the Word of God!

Note what the promises are -- how fantastic they are, especially in the light of Jacob's circumstances at this moment!

But the promises of God are always like that!

Illus: Dr. Lockwood's song, TELL ME OVER AGAIN AND AGAIN -- about the promises of God!

Many times the Lord is going to be teaching us that, when we have the promises of God, we have all that we need.

D. The God of the presence (v. 15a).

"And, behold, I am with thee."

What a statement! This means present with you, but it also means on your side, here to protect you, here to provide for you, here to meet your every need.

Cf. Isa. 41:10, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee . . ."

E. The God of power (v. 15m).

Isaac had spoken about "God Almighty" in v. 3. Here we see God's power in a special way -- "and will keep thee in all places to which thou goest."

Cf. John 10:27-30; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24, 25.

F. The God of purpose (v. 15b).

Note: "for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Although Jacob did not know Rom. 8:28, yet he knew the truth of that verse. He was one who was "called according to his purpose" -- and so are you, if you know the Lord.

God's ways may not always make sense to us, but let us be assured that they are always according to God's divine plan. And you and I are not going to change that plan -- even though we may be ignorant of it!

Concl: How does the chapter end?

- 1) With two comments -- in vv. 16, 17.

It is good to see what Jacob was learning, but are we learning the same things. Can you say this about your problems, about your circumstances right now?

- 2) With a memorial -- in vv. 18, 19.

This was not to be a place of worship, but a place of remembrance.

How very important it is to remember the places that the Lord has met with us, and what we have seen (with the eyes of our hearts), and what we have heard!

There are many such memorials in the Bible -- one which we are observing this morning in the Lord's Supper.

- 3) With a vow -- in vv. 20-22.

"If" in v. 20 should be since. (See mg. in NSRB.)

So we have since and "then."

Have you ever made such a commitment to the Lord?

But there is another part in the last part of v. 22. Have you ever committed what you have to the Lord? 2 Cor. 8:5

Wherever you and I go, whatever the problems may be, we can always count on:

the Lord's presence,
the Lord's provision,
the Lord's protection.

And so we must yield ourselves to Him, and always honor Him first with what He has given us.

TWENTY YEARS LATER . . . the Lord appeared to Jacob to tell him to God back home. And He said to Jacob (among other things): "I am the God of Bethel."

And He still is today!

THE WAYS OF THE GOD OF JACOB
Genesis 29-31

Scripture Reading: Genesis 31:38-42.

Intro: This morning we are going to look at 3 chapters in Genesis (29, 30, 31) which cover a period of 20 years in the life of Jacob.

They were 20 years which Jacob's mother, Rebekah, thought would be only "a few days" (Gen. 27:44).

These 20 years correspond to similar times in every believer's life when:

- nothing in particular seems to be going on, or when
- the Lord for one reason or another is testing us, or when
- like Jacob, we are reaping the results of what we have done.

These can be:

- very discouraging times, even of despair,
- very confusing times,
- times of rebellion and resentment, even against God.

We might be able to understand a shorter time, "a few days," but it is impossible for us to understand why it should be extended into years!

Genesis 29-31 were written to help us with these times which come to all of us.

It all goes back to Genesis 27 when Isaac called Esau to prepare food for him -- and when Isaac promised Esau that he would follow up the eating with a blessing for Esau. Rebekah, the mother of Esau and Jacob, heard what her husband said, and, instead of waiting upon the Lord, took matters into her own hands. She knew that Jacob was to have that blessing. The result was that Jacob got the blessing, but by that time their home was hopelessly divided -- and Esau had declared his intention to kill Jacob as soon as Isaac died. So -- Jacob had to go!

He was away for 20 years.

As far as we can tell from the Scriptures, he never saw his mother again! Chapters 29-31 tell us what happened to him while he was away.

Let me summarize the chapters for you. You can read them later.

Genesis 29

Jacob leave home.

Arrives at Laban's -- his mother's brother.

Meets Laban's daughter, Rachel, and falls in love with her.

Works for 7 years so he can marry her.

Laban deceives Jacob, and he is married to Rachel's older sister, Leah.

After a week, Laban gives Rachel also to Jacob, and he agrees to work another 7 years for her.

Leah's first 4 sons are born as the chapter closes.

Genesis 30

The rest of Jacob's sons (except Benjamin) are born:

2 by Rachel's handmaid, Bilhah.

2 by Leah's handmaid, Zilpah.

2 more by Leah -- and 1 daughter.

1 by Rachel -- Joseph.

The chapter ends with the account of how the Lord multiplied Jacob's cattle after he agreed to continue working for Laban after the 14 years were up.

Genesis 31

The situation between Laban and Jacob goes sour, and so Jacob leaves to return home.

Laban goes after him.

The two men make a covenant at Mizpah -- and then part.

What can we learn from these events that will be helpful for us?

Going back for a moment to the end of chapter 28, remember:

I. THE LORD'S APPEARANCE TO JACOB AT BETHEL (Gen. 28:10-22).

This is where the 20 years actually begins.

All unexpected, completely unsought (and we could add, undeserved), THE LORD APPEARS TO JACOB AND MINISTERS TO HIM.

What a wonderful time that was for Jacob! Nothing is more amazing in the life of every child of God than to see the gracious dealings of the Lord. Cf. Psa. 103:10, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Or Psa. 130:3, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"

What an encouragement this was to Jacob! Dr. Griffith Thomas points out in his commentary on Genesis that the Hebrew of Genesis 29:1 reads, "'Then Jacob lifted up his feet.'" (See p. 269.)

How does the Lord appear to us and speak to us today? Primarily and usually through His Word! He does not leave us alone. Cf. Heb. 13:5; John 10:4.

The Devil will try to get you away from the Word -- and he often succeeds with little effort. Pray that you will not stop reading the Word, nor stop praying!

The Lord will meet with you, and speak to you, and draw you to Himself! You may give up on yourself, but He never does!

II. GUIDANCE.

This is a second thing that we can be assured of: The Lord will not leave us to find our own way, but He will lead us just like He led Jacob right to the house of Laban!

Isa. 58:11 says, "And the Lord shall guide thee continually."

Psa. 23 promises, "He leadeth me beside the still waters . . ."

Often we do not realize it at the time, and we may not even be praying for guidance, but as we look back we can see how graciously and gently and clearly the Lord was leading.

III. DISCIPLINE.

This word does not basically mean punishment (although we do suffer some of the consequences of our sins), but it means training.

There are always things for us to learn!

Both the OT (Prov. 3:11, 12) and the NT (Heb. 12:5, 6) give us these words:

"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord,
nor faint when thou art rebuked of him;
For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,
and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

How did the Lord discipline Jacob?

By putting him with a man who was just like he was -- only Laban was better and more consistently at the job of beguiling others.

Sometimes the Lord will put us with people who are just like we are until we see in our own hearts what the Lord has known all along!

If you are in a time of testing, are you learning anything?
The Bible clearly teaches us that more of our lives are given over to what the Lord is seeking to do in us than to what He is seeking to do through us.

He never forgets about you -- or me!

IV. MINISTRY. Now!

But times of testing are not times when we are set aside waiting until after the testing is over until we can expect the Lord to use us. The usefulness goes on with the testing and with the learning and with whatever He may be doing in our hearts.

Note what Laban said in Gen. 30:27.

And note what Jacob said in Gen. 30:29, 30. And then see Jacob's words in our Scripture reading: Gen. 31:38, 39.

Jacob sought to be faithful (perhaps Joseph learned something from his father on this point), and it was apparent that the Lord's blessing was on Jacob even during those years that he was away from home.

In addition to Joseph, think of David (during the years that Saul was chasing him -- years when some of his Psalms were written). And think of Daniel!

V. PURPOSE. LOOKING AHEAD!

One of the hardest things for us to take about times of testing is that so often the trials seem to be pointless, or they seem to go on to long!

We do not like it when we cannot answer the question, WHY?

Was there a purpose in Jacob's flight apart from what the Lord was doing in his own heart -- or, better, in addition to what the Lord was doing IN Jacob?

To answer your question, look at the names which begin to appear in Scripture at this point:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------|--|
| 1) | Reuben. | |
| 2) | Simeon. | |
| 3) | Levi. | |
| 4) | Judah. | |
| 5) | Dan. | |
| 6) | Naphtali. | |
| 7) | Gad. | |
| 8) | Asher. | |
| 9) | Issachar. | |
| 10) | Zebulun. | |
| 11) | Joseph. | |
- In blessing Boaz when he married Ruth, the people and the elders of Israel said, "The Lord make the woman who is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel . . ." (Ruth 4:11m).

And later in Gen. 35:18 -- Benjamin.

Do these names mean anything to you? What place do they have in the purpose of God?

IN THIS TIME OF JACOB'S EXILE THE LORD WAS LAYING THE

FOUNDATION NOT ONLY FOR THE NATION ISRAEL, BUT ALSO FOR THE WRITING OF SCRIPTURE, AND, WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT, FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST INTO THE WORLD, BORN OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH.

These sons of Jacob (along with the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh) became the heads of the tribes of Israel.

Was God doing anything? Yes He was -- amazing things! There were great and glorious purposes behind all that Jacob was experiencing!

This is here to encourage us. We do not have the place that Jacob had, BUT WE HAVE A PLACE! And the Lord is not wasting our time. There is a point in His delays. He is at work. Let us believe it, and rest in the fact that He never has made any mistakes, and He will not make any with us!

A final word:

VI. FAITHFULNESS.

We can also call this, God's providential care.

In Gen. 28:15 the Lord had said, "And, behold, I am with thee."

We saw last week that that word, "with," had a very special meaning. (Explain.) Had God been "with" Jacob?

Read Gen. 31:42.

Laban had deceived Jacob about Leah. He had changed his wages 10 times. And he had probably done a lot of other things. He had even pursued Jacob to give him more trouble. But through it all the Lord did not allow Laban to "hurt" Jacob. See what Jacob told Leah and Rachel in Gen. 31:5-7.

We have another illustration of Rom. 8:28!

Concl: Now regardless of all the reasons why you can think that your circumstances are different from Jacob's, will you do two things?

- 1) Will you thank the Lord that He has put this in the Bible? You and I would have no way of knowing these things if they were not here.
- 2) Will you ask the Lord to enable you to believe that the same truths apply to you right now -- so that you can be at peace in believing that the Lord is also "with" you, and that He does have a purpose for what you are going through now?

JACOB -- IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER
Genesis 32:1-12

Intro: The child of God is always in school -- God's school.
God is always teaching; we must always be learning.
He never gives us over to some other teacher. He uses every-
thing in our lives, every circumstance, every person, every
problem -- to teach us what He wants us to know, and to make us
what He wants us to be.

Such was the case with Jacob!

As we come to Genesis 32 Jacob is on his way home. He is 20
years older, much wiser, much better, and much greater in num-
bers.

He has just left Laban -- and that is good.

But he is going to meet Esau -- and that is bad.

In chapter 32 we can see some of the things that God had taught
Jacob during the time that he had been with Laban.

We can also see what the Lord was doing to prepare Jacob for his
meeting with Esau.

Two places become important to Jacob:

- 1) Mahanaim.
- 2) Peniel.

This morning we want to look at the first of these: Mahanaim.

Jacob had a way of naming places to commemorate God's dealings
with him. And it is important to recognize that these events
were just that -- God's dealings with Jacob!

What happened first?

I. "THE ANGELS OF GOD" (Gen. 32:1, 2).

Like Bethel, this was unexpected and completely unsought!

This is one of those surprises that the Lord brings into the
lives of His children.

What a change -- from Laban to angels!

And what was the purpose?

Obviously it was to help Jacob in his anxiety about meeting
Esau.

How many there were, we do not know. We do know that they

- 1) Had come from God.
- 2) Had been sent specifically to Jacob. Note: "The angels of God met him."

More than that, we know:

- 1) That Jacob "saw them."
- 2) That he knew who they were: "He said, This is God's host."

How he saw them, we do not know. Nor do we know who else saw them. But it must have reminded Jacob of what had happened to him at Bethel -- when he saw the angels of God ascending and descending on the ladder that extended from earth to heaven.

At this point Jacob did not know about Esau's 400 men -- but this was his preparation for that. Note: We often find out that the special things that the Lord brings into our lives are preparation for the things that are coming.

For Jacob, this was like Paul's experience which he refers to in 2 Tim. 4:17 -- when he found himself forsaken by all. He wrote to Timothy -- "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me . . ."

Cf. Psa. 34:7,

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

Also Psa. 91:11,

"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Think of Psa. 46. "God is our refuge and strength . . ."

How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
His love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end.

Does God use His angels today? Why not? See Heb. 1:14.

II. JACOB'S PLAN FOR MEETING ESAU (Gen. 32:3-8).

We see two things here: one is good; the other, not so good.

A. What Jacob had learned.

Note how he refers to Esau as "lord" and how he refers to himself as Esau's servant.

Relate these to Gen. 25:23 where Rebekah had received

the prophecy concerning her twin sons, and Gen. 27:29 where Jacob had been blessed by Isaac with the prediction that both nations and even his own family would "bow down" to him.

The greatness of God's promises are one of the main reasons we should be humble.

B. What Jacob failed to do here.

See vv. 7, 8.

What about the angels?

Note: We also fail to apply the promises of God, or the blessings of God to our present circumstances so that we can have peace about our problems.

However, it is encouraging to see that all of this is followed with:

III. JACOB'S PRAYER (Gen. 32:9-12).

Bible prayers are recorded to help and to teach us.

Before we note the content of Jacob's prayer, it is worthwhile to mention that he did not attend any classes on prayer (although such classes can be helpful),

nor did he read any books on prayer (because there were none for him to read),

but he was obviously praying as the Lord led him in connection with the crisis that he was facing in his life!

He was not saying a prayer; HE WAS PRAYING. To Jacob it was a matter of life and death for God to hear and for God to answer favorably for Jacob and his family.

How did he pray?

Let me mention 4 things that tie in with the 4 verses:

- 1) He began with GOD.
- 2) Secondly, HIMSELF.
- 3) Thirdly, ESAU.
- 4) He concludes with GOD.

There could be no better pattern for prayer.

A. He began with GOD (v. 9).

Here we have three things:

1. His Names:
 - a. God -- setting Him apart from men.
 - b. Lord -- Jehovah, the eternal and unchanging One.
2. His relationship to Jacob's father and grandfather. Jacob had heard this first at Bethel in Gen. 28. What a wealth of truth is here.
3. His Word.

We can never separate God from His Word. He will never go back on His Word.

This particular reference goes back to Gen. 31:3.

How wonderful it is to know that you are where you are, doing what you are doing, because it is the will of God!

- B. Jacob talks to the Lord about himself (v. 10).

When he says, "I am not worthy," he uses a word which Gesenius in his Hebrew Lexicon says has "the primary idea . . . of cutting off, and so making shorter and smaller." Jacob had been getting more and more insignificant in his own eyes, so that he would have felt that God would have been justified if no blessings had been given. This is evidence of his spiritual growth.

Note Paul's statements along this line.

"Mercies" are those evidences of God's love and goodness which He is eager to give -- and does give in abundance.

"Truth" here means faithfulness.

And these have been "shown" -- formed and cut and shaped to meet Jacob's particular needs (so the Hebrew indicates).

And then Jacob speaks of himself as God's "servant" just as before he had spoken of himself as Esau's "servant."

All that Jacob has he attributes to the blessing of God!

- C. Next -- about Esau -- the problem (v. 11).

Note how simple, how brief, how direct and specific Jacob is. We must sometimes test the omniscience of God by our vagueness. Trial make us specific, and give us an urgency in our requests that we do not have at other times. We pray for answers!

D. Finally, Jacob turns back to God again (v. 12).

How important it is to note that Jacob begins with the the Lord, and then comes back to Him at the end.

And here the emphasis is again on the Word of God.

This surely must mean that the Lord loves to hear His Word in our prayers -- to be reminded by us of what He has promised to do!

Now look at these words carefully.

"Thou" is emphatic -- just like "I" and "him" are in v. 11 -- "I fear him."

How important it is to remember that the Word of God is the Word OF GOD!

The Lord had promised Jacob at Bethel, "I will surely do thee good." And He had kept that promise -- or those promises!

BUT . . . look through the words of God to Jacob and you will never find any record of the fact that He ever told Jacob that he would make his "seed as the sand of the sea"!

THE ONLY TIME THAT SAND IS MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY IN GENESIS IS IN GENESIS 22:17. And there it is in a promise to Abraham.

But it involves Abraham's seed -- and Jacob was a part of that seed. So here Jacob is laying claim to that Messianic promise, and claiming that the Lord must preserve him and his family in order to be faithful to Abraham and to Isaac! Jacob was an heir of the promise of salvation . . .

AND SO ARE WE -- if we know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. The promises are ours too. We are a part of God's great plan, and He deals with us accordingly.

Concl: The Lord is not through with Jacob yet before he meets Esau. He has to go to Peniel.

But the important thing for us is to see if we are keeping pace with Jacob in the things that the Lord is teaching him. What about your faith,
 your prayer life,
 your knowledge of the promises of God, and of God Himself?
 These things have been written for us. Let us enter in, and be at peace!

God's School of Prayer.

JACOB'S VICTORY
Genesis 32:22-32

Intro: In considering the Word of God we need to be interested constantly in:

- 1) What the basic meaning of the passage is. We need to learn, as in this case, what these events meant in Jacob's life.
- 2) How the Lord is revealed in the passage. This is always of primary importance in the study of the Word.
- 3) The application that it has in our lives.

The Lord never deals with any of us in exactly the same way, but there is a similarity with all of us in what He is seeking to accomplish -- and so we can learn a great deal from what we see the Lord doing in another person's life.

What is the background of this passage in the life of Jacob?

We need to remember several things:

- 1) That the Lord had His hand of Jacob from the very beginning of his life -- even before he was born. He was like Paul -- "separated from my mother's womb" (Gal. 1:15).
- 2) That Jacob had not always done the right thing. He and his mother had run ahead of the Lord in getting the blessing of the Lord.
- 3) That the Lord had promised to bless Jacob -- at Bethel, as he was leaving home 20 years before this time at Peniel.

All of this is by way of preparation -- of background.

Now looking at our text, what are . . .

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES -- the immediate circumstances, the details that apply to Jacob's conflict at Peniel?

A. First, he was definitely here by the will of God.

The Lord had told him to go back home. Cf. 31:3.

B. He had prayed for the Lord's blessing. See 32:9-12. And the burden of his prayer was that the Lord do something about Esau.

C. Two things from the text itself:

1. It was night -- with all of the spiritual implications that that brings.
2. "And Jacob was left alone."

This is where the Lord does most of His dealing with us -- when we are alone. We would choose to be with others, especially in times of danger, but the Lord

gets by ourselves.

(Note how these apply to our lives.)

II. THE CONFLICT.

When we consider the background and the immediate circumstances, how utterly amazing it is to see that . . .

- A. The Lord is the aggressor. Jacob is not fighting the Devil. He is not fighting one of Esau's men (as he might have thought at the first). Nor was he fighting some other stranger. He was struggling with the Lord -- and the Lord was the One Who started it all!

How do we know it was the Lord? See vv. 26, 28, 30.

Note also what Hosea wrote about this in Hosea 12:3-5:

"He took his brother by the heel in the womb,
and by his strength he had power with God.

"Yea, he had power over the angel (note what Hosea called the Lord),
and prevailed;

he wept, and made supplication unto him;

he found him in Bethel, and there he spoke with us --

"Even the Lord God of hosts;
the Lord is his memorial."

Have you ever been through anything like this -- when it seems that not only is the Lord not answering your prayers, but that He also has turned to fight against you?

- B. It was a long struggle.

It lasted all night -- a long time for a wrestling match! It shows what excellent physical condition Jacob was in. It also shows his determination to win!

And -- amazingly -- Jacob was winning.

At the same time, he was losing! We miss the whole point of this story if we interpret it as meaning that Jacob prevailed over the Lord by struggling against Him.

- C. The turning point: "And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh."
See v. 25.

This means that the Lord hurt Jacob. He injured him. And, as we see later in the passage, the Lord permanently crippled him.

Jump over into the NT about 2,000 years later and you find a similar situation with Paul -- which shows a basic similarity in God's dealings with His people in every age. See 2 Cor. 12. Here we have Paul's thorn in the flesh.

Why was it given to Paul? And why did Jacob have his thorn?

Paul gives us the answer:

"Lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7b).

Listen to what one writer has written:

" . . . no purpose is more settled in the counsels of heaven, than to beat down the vain self-confidence, which in one form or other is so prone to intrude itself into the devoutest doings of even the best of men. Some secret reliance upon their own strength, or uprightness, or understanding, mingles with the workings of their hearts, and prevents that entire renunciation of themselves which is essential to their being filled with the fulness of God. But when the Most High begins to wrestle with a soul, that is, to carry on more effectually the work of grace, he struggles with him in such a manner as to abase every high thing that exalts itself within him, and bring down to the lowest of self-abasement and self-annihilation. He will leave him nothing to plead but his pure gratuitous mercy in Christ. He will cause him, by his hidden influences in his heart, to feel that he has no alternative remaining but to embrace with the arms of faith the Son of God, and thus, as a crippled conqueror, to prevail. He thus learns to believe from the heart the declaration that 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' He is thus led into those mysterious processes of the inward life which may justly be called a continual riddle, which cannot be solved without personal experience. In a word, we may see, in this incident of the mystical conflict, how completely the Lord designs to strip the sinner of every relic of self-confidence, that he may cast himself, weak, wery, lame, halting, and helpless, into the arms of the all-sufficient Saviour" (George Bush, who was professor of Hebrew at the U. of New York beginning in 1831 -- Notes on Genesis, pp. 171, 172).

It was in afflicting Jacob that the Lord gave him the victory. His victory was not in struggling, but in surrender!

And from all of this we can deduct one very important point. You are not going to like it, and neither do I -- but here it is:

If you are going to walk with God and be used by the Lord, it is probably going to mean that you will have to have some kind of a health problem. As long as we can fight all night, we are too strong. When we are crippled in some way, then we begin to make progress. We do not need to seek it; God will bring it!

How is this progress immediately discernible in Jacob?

III. THE CONSEQUENCES.

- A. Jacob realized as never before that all he needed could come, and must come, from just one source -- from GOD!

See v. 26.

Note the apparent reluctance of God -- but only apparent.

Illus: Jesus and the Syrophenician woman in Matt. 15: 21-28.

The Puritans -- God's desertions -- Matthew Lawrence, who in 1657 wrote, The Use and Practice of Faith, once said, "God forsakes us that we may not forsake God."

Do you understand that?

- B. Jacob immediately longed to know more about God.

Cf. v. 29. Have you ever asked God about Himself? Or have you been so captivated by the humanistic emphasis of today that you are so occupied with yourself that you have no time for the Lord?

Have you read, Knowing God, by J. I. Packer?

Do you read your Bible to learn about the Lord?

- C. Jacob was filled with a new assurance. See v. 30 where he says, ". . . and my life is preserved."

It was here that Jacob got the victory over Esau -- because what else could the 400 men have meant except death for Jacob and his family. How interesting it would be to know how Esau changed, and then changed his men!

But it was also an assurance that went far beyond the trouble with Esau. What an illustration this

Job

is of our Lord's words in John 12:25,
"He that loveth his life shall lose it;
and he that hateth his life in this world
shall keep it unto life eternal."

- D. Even the weather the next morning was a token of
God's blessing, and that a trial was past:

"And as he passed over Penuel
the sun rose upon him" (v. 31).

This reminds us also of Psa. 30:5,

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy
cometh in the morning."

Trials have their purpose, and they have their end!

But all was not over:

- E. Jacob continued to carry the evidence of the
conflict: "and he halted (or, limped) upon his
thigh" (v. 31).

As evidence of Paul's conflicts, he wrote to the
Galatians,

" . . . I bear in my body the marks of the
Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).

Why is this?

- 1) To keep us dependent.
- 2) To keep us from pride.

Concl: One final word . . .

By the name which the Lord gave to Jacob, and which became
the name of the nation, the Lord indicates that He wants
His people to be people who prevail with Him and with men
IN PRAYER.

"Have we trials and temptations,
Is there trouble anywhere,
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer."

Our trials, while we would never choose them, may be God's
way of preparing us for the greatest blessings we have ever
experienced.

TRIUMPH, TRAGEDY, TEARS
Genesis 33, 34, 35

Intro: Although the death of Jacob is not recorded until Gen. 49, and his burial in chapter 50, these three chapters are the last 3 (33, 34, 35)ⁱⁿ which the emphasis is especially on Jacob.

Esau is the subject of Gen. 36; Joseph, of Gen. 37-50.

There is much in these 3 chapters -- they are full of facts and details which are very profitable for every believer. But let us take three things and concentrate on them:

- 1) Triumph -- of Jacob over Esau -- in ch. 33.
- 2) Tragedy -- sins in which 4 of Jacob's children were involved:
 - a) The sin of Shechem in committing fornication with Jacob's daughter, Dinah -- in Gen. 34.
 - b) The retaliation of Levi and Simeon -- in murdering all of the men of Shechem -- also in Gen. 34.
 - c) The sin of Reuben in committing incest with Bilhah -- in Gen. 35.
- 3) Tears -- of sorrow.

Undoubtedly the tragedies listed above caused tears and deep sorrow for Jacob, but the tears of Gen. 35 were tears caused by the death of those who were very dear to him:

- a) Deborah -- in v. 8.
- b) Rachel -- in vv. 18, 19.
- c) Isaac -- in v. 29.

Let us see what the Spirit of God will teach us from each of these:

I. TRIUMPH (Gen. 33).

Several things stand out:

- 1) We see how the Lord literally forces Jacob to go back to face the situation with Esau. This was the most severe trial of Jacob's obedience to God.

And any test of obedience is a test of faith.

Here Jacob becomes an example to all of us -- to put obedience to the Lord first, leaving the consequences to the Lord.

- 2) We see, in Esau's change, that the hearts of all men, even of the unregenerate, are in the hands of the Lord. He is sovereign over ALL.

What a wonderful illustration of the fact that it is always right, always safe, to put our trust in the Lord, and to leave the outcome in His hands!

3) We see a real difference in Jacob.

Note how the word grace has found its way into his vocabulary. See vv. 5, 8, 10, 11.

We noted evidence of this in Jacob's prayer in Gen. 32:10.

Calvin says, "He celebrates the grace of God." How few of us there are who really ascribe to God the glory for all that we are and have!

4) We see evidence that Jacob wanted to get started in his new home in the right way. Note Gen. 33:20.

The altar meant:

- 1) That he meant to worship God with sacrifices.
- 2) That he meant for his worship to be seen by the Canaanites -- a public testimony!

The sincerity and depth of our witness is seen when these two things are present.

What an encouragement this should be to us to trust the Lord with all of our problems, and to keep things right with Him and with men.

II. TRAGEDY (Gen. 34, 35).

Things do not always go right in the homes of the people of God, but there are always reasons when they do not.

The sins of Dinah (with an outsider) and of Reuben (with a member of the family, shows that the people of God are not immune to sin. And it is always more grievous when a child of God sins.

Reuben's sin is condemned by 1 Cor. 5:1.

How important it is in these days to recognize that this is still sin -- even though it might be accepted by the world!

How did they happen?

Note some possible answers:

- 1) Gen. 34:1, "And Dinah . . . went out to see the daughters of the land.

How often sin is started by what we see!

She left the safety of her father's home, and did that which was definitely forbidden by God.

We cannot play with sin, even with the temptation to look at the sins of others, or to compromise with sinners. We are apt to get into situations, like Dinah, which are too great for us.

- 2) Gen. 49:3, 4 seems to give the answer as far as Reuben is concerned.

Reuben was weak -- perhaps inclined to depend on his family -- but having neglected those things having to do with his fellowship with the Lord that would have made him strong.

Are we making the same mistake -- depending on a good family, or upon our church -- but not taking care of the nourishment and obedience of our own lives?

And then, what about Simeon and Levi?

Their action, though in some ways understandable, went far beyond what was right -- and this, too, was a source of great grief to Jacob.

How easy it is for us to over-react when others do something that is wrong!

Note what Jacob says about them in Gen. 49:5-7. They were "cruel" men because they had never learned how to handle "anger" and "wrath."

They (1) went completely beyond what was right in killing all of the men. They (2) had no right to do what they did. They appointed themselves as the ones to execute judgment. This is the Lord's job. And they (3) did what they did under the pretence that they would make children of God out of the men of Shechem -- even desecrating the sacred sign of the covenant which God had given to them: circumcision.

Let us be careful lest the sin of others become the occasion of even greater sin with us. Sin is not corrected with sin -- nor does God ever punish sin with sin.

Finally . . .

III. TEARS -- tears of sorrow.

The time comes when all of us have to face this -- the death of our loved ones.

Life does not get easier the longer we live. We have more and more and more reasons for trusting the Lord.

Three times Jacob buried those who were dear to him here in Gen. 35:

- 1) Deborah (v. 8).
- 2) Rachel (vv. 18, 19) -- when joy was turned to sorrow -- the greatest of Jacob's sorrows because of the great love that he had for Rachel.
- 3) His own father, Isaac, which brought him and Esau together again.

And note that this came even though Jacob had done everything to get his family situation straightened out. See Gen. 35: 35:1-5.

Jacob had a wife to bury and a new son to take care of -- the only son born in the land of Canaan.

Note what he did with Rachel's body:

- 1) He buried her.
- 2) He put a marker on her grave.

WHY?

Both of these practices have come down to us today, but few understand the significance:

- 1) Jacob buried the body of his beloved wife because he believed in resurrection -- not only in the immortality of the soul, but in the immortality of the body!

Is this not what 1 Cor. 15:51-57 teaches?

This is one thing that gives us courage to go on serving the Lord. All is not in vain. There is more to come, and what is coming is better than this could ever be!

But there is another reason:

- 2) Jacob put a marker on Rachel's grave as a testimony to the Canaanites of his faith -- of his hope for that which is to come!

Has the Lord recently taken someone very dear to you? Let your heart be comforted by this. Perhaps it has been years since that dear one was taken. The hope is still the same, and the world needs to know that we not only have a faith that is sufficient for death, but it is a faith that goes far beyond the grave into eternal life!

Concl: What chapters!

They hold:

- 1) Encouragement to trust the Lord in our trials -- even when we are to blame.
- 2) Warning against the sin with which this world is filled; it can affect us too.
- 3) Comfort in the greatest trial of all -- when the Lord takes our loved ones from us through death.

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS
Genesis 37

Intro: We come to the last section of Genesis -- the life of Joseph.

The contrast between Gen. 36 and Gen. 37-50 -- the former is what Matthew Henry (I, 212) calls "a bare barren genealogy"; the latter, "a memorable useful history."

In Zech. 4:10 we have a question which I want to take as my subject this morning:

"For who hath despised the day of small things?"

When we are looking for the finger of God in history, we usually are looking for BIG things. God's work is always BIG, but it seems to be characteristic of His ways that He begins with things which are so insignificant in the eyes of men that often it is only afterwards we are able to see that in the "small things" the Lord was doing something really important.

As it was with Zerubbabel, so it was with Joseph -- the things they saw were "small" in the light of what the Lord was doing -- both, in the light of what needed to be done.

In Joseph's case, the Lord was in the process of making a mighty nation out of an insignificant family -- as He had promised Joseph's great grandfather He would do. See Gen. 15:13-16.

But this was only a part of it.

This nation was important, extremely important, for at least two reasons:

- 1) It was through this nation that God was going to give His Word to men.
- 2) It was through this nation also that God was going to give His Son to be the Redeemer of men.

I intend to deal with this chapter from Joseph's point-of-view, but I must mention another way in which we see evidence of the "small" beginnings of the work of God. It has to do with the way in which Joseph's life so closely parallels the life of our Lord Jesus Christ almost 2,000 years later!

One reason for Joseph's hard experiences (as well as some that were more enjoyable) is that he was chosen of God to be the greatest human type of our Lord Jesus Christ that we have in all of the Old Testament! Note how he was loved by his father, hated by his brothers, destined to be a king, rejected by his brethren, sold for 20 pieces of silver, etc. You can fill in this details. Here we have a divinely painted picture looking

ahead to the One Who is the theme of all Scripture: the Lord Jesus Christ!

But let us look just now at Joseph. What were some of the "small things" which turned out to be of great significance in the life of Joseph?

I. THE "SMALL THINGS."

- A. First, the fact that the Lord was dealing with a teenager. See v. 2.

Think of Samuel, of David. Even of Saul of Tarsus who in later years said that God had "separated" him "from" his "mother's womb."

The Lord not only deals in "small things," but He deals with little people -- teenagers, children, those who are "nothing . . ."

- B. The second, Joseph's dreams. See vv. 5-9.

Everybody dreams. Doubtless Joseph had dreamed before. And most of his dreams meant nothing.

But there was something special about these dreams -- and even his brothers recognized it when he told them.

What was happening? See Heb. 1:1. God was speaking and a revelation was being given to Joseph.

How unlikely they were!

But note what they were:

1. Of sheaves of wheat.

This was given to shepherds, not to farmers, to show that it was under different circumstances that this would be fulfilled -- when Joseph's brothers would be after bread.

2. Of the sun, moon, and stars.

This was to get them to realize that the Lord was doing this -- and therefore they could expect it to be a miraculous work!

But in themselves they were "small things"!

- C. The errand on which Jacob sent Joseph.

This had probably happened many times before, but this time Joseph was not coming back. Jacob could not have known that. If he had, he would never have sent Joseph to see his brothers. And when he grieved in vv. 33-35, this was probably his greatest regret in the whole thing -- that he had sent Joseph.

All seemed unimportant at the time, but the Lord was working in it all. His sovereign providence becomes clearer all of the time.

Let us believe that the Lord is working for us, too!

II. THE TREACHERY OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS.

Although they hated him because his father loved him, the thing that made them furious was the meaning that they saw in the dreams -- and the Lord enabled them to understand at least the basic meaning.

How foolish for anyone to try to do away with the purposes of God! Let us learn well the lesson that the Spirit of God has included for us here. See vv. 18-32.

III. THE OVERRULING CARE OF GOD.

We see this in three ways:

- A. In the way the Lord moved upon the hearts of Reuben and Judah.

The Lord will give us friends even among our enemies. The hearts of all men are in his hands -- and this is proof.

- B. In the arrival of the merchantmen at the right time -- and in their destination.

How perfect are the ways of the Lord, and how exact his timing! He makes "even the wrath of men to praise Him" (see Psa. 76:10 -- not an exact quotation).

- C. In the one who purchased Joseph from the merchantmen: Potiphar. See v. 36.

God is getting things ready for the next phase.

Concl: Cf. Rom. 15:4, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (NASB)

(Apply.) Do not "despise the day of small things."

MOSES'S DAY

THE LORD "WITH" JOSEPH IN EGYPT

MOSES'S DAY

Genesis 39

MOSES'S DAY

Scripture reading: Genesis 39:1-5, 20-23.

- Intro: In Gen. 37 we had the record of Joseph as a shepherd.
In Gen. 39 we see Joseph as a servant. Gen. 38 is given in contrast with Gen. 39 as we shall see.

In Gen. 39 it is obvious that there is an emphasis on the preposition "with." Cf. vv. 2, 3, 21, 23. What does it mean?

From these verses it is obvious that it means:

- 1) Prosperity.
- 2) Blessing.
- 3) Favor.

See the following verses:

- 1) Gen. 26:1-5 -- concerning Isaac.
- 2) Gen. 28:13-15 -- concerning Jacob.
- 3) Isa. 41:10.

So it is more than just a declaration of the omnipresence of the Lord. It is evidence of His blessing.

It is the equivalent of God being "for" us in Rom. 8:31.

— This is what Boaz had in mind when he greeted the reapers with, "The Lord be with you." And they responded with, "The Lord bless thee" (Ruth 2:4).

AND WE MUST NOTE THAT THIS IS EVIDENCE OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, AND THAT THIS PRECEDED ALL THAT IS RECORDED IN JOSEPH'S LIFE. We do not understand the workings of the Lord upon our hearts, but we must recognize that Moses is not telling us here in Gen. 39 that Joseph was faithful, and so the Lord was "with him," but Moses is saying that the Lord was "with" Joseph, and so -- Joseph was faithful,

Joseph was not seduced by Potiphar's wife,
Joseph did not get bitter against his brothers,
or against Potiphar's wife -- and on and on!

This one phrase is descriptive of Joseph's life. It says all that can be said or needs to be said. It could be the epitaph on his grave marker: "And the Lord was with Joseph."

What wonderful lessons there are for us in this chapter!

- Let us note, first of all, what this expression does NOT mean:

I. WHAT IT DOES NOT MEAN.

Let us confine ourselves to Gen. 39.

- A. It does NOT mean that things will always go the way we want them to go.

Joseph did not want to be in Egypt. He wanted to be with his father and his family in Canaan.

- B. It does NOT mean that people will not hurt you -- even hate you.

Look at what his brother's had been able to do -- and remember that they really wanted to do a lot worse!

- C. It does NOT mean that you cannot be tempted to sin -- tempted to commit the worst of sins.

Cf. Potiphar's wife.

In fact, this may have been the reason that such a temptation came his way -- because the Lord was "with" him!

- D. It does NOT mean that your name will not be maligned -- slandered.

False accusations are a terrible thing. Imagine what this meant to Joseph! In our human relationships we have nothing greater than our name (Dr. Kerr reminded us men of this at our retreat).

The Lord may permit our names to get dragged in the dirt of this world -- and sometimes the people of God will be the ones responsible for it.

Are you on some kind of a grapevine -- which the dictionary defines as "a secret means of spreading information"?

And what if this happens to us -- are we justified in retaliating in the same way? Where do you read about Joseph's lawsuit against Potiphar's wife for defamation of character? Where do you read that he ever said anything about her? Or that he ever did anything to get even?

- E. It does NOT mean that things will not get worse (before they get better).

Joseph went from being a servant to become a prisoner. Is that up, or down? Was he having fun? Cf. Psa. 105: 18, "Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron." Joseph's life teaches us that things can go from bad to worse, even when the Lord is "with" you!

But I do not want to send you away discouraged. All of this has had to do with WHAT IT DID NOT MEAN. Now let us look at . .

II. WHAT IT DID MEAN.

- A. First -- as far as God was concerned: It meant that the will of God was being done.

How strange are the ways of the Lord! How very strange!

But what an encouragement the life of Joseph is in seeing God at work doing His own will, fulfilling His own purposes!

And this includes an internal work (in us) as well as an external work (having to do with our circumstances).

This was Joseph's training for the throne! How different from our leadership seminars today!

All of this was designed by God to teach Joseph that the important thing was not -- his plans,
his comfort,
his reputation,
or "his" anything else!

The important thing was that the will of God be done for the glory of God.

And so it was not only WHAT, but HOW -- the spirit with which it was done.

- B. Secondly -- what it meant as far as Joseph was concerned:

1. Joseph's faithfulness.

Will you note again that this chapter begins and ends on the same note even though it begins in Potiphar's lovely home, and ends in an Egyptian prison?

Joseph did not sulk because he was being wronged, or because he felt that he deserved something better. Wherever he was, he looked for that which was his duty -- and he did it.

And let me say again -- this was not the reason why God was "with" him, but it was the evidence, the proof.

2. Joseph's righteousness.

We may suffer at the hands of men, but we must never suffer "as an evildoer." Cf. 1 Pet. 3:16 (not an

exact quotation). The evidence that the Lord is "with" us will be the fact that He is keeping us from sinning against Him.

3. Joseph's blessing.

Wherever Joseph was, there was blessing -- not always great blessings, but blessings nevertheless!

Do not despise the little things that the Lord is doing. They indicate that greater blessings are on the way.

Blessing . . . prosperity . . . favor!!!

But there is one thing that becomes increasingly prominent in Joseph's life that I want to conclude with this morning. It is:

4. Joseph's consciousness of the presence of God.

Note it in this chapter in v. 9. To Joseph (and he was right), the Lord was always there!

Trace this all the way to the end: Gen. 50:19, 20.

Concl: Your story is not completed -- and neither is mine. But from where you are this morning, is the outlook discouraging? Does it even look hopeless? How do you think that it looked to Joseph from an Egyptian prison -- for "two full years"?

But look at the outcome!

The Lord is with us too! Let us be encouraged. The outcome may not be what we think, or what we want (or it may be!) -- but, whatever, the Lord is working out His will for His glory, and that is what will give us our greatest joy!

FAITHFUL, BUT FORGOTTEN
Genesis 40
(Read also Gen. 39:20-23; 41:1a)

Intro: In this chapter we come to the third phase in Joseph's life:

- 1) First, he was a shepherd.
- 2) Second, he was a servant in Potiphar's house in the land of Egypt.
- 3) Here, he is in prison -- falsely accused by Potiphar's wife.

It seems that from the time the Lord showed to Joseph by the two dreams that he had what his life work was to be, that everything went wrong -- and it continued this way for about 13 years!

Why?

Why is it that we see trials and problems in the lives of all of the men and women of Scripture?

What purpose do they serve in our lives -- because none of us has found that the life of a Christian is a life free from trouble?

Obviously the answer has to do with what the Lord is seeking to teach us, how He is seeking to change us. Let us see the answer to the question in Joseph's case so that we can get some help in answering the question as it relates to our lives.

We have in our text, from 39:20 to 41:1a, evidence of seven things that the Lord was doing in Joseph's life:

- I. HE WAS LEARNING ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD (Gen. 39: 21, 23).

I almost gave this message the title, When the Lord Went to Jail.

Joseph had already learned a little about this while he was at Potiphar's house:

- that his brother's could send him away, but they could not keep the Lord from going along into Egypt.
- that Potiphar could put Joseph in prison, but he could not keep the Lord out!

The presence of the Lord -- how amazing this truth is! Have we really grasped what it means?

Note two passages -- one in the OT, the other in the NT:

- 1) Josh. 1:9, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

He does not tell Joshua all the places he is going, but He assures him that, wherever it is, he can count on the Lord being there!

- 2) Heb. 13:5, 6, "Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content . . . So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not . . ."

This obviously was Lesson #1 -- not a lesson that we learn once and for all at any time, but one that we continue to learn over and over, in deeper and more wonderful ways each time the Lord teaches us.

- II. HE WAS LEARNING ABOUT THE BLESSING OF THE LORD (Gen. 39: 21, 23 -- the same two verses we had for our first point).

Note also Gen. 39:5b.

We know that trials always lead to blessing, but the mistake we make is in expecting^{all} the blessing after the trial is over!

The blessings never stop! They come when things are at their worst. The Lord was with the three friends of Daniel when they were in the fiery furnace; He did not wait until they came out!

Do you remember what David wrote in Psa. 68:19? "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." And then he adds, "Selah."

Sometimes we have trials that never end. What about them? Listen to Paul's words in 2 Cor. 12:9, 10. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient . . . Most gladly . . . Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Look for the blessings NOW. This is Lesson #2.

- III. HE WAS LEARNING TO HAVE COMPASSION FOR OTHERS (Gen. 40:6, 7).

It is not always true, but most of the time it is -- that the people with the most compassion are those who have suffered the most. John Calvin once wrote: "Men become softened by their own afflictions."

Wasn't this what Paul had in mind when he wrote those words at the beginning of 2 Corinthians -- an Epistle which has much to say about his sufferings: 2 Cor. 1:3, 4, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort . . ."

Sin has made our hearts hard; God softens them with afflic-

tion. This is Lesson #3.

IV. HE WAS LEARNING TO BE HUMBLE BEFORE THE LORD (Gen. 40:8).

The Lord had given Joseph the gift of interpretation -- and he knew it.

There is no evidence that anyone else in Egypt had it. But that did not make him proud. Instead, his trials had made him very conscious that he did not have anything but what it had come to him from the Lord.

Paul asked the Corinthians a question that we all need to answer. After saying to them, "that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another," he added this question (or questions): "For who amketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

Do you know a doctrine that is coming under increasing disfavor with a lot of Christians in these days? It is the doctrine of human depravity -- or worse, TOTAL depravity!

Have you heard slanderous remarks about worm theology? Worm theology is good theology. It's Biblical theology. David said, "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people" (Psa. 22:6). And do you know when he said it? When he was going through the agony of feeling that God had forsaken him! See Psa. 22:1.

Isaac Watts who knew more theology than most of us will ever know wrote those words,

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"

The only problem about calling yourself a worm is that you had better get ready to apologize to the worms because they have never done what you and I have done to corrupt this world in which we live.

This was Joseph's Lesson #4. Are we learning it?

V. HE WAS LEARNING HOW DIFFERENT ARE THE WAYS OF THE LORD.

The whole chapter tells us this. In fact, so do the preceding chapters. And even here where Joseph seems to see a little light in this dark place (see vv. 14, 15), the light goes out -- and Joseph remains in the darkness for 2 more "full years"! See Gen. 41:1a.

How slowly the Lord works sometimes! And in what round-about ways!

But how certainly He works!

It was in prison that Joseph (and also Paul) continued to learn the truths of Isa. 55:8, 9,

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

The Lord knows what He is doing even though it may be a mystery to us. This is Lesson #5.

VI. HE WAS LEARNING TO GET HIS ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE WORD OF GOD.

But, you say, where do you read of Joseph reading his Bible?

We don't! But the Lord was speaking in those days in a different way -- by dreams. Cf. Heb. 1:1.

The Lord had spoken to the butler and the baker just as clearly and certainly as He had spoken to Joseph over 10 years before -- but He fulfilled His Word to them in 3 days while He made Joseph wait for 13 years!

But how was this an encouragement to Joseph? By seeing that the Lord is faithful to His Word. He does not deal with any of us in exactly the same way, but He always stands faithful to His promises. AND SO ANY TIME YOU SEE GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO SOMEONE ELSE, IT SHOULD BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO YOU THAT HE WILL BE FAITHFUL TO YOU, TOO.

Sometimes all we have is the Word -- but that is enough! This is Lesson #6.

VII. HE WAS LEARNING TO BE PATIENT (Gen. 40:23-41:1a).

Yes, FAITHFUL, BUT FORGOTTEN -- but only forgotten by men, not by the Lord!

One of the greatest enemies of the spiritual life is that we are always in a hurry.

Why does the Lord make us wait? Let me suggest three reasons from Joseph's experience:

- 1) He makes us wait until we can see that where we are is exactly where He wants us to be. When He was ready, He moved Joseph out, but not until Joseph had come to realize that this was the Lord's doing.

- 2) He makes us wait so that we can know in a deeper and more complete way what it means to trust -- to trust Him, and Him alone -- not ourselves, and not others.
We do not find it hard to trust when we can see how things can work out, but the Lord makes us trust Him even when or until all hope is gone!
- 3) He makes us wait so that, when the answer comes, we will not hesitate at all to give Him all of the glory for all of the answer.

James has taught us the following:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into various trials, Knowing this, that the testing of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing!"

This is Lesson #7.

Application: What kind of a prison are you in today?

What do we mean by a prison? It is any circumstance which seems to be contrary to the will of God and/or any circumstance that keeps you from doing the will of God.

Most of the time people are involved.

Why are you there? Why am I there?

Answer: For the same reason that Joseph was there -- so we can learn

- 1) that the Lord is doing the work,
- 2) that He is working in us in preparation for what He will do through us,
- 3) and that we may trust Him more completely and glorify Him for every blessing received and for every work that is done.

THE HAND OF THE LORD
Genesis 41

Intro: The Bible has much to say about hands. It is expressive not only of what people do, but of the power that they exercise.

There was a time when Joseph was in his brothers hands.

He left his coat in the hands of Potiphar's wife.

Often it seems that we are more in the hands of men than we are in the hands of the Lord. And to make it even harder, we can usually see the hands of men, but the hands of the Lord are hard to see. Sometimes it seems that men's hands are the stronger. Sometimes it seems that God's hands are not doing anything. And yet we have the promise of our Lord in John 10: 27-30, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them . . ."

While the hand, or the hands, of the Lord are not mentioned here in Genesis 41, it is evident that God's hand is to be seen in the circumstances of the chapter.

Let me mention four significant ways.

First of all, the hand of the Lord is seen in:

I. THE TIMING (Gen. 41:1).

Lit. this is two years of days. If Joseph's hope had not been a true hope, one given to him by the Lord, it would have died out during this time! They were two long years, and Joseph lived every day of them -- hoping, hoping hoping!

And suddenly things began to happen -- not in the prison, but in the palace.

And when it did, the time was right -- right for everyone concerned!

This confirms every command in the Bible which tells us to wait.

Years later Habakkuk penned these words:

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3).

We are not told how the time affected Joseph, but at last things began to move.

II. PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

There are several things of importance here. First:

A. The fact that there were two dreams (vv. 2-4, 5-7).

The Lord had done this with Joseph. We are so slow to realize what the Lord is doing, and that He is speaking to us -- so He usually speaks more than once, and often in different ways.

He spoke 10 times in the plagues to the Pharaoh of Moses' day!

B. The peculiar nature of the dreams.

Remember that the Lord is speaking to Pharaoh, and so these dreams are God's word to Pharaoh. How strange the Word of God is to those who do not know the Lord! Who every heard of cattle eating cattle, or of one stalk of grain or ear of corn eating another?

But the account of creation, or the doctrine of the new birth, or the truth of the coming of the Lord sound just as strange to the unregenerate ear.

The wisdom of God is foolishness to men.

C. The way the dreams disturbed Pharaoh (v. 8a).

When the Lord is speaking, no man can cast His Word aside. Although doubtless Pharaoh had dreamed many times before, there was something about these dreams that he could not get away from. His very concern was evidence of the working of God's hand.

D. The lack of an interpreter (v. 8b).

Paul teaches us: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

This is how the Lord was preparing the way for Joseph. There was no one else in all of Egypt who could do what needed to be done.

E. The butler's remembrance (v. 9).

It is not to his credit that he remembered; this is also evidence of the hand of the Lord moving upon his heart. The Lord actually kept the butler from remembering until the time was right in accordance with the plan of God.

But there is a third way in which we can see the hand of the Lord in this chapter:

III. JOSEPH'S INTERPRETATION OF PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

Note how there is no attempt on Joseph's part to make something of himself. In his first recorded words before Pharaoh we see evidence of his humility and his faith.

A. His first words (v. 16).

This was Moses' first response when the Lord called him after 40 years of waiting!

Note also what John the Baptist said about himself when he was asked who he was. Cf. John 1:23, "the voice."

Not many of us speak like this today!

B. The main point (vv. 25, 28).

Oh, that we delighted more in talking about the Lord!
Here Joseph exalts the providence,
the foreknowledge,
the power . . . of GOD!

C. The interpretation (vv. 26, 27, 29-31).

Cf. what Joseph had said to the butler and the baker in Gen. 40:8.

The dreams were given to Pharaoh, but the meaning was given to Joseph. Note how the Spirit of God gives us wisdom and ability far beyond what we naturally have.

D. The reason for the repetition (v. 32).

It is interesting to relate this to the two dreams which Joseph himself had back in ch. 39 -- 13 years before this!

There were actually two reasons -- and this applies to anything else that we find repeated in the Word of God:

- 1) Its certainty.
- 2) Its nearness -- by the Lord's timing.

E. The application (vv. 33-36).

Thus, we have three things:

- 1) A revelation -- to Pharaoh.
- 2) An interpretation -- by Joseph.
- 3) The application -- also by Joseph. The first two

would have been meaningless to Pharaoh without the third. How often we fail to profit from the Word because we lack the application. This, too, is of the Lord.

And in all of this the Lord was leading to:

IV. THE OUTCOME FOR JOSEPH (vv. 37-43).

What a miracle!

But do not overlook the main point: **THE IS THE LORD'S DOING.** It was not just luck. It is the Lord, His hand, His purpose, His will.

Even Pharaoh's acceptance of what Joseph said was in itself a miracle. But here again we see the power of the Word of God, and the conviction that it carries that it is true. When God is working, there is no need to proofs or arguments.

Note: For the second time in the same day Joseph has a change of clothing -- probably the first time in his life that this had happened!

God is faithful! We may think that He forgets, but He never does.

Concl. and Appl: Like Pharaoh, we need to know how to use what God has revealed. This was not only done for Joseph and Pharaoh and Egypt and the surrounding nations and for Jacob and his other sons -- BUT ALSO FOR US!

I can't do all of the applying of truth that needs to be done. This is also what the Lord does. Each one needs to ask this question for himself: What is the Lord teaching me from this chapter?

But let me make three simple suggestions. The chapter teaches us:

- 1) To wait -- Like Joseph did. It was not in vain.
- 2) To hope while we wait, to believe.
- 3) To learn -- about the Lord,
about His ways,
about ourselves.

The Lord intends for our experiences to be humbling, but also to be strengthening.

OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT
Genesis 41:37-57

Intro: I had originally planned to get into ch. 42 also this morning, but have found a great deal of truth in the latter part of ch. 41, so will reserve ch. 42 for next Lord's day -- if the Lord wills, and tarries.

The first part of ch. 41 gives us an excellent illustration of revelation, interpretation, and application --

- 1) Revelation -- when the Lord gave the two dreams to Pharaoh.
- 2) Interpretation -- when the Lord showed Joseph what the dreams meant.
- 3) Application -- when the Lord showed Joseph what Pharaoh should do about his dreams.

*GOD'S
SILENCE
BROKEN*
This was a real turning point in the life of Joseph. For 13 years he had, in a sense, been in the darkness. Now he moved out of the darkness into the light, never to be in the darkness in quite the same way again! Things were at last becoming clear.

There are at least 5 ways in which this was true:

- I. IN SEEING THE WORD OF GOD FULFILLED IN THREE WAYS -- with 7 years between the 2nd and the 3rd.

Remember that God had spoken to Joseph as well as to Pharaoh by means of dreams.

What were the 3 ways?

- A. When Pharaoh exalted Joseph as second only to himself over all the land of Egypt (Gen. 41:40-42).

What an amazing thing this was! Absolutely unbelievable.

- B. When the seven years of plenty came (Gen. 41:47, 49).

This was not only good -- it was good to the point of being miraculous!

- C. When the seven years of famine began (Gen. 41:54-57).

How would we use these facts in our own lives?

Well, they teach us that there will be times in our lives when God speaks to us through His Word, and yet they are times when we do not see a fulfillment of the promises. The Lord is asking us to wait, to believe, to hope -- even though it seems like we are waiting in vain. Joseph had 13 years like this!

But, then, the Lord began to work -- and faith turned to sight, darkness to light!

It will for us, too!

— II. IN RECEIVING AN UNEXPECTED BLESSING FROM THE LORD (Gen. 41:45).

There is an untold story in itself in connection with Asenath.

This makes us think back to ch. 39 -- and to Potiphar's wife. How tragic it would have been if Joseph had not waited for God's time!

While we are not given a lot of detail here, yet it is unthinkable that Joseph, who had been so faithful to the Lord during all of these 13 years, would rush into a marriage, or be pressured to do so, if he did not firmly believe that this was the will of God!

Joseph had not only waited for his life work; he had waited for his life partner. And suddenly -- there she was!

Oh, young people, do not run ahead of the Lord in this. Wait for God's time, and for God's choice. He (or she) will be far better than you would have ever chosen. Don't be pressured by the world's ways. The Lord is in sovereign control -- and He will work!

This is a great illustration of Eph. 3:20. And it is illustrative of the ways of the Lord. He not only gives us what He has promised, but He gives us a lot of added surprises along the way.

III. IN RECOGNIZING THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

Things which seemed to be so pointless before, now begin to fit into place.

Why did the Spirit of God lead Moses (in writing Genesis) to give Joseph's age at this point? He was 30 years old.

There are probably many reasons. But one is this: So we might put it together with the 17 years of Gen. 37:2 and realize how long Joseph had been waiting in darkness -- with only the Word of God to go on!

And then for Joseph at this early age to be given such a position in a foreign land right after coming out of prison -- this had to be the providence of God!

But there are two other ways. See vv. 51, 52.

A. The naming of MANASSEH (v. 51).

The name means forgetting. Who made him forget, and what did he forget?

The answer to the first question is "God." Here is evidence that Joseph had recognized the hand of the Lord in all of his 13 years of exile.

In what sense did he, could he, forget "all my toil, and all my father's house"?

It meant that, in thinking back over those years to his brothers, Potiphar's wife, the butler, all bitterness, all resentment, any feeling of revenge, was gone -- because he could see now that the hand of the Lord had never been removed from his life -- that the Lord had been working and guiding and controlling all through those long years.

Will you believe that for yourself?

Cf. Rom. 8:18, "For I reckon that the sufferings . . ."

Also Heb. 12:11, "Now no chastening for the present . . ."

B. The naming of EPHRAIM (v. 52).

Notice "God" again -- divine providence!

Again Joseph is worshipping "God"!

We often wonder why people name their children the way they do. Joseph had reasons, and he doubtless gave those reasons many, many times when he was asked -- and it gave him an opportunity to glorify the Lord!

Look at those two words which Joseph puts together: "fruitful" and "affliction."

They always go together. Fruit will also be produced in our lives through affliction, testing. It may be different from the "affliction" which Joseph experienced, but it will be our own peculiar testing!

(Read the card from M. L. -- given to me back in Nov. of 1975.)

Cf. Psa. 126:5, 6, "They that sow in tears shall reap" (a promise), but also "shall reap IN JOY."

IV. IN EXPERIENCING THE RESULTS (in himself) OF WAITING 13 YEARS.

This would have ruined most 30 year old men, even though they were the children of God --

- 1) Either through pride,
- 2) Or through compromise with Egypt's ways, or with Egypt's gods!

Joseph went right to work -- just like he had done:

- 1) For his father.
- 2) For Potiphar.
- 3) For the jailor.

The Lord knew how to get Joseph ready -- and He knows what He is doing with us.

Some have asked: Why do you think that Joseph did not get in touch with his family when all of this happened?

Because he had learned when he could not do a lot of the things that he wanted to do that it was always safe to leave things in the Lord's hand, and so he was not going to take matters into his own hands now when he could do something!

We do not learn this overnight -- and neither did Joseph! For him it took 13 years! How long will it take for us?

V. IN UNDERSTANDING THAT OTHER DARK DAYS WILL COME.

It would have been easy to forget the coming years of famine during the seven years of plenty.

But Joseph did not forget!

HAVE YOU?

At one point in Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas "returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch" -- to do what? Listen carefully to the answer: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21b, 22).

Just because things are going well now, we cannot assume that this will always be the case. In fact, we can be absolutely sure that they will NOT always go well!

Are you learning what the Lord is seeking to teach you? Are you hiding His Word in your heart like Joseph was storing grain during those seven years of plenty? Do you spend more time waiting and praying now, and less time scheming and talking?

We do not know what is going to happen in our country -- but it is certain that vastly different days are ahead for all of us! Are you getting ready?

Application: Let me finish this morning with a word for any of you who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

Joseph is a wonderful OT picture (or type) of Christ. He was:

- 1) Beloved by his father.
- 2) Hated by his brethren.
- 3) Sold by his brothers as our Lord was turned over to the Jews by Judas for 30 pieces of silver.
- 4) Began his public ministry also at 30 years of age.
- 5) Was king -- as our Lord will be.

And in many other ways Joseph pictures our Lord Jesus Christ.

But at the end of our chapter today -- notice v. 55 -- and let me point you to Christ through what Pharaoh said to his people. He said, "Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do."

Doesn't that remind you of what Mary, the mother of our Lord, said to the servants at the marriage in Cana of Galilee? "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5).

May I say this morning that, if the Lord has shown you your need, and if you have come to realize the emptiness, the nothingness of all that this world has to offer, and that there is a God in heaven Whom you have sinned against -- then, do not look to me, nor to anyone here whom you can see, nor to Central Bible Church, but GO TO JESUS! He is the only One Who can help you. He has food for your soul. He will save you. And He will save you now. Open your heart to Him. Do what He says. He is the One Who gave us John 3:16. It holds the answer to your need.

JOSEPH, JUDAH, AND CHRIST
Genesis 42-44

Scripture reading: Gen. 43:1-15.

Intro: The outstanding theme of the all the Bible is CHRIST!

This is brought out in several NT passages:

- 1) In John 5, when the Lord was speaking to some unbelieving Jews, He said to them in v. 39,
"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."
- 2) On another occasion, after His resurrection, our Lord was with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were confused about what had taken place in connection with the Lord, and especially about reports of His resurrection. Then Luke records these words in Luke 24:25-27,
"Then He said unto them, O foolish one, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ (or, the Messiah) to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself."
- 3) And then in that same chapter, vv. 44, 45, when the Lord was with "the eleven" (v. 33), Luke tells us that the Lord said and did this:
"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

In these passages the Lord does two things:

- 1) He clearly teaches that He is the theme of all of Scripture.
- 2) He indicates that we will not be able to understand the Scriptures unless we recognize this to be true.

When Philip went to find Nathanael in John 1:45, he said to him,
"We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

The OT Scriptures speak of Christ in several ways:

- 1) Sometimes He appears personally -- theophanies, pre-incarnate appearances -- as Isaiah saw Him in Isa. 6.
- 2) Sometimes He is the subject of some prophetic utterance -- like Zechariah's words in Zech. 12:10,
" . . . and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced . . ."

- 3) Sometimes the Lord is seen in types -- which are OT illustrations of Christ -- like the Passover lamb, or the Tabernacle.

It is with this latter kind of revelation that we are concerned this morning: types.

Joseph is a type of Christ -- probably the greatest of any man in the OT!

But Judah also is a type of Christ (in this passage).

A word of caution: Just because men like Joseph and Judah are types of Christ in some respects, does not mean that everything about them is typical of Christ. Sometimes they are very much in contrast with Christ, instead of being like him, and so we must be careful to distinguish between what is important as pointing to Christ as compared with that which is not to be included.

It is amazing to see this in the Word of God. We can hardly find a greater evidence of the sovereignty of God than that the character, the circumstances of men's lives, should portray in such amazing detail the life, character, and works of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So -- while in these three chapters we want to continue with the life of Joseph, yet we also want to see how Joseph, and Judah, in these chapters typify our Lord.

We could have pointed out in previous chapters how Joseph is a picture of Christ in:

- 1) The fact that he was the beloved son of his father.
 - 2) The fact that he was hated by his brethren.
 - 3) That his being placed in the pit is a picture of our Lord's death and resurrection.
 - 4) That he was sold by his brethren into the hands of Gentiles.
 - 5) That he experienced the worst kind of humiliation, false accusations, etc., before his exaltation over all Egypt.
- And there are many other ways in which Joseph pictures Christ.

In these chapters, therefore, we have . . .

I. JOSEPH -- A TYPE OF CHRIST, THE KING.

Let me mention three ways in which we can see this -- and then we will spend a little time thinking of Judah.

A. The glory of Joseph.

What a picture this is of the day in which the Lord Jesus Christ will reign as King of kings, and Lord of lords!

And do you remember how Joseph's brothers rebelled against the idea that they would ever fall at Joseph's feet? That is why they sold him -- to do away with his dream. That is why they wanted to kill him. When they saw Joseph coming in Gen. 37 when Jacob had sent him to see his brothers, they said,

"Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: AND WE SHALL SEE WHAT WILL BECOME OF HIS DREAMS."

But, now, look at what happened without any pressure, so simply, so voluntarily, so suddenly . . . "and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth" (Gen. 42:6).

And then notice v. 9 -- "And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them . . ." -- dreams which for the moment, at least, and because of the many years which had gone by, he had forgotten!

We are like this. We can forget the promises. We quit praying about certain things when they do not take place when we feel that they should -- or when the passage of time so discourages us that we quit hoping!

And then suddenly the answer is there -- like it was with Joseph!

AND THIS IS THE WAY THAT IT WILL BE WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST! At the end of the Great Tribulation, suddenly He will come, and this prophecy which has seemed so impossible, so unlikely, will suddenly be fulfilled.

Cf. Phil. 2:9-11, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him . . ."

What an encouragement this ought to be to us to believe the Word of God!

- B. The sovereignty of Joseph -- bringing to light the hidden things, showing what the Lord had been doing in the lives of his brothers, getting things cleared up which seemed to have no solution.

We cannot justify Joseph in everything that he did, but there were probably reasons that he had which we cannot understand, such as:

- 1) Maintaining his proper position with foreigners.
- 2) Seeking to determine what his brothers were like after 20 years.
- 3) Wanting to protect Benjamin, and even Jacob.

We will not consider all of the details of these chapters this morning, but think how this pictures the coming work of the One Who said,

"Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

The Apostle Paul gave us these words found in 1 Cor. 4:5, "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."

Think of the Lord Jesus when you read of Joseph dealing with his brothers!

C. The tenderness of Joseph.

Read Gen. 42:24, 25; 43:16, 24, 30; 45:1, 2.

Link these statements with similar statements made of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- 1) Luke 13:34, 35,

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."
- 2) John 11:35, "Jesus wept."
- 3) Luke 23:34,

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
- 4) John 8:11 -- to the woman taken in the act of committing adultery,

"Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no moare."

Oh, the amazing tenderness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (2 Cor. 8:9).

And so these chapters give us some wonderful types of our Lord Jesus Christ in Joseph. What about Judah?

II. JUDAH -- A TYPE OF CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR.

It had not yet been revealed, but now we know that our Lord was to be born of the tribe of Judah!

How does Judah portray our Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour?

- A. First, by his promise. See Gen. 43:9 -- one of the great verses of the Bible -- words which could be put into the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ for every believer.

Note: They are voluntary, full, personal.

Cf. Jude 24, 25.

- B. Second, by his performance. See Gen. 44:18-34.

Martin Luther once said of this passage,

"I would give very much to be able to pray to our Lord God as well as Judah prays to Joseph here; for it is a perfect specimen of prayer, the true feeling that there ought to be in prayer" (K & D, Pent., I, p. 364).

Link this with Heb. 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, SEEING HE EVER LIVETH TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR THEM."

- C. Third, by his purpose(s) -- which were two:

1. For Jacob's sake -- to please him.
2. For Benjamin's sake -- to save him.

Why did the Lord Jesus Christ come into the world? For two reasons:

- 1) John 6:38 -- "For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me."
- 2) Luke 19:10 -- "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Application: For those of us who believe -- worship
trust and wait
hope in Him.

For those who have not believed, can anything be clearer than that Jesus Christ is set before us in the Scriptures as the all-important Person of time and eternity -- that God finds all of His delight in His Son. He is found all through the OT. He appears in the Gospels. He is explained in the Epistles. And we have His coming in glory in The Revelation.

How important is He to you?

THE GLORY OF JOSEPH'S GOD
Genesis 45

Scripture reading: Gen. 45:1-15.

Intro: To get the full impact of this part of Joseph's life we need to ignore the chapter division at the head of ch. 45. There is none in the Hebrew Bible at this point, and there should be none in our English Bibles.

Joseph has just listened to Judah's appeal, a most moving one, on behalf of Benjamin. And his heart is so touched by it that he can no longer conceal his true identity from his brothers.

It is a scene packed with emotion. Nothing in Joseph's life compares with this -- not even his reunion with his father in Gen. 46:29, 30.

We are able to see in Genesis 45 the explanation of all that God has been doing since we first came to Joseph in the Word of God.

Let us notice the important features of the chapter.

We are seeing the glory of God -- God glorified in His works. What are some of the aspects of His glory according to this chapter?

I. GOD IS GLORIFIED -- BY THE FACT THAT HE HAS BEEN AT WORK.

This is always our great concern -- particularly in times of trial -- that men are doing a lot of things over which we have no control, but that God is strangely silent and even strangely absent from all that is being done!

BUT NOTICE HOW JOSEPH EXPLAINS ALL THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE OVER THE PRECEDING 22 YEARS -- FROM GENESIS 37 TO 45. God had been at work!

Three times Joseph says it: in vv. 5, 7, 8.

This is DIVINE PROVIDENCE -- God literally seeing ahead. But it is more than that. God is providing now for that which He has ordained to take place in the affairs of His people and in the affairs of men throughout the world!

We cannot understand history if we do not understand Divine Providence. Nor can we understand the present. And what we call prophecy is simply a revelation of the outworking of the Providence of God!

Not many of us are ready to believe what Joseph tells his

brothers in these verses. He is not saying that God simply permitted it; he is saying that God DID it!

He is not excusing his brothers. His brothers are still responsible to God for their sins. But this is the only way that we are to understand the events of Joseph's life -- and, may I say, the events of our lives!

Read these over and over, praying that their truth will get into your heart. And, if you like, add to them the latter part of v. 8 and the latter part of v. 9.

II. GOD IS GLORIFIED -- BY THE FACT THAT HE HAD MADE THIS KNOWN TO JOSEPH.

Joseph did not come to understand this on his own. He did not automatically understand this great truth. IT WAS A DISTINCT REVELATION FROM GOD TO JOSEPH -- A REVELATION WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY WAS MADE THROUGH THOSE AGONIZING 13 YEARS WHEN IN SO MANY WAYS HE WAS THE VICTIM OF WHAT PEOPLE DID TO HIM.

But God was teaching him.

The ways of God are different from our ways -- and so are his purposes. He is the SOVEREIGN ONE; we are not. We do not always know what the Lord is doing now, but we are able to see it "hereafter" (John 13:7).

III. GOD IS GLORIFIED -- BY WHAT HE HAD DONE TO JOSEPH'S BROTHERS.

As we come up to the beginning of chapter 45, Joseph has been satisfied about three things that had given him great concern:

- 1) Had any change taken place in his brothers?
- 2) Did they have any concern for their father, Jacob?
- 3) Would they be willing to do away with Benjamin as they had done away with him -- or were they concerned about Benjamin's safety?

Gen. 45:1, 2 indicate that all of Joseph's questions in these areas were answered!

How important it is for us to realize that the Lord is working in the lives of others as well as in our own lives. Cf. Phil. 1:6.

IV. GOD IS GLORIFIED -- BY WHAT HE HAD DONE FOR JOSEPH -- IN HIS CIRCUMSTANCES.

See vv. 8, 9, 13. They never expected to see Joseph here. This is something which only God could have done!

We must never underestimate the power of God, nor the purposes of God!

V. GOD IS GLORIFIED -- BY WHAT HE DID TO JOSEPH -- IN HIS ATTITUDE.

The only thing that could have kept Joseph from the worst kind of bitterness and from the greatest possible discouragement has been expressed by one writer in these words:

"He looked beyond his brethren to God when he thought upon his afflictions, and beyond Pharaoh to God when he thought of his exaltation" (Lawson, Geo., p. 272).

It was in understanding this that Joseph could forgive his brothers.

Finally . . .

VI. GOD IS GLORIFIED -- BY WHAT HE WAS DOING FOR . . . JOSEPH'S BROTHERS . . . PHARAOH AND THE EGYPTIANS . . . THE SURROUNDING NATIONS.

Especially for Joseph's brothers!

The Lord turns the diabolical scheme that they had for destroying Joseph and putting an end to his dreams into the very means by which their lives would be preserved!

What a picture of the grace of God! How could we ever want a great illustration of the greatness of God -- and of His goodness?

Application: How should all of this affect us?

We cannot take Joseph's circumstances because God's purposes for us are different. But we can do something infinitely better: WE CAN REALIZE THAT WE HAVE JOSEPH'S GOD!

We, too, can rest in His Providence,
 in His sovereignty,
 in His greatness,
 in His goodness!

Every person on the face of the face of the earth in every generation is under the sovereign authority of God. Even some of the Lord's people haven't learned this, and they are trying to run things in the Lord's work.

But God is control. Our souls can be tried to the very limit -- even to despair. But He has ordained even this that we might learn, when the answer comes, that it is all for His glory and His praise.

THE LAND THAT WAS NOT THEIRS
Genesis 45, 46

Scripture reading: Gen. 15:13-16; 46:1-7, 28-34.

Gen. 15:13-16,

"And he (the Lord) said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a sojourner in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come here again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

Intro: All that the Lord does is important, and everything that we experience from His hand, we need!

There were some very important lessons that Jacob and his sons needed to learn -- and THE LAND THAT WAS NOT THEIRS was the place that the Lord chose to teach them. These are also important lessons for us to learn and so let us note carefully the significance of what is recorded in the latter part of chapter 45 and all of chapter 46!

It was through a long delay,
service,
and affliction

that the Lord was going to prepare His people to come back into the land! This meant for them -- humiliation,
frustration,
despair,
and all that goes with such feelings.

But God was in it all!

We have the foreshadowings of those difficult times in the special emphasis we see in the four divisions of our text:

- 1) In Gen. 45:16-28 when we look at Jacob and his sons we see inadequacy, great need, their dependence upon Egypt. It was a very, very critical time for Jacob and his family.
- 2) In Gen. 46:1-7 we see their unworthiness -- and it is seen especially in the name, "Jacob"!
- 3) In Gen. 46:8-27 -- 70 people, in contrast with the Egyptians and in contrast with what the Lord had said about making Abraham's seed like the stars of heaven and like the sand of the sea -- we see their insignificance.
- 4) In the closing verses of Gen. 46 (vv. 28-34) we see how unwanted they were -- which is really not a strong enough word. They, by their occupation, were "an abomination unto the Egyptians" (v. 34b).

What is important for us is to recognize that all of these words apply just as much to us as they did to Jacob and his sons. We, too, are: inadequate for ourselves,
unworthy of God's blessing,
insignificant when you consider God's purposes,
unwanted in the world!

And to get them to realize these things, was one of the main reasons the Lord took them down into Egypt. There they would suffer because of these things, BUT THERE ALSO THEY WOULD GROW! AND THERE GOD WOULD PREPARE THEM FOR THE CERTAIN TIME WHEN THEY WOULD LEAVE EGYPT AND COME BACK INTO THE LAND THAT WAS THEIRS.

Here, like Paul, and like the Israelites in Egypt, we "have no certain dwelling place" (1 Cor. 4:11b). We are, as Peter says, "strangers and pilgrims" in this world. "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). But we are here to learn how much we need the Lord so that we will trust Him as we should, and be prepared to praise Him throughout eternity because He has shown Himself to be more than all we could ever need!

In the light of such human need as we see in Gen. 45, 46, what are we to learn from these chapters?

I. THAT GOD IS SUFFICIENT! Cf. Gen. 45:16-28.

According to Gen. 42:2, we can assume that there was the very real possibility that Jacob and his sons could have starved to death during the 7 years of famine!

What would this have meant to the promises which the Lord gave to Abraham -- and then to Isaac -- and then to Jacob?

But those promises were not to fail! And to show His power, God ordered a famine, and then used Egypt to feed and to provide for His own chosen people.

Who is to get the glory? Egypt? NO! But God!

Look at verses 18-23.

Cf. also Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:33; Rom. 8:28; Jude 24, 25.

II. THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL! Cf. Gen. 46:1-7.

This is one of those special times in the life of Jacob when he drew near to God, and God responded to him. Cf. Jas. 4:8a.

But notice what the Lord calls him in v. 2: "Jacob, Jacob." Why is this when in Gen. 32:28 the Lord Himself had changed

Jacob's name to Israel?

The answer is very simple and very obvious. "Jacob" was used to remind Jacob of what he was in himself, what he was before the Lord changed him.

This is obvious from Isa. 41:14 and many other passages:

"Fear not, thou worm, Jacob, and ye men of Israel;
I will help thee, said the Lord, and thy redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel."

We are completely, totally, utterly unworthy of what the Lord has done for us! And we must never forget this. This revelation of God to Jacob, followed by the promises, gives us one of our biggest clues as to the purpose of God in taking them down into Egypt. And this is what we must all keep in mind -- so that we will be resting in the promises of God, not in our own merits or efforts.

Cf. Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15:10.

III. THAT GOD IS GRACIOUS. Cf. Isa. 46:8-27.

One often wonders about the genealogies of Scripture, why they are there -- but there seems little doubt about this one, especially with the repeated number: "threescore and ten" (46:27) -- 70 people.

The promise was for people like sand, like stars! One is inclined to ask, "But what are these among so many?" (John 6:9).

Look at the number given when the Lord brought them out of Egypt 400 years later: "six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children" (Ex. 12:37). This was a miracle. It has been estimated that the children of Israel numbered between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000 people. This indeed was "a great nation" (Gen. 46:3).

Calvin wrote:

"For, the more improbable it appears, that seventy men, in no lengthened space of time, should have grown to such a multitude; so much the more clearly does the grace of God shine forth" (Genesis, p. 392)

Another writer has given additional information on the miracle when we go back to Abraham and Isaac.

"From the date of God's promise of a holy seed to Abraham, unto the birth of Isaac was twenty-five years. Isaac lived sixty years before Jacob was born. Jacob had nearly reach the age of eighty at the time of his marriage. So that about two hundred

and forty years elapsed before more than two persons were born of a family which was to be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand on the sea-shore, for multitude!" (Bush, quoted by Calvin's editor in a footnote of Genesis, p. 392).

Two persons in 240 years; about 2 million in the next 400 years. What an example of the grace of God!

God took His people down into Egypt to teach them "that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21b).

Never underestimate God or His promises!

IV. THAT GOD IS HOLY -- and that is what He wants His people to be. Cf. Gen. 46:28-34.

He did not take them to Egypt to make Egyptians out of them!

The Lord has not left us in this world to make worldlings out of us.

The family of Jacob was "an abomination unto the Egyptians" (Gen. 46:34). But God had ordered it so.

Our Lord once prayed,

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14-16).

Why, then, do we spend so much time trying to gear the work of God and the lives of His people to what will be pleasing to the world, or to what is presently going on in the world?

"The Lord often permits us to be despised or rejected by the world, that being liberated and cleansed from its pollution, we may cultivate holiness" (Calvin, Genesis, p. 395).

It is just as wrong for us to pattern our lives after the world as it was for the sons of Jacob to seek to be like the Egyptians, or the Canaanites! Our ability to please God and to minister to men is based on the fact that we are different!

Application and Conclusion: Do you see how rich this pass-

age is in its message to us?

How applicable are William Cowper's words:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain:
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

Remember: God is sufficient.
God is faithful.
God is gracious.
God is holy.

THE BLESSING OF THE UNSEEN GOD
Genesis 47

Scripture reading: Gen. 47:1-12, 27-31.

Intro: One of the unique things about Gen. 47 is that God is not mentioned at all in the chapter! He does not appear. He does not speak. He is not mentioned by Joseph, or by Jacob, or by any of Joseph's brothers, nor by Pharaoh or any of the Egyptians.

But it is obvious that the Lord is here. Although unseen, and not heard from, and unmentioned -- YET HE IS PRESENT!

We know this because:

- 1) He is God, and therefore cannot be absent from any situation.
- 2) There is evidence of His presence, and evidence that He is working on behalf of His people.

Chapter 37 is the only other chapter in the life of Joseph which has this same distinction, i.e., that the name of God does not appear in any form throughout the entire chapter!

This is often the way our lives are -- and perhaps this is the reason the Spirit of God led Moses to write this part of Joseph's life in this way! We, too, do not see Him. It seems that He does not speak to us through His Word. Perhaps we are not even talking about Him. But when we stand back and look at our circumstances, or look back on them after we have gone through them, we can see evidence, mighty evidence, of the presence and power of the Lord!

But let us look at the details of the chapter . . .

There are three main divisions:

- 1) In the first, we see THE UNSEEN GOD'S PROVISION FOR JACOB AND HIS FAMILY (vv. 1-12).
- 2) In the second, we see THE UNSEEN GOD'S PUNISHMENT OF EGYPT AND CANAAN (vv. 13-26).
- 3) In the last section, we see THE UNSEEN GOD'S PURPOSE AS EXPRESSED BY JACOB (vv. 27-31).

Although the Lord is not mentioned, the key to the chapter is in seeing His hand of blessing in all three of these circumstances.

- I. THE UNSEEN GOD'S PROVISION FOR JACOB AND HIS FAMILY (Gen. 47: 1-12).

Although there are many things that could be mentioned here, let me concentrate on three things:

- 1) What God did for them.
- 2) What God did to them.
- 3) What God did through them.

And all of this was blessing!

A. What God did for them.

In a day when both Egypt and Canaan were being devastated by this famine, we see in vv. 5, 6, 11, 12 what the Lord did to provide for His own.

This was the most important family on earth, and the Lord was not going to let anything happen to destroy them.

And such a thing as this, involving Pharaoh and the Egyptians could not have happened apart from the Lord!

David wrote in Psa. 33:18, 19,

"Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him, upon those who hope in his mercy, To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine."

And in Psa. 37:18, 19 we read -- also from David,

"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever. Thys shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

Jacob and his sons had many hard and difficult days (sse his words to Pharaoh in Gen. 47:9), but the Lord always took care of them in spite of their unworthiness -- and He is doing the same here.

B. What God did to them.

Read Gen. 46:34 -- about Egyptians and shpeherds, and then read Gen. 47:3.

This, too, was blessing -- although they may not have recognized it that way at the time.

God was humbling them.

God was separating them, protecting them.

BUT GOD WAS ALSO SHOWING THEM HOW GREAT HIS POWER WAS!

After this confession, who cannot but see the hand of the unseen God in what Pharaoh says in vv. 5, 6, esp. in v. 6b!

We do not hear much about separation these days. It is not popular among the people of God today to be like the patriarchs who "confessed that they were strangers and

pilgrims on the earth . . . wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. 11:13b, 16b).

Where do we stand today in our relationship with the world?

C. What God did through them.

We might refer again to the work that they did for Pharaoh (because undoubtedly that was a blessing to Pharaoh just like the work of Joseph had been a blessing)

But let me focus in on that four-word statement which is found twice in our chapter -- in vv. 7 and 10:

"And Jacob blessed Pharaoh."

How could Jacob bless Pharaoh?

Primarily in one way -- by praying for him!

Jacob prayed for Pharaoh when he went in to see Pharaoh, and he prayed again just before he left the presence of Pharaoh.

When you are inclined to look down on Jacob, turn and read these passages again. Would you have done this?

What a privilege this was for Pharaoh!

But remember what the Word teaches us about this when in Heb. 7:6 we are told that Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

In the next verse, Heb. 7:7, we read,

"And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better."

Or, as the NASB renders it,

"But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater."

Remember that the people of God always stand on the highest ground. How could a human being possibly be greater than to be a child of the living, the unseen, the eternal, GOD?

Let us remember this today.

But let us look at the second section:

II. THE UNSEEN GOD'S PUNISHMENT OF EGYPT AND CANAAN (Gen. 47: 13-26).

But we must speak of this as blessing, too, even though it was a judgment of God -- BECAUSE ANYTHING THAT TURNS MEN TO

THE LORD (or that is designed by God. for that purpose) IS A BLESSING IN DISGUISE!

What a lesson this is for America!

Egypt and Canaan made up one of the most luxurious areas of the world where they were always on the giving end -- and now their people are gradually reduced from wealth to slavery!

This gives us a hint as to why the Lord waited for 400 more years after Abraham's day before He took Canaan away from the Canaanites; HE WAS EXTENDING GRACE TO THEM. And He is doing the same for Egypt!

Actually, the Egyptians did not save the sons of Jacob; they saved Egypt!!!

BUT -- did Pharaoh, or did the Egyptians turn to the Lord?

NO! There is no evidence that they did.

But let me point out one thing which Pharaoh did do which might serve as a warning to some who are here this morning. You see it in vv. 22, 26.

Historians are not in agreement on this point, but it seems fairly clear that what Pharaoh did for the priests at this time was more than he usually did -- that this was something special!

BUT -- even if it were the usual thing to make the priests an exception, Pharaoh would not let Joseph interrupt that because of any merit that might come to Egypt from the gods of which these men were the priests!

In other words, Pharaoh belonged to that large group of men who are always on the earth who believe that everybody should be religious, but that it does not make any difference as to how you approach God, or even what God you approach!

He was not concerned about knowing the true God.

Are there any listening to my voice who have not realized the difference yet? It is not enough to be religious. We must know the true and living God. And we do not come to Him any way we want to. We can only come to Him through Christ. Cf. John 14:6.

One more point:

III. THE UNSEEN GOD'S PURPOSE AS EXPRESSED BY JACOB (Gen. 47: 27-31).

Jacob was concerned about the place of his burial (that it would be in the land of Canaan and with Abraham and Isaac) -- an expression of his faith in the promises of God!

Joseph did likewise. See Gen. 50:24-26; Heb. 11:22 -- the one thing mentioned about Joseph in the faith chapter!

What evidence of the blessing of the unseen God -- that after 17 years in Egypt the promise of God was still alive in the heart of Jacob!

As Heb. 11:13 says, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Take our hope away from us, and we have nothing left. But, with such a hope, we are carried through all of the trials and testings of this life.

Paul's expression of our hope in Christ is given many places, but none is better nor clearer with regard to the body than what we have in Rom. 8:18-25.

Appl. and Concl: What an encouragement this should be to us for those times which we all have when it seems that God has left us and that we are left as victims of our circumstances and of people.

God is present!

God is at work!

He does know our circumstances. Rom. 8:28 is still true. Everything has meaning and significance. And in this we can rest -- knowing that, though unseen, yet He is present. He protects us from our enemies, and keeps faith alive in our hearts.

JACOB, THE PROPHET
Genesis 48, 49

Scripture reading: Gen. 48:8-49:1, 28-33.

Intro: A prophet in the OT is a human instrument used by God to bring the truth of God to man. Sometimes it took the form of preaching in which the prophet warned people of the judgment of God. At other times it had to do with the prediction of events which were to take place in the distant future, and sometimes in the near future!

In the first of these instances the prophet was a forthteller; in the second, a foreteller.

Jacob was a prophet.

In the faith chapter of the NT (Heb. 11), Jacob is remembered especially for that which he does here in Gen. 48, 49 -- with a reference even to the last verse of Gen. 47. Listen to Heb. 11:21,

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

The emphasis, as you can see, is on the blessing in Gen. 48, but the blessing of chapter 49 follows chapter 48 and is really a part of it.

One thing is certain: Jacob would not have been able to say any of the things that he says in these two chapters (48, 49) if they had not been revealed to him by God. How they were revealed, we do not know; the fact that they were revealed, cannot be denied!

And so we have, first of all, through Jacob . . .

I. THE EVIDENCE THAT GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF AND HIS PURPOSES TO US IN HIS WORD.

How different things would be for us if He had not!

Remember what Peter teaches us in 2 Pet. 1:21,

"For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Note Jacob's words in Gen. 48:3, 4, ". . . God Almighty appeared unto me . . . and blessed me, and said unto me . . ." And then notice what He said in v. 4.

So the things which Jacob says in these two chapters are not because of any great wisdom he possessed in himself, but be-

cause God had revealed these things to Jacob, and had commanded him to confer these blessings upon his grandsons and upon his sons!

How thankful we should be not only for the revealed Word of God, but that the revelation of His will has been written and preserved for us today!

II. JACOB'S PROPHECY INDICATES THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH.

Note Gen. 48:15, 16, 21, 22. Also Gen. 49:1.

This is what Heb. 11:21 says, "By faith Jacob . . . blessed both the sons of Joseph . . ."

Heb. 11:6 tells us, "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God . . ."

Faith follows the hearing of the Word. Cf. Rom. 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing . . ." Jacob was like the Psalmist who said, "I believed, therefore have I spoken . . ." (Psa. 116:10). Or, also as the Psalmist said in another place,

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psa. 27:13).

The writer of Hebrews speaks of those who had the word preached to them, but it did not profit them because it was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2).

How thankful we ought to be for the Word of God, but how we need to pray for the faith to lay hold of the promises!

III. JACOB WAS A PROPHET OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE EXERCISE OF HIS GRACE.

We see this in the blessing of Ephraim over Manasseh. Joseph thought it was a mistake because of the failing eyesight of Jacob. Heb. 11:21 also tells us that Jacob was dying while he did this. But this was no mistake! This was done, not to show the greater merit of Ephraim (because nothing is said about any such thing), but to show that God works in accordance with the exercise of His own will!

Calvin makes these great comments:

"Yet he (Joseph) errs in binding the grace of God to the accustomed order of nature: as if the Lord did not often purposely change the law of nature, to teach us that what he freely confers upon us, is entirely the result of his own will. If God were rendering to every one his due, a certain rule might properly be applied

to the distribution of his favours; but since he owes no one anything, he is free to confer gifts at his own pleasure. More especially, lest any one should glory in the flesh, he designedly illustrates his own free mercy, in choosing those who had no worthiness of their own. What shall we say was the cause, why he raised Ephraim above his own brother, to whom, according to usage, he was inferior? If any one should suppose that Ephraim had some hidden seed of excellence, he not only vainly trifles, but impiously perverts the counsel of God. For since God derives from himself and from his liberality, the cause, why he prefers one of the two to the other: he confers the honour upon the younger, for the purpose of showing that he is bound by no claims of human merit; but that he distributes his gifts freely, as it seems good unto him. . . . Wherefore, be it our part to leave to God his whole power untouched, and if at any time, our carnal sense rebels, let us know that none are more truly wise than they who are willing to account themselves blind, when contemplating the wonderful dealings of God, in order that they may trave the cause of any difference he makes, to himsefl alone. We have seen . . . that the eyes of Jacob were dim: but in crossing his arms, with apparent negligence, in order to comply with God's purpose of election, he is more clear-sighted than his son Joseph, who, according to the sense of the flesh, inquires with too much acuteness. They who insanesly imagine that this judgment was formed from a view of their works, sufficiently declare, by this one thing, that they do not hold the first rudiments of faith" (Calvin, Genesis, II, pp. 431, 432).

How important it is to get this truth of the grace of God firmly established in our hearts!

IV. JACOB WAS A PROPHET OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN HISTORY.

This is the meaning of Gen. 49. Prophecy is simply pre-written, or predicted, history.

And we see not only that God is control, but that history is actually planned by God, and is the outworking of His sovereign plan.

But with respect to the prophetic utterances of Jacob, there is a twofold emphasis as it relates to God's plan for the salvation of men:

- A. The nation Israel has a unique place among all of the nations of the earth.
- B. Within that nation, from the tribe of Judah, shall

"Shiloh come" -- the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

See Gen. 49:10.

Two times in these two chapters does Jacob speak of Christ:

- 1) In chapter 48 He is the "Angel" of v. 16.
- 2) In chapter 49 He is the King who will come from the tribe of Judah.

The Lord Jesus had kept Jacob during his life, and the Lord Jesus was the One who gave credence to the promises which were the hope of Jacob and his sons.

Christ is the key to prophecy. As the words given to the Apostle John in Rev. 19:10 indicate, ". . . the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

But there is one final thing:

V. THE PROPHECY OF JACOB NOT ONLY ENABLED HIM TO LIVE WITH HOPE AND JOY, BUT ALSO TO DIE IN PEACE.

In the latter part of Gen. 47, Jacob made Joseph promise that that his bones would not be buried in Egypt -- but in the land that God was giving to them. Now in the end of Gen. 49, Jacob speaks to all of his sons about this same thing. See Gen. 49:29-31 -- and then notice the peaceful, resigned attitude in v. 33.

How different from the man who said that if he knew where he was going to die he would never go near the place!

Death does not destroy the object of our faith -- not even Jacob's death. In fact, Heb. 11:13,

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off . . . and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

David anticipated death without fear:

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me . . ." (Psa. 23:4a).

This was one thing that bothered the Thessalonian church. Did the death of believers eliminate them from the hope of the coming of the Lord? NO! In fact, it gave them a special priority: "the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16b).

Appl. and Concl: Gen. 48 and 49 cover a period which has now

extended for approx. 4,000 years! Only God could speak like that. Jacob certainly could not have known these things if they had not been divinely revealed.

And now look at the expression of Jacob's faith -- suddenly breaking out in the middle of his prophetic utterances:

"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. 49:18).

Or, as the NASB has it,

"For thy salvation I wait, O Lord."

Why does he say this?

It is "the shield of faith" (Eph. 6:16).

Two things stood in the way of the outworking of the saving purpose of God:

- 1) The opposition of the enemies.
- 2) The weaknesses and sins of the people of God.

If salvation were not God's salvation, i.e., His work, dependent upon Him from start to finish, THERE COULD BE NO HOPE THAT IT WOULD EVER BE REALIZED. Grace is written all over Gen. 49 -- and only through God do we have any hope.

Can you say this this morning? Are you expecting the fulfillment of what God is doing, or are your hopes linked only to this world and to what men can do?

This past week I heard a men's quartet singing on KPDQ,

"His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

Will you say this morning, "For thy salvation I wait, O Lord"? Perhaps some of you will say it for the first time -- and so place your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour from sin!

A FINAL TRIBUTE
Genesis 50

Scripture reading: Gen. 50.

Intro: The last chapter in the life of Joseph, and the last chapter in the book of Genesis.

Concerning the whole book as well as just the life of Joseph -- they are full of wonderful truth and many lessons that are of tremendous help to us in our walk with the Lord today. What a loss it would be if we did not have Genesis -- and, as I said in the beginning of our study, the rest of the Bible would be incomprehensible without Genesis.

So we should never read it without thanking the Lord for it.

We have met some wonderful people -- people we are going to get personally acquainted with some day. I am speaking of people like those mentioned again in Heb. 11 -- Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph -- and many others, too! Aren't you looking forward to that?

Think of meeting Joseph and of being able to thank him for all of the wonderful lessons the Lord has taught you from his life. It has to be classed as one of the greatest in the Word of God.

The last half of Joseph's life is passed over in almost complete silence. He was 37 when his family come to live with him in Egypt -- Jacob lived there 17 years before he died, which would have made Joseph 54 at the time of his father's death. But Joseph lived to be 110 -- which means that we know practically nothing about Joseph's last 56 years! BUT, FROM WHAT WE READ OF JOSEPH'S LAST DAYS, WE KNOW THAT HE CONTINUED TO BE THE KIND OF PERSON HE HAD BEEN DURING HIS EARLIER YEARS -- and that is what I want to talk to you about this morning.

Let's suppose that we are getting ready for Joseph's funeral. You think about it from the standpoint of what you would say if you were going to be in charge. What kind of a final tribute would you pay to Joseph -- not to glorify him, but to glorify God for all that he did in the life of His servant?

The things that we would point out should be things that would commend his life to us -- because one reason the Bible has so much to say about biographies is because we are to become like those who have gone before us to the extent to which they were followers of the Lord. I have Paul as my authority for making this statement. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:1,

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

Although the Lord had not come yet when Joseph was here on the

earth, yet we can see now that Joseph was very much like the Lord in many ways. So we would do well to follow his life and to seek to be what he was!

But what shall we say? What kind of a tribute shall we pay to Joseph? This is what I face every time I conduct a funeral service.

In answering this question with regard to Joseph we have a distinct advantage: WE HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH. It is here in Gen. 50. Let us consider it together.

There seem to be three things that are emphasized:

- 1) What Joseph did when his father died.
- 2) How Joseph treated his brothers after their father was gone.
- 3) The plans that Joseph made regarding his own death and burial.

The first is in vv. 1-14;
the second is in vv. 15-21;
the last is in vv. 22-26.

The three words that I want to use for these three sections are:

- 1) He was a faithful man.
- 2) He was a forgiving man.
- 3) He was a man of faith.

I. JOSEPH WAS A FAITHFUL MAN (Gen. 50:1-14).

This was really the story of his life.

Think back to the time when he was a shepherd at home in land of Canaan -- he was faithful -- and it was his faithfulness that got him into trouble.

When he was serving Potiphar -- his outstanding trait was his faithfulness -- not only to Potiphar, but also to the Lord.

And then in prison you have the same thing. Joseph was so faithful, in fact, that both Potiphar and the jailor turned everything over to him.

And so when Joseph was lifted up to the throne of Egypt, he was the same way.

And when his father died, we are not surprised to see this same outstanding trait in his life -- FAITHFULNESS! What a rare quality this is among men -- and sometimes even among believers.

Paul lays heavy emphasis on this in the NT. In 1 Cor. 4:1, 2

we have these words:

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

When Paul was writing to Timothy about the ministry, he said,

"And the things that thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

But Joseph was not a preacher. He was a shepherd, then a servant, then a prisoner, then a sovereign -- but he was the same in each position: FAITHFUL!

He could be trusted. He was honest. He was morally upright. HE WAS FAITHFUL.

Are you? Am I?

Is this what we are primarily concerned about in our ministry at Central Bible Church -- faithfulness to God, and to each other, and to people who need the Lord?

Think about it!

II. JOSEPH WAS A FORGIVING MAN (Gen. 50:15-21).

What a pathetic section this is when we think of Joseph's brothers! They just could not believe that Joseph would really forgive them because of what they had done to him 37 years before!

If for no other reason we ought to avoid sin because of what it does to our consciences -- one act which takes only a few minutes can torment us and trouble our consciences for the rest of our lives.

I do not know anyone in the Bible apart from our Lord who had more reason to hate people than Joseph did. (Some had as many reasons.) Joseph's heart could have been filled with bitterness!

But you never read of him criticizing his brothers,
 or Potiphar's wife,
 or Potiphar,
 or the butler,
 or anyone else.

How much like the Lord Jesus he was in this, especially when our Lord said from the cross,

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"
 (Luke 23:34).

genesis 50 (7)
But how could he forgive his brothers for changing the whole course of his life?

BECAUSE HE LOOKED BEYOND HIS BROTHERS AND SAW EVEN IN THEIR SINFUL ACTIONS THE OVERRULING PURPOSE OF A SOVEREIGN GOD.

He had told them before,

" . . . it was not you that sent me here, but God" (Gen. 45:8).

And he still feels the same way 17 years later:

" . . . ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good . . ." (Gen. 50:20).

"But God"!

Is bitterness filling your heart today? Then listen also to this word:

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

Note: "even as God"!

Do not let an unforgiving spirit stand between you and the blessing of God. Others may have wronged you, but they are not greater than God, and neither are you -- nor am I!

But there is another word:

III. JOSEPH WAS A MAN OF FAITH (Gen. 50:22-26).

The Spirit of God passes over the next 56 years in absolute silence. Therefore, you and I should not be surprised if most of our days seem uneventful. Not everything about a Christian's life is exciting!

But the thing that Joseph did as he was dying was so important to the Lord that it is the one thing that is mentioned in Heb. 11 -- the verse is v. 22:

"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones."

Now listen! Joseph had come to Egypt at 17.

He is dying at 110.

The difference between the two is 93 years!

For 93 years Joseph had been in Egypt, but he never became an Egyptian at heart. He was in the world, but not of the world (see John 17:14-18). What a testimony to the keeping power of the Lord!

And will you notice the influence of Jacob in this -- "holy Jacob" as Calvin used to call him? This is what Jacob was most concerned about, too!

This had to be the longest funeral procession in history -- 40 years! See Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32.

Why did Joseph command this?

Because he believed God, he believed the promise of God, he believed in the power of God, and he believed in the purpose of God regarding salvation.

Joseph believed he would have a part in this. He believed in resurrection.

See Gen. 50:24-26.

Concl: FAITHFULNESS, FORGIVENESS, FAITH -- What a tribute to Joseph -- or to any child of God.

Joseph was like this because of the grace of God in his life. The Lord had fashioned him into such a saint through all of the troubles and trials of his life. He never saw Canaan again (as far as we know), but he looked forward to that day when he would in resurrection glory. He "died in faith" (Heb. 11:13).

We, too, have our trials. Through them the Lord is teaching us to trust Him, to believe that His purposes in us and for us are somehow being accomplished according to His infinite wisdom and in His divine plan.

This is our confident hope and assurance.

Let me close with Peter's words concerning this:

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, But rejoice, inasmuch as year are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

We may not have all of our questions answered here in this life, but the glorious day is coming when we will all be with the Lord and then we will understand perfectly why the Lord has led us as He has.