

(Genesis) - Part 30

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of remaining faithful to God's calling, the value of brokenness for spiritual discernment, and the prophetic legacy of Jacob's life.

Duration: 56:33

Scripture: Genesis 49:22-50, Matthew 4:15, Romans 12:3, James 4:10

Topics: "Jacob"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the examples of ordinary men in the Bible who lived by the spirit of Christ without the presence of scriptures. He highlights the story of Joseph as a shining example of someone who attained great heights without the guidance of verses. The speaker emphasizes the importance of submitting to God's discipline and how it can transform a person's life. The sermon concludes with the story of Jacob, who started as a crook but through brokenness and submission to God, became a prophet.

Transcript

Let's turn to Genesis chapter forty-eight, verse one. It came about after these things. As Joseph was told, Behold, your father is sick.

So he took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with him. And when it was told to Jacob, Behold, your son Joseph has come to you, Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed. And Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me.

And he said to me, Behold, I'll make you fruitful and numerous. I'll make you a company of people, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession. There's something we see about Jacob that even though he came from the comparatively primitive part of the world called Canaan to this very modern country called Egypt, that he wasn't so taken up with everything that he saw in Egypt that he forgot about his calling, that God had called him to possess Canaan.

Whether Canaan was a developed country or not was besides the point. The point is that God had called him and told him that he and his descendants would have to be in Canaan. There are very few believers who can resist the temptation when they can live a comfortable life in some other place which is more advanced and comfortable to leave it.

And that can be a test. And we could say that in a sense, Egypt was a test for Jacob to see whether he would give up his calling when he saw all the advancements of society in Egypt. And then we see towards the end of his life, as he was on his deathbed, he keeps his vision on Canaan, the place where God had spoken to him that he and his descendants were to live.

His heart was set on that. And that is the type of person whom God can say he is the God of Jacob, because despite all his other failings, we can say that he desired to be in the place where God wanted him to be, and he would not succumb to the temptation of the comforts of a more advanced country. And though his son is such a big person in that country, his son is almost the top ruler in that country, and yet he says, No, my home is back there where God called me to be.

I'm here temporarily, but my heart and mind is set on that which God called me to. He says, Now you have two sons who were born to you in the land of Egypt. Before I came to you in Egypt are mine.

Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. Now, what we see in these coming two chapters, chapter 48 and 49, is Jacob speaking prophetically. He is speaking concerning his sons, prophesying concerning what is going to happen to them in the days and the years to come in future generations.

And we can contrast this with Isaac, who could never say anything concerning what would befall Jacob or Esau. He never could gather Jacob and Esau and prophesy to them. Isaac had had an easy way through life.

He had received everything freely from his father and lived a fairly comfortable life. He lived a good life, of course, but a fairly comfortable, easy life. There was not much discipline, and so we find at the end of his life there is no prophecy either.

But Jacob had gone through the mill, we can say. He'd been ground by God in the mill, and all his hopes were shattered, and he'd gone through frustrations, disappointments, discipline, difficulty, hardship. And through all that, he got a spiritual education.

We can say that Jacob went through a real Bible school conducted by God. And the result was that he had learned through all that, so that when he says something, few words, in fact, the words that he speaks to each of his sons are very few, less than half a minute, almost, to most of his children. And yet they were so prophetic concerning exactly what was going to happen hundreds of years later for them.

And we can say that this is the basis of prophecy, because that's our calling in the church, to be able to speak the word in such a way that we can help the people we speak to. And it's not long sermons. There is a place for teaching, but prophecy can be very brief.

Joseph's, I mean, Jacob's words of prophecy to his sons were, as I said, less than a half a minute to each of them. And they were so appropriate. In fact, that's the word the Holy Spirit uses later on, appropriate to each one.

Beginning with Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Now, Jacob had 12 sons, beginning with Reuben and all the way down to Benjamin. And we know that there were 12 tribes in Israel later on, long after Jacob died and they came to the land of Canaan, there were 12 tribes.

But the interesting thing we see is that God removed one of those tribes that descended from one of the sons of Jacob, the tribe of Levi, and made them free. And said, you are to have no inheritance and you're not even going to be counted with Israel. And all the Levites were not counted among the 12 tribes.

So we were left with only 11. So which are the 12 tribes then? The 12 tribes are 10 sons of Jacob, their descendants, and instead of Joseph, the two sons of Joseph. That's how it becomes 12, later on in the Old Testament.

Now, how in the world did Jacob know that? That is by prophetic vision. He said, Ephraim and Manasseh are going to be my sons, just like Reuben and Simeon. They're going to be part of my family.

They are not my grandsons. They are my sons, just like Reuben and Simeon. And that's exactly what happens when we find that Ephraim and Manasseh became the heads of two of the 12 tribes of Israel, though Jacob didn't know why that would happen.

He just spoke as he was given utterance at that time by God. But the man who's gone through discipline under God's hand may not always know what he's speaking, but what he speaks will be exactly according to the need of those who hear. So he says, your offspring, verse 6, that have been born after them shall be yours.

They shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance. That means they're going to get an inheritance along with the other 10 sons of mine. That was really prophetic.

And then he sees them. He remembers his beloved wife, who died, as for me, when I came from Paddan. Rachel died to my sorrow in the land of Canaan, on the journey, when there was still some distance, to go to Ephraim.

What a relationship he had with his wife, that so many, many, many years after her death, he still remembers her with great affection. A good example for a husband. When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, who are these? And Joseph said, these are my sons.

He said, bring them to me, that I may bless them. And in the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. Physically, he was dim, just like Isaac.

Isaac's eyes were dim when he told Esau to go and get the venison. And Israel, that's Jacob, who's now called Israel, his eyes were dim too. But the difference was that Isaac's spiritual eyes were also dim, whereas Jacob's spiritual eyes were crystal clear.

And that's quite a contrast. And that's how we must come to the end of our lives. When I see some old believers, who've been believers for many, many years, many, many years, they're advanced in age now, and they're so sour, and so bitter, and so demanding, so grumpy.

And not full of the joy of the Lord, and imposing themselves on other younger people. I say, Lord, save me from ever degenerating into an old man like that. Think of that.

It's easy to end up like that if we have not worked out our salvation in our younger days. Very easy. It's because Jacob went through discipline that he ended his life.

In such a glorious way. We can say, well, that's a long way before I become an old man, but that's what everybody says. But time flips by so fast.

In any case, there's not probably time left for all of us to become old people, for the coming of the Lord is near. It's important that we grow in wisdom quickly, so that we can have a prophetic word for those who come to us. And Israel said to Joseph, verse 11, I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.

And Joseph took them from his knees and bowed his face to the ground. And Joseph took them both. Ephraim with his right hand, because Ephraim was the younger, he took Ephraim towards Israel's left hand.

And Manasseh, he took with his left hand towards Israel's right hand, because Manasseh was the oldest, and brought them close to him. But Israel stretched out his right hand. He couldn't see which was which.

But you see the leading of God, that he lays his right hand, not in the normal way on these two, but he crosses his hands and puts the right hand on Ephraim's hand. Because the right hand was supposed to be the greater blessing than the left. And crossed his left hand on Manasseh, he said, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.

And he blessed Joseph. And he said, the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who's been my shepherd all my life to this day. This has been his experience, and this has been his testimony.

That though he went through rough parts, it was God who shepherded him. And the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, blessed these lands. And may my name live on in them, the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, interesting, that though Joseph was such a good man and a very upright person, and very wise when it came to worldly administration, yet he did not have that discernment yet concerning his own children, which his father had. His father had gone through God's mill and knew what he was doing. Joseph did not have that discernment.

And in fact, it says it displeased him. And he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, Not so, my father.

This one is a firstborn. You made a mistake. Place your right hand on his head.

His father refused and said, I know, my son, I know. What beautiful words. I know.

I'm not so dumb spiritually, though I can't see physically. I know what I'm doing. The word of God says that the natural man cannot understand why a spiritual man does things in a certain way.

1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 14 and onwards. And it is foolishness to him. The natural mind, however sharp it may be, cannot understand why a spiritual person does and behaves in a certain way.

Jacob says, I know. Yes, Manasseh will also become a people. He'll also be great.

However, his younger brother shall be greater. Here is prophecy. His younger brother shall be greater than he.

And his descendants shall become a multitude of nations. This is no giving the blessing to the one who will bring the venison first. No, no, no, no.

He's gone through the mill. He's not bothered about venison or curry or any such thing. He knows, he says, I know what I'm doing.

I have no partiality here. And I'm not going to go by your suggestion. Joseph, you're a good brother, but I know what I'm doing.

And your suggestion, though good, is not really what the way God is leading. That which appears right to us naturally is very often not right spiritually. And he blessed them that day, saying, May by you Israel should pronounce blessings, saying, May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.

Not like Manasseh and Ephraim. Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh. And it's very interesting when you read through the scriptures towards the latter part of the Old Testament.

After the days of Solomon, the days of Rehoboam, the kingdom of Israel to twelve tribes was split into two. And the northern kingdom comprised of ten tribes. And very often in the prophets, the ten tribes were called Ephraim.

Ephraim was the combined name for ten tribes. It was the name by which the northern kingdom of Israel was often called. How right Jacob was.

Concerning the future. Manasseh, on the other hand, half the tribe of Manasseh, we read in the book of Numbers and Deuteronomy, never even wanted to cross into Jordan. They stayed on the other side of Jordan.

They said, this beautiful land here, we'd like to stay here. And Israel said to Joseph, Behold, I am about to die. But God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.

There again, his heart is not set on this advanced country of Egypt. His heart is set on the primitive land of Canaan, because that is where God has called him. The important thing, brothers and sisters, is not to go to a land where things are comfortable and easy, but to be in the place where God has called us.

Perhaps one percent of believers are gripped by that. But Jacob was one of those gripped by that. He says, I'll give you one portion.

Here's the double portion, the birthright that went to Joseph. Joseph got the birthright. I'll give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.

I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 21. We read, By faith, Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped.

And here is that beautiful phrase, leaning on the top of his staff. How did he bless the sons of Joseph correctly? Leaning on the top of his staff. And that staff reminded him that many years earlier, at Peniel, God had dislocated his thigh and broken him.

After 20 years of discipline, broken him. And he leaned upon God. The staff was a symbol of his leaning upon God from that day.

Leaning upon God, he blessed the sons of Joseph by faith. Correctly. He did that by faith, by leaning upon God.

That is what faith means. And so that is how true prophecy comes. True prophecy comes when a man has been so dislocated his own strength.

And all of us have a particular area where we have strength. With some people, it is their intellect. Some people, it is their money.

Some people, it is something else. But where God has been able to break them and they are dislocated and broken and they are learned to lean upon a staff, then they can prophesy by faith correctly. Otherwise, it will be like Joseph, good brother, upright brother, but not broken like Jacob.

And therefore, not able to discern which of these two sons, what is going to befall these two sons in the future. It is very easy sometimes we see even good brothers not able to discern another person. You can be a good brother, and yet you may not have discernment concerning a need in the church, because there, God, you have to be broken.

It is not enough to be a good brother like Joseph. You have to be a broken brother like Jacob. There is a difference.

It is not enough to be a good upright brother like Joseph. You have also got to be a broken brother like Jacob, who leans upon the top of his staff. Then you have discernment.

That is what we need, brothers and sisters, discernment, spiritual discernment. Otherwise, we should go by unnatural reason and say this is like this and this is like this, and we will be completely wrong. We may even be upset that a more spiritual brother has a different view than us on this, and we wonder why.

Maybe you are a good brother, but you are not broken. That may be the reason. Joseph could not understand why Jacob did it that way.

In fact, he was displeased. Have you ever been displeased or a bit upset that another brother does it differently from the way you would do it, and it disturbs you? Yes, it is good to judge ourselves and see whether we have resisted brokenness and just been good. It is brokenness that brings discernment.

And then Jacob assembled all his sons and said, I will tell you what shall befall you in the days to come. Think of the confidence this man has. He said, I am going to tell you now, all of you.

I have told Ephraim and Manasseh. Now I shall tell you, the rest of you, what shall befall you in the days to come. Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel, your father.

Even Abraham never did this. Isaac never did it. But Jacob, the man who was a crook, who was a grabber, who was a deceiver, what an encouragement to us that God could so change this man and break him that he ends his days in prophecy.

In fact, he prophesied, and then it says he just got into bed and died. What a wonderful way to die. To prophesy with our last breath, and then it can be written of us, he just lifted up his legs onto his bed and died.

Wonderful. That is the tremendous thing that God can do when we are broken. Isaac was not a grabber like Jacob.

Isaac was not, humanly speaking, he was not so deceitful and so deceitful. A crook like Jacob. But yet God was able to do a greater work for Jacob because he broke him.

We can be good brothers, but if we are not broken, we don't come into prophecy. We don't come into spiritual vision. And then he calls Reuben, he says, Reuben, you're my firstborn, but you don't get the birthright.

The birthright is already given to Joseph, as we saw in chapter 48, verse 22. He says, Reuben, you are the beginning of my strength, preeminent in dignity, preeminent in power, but you are unstable, uncontrolled as water, boiling over as water. You could not rule.

You shall not have the preeminence because you went up to your father's bed. He committed adultery with one of his father's wives. He could not rule his own love, and therefore he was not permitted to rule his younger brothers.

The principle that Jacob understood, you've got to first learn to rule your own passions before God gives you authority over other brothers. We can have a great lust to be considered an elder brother or an elder sister to others who are younger to us. Yeah, God says, you forget all that.

Just first learn to control your anger and your irritation, and you're getting offended and you're impatient. Get to rule over that before you seek to be an elder to other people. Even to a young boy or girl.

You are the beginning of my strength. In other words, you're the senior most brother in the church, but sorry, you're not going to get the birthright just because you're the senior most. There's no question of seniority in the kingdom of God.

The birthright does not go to the senior most, to the one who has been the longest number of years in the fellowship in the church. He may not be spiritual. He may not have overcome sins.

He may not have spiritual vision. There are lots of people who have been in the church for many years who don't have as much spiritual vision as somebody else who's come in for two, three years ago. Because it's a question of faithfulness before God's face.

So, he says, you missed it. And when you look at the history of Reuben in the Old Testament, you find that there was not a single king of Israel, not a single judge, and not a single prophet ever came out of the tribe of Reuben. Not a single king, not a single prophet in the whole history of Israel ever came out of the tribe of Reuben.

Even though he was a senior brother who's been longest in the church. What a tragedy. What a tragedy to be a senior brother and not have got victory over one's lusts and to lack spiritual vision.

Tragedy, tragedy. That's Reuben's warning to all such. Think of what Reuben himself says in chapter 42, verse 22.

He says, you remember the time when Joseph was in the pits? Chapter 42, verse 22. And Reuben answered saying, didn't I tell you, don't sin against the boy and you would not listen. What is he saying? Hi, as your elder brother, and I'll tell you something.

Those days, those who were the eldest in the family had tremendous respect from the younger, but not Reuben. He told them something, he says, they told him to go and mind his own business. He wouldn't listen.

He had no influence because he was unstable, not steadfast. Seniority doesn't make us elder brothers or bring other people to have confidence in us. It is steadfastness.

Simeon and Levi, verses five to seven, is the next two and three in the family that Joseph, Jacob prophesies about. Genesis 49, five. Simeon and Levi are brothers.

Their swords are implements of violence. You remember, they killed the Shechemites who had defiled Dinah, their sister. Let my soul not enter into their counsel.

He says, don't, I will have no fellowship with them in that spirit of revenge that they had. Let not my glory be united with their assembly, because in their anger, they slew men in their self. So they lamed oxen, cursed be their anger for it is fierce and their wrath for it is cruel.

I will disperse them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. There was a curse that came upon Simeon and Levi. The wonderful thing we see here is that that curse was cancelled later on.

In Exodus chapter 32, when the children of Israel were worshipping the golden calf and Moses came down and said, who is on the Lord's side? Who will stand with me against all these idolaters? And we read that in Exodus 32, that the tribe of Levi came forth and said to Moses, we'll stand with you. They went forth and they stood against their own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters. They really were radical towards their relatives.

And the Lord said, the tribe of Levi is going to be the priest. The priest will come from the tribe of Levi. That's the day God chose the priest.

They didn't know that was that was a selection for priests that was going on there. Supposing Moses had announced, now we're going to select the priestly tribe who will come out on my side. Oh, all 12 would have run off.

Very often when God tests us, we don't realize that God is testing us for a privilege, for a ministry. But that day, because Levi took the stand with Moses for the Lord, they were appointed as priests. And this curse that came from Jacob was cancelled and the blessing came upon them.

It's amazing how we can see that, that though in our past there may have been so many things wrong, yet it can all be cancelled out if we take a stand for the Lord, even against our own family members. Verse 8 to 12, we read about Judah. Judah, your brother shall praise you.

Judah means praise. And in the journey in the wilderness, God had appointed a particular order in which the tribes were to march. And right in front, the first tribe to lead the congregation of Israel was Judah, symbolizing that in God's church, always praise must lead the church.

Just like Jehoshaphat, he appointed right in the front of the army people who would praise the Lord. Judah, meaning praise, was to be in the front in the marching order in the wilderness. And Judah, your brother shall praise you.

Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's son shall bow down to you. Judah is the lion's wealth, and there you think of the lion of Judah that we read of in Revelation.

You see what fantastic prophetic vision Jacob had. From the prey, my son, you've gone up, he couches, he lies down as a lion, as a lion who dares rouse him up. Three times he uses that word, the lion of Judah.

And the scepter, the scepter is the rod of the king, shall not depart from Judah. And we see in the history of the kingdom of Judah, in the, of Israel and later on of Judah after Israel got divided, it was the tribe of Judah that had kings all the way. David, the most famous of them, beginning with David, and all the way up to Jesus Christ, who was born of the tribe of Judah.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh, that is the prince of peace, comes. This is the first place in the Bible where we read a prophecy that the Messiah would come through the tribe of Judah. It's amazing, the vision that God gave to Jacob, this man who had started out so badly, but whom God broke and gave him such a prophetic vision.

And to him shall be the obedience of the people. To Jesus Christ will be the obedience of the people. He ties his pole to the vine, and so on.

Then he goes, it's very interesting, he skips the, he's going in order, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, that's in the right order. Now the fifth son is Issachar, but he doesn't go to the fifth son, he skips straight over to the tenth one. The tenth one is Zebulun.

He says, Zebulun shall dwell at the seashore. And he shall be a haven for ships, and his flank shall be toward Sidon. And perhaps there is a reason why he went from the fourth to the tenth son, because Zebulun is the son whose tribe got the area of Canaan's land, in which were Nazareth and Galilee, where the Lion of Judah, the one who, when he would come, would grow up.

And here was Jacob prophesying that years later, when the land of Canaan would be divided up, Zebulun, the tribe of Zebulun, would get a property near Sidon, beside the sea. And they would be involved in commerce. And that's how we read of Zebulun there.

And then we go to the fifth son, Issachar, verse 14 to 15. He's a strong donkey, lying down between the sheepfolds. When he saw that a resting place was good, the land was pleasant, he bowed his shoulders to bear burdens.

Various prophecies concerning these sons that were literally fulfilled in the history of Israel. Some of it we cannot exactly locate. Some of it we can see clearly.

Dan shall judge his people, because Dan means judge, he's one of the tribes of Israel. And we can say one of the judges of Israel was Samson, who came from the tribe of Dan. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the path.

You see, not very good things that he says about Dan here. That bites the horse's heels so that his rider falls backward. That he'd be subtle like a serpent.

He was the son of one of the servants, one of the servant women. We look at the, it's likely that he was probably one of the ringleaders in getting Joseph sold off. And one of the ringleaders trying to get Joseph knocked out and killed.

When Joseph came to see them. He was, we can say, one of the black sheep of the family. And it's interesting that in the history of Israel too, the tribe of Dan was the first tribe that went into idolatry.

In the book of Revelation, chapter seven, where the twelve tribes of Jacob are mentioned, Dan is not even mentioned. He was the bad boy of the family, as far as he knows. And I think verse 18, all of a sudden we wonder what that verse means.

For thy salvation I wait, O Lord. It's almost as though Jacob has seen through this naughty boy and says, I wonder when he'll get salvation. I wait for it, Lord.

I wait for salvation for this lad. From his naughtiness and his evil nature, like a serpent in the way that bites the horse's heel, a horned snake in the path. Verse 19, as for Gad, raiders shall raid him, but he shall raid at their heels.

In other words, they'll be alternately defeated and victorious. And that was the history of Gad too. As for Asher, his food shall be rich.

He shall yield royal dainties. Asher was another tribe that was located in one of the richest parts of Canaan in the north. And that was also prophesied here.

Naphtali is a dull, let loose. He gives beautiful words. Naphtali was the other tribe that was located in the north.

We read in Matthew 4.15 that Jesus began to preach in the areas of Zebulun and Naphtali. Matthew 4.15. Then verse 22, Joseph is a fruitful bow, a fruitful bow by a spring. Its branches run over a wall.

The Ashers bitterly attacked him. That's referring to the past. Joseph passed and shot at him and harassed him, harassed by his brothers.

But his bow remained firm. That means he did not compromise. And his arms were agile.

He stood for the Lord. But Jacob reminds him that his hands were made strong by the mighty one of Jacob. From there, that is the shepherd and the stone of Israel.

You should read the verse like that from there. That is from the shepherd, the stone of Israel, the mighty one of Jacob. In other words, he's telling your Joseph that the reason why you were not able to come, why you did not compromise and why your bow, the bow didn't strength and where your arms are agile were because you were strengthened by the mighty one of Jacob, the shepherd and the stone of Israel.

All of Jacob's blessings came from him, from the God of your father, who helps you by the almighty, who blesses you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breast and the womb. The blessings of your father have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors. But to the utmost bond of the everlasting hills, may they be on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.

Later on from his tribe came Joshua from the tribe of Joseph, who led the Israelites into the land of Canaan. Now here's something which is very interesting when we come to verse 27. This is the last boy now.

And you know how the last son in a family or the last child in the family is always petted and pampered and spoiled. And particularly when Jacob had one out of his four wives was his favorite and his favorite wife, Rachel, had only two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. And one of those two sons disappeared, he thought dead.

Benjamin must have been the darling of Jacob's heart in every way. He must have looked a little bit like his mother, Rachel. And everything made would have made Jacob really pamper and spoil Benjamin.

And one would think that, humanly speaking, when he came to prophesy over Benjamin, he said, oh, God will really give you the best. But see what he says. There we see how Jacob does not prophesy according to the natural mind.

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf. There we see a spiritual man who's being cleansed from partiality towards a particular child. It's a tremendous lesson for fathers to learn.

If we can learn to prophesy like this, to be cleansed from this partiality. Yeah, Benjamin is my favorite child, but God says he's a ravenous wolf. In the morning, he devours the prey.

And in the evening, he divides the spoiled, cunning as a wolf. From the tribe of Benjamin came King Saul. And we read in the history of Israel that the tribe of Benjamin was a fierce tribe.

Exactly like this, a ravenous wolf. But it's very interesting that to see there that Jacob does not go by his natural preferences. I must confess that in my life, I've seen probably very few fathers who have who who attained to this freedom from partiality.

Even among those who understand the new and living way, very few take it seriously to cleanse themselves from partiality towards their children. It's a very difficult thing to cleanse ourselves from. But he who is wholehearted to partake of the divine nature will see that God is impartial and will really seek to be impartial himself.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. All these are the 12 tribes of Israel. And this is what the father told him.

And what he said to them when he blessed him. And this is the verse I was telling you earlier. He blessed them, everyone with the blessing appropriate to him.

Prophetically, he gave each one exactly what was needed for him without partiality, without preference. I've seen people prophesying in charismatic meetings. It's all so shallow.

It depends on this pastor goes and prophesies over somebody. If he likes him, he'll say something good. If he doesn't like him, he'll say something bad.

That's not prophecy. That's just a deception. That's like Isaac saying, bring me the venison, and I'll give a good prophecy over you.

For pastors like that, you bring them the venison, they'll give a good prophecy over you. But Jacob's not going to be fooled by venison or any such thing. You may be my favorite son, Benjamin, but I've got to tell you exactly what God's shown me.

Oh, I long to be a father like that. I want to be a brother like that who is being disciplined so that there's no partiality at all towards any human being, towards any brother in the church, to speak exactly what is right without any human attachment, to see as God sees. That's what we should long for.

If we let God discipline us, we can be like that. That what we speak will be appropriate to each person without partiality. Long for it, dear brothers and sisters.

That's our calling. Long for it. Think that a crook like Jacob could become like this in the end of his days.

God could work on him. There's hope for every one of us. If we are wholehearted, this partiality is really a wretched thing.

If we don't take it seriously, it'll remain with us till our dying day. We've got to root it out and cleanse it out. Partiality towards one another in the church.

You've got to cleanse it out. Then he charged them. His eyes are on Canaan.

He says, don't bury me in this advanced country, Egypt. Take me back to the primitive country of Canaan. Bury me with my fathers in the cave of Ephron the Hittite.

None of all these fancy pyramid tombs for me. That old cave down in primitive Canaan is good enough for me. That's why God called me.

There they buried Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and his wife Rebecca. There I buried Leah. And when he finished charging his sons, he prophesied right up to last breath.

He drew his feet into the bed, breathed the last, was gathered to his people. What a wonderful way to end one's life. What a wonderful way to end one's life.

I hope it challenges us and encourages us that God could make so much out of a man who started life as a crook and a cheat and a deceiver and a grabber. But he submitted to God's discipline. I believe it's one of the greatest examples in the Old Testament of what God can do in a man who's just like us.

If we submit to God's disciplines, he can make us, he can make that crook into a prophet. That's what we see in Jacob's life. Anyone, God has no partiality with God.

What he did for Jacob, he'll do for us. But we have to give the right answer when he says, what's your name, Lord deceiver? Jacob. We got to give the right answer when he asks us, what's your name? Yeah, Lord.

This is the truth. This is what I am. That's the man whom God changes.

And Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father. Chapter 50, verse 2. And the physicians embalmed Israel.

Now 40 days were required for this. Such is the period required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him 70 days.

And when the days of mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh. Remember this. Now, we got to understand this picture clearly.

We can say, comparing it to today's world, we can say Joseph was like, say, the man next to the president of the United States of America or something like that, who would say, maybe he went out from some primitive country like India and became the top man in America. And he took his father over and his father says, no, my home is back. In the old land where I came from.

And this man, who is the top ruler in another country, goes up to Pharaoh and says, I've got to go back to Canaan. My home is there. You see, Joseph is not ashamed to stand up to the world's greatest monarch and tell him, my home's in Canaan.

I've got to take my dad's body over there to bury him there. Not in any of the fancy tombs of Egypt. Think of that.

Think to say, I, though I'm here in Egypt and I'm a ruler, I refuse to identify with this country. I want to be identified with a country in which God has called me. That's something we see.

He was not afraid. He was not afraid of what Pharaoh would think. Look at this fellow.

After all that I've done for him all these 30, 40 years, now he still wants to go back to Canaan. He was not afraid. He says, now let me go up and bury my father in Canaan.

I'm sure Pharaoh would have been glad to make a fantastic, at least a small ceremony for Jacob. But no, they wanted to go back to Canaan. Pharaoh said, go up and bury your father.

And Joseph went up to bury his father. And with him went all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house and all the elders of the land of Egypt. All the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household.

They left only the little ones. And they went up within chariots and horsemen to the great company. And they made a lamentation of the threshing floor of Asad, verse 10.

And when the inhabitants of land, the Canaanites saw the morning, they said, this is a grievous morning for the Egyptians. And thus his sons did for him as he had charged them. For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, buried him in the cave of the field of Machphela before memory.

And after he had buried his father, verse 14, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, all who had gone up with him to bury his father. Now, we come to another part where we see the attitude of Joseph's brothers and Joseph's attitude. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, what if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him? You see, a guilty conscience can give us many fears.

Sometimes a man may be there like Jacob to protect us. We say, oh, it's all right now, this man will help us out of our problem. And then the man dies, or the man is transferred or goes away, and his guilty conscience begins to bother us again.

A guilty conscience brings many fears, and the guilty conscience of these brothers, particularly the 10, bothered them. And they thought, now Joseph will take revenge on us. That teaches us something about their own nature.

There's a verse that we considered when we studied the book of Proverbs, I don't know whether you remember it, in Proverbs 27, verse 19, which says that as in water faith reflects faith, so the heart of man

reflects man. That means that when I come into a particular situation with another human being, I expect that that human being will behave in the same selfish, self-centered way that I usually behave in. That's the meaning of that verse.

That I see in his heart, he may have very good motives, but because I am not so spiritual to have such good motives, I imagine that he must be having selfish motives, because I see in his heart a mirror, this verse says, that shows me the condition of my own heart. So when Joseph's brothers thought that Joseph will now take revenge on us, they were actually seeing a reflection of what was in their own heart, that if they were in Joseph's position, they would have taken revenge. And very often the motives, the evil motives that we attribute to other brothers and sisters for the reason, I know why he did this, he did that with this type of motive, we don't say it, but we think like that.

Why do we think like that? Because we ourselves act with such selfish, self-centered motives that we can't imagine that any brother or sister would act from any pure motive. That must be a selfish motive, because I'm selfish myself. And if only we can be honest there and say, Lord, I'm just seeing a reflection of my own heart.

That's not a picture of his heart. I can't even see his heart, only you can see it. But I'm imagining what I see is a mirror.

I imagine that he will act in the same selfish way as I do. I imagine that he'll take revenge like I do. But Joseph was far from that.

Joseph didn't have any thoughts of revenge in his mind at all. And so they went up to Joseph, and I think they invented a story here. I don't think it is really true, saying your father charged before he died, saying they have to invent something.

They're quite capable of that. Thus you shall say to Joseph, please forgive. I beg you the transgression of your brothers for their sin.

If Jacob wanted to say that to Joseph, he could have said it himself before he died. Why did he have to leave a message with his 10 brothers and say, go and tell this to Joseph after I'm dead? That's a story, an invention. To protect themselves, just like we know how we can invent stories to protect ourselves when we are in the soup, in some situations.

Your father said this, you know, please tell Joseph to forgive their transgressions. Now please forgive the transgressions of the servants of the God of your father. And Joseph wept.

You see something of Joseph's heart saying? He says, oh my brothers, you lived with me for all these years in Egypt, and you think I'm so evil, I'm so sad that you still have such bad thoughts about me, that you think I'm going to take revenge on you now just because Jacob had died. He wept. He wept that they could be so evil.

He was really a tender-hearted man. The man God used in Egypt was a tender-hearted man. And his brothers came and fell down and said, we are your servants.

And Joseph said to them, do not be afraid. And here's a very beautiful word. Am I in God's place? Am I in God's place? A very good question for us to ask ourselves in our relationships with other people.

Am I in God's place? It's amazing, my dear brothers and sisters, how many people I've seen who try to take God's place towards another brother. Do you know that when you take revenge, you are taking God's place? There's a verse in Deuteronomy chapter 32, verse 35, where God says, vengeance is mine. It's quoted in Romans chapter 12, towards the end of Romans 12, Deuteronomy 32, 35.

Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. But Joseph knew that before Deuteronomy was written. Joseph lived hundreds of years before Deuteronomy was written, but he knew it.

Because he had the spirit of God, which taught him that revenge is God's business. Am I in God's place to take vengeance on you? No, sir, I'll never do that. Do you know the number of ways in which we can act like God towards other brothers and sisters? When I lord it over others, what am I doing? I'm being like God towards other people.

When I want other people to obey me and submit to me, I'm being like God to them. There are many husbands who are like God to their wives. They need to ask themselves this question, am I in God's place? Are you in God's place, my dear brother, acting like God towards somebody else? Humble yourself.

That's the spirit of Lucifer, who wanted God's place. Joseph knew that that is not the right spirit. Am I in God's place is a question that we can profitably ask ourselves in many situations.

There are many people who treat the people who work under them just like God. Even God wouldn't be so strict and hard the way some people are hard on their, on the people they employ, who work under them, their subordinates. Ask yourself this question, am I in God's place? Am I acting like God towards that person? Am I imposing my personality on that person, such that the person doesn't have freedom to be himself? There's a tremendous lust in our flesh to be God towards other people.

You find, for example, I'll give you a test of this. Supposing you find a secret delight in your heart when you find some brother having confidence in you and coming to you for advice, or some sister coming to you for advice and having confidence in you, and you find secretly your heart is delighted. Shall I tell you, my brother, sister, there's something of the spirit of Lucifer there that makes your heart delighted, that you can be God to that brother.

You can be God to that sister, giving advice. Cleanse yourself, cleanse yourself. We are not to be in God's place towards any other person.

It's got to bring a fear in our hearts when we see that people take our advice. A fear, a holy fear, am I in God's place? I fear, Lord, this person's taking my advice so seriously. I fear, am I in God's place? That's the right spirit.

That is the man whom God appointed in Egypt. As for you, he understood Deuteronomy 32, 35, before it was written. As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

He understood Romans 8, 28, before that was written. What a man Joseph was. Think to be able to know a scripture which is not even written.

Think to be able to know a scripture from experience, which is the spirit of Christ, but it's not there. You haven't read the word, but you know it. That's how the spirit can lead us into all the truth.

You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good, in order to bring about this present result to preserve many people alive. So therefore, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your little ones.

I will do good to you. I will do the very best to you people. In fact, Joseph doesn't try to rub it in by saying, You fellows did such a lot of evil to me, and you did this.

Don't you remember you did this? And don't you remember you did that? And don't you remember? But I shall be so magnanimous and gracious, and I shall forgive you. You know, there are some people who forgive like that. I don't forget all the wretched things that you have done to me, but I shall.

You see the pious humbug of a Pharisee putting on the garments of humility there. I remember hearing of, it wasn't here, it was in another place, not in Bangalore, where a sister had a difficulty with another sister, and then she went up and told her, Yes, I was a bit disturbed by your attitude towards me, but I have decided to die. You see the pious Pharisee who's put on the garments of death to self.

Can you see through that hollowness? Can you see through that humbug? That sister couldn't. And this sister told me, that's how I know about it. I said, Lord, I said, give her light.

Let her see. She can't see. She can't see the Phariseeism in that.

You have treated me like this, but I shall forgive you, because I'm so spiritual, you see. That is the unsaid part. I shall forgive you.

I shall be gracious, and I shall die to myself and forgive you. Joseph has not got any of that humbug. He says, God worked it out for good.

He says, I'll do good to you. No reminding the other person of all that they did. That's spirituality.

And Joseph lived there for the age of 110. And he saw the third generation of Ephraim's son. And he told his brothers, verse 24, I'm about to die.

And twice, he says, in verse 24 and 25, God will surely take care of you and bring you back to that land, to that primitive land of Canaan, away from this advanced society. Because that's the place where God wants us to be. And Joseph made the sons of Israel, saying, God will surely take care of you.

He'll carry my bones up from here. He identified himself with Canaan's land, the place where God had called him to be. So Joseph died at the age of 110 years.

And he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt. Just in closing, let me mention. It's very interesting to see how the book of Genesis begins and how it ends.

You know the first verse in Genesis? In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And then the last words are, a coffin in Egypt. It's quite a contrast.

That's the result of sin. And from that book, we see the examples of these men. And we see that they were very ordinary men.

Just like you and me. There are warnings. There are encouragements.

Examples for us to follow. Warnings for us to be careful of, dangers to avoid. Shining examples of men who did not even have a bible with them.

No old covenant, no new covenant. And yet who lived by the spirit of Christ. Think of Joseph.

Some wonderful characters to study. To see how much, what a height he could attain to. Without scriptures, without any verses.

Because he was open to God. At the age of 17, he was getting visions of God. I'm sure he was getting it right on till the end of his life.

That's the secret, brothers and sisters. It's not just knowledge of the bible. It's being open to God.

That's what we see in the book of Genesis. Noah, Abel, Abraham, Enoch. They were open to God.

Walked with God means they heard what God had to say to them. They didn't have just dry academic knowledge of some scripture. They didn't have any scripture.

They were open to God. And that's what made them the men they became. And that's what God desires from us.

An openness to Him. To hear Him. To walk with Him.

That's the message that comes through the book of Genesis. To us from these characters.

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