

CHAPTER 48

The time drawing nigh that Israel must die, having, in the former chapter, given order about his burial, in this he takes leave of his grand-children by Joseph, and in the next of all his children. Thus Jacob's dying words are recorded, because he then spoke by a spirit of prophecy; Abraham's and Isaac's are not. God's gifts and graces shine forth much more in some saints than in others upon their death-beds. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where it listeth. In this chapter,

- I.** Joseph, hearing of his father's sickness, goes to visit him, and takes his two sons with him (v. 1, 2).
- II.** Jacob solemnly adopts his two sons, and takes them for his own (v. 3-7).
- III.** He blesses them (v. 8-16).
- IV.** He explains and justifies the crossing of his hands in blessing them (v. 17-20).
- V.** He leaves a particular legacy to Joseph (v. 21, 22).

~~OLD~~ GENESIS 48:1-7

JACOB'S LAST ILLNESS

Here,

I. Joseph, upon notice of his father's illness, goes to see him; though a man of honour and business, yet he will not fail to show this due respect to his aged father, v. 1. Visiting the sick, to whom we lie under obligations, or may have opportunity of doing good, either for body or soul, is our duty. The sick bed is a proper place both for giving comfort and counsel to others and receiving instruction ourselves. Joseph took his two sons with him, that they might receive their dying grandfather's blessing, and that what they might see in him, and hear from him, might make an abiding impression upon them. Note,

1. It is good to acquaint young people that are coming into the world with the aged servants of God that are going out of it, whose dying testimony to the goodness of God, and the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, may be a great encouragement to the rising generation. Manasseh and Ephraim (I dare say) would never forget what passed at this time.

2. Pious parents are desirous of a blessing, not only for themselves, but for their children. "O that they may live before God!" Joseph had been, above all his brethren, kind to his father, and therefore had reason to expect particular favour from him.

II. Jacob, upon notice of his son's visit, prepared himself as well as he could to entertain him, v. 2. He did what he could to rouse his spirits, and to stir up the gift that was in him; what little was left of bodily strength he put forth to the utmost, and *sat upon the bed*. Note, It is very good for sick and aged people to be as lively and cheerful as they can, that they may not faint in the day of adversity. *Strengthen thyself*, as Jacob here, and God will strengthen thee; *hearten thyself and help thyself*, and God will help and hearten thee. Let the spirit sustain the infirmity.

III. In recompence to Joseph for all his attentions to him, he adopted his two sons. In this charter of adoption there is,

1. A particular recital of God's promise to him, to which this had reference: "*God blessed me* (v. 3), and let that blessing be entailed upon them." God had promised him two things, a numerous issue, and Canaan for an inheritance (v. 4); and Joseph's sons, pursuant hereunto, should each of them multiply into a tribe, and each of them have a distinct lot in Canaan, equal with Jacob's own sons. See how he blessed them by faith in that which God had said to him, ⁸¹²Hebrews 11:21. Note, In all our prayers, both for ourselves and for our children, we ought to have a particular eye to, and remembrance of, God's promises to us.

2. An express reception of Joseph's sons into his family: "*Thy sons are mine* (v. 5), not only my grandchildren, but as my own children." Though they were born in Egypt, and their father was then separated from his brethren, which might seem to have cut them off from the heritage of the Lord, yet Jacob takes them in, and owns them for visible church members. He explains this at v. 16, *Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers*; as if he had said, "Let them not succeed their father in his power and grandeur here in Egypt, but let them succeed me in the

inheritance of the promise made to Abraham,” which Jacob looked upon as much more valuable and honourable, and would have them to prize and covet accordingly. Thus the aged dying patriarch teaches these young persons, now that they were of age (being about twenty-one years old), not to look upon Egypt as their home, nor to incorporate themselves with the Egyptians, but to take their lot with the people of God, as Moses afterwards in the like temptation, ⁻⁵¹¹²⁴Hebrews 11:24-26. And because it would be a piece of self-denial in them, who stood so fair for preferment in Egypt, to adhere to the despised Hebrews, to encourage them he constitutes each of them the head of a tribe. Note, Those are worthy of double honour who, through God's grace, break through the temptations of worldly wealth and preferment, to embrace religion in disgrace and poverty. Jacob will have Ephraim and Manasseh to believe that it is better to be low and in the church than high and out of it, to be called by the name of poor Jacob than to be called by the name of rich Joseph.

3. A proviso inserted concerning the children he might afterwards have; they should not be accounted heads of tribes, as Ephraim and Manasseh were, but should fall in with either the one or the other of their brethren, v. 6. It does not appear that Joseph had any more children; however, it was Jacob's prudence to give this direction, for the preventing of contest and mismanagement. Note, In making settlements, it is good to take advice, and to provide for what may happen, while we cannot foresee what will happen. Our prudence must attend God's providence.

4. Mention is made of the death and burial of Rachel, Joseph's mother, and Jacob's best beloved wife (v. 7), referring to that story, ⁻¹³⁵⁹Genesis 35:19. Note,

(1.) When we come to die ourselves, it is good to call to mind the death of our dear relations and friends, that have gone before us, to make death and the grave the more familiar to us. See ⁻⁰²⁷¹³Numbers 27:13. Those that were to us as our own souls are dead and buried; and shall we think it much to follow them in the same path?

(2.) The removal of dear relations from us is an affliction the remembrance of which cannot but abide with us a great while. Strong affections in the enjoyment cause long afflictions in the loss.

~~488~~ GENESIS 48:8-22

JACOB BLESSES THE SONS OF JOSEPH

Here is,

I. The blessing with which Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph, which is the more remarkable because the apostle makes such particular mention of it (~~312~~ Hebrews 11:21), while he says nothing of the blessing which Jacob pronounced on the rest of his sons, though that also was done in faith.

Observe here,

1. Jacob was blind for age, v. 10. It is one of the common infirmities of old age. *Those that look out at the windows are darkened*, ~~218~~ Ecclesiastes 12:3. It is folly to *walk in the sight of our eyes*, and to suffer our hearts to go after them, while we know death will shortly close them, and we do not know but some accident between us and death may darken them. Jacob, like his father before him, when he was old, was dim-sighted. Note,

(1.) Those that have the honour of age must therewith be content to take the burden of it.

(2.) The eye of faith may be very clear even when the eye of the body is very much clouded.

2. Jacob was very fond of Joseph's sons: *He kissed them and embraced them*, v. 10. It is common for old people to have a very particular affection for their grand-children, perhaps more than they had for their own children when they were little, which Solomon gives a reason for (~~316~~ Proverbs 17:6), *Children's children are the crown of old men*. With what satisfaction does Jacob say here (v. 11), *I had not thought to see thy face* (having many years given him up for lost), *and, lo, God has shown me also thy seed!* See here,

(1.) How these two good men own God in their comforts. Joseph says (v. 9), *They are my sons whom God has given me*, and, to magnify the favour, he adds, *"In this place of my banishment, slavery, and imprisonment."* Jacob says here, *God has shown me thy seed*. Our comforts are then doubly sweet to us when we see them coming from God's hand.

(2.) How often God, in his merciful providences, outdoes our expectations, and thus greatly magnifies his favours. He not only prevents our fears, but exceeds our hopes. We may apply this to the promise which is made to us and to our children. We could not have thought that we should have been taken into covenant with God ourselves, considering how guilty and corrupt we are; and yet, lo, he has shown us our seed also in covenant with him.

3. Before he entails his blessing, he recounts his experiences of God's goodness to him. He had spoken (v. 3) of God's appearing to him. The particular visits of his grace, and the special communion we have sometimes had with him, ought never to be forgotten. But (v. 15, 16) he mentions the constant care which the divine Providence had taken of him all his days.

(1.) He had *fed him all his life long unto this day*, v. 15. Note, As long as we have lived in this world we have had continual experience of God's goodness to us, in providing for the support of our natural life. Our bodies have called for daily food, and no little has gone to feed us, yet we have never wanted food convenient. He that has fed us *all our life long* surely will not fail us at last.

(2.) He had by his angel *redeemed him from all evil*, v. 16. A great deal of hardship he had known in his time, but God had graciously kept him from the evil of his troubles. Now that he was dying he looked upon himself as *redeemed from all evil*, and bidding an everlasting farewell to sin and sorrow. Christ, the Angel of the covenant, is he that redeems us from all evil, ^{STUBS}2 Timothy 4:18. Note,

[1.] It becomes the servants of God, when they are old and dying, to witness for our God that they have found him gracious.

[2.] Our experiences of God's goodness to us are improvable, both for the encouragement of others to serve God, and for encouragement to us in blessing them and praying for them.

4. When he confers the blessing and name of Abraham and Isaac upon them he recommends the pattern and example of Abraham and Isaac to them. them, v. 15. He calls God the *God before whom his fathers Abraham and Isaac walked*, that is, in whom they believed, whom they observed and obeyed, and with whom they kept up communion in

instituted ordinances, according to the condition of the covenant. *Walk before me,* ^{<OR>}Genesis 17:1. Note,

(1.) Those that would inherit the blessing of their godly ancestors, and have the benefit of God's covenant with them, must tread in the steps of their piety.

(2.) It should recommend religion and the service of God to us that God was the God of our fathers, and that they had satisfaction in walking before him.

5. In blessing them, he *crossed hands*. Joseph placed them so as that Jacob's right hand should be put on the head of Manasseh the elder, v. 12, 13. But Jacob would put it on the head of Ephraim the younger, v. 14. This displeased Joseph, who was willing to support the reputation of his first-born, and would therefore have removed his father's hands, v. 17, 18. But Jacob gave him to understand that he know what he did, and that he did it not by mistake, nor in a humour, nor from a partial affection to one more than the other, but from a spirit of prophecy, and in compliance with the divine counsels. Manasseh should be great, but truly Ephraim should be greater. When the tribes were mustered in the wilderness, Ephraim was more numerous than Manasseh, and had the standard of that squadron (^{<OR>}Numbers 1:32, 33, 35; 2:18, 20), and is named first, ^{<OR>}Psalms 80:2. Joshua was of that tribe, so was Jeroboam. The tribe of Manasseh was divided, one half on one side Jordan, the other half on the other side, which made it the less powerful and considerable. In the foresight of this, *Jacob crossed hands*. Note.

(1.) God, in bestowing his blessings upon his people, gives more to some than to others, more gifts, graces, and comforts, and more of the good things of this life.

(2.) He often gives most to those that are least likely. He chooses the weak things of the world; raises the poor out of the dust. Grace observes not the order of nature, nor does God prefer those whom we think fittest to be preferred, but as it pleases him. It is observable how often God, by the distinguishing favours of his covenant, advanced the younger above the elder, Abel above Cain, Shem above Japheth, Abraham above Nahor and Haran, Isaac above Ishmael, Jacob above Esau; Judah and Joseph were preferred before Reuben, Moses before Aaron, David and Solomon before their elder brethren. See ^{<OR>}1 Samuel 16:7. He tied the Jews to observe the

birthright (~~45217~~ Deuteronomy 21:17), but he never tied himself to observe it. Some make this typical of the preference given to the Gentiles above the Jews; the Gentile converts were much more numerous than those of the Jews. See ~~4807~~ Galatians 4:27. Thus free grace becomes more illustrious.

II. The particular tokens of his favour to Joseph.

1. He left with him the promise of their return out of Egypt, as a sacred trust: *I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again*, v. 21. Accordingly, Joseph, when he died, left it with his brethren, ~~4624~~ Genesis 50:24. This assurance was given them, and carefully preserved among them, that they might neither love Egypt too much when it favoured them, nor fear it too much when it frowned upon them. These words of Jacob furnish us with comfort in reference to the death of our friends: *They die*; but God shall be with us, and his gracious presence is sufficient to make up the loss: they leave us, but he will never fail us. Further, He will bring us to the land of our fathers, the heavenly Canaan, whither our godly fathers have gone before us. If God be with us while we stay behind in this world, and will receive us shortly to be with those that have gone before to a better world, we ought not to sorrow as those that have no hope.

2. He bestowed one portion upon him above his brethren, v. 22. The lands bequeathed are described to be those which he *took out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword, and with his bow*. He purchased them first (~~4682~~ Joshua 24:32), and, it seems, was afterwards disseized of them by the Amorites, but retook them by the sword, repelling force by force, and recovering his right by violence when he could not otherwise recover it. These lands he settled upon Joseph; mention is made of this grant, ~~4945~~ John 4:5. Pursuant to it, this parcel of ground was given to the tribe of Ephraim as their right, and the lot was never cast upon it; and in it Joseph's bones were buried, which perhaps Jacob had an eye to as much as to any thing in this settlement. Note, It may sometimes be both just and prudent to give some children portions above the rest; but a grave is that which we can most count upon as our own in this earth.