

This week we continue our study of Jacob's death-bed blessings, focusing on the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob, whom he blesses in Genesis 49:27. Jacob's words are potent prophecy, predicting the destiny of God's people as God had foreknown and fore-ordained. Our prayer ought to be that the Lord will likewise powerfully conform every aspect of our lives to His all-pervasive will as revealed in His Word – even though such conformity of our lives might take a very long time, as it did in the tribe of Benjamin -- stubborn, rebellious, but in the end, loyal.

Monday: Read Genesis 49:26-27**The Blessing of the Approaching Revelation**

The prophetic words concerning Benjamin in verse 27 follow a very important declaration in Genesis 49:26 about the *expanding nature* of God's blessings. This comes out when we literally translate Jacob's claim about greater blessing in verse 26, which should read: “The blessing of your father is greater than the blessing on my forefathers... even greater than the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills.”

To be sure, God's blessings were abundant for Jacob's father Isaac and grandfather Abraham. But, in God's purposes towards Jacob, God's plan expanded to more clearly portray the hope of salvation to come through Jesus Christ. This progress towards the Messiah made the blessings on Jacob “greater” than what had preceded. “In the divine economy of the accomplishment and application of redemption, the closer in time the people of God lived to the coming of Christ, the clearer and more complete was the Scriptural record of the person and work of the Savior” (Pastor Bill Harrell, *Bible Notes*) Think of Joseph, to whom Jacob is speaking (verse 26) whose life greatly foreshadowed the suffering of Christ, punished cruelly yet forgiving his brothers in Egypt? In this way, Jacob saw the greatness of God's blessing and revelation in his life as he learned to trace God's redemptive purposes through his long-lost son, Joseph, now Prince of Egypt.

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that He is no miser when it comes to progressively pouring out more and more blessings upon His Church throughout history. Nor will He fail to progressively open our eyes to the ever-increasing level of His blessings in our lives. As Bill Harrell concludes on this passage: “How greatly blessed are we who have, in addition to the various portions of divine revelation contained in the Old Testament, the final, full revelation of God in His Son (Heb. 1:1-4).”

Tuesday: Read Genesis 49:26-27 and 2 Samuel 3:1**Faith, in the End, Triumphs**

It is one of the shocking surprises of the Bible that the tribe of Benjamin took so long to come to a place of trust in and devotion to God's decrees. Despite God's generous plan, Benjamin long distrusted the protection of the royal tribe of Judah. Beginning with Saul, there was a stubborn refusal on the part of Benjamin to find salvation in the house of David – so that “war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time”(2 Sam. 3:1). How sad that, for so long, so few of the house of Saul the Benjamite king bowed the knee to David (and through Him, to the Kingdom of Christ). In fact, we still see members of the house of Benjamin rebelling against God's chosen king in 2 Samuel 20:1 and causing famine over the whole land of Israel in 2 Samuel 21:1 because of their “blood-stained house”! Yet God eventually subdues this rebellious house. In the end, it is Benjamin alone who stays true to David when the 10 other tribes of Israel rebel in the days of 1 Kings 12:21!

Meditate and Pray: We too often regret past failures and rebellions against God, instead of rejoicing at the reconciliation which we now enjoy. Saul's dismal failures are forgotten in the light of Benjamin's ultimate commitment to Judah. Faith, in the end triumphs. Are you today a friend to David's Son, Jesus, adopted by

grace into the family of God, though perhaps brought to bow the knee only after years of guilt and rebellion like the house of Benjamin? Rejoice in God's amazing grace, in the words of this hymn by Ray Palmer (Trinity Hymnal # 91):

*Take me, O my Father, take me;
Take me, save me, through Thy Son;
That which Thou wouldst have me, make me,
Let Thy will in me be done.*

*Long from Thee my footsteps straying,
Thorny proved the way I trod;
Weary come I now, and praying,
Take me to Thy love, my God.*

*Fruitless years with grief recalling,
Humbly I confess my sin;
At Thy feet, O Father, falling,
To Thy household take me in.*

*Freely now to Thee I proffer
This relenting heart of mine;
Freely life and love I offer,
Gift unworthy love like Thine.*

*Once the world's Redeemer, dying,
Bore our sins upon the tree;
On that sacrifice relying,
Now I look in hope to Thee:
Father, take me; all forgiving,
Fold me to Thy loving breast;
In Thy love forever living
I must be forever blest.*

Wednesday: Read Genesis 49:27, Judges 20:4-14 and 2 Samuel 20:1

Grace for Troublemakers

Sadly, the history of the tribe of Benjamin is scarred with many “troublemakers” (like Sheba in 2 Sam. 20:1) who rebel against God's rule, bringing divine judgment down not only on their own heads, but also on their whole tribe. In the days of Judges, for example, the tribe of Benjamin refused to bring their own evil brethren from Gibeah to justice when that Benjamite city's rape and murder was discovered (Judges 20:4-7). All of Israel then came against Benjamin “as one man” (Judges 20:8) to exact a terrible Divine judgment against this tribe – to the point that there were only 600 Benjamite men left out of more than 26,000 when the holy war against them concluded (Judges 20:46-47). No wonder that word translated “troublemaker” (2 Samuel 20:1) literally means “son of Belial” - Belial being a name for the Destroyer himself, Satan. See how close this tribe came to complete destruction because of these troublemakers among them!

Meditate and Pray: It is sobering to realize that the flagrant sins of evil men can bring judgment down upon a whole tribe or nation. With such high-handed wickedness all around us and on the news every night, is there any hope for us and our nation? Only God's New Covenant of Grace, bestowed upon us in the Name of Jesus who died in the place of sinners, is able to break the cycle of corporate sin. Ezekiel 18:2 promises that because of God's grace fulfilled in the coming of Christ, no longer will children inherit the bitter sins of their parents. Instead, because of God's withholding judgment as the God “who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezekiel 18:30) there is always hope for the sinner who turns from the evil ways of his fathers to find forgiveness (see Ezekiel 18:30). Hallelujah!

Thursday: Read Genesis 49:27, 1 Sam 20:14-15 and 2 Sam 1:25-27

A Place at the Table

How tragic that the stubborn rebelliousness of the Benjamite King Saul resulted in the death of the godliest prince of that tribe, Jonathan, the closest friend and spiritual brother of David – for whom David mourns in 2 Samuel 1:25-27. Never was there a clearer example of the destructiveness of sin on a family than Saul's destruction of his own house. Yet, is it not beautiful that Jonathan's prayer for his family that David would

“never cut off his kindness” from Jonathan's descendants (1 Samuel 20:14-15) was answered by David. The tribe of Benjamin ends up sharing the portion of David's house, finding refuge in his kingdom – even as Jonathan's son Mephibosheth found a place at his table (2 Samuel 9:7). What a picture of our Savior, the Son of David: able to find and rescue the lost and cursed sons of Saul, giving them an adopted place at His table of grace!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that David was determined to share his kingdom with the house of Saul and the tribe of Benjamin. He said to his courtiers: “Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?” Does not God the Father announce His intentions to His servants in the same way? Can you not imagine Him speaking of *your sin-broken house*: “Is there anyone still left of the house of _____ to whom I can show kindness for the sake of my Son Jesus Christ?” How David's servants must have rejoiced to have a part in bringing the lowly and the crippled into David's palace! How much greater is the joy of God's servants in Heaven, “when one sinner repents” (Luke 15:10). Therefore, let us thank God the Father for his love for the lost in the words of this hymn by Elizabeth Charles (Trinity Hymnal # 107):

<i>Praise ye the Father for His lovingkindness;</i>	<i>Praise ye the Spirit, Comforter of Israel,</i>
<i>Tenderly cares He for His erring children;</i>	<i>Sent of the Father and the Son to bless us;</i>
<i>Praise Him, ye angels, praise Him in the heavens,</i>	<i>Praise ye the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,</i>
<i>Praise ye Jehovah!</i>	<i>Praise ye the Triune God!</i>

Praise ye the Savior—great is His compassion;
Graciously cares He for His chosen people;
Young men and maidens, older folks and children,
Praise ye the Savior!

Friday: Read Genesis 49:27 and 2 Cor 13:14

Love Sweetly Draws Us In

How fitting that the last son of Jacob, Benjamin, named “Son of my Sorrow” by his grieving mother as she died from giving birth to him, should share the joy of a portion with the great tribe of Judah. We have seen how this prophecy of “dividing a portion” with another in Gen. 49:27 was fulfilled when Benjamin, drawn by grace to a commitment to David's tribe Judah, became the most loyal of brothers. Benjamin was the only tribe to stick with David's grandson Rehoboam when all the other tribes rebelled against David's house (1 Kings 12:21). Yes, in the beginning, Benjamin is likened by Jacob to a ravenous wolf, thirsting for flesh and blood, a violent thirst which this tribe sought to satisfy in the violent days of the book of Judges and in the blood-stained house of King Saul. But in the end, drawn by the kind treatment of their former enemy, King David, this tribe is led by grace to commit itself to God's Anointed King. In like manner, we thank God for the effectiveness of the sweet ways of grace shown towards us by our Anointed Son of David, Jesus Christ.

Meditate and Pray: In these days, so many houses and families around us are broken by sin and on the verge of destruction. Pray for that same grace which drew that rebellious tribe into bonds with David to draw families of sinners into bonds of loyalty to Jesus Christ. It is no accident that Paul the Apostle almost always signs his letters with: “The *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor. 13:14). How blessed are we, then, to enjoy the full of revelation of this grace, drawing us to sit at Table with the Lord, which was so faithfully foreshadowed by David. As that hymn by Isaac Watts puts it (hymn # 469):

*How sweet and awesome is this place
With Christ within the doors,
While everlasting love displays
The choicest of her stores!*

*While all our hearts and all our songs
Join to admire the feast,
Each of us cry, with thankful tongues,
“Lord, why was I a guest?”*

*“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”*

*’Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.*