

The Blessing of God Almighty

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Date: 02 March 2025

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our reading for this evening, and we're continuing our series towards the end now of the book of Genesis. So please do turn in Genesis to chapter 48. We have a number of visitor Bibles at the side here if you need to grab a Bible, so please do turn it up, and you'll find on page 41 if you have the visitor Bible.

So Genesis 48, and beginning at verse 1. After this, Joseph was told, Behold, your father is ill. So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And it was told to Jacob, Your son Joseph has come to you. Then Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed. And Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Lutz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I'll make of you a company of peoples and will give you this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession. And now your two sons, who are 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.

And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. As for me, when I came from Paddan to my sorrow, Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath. And I buried her there on the way to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem. When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, Who are these?

Joseph said to his father, These are my sons whom God has given me here. And he said, Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them. Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see.

So Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your offspring also.

[2 : 34] Then Joseph removed them from his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand towards Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand towards Israel's right hand, and brought them near him. And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who is the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys. And in them, let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him. And he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, Not this way, my father, since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head. But his father refused and said, I know, my son,

I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations. So he blessed them that day, saying, By you, Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh. Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh. Then Israel said to Joseph, Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers. Moreover, I've given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow. Amen. May God bless his word to us this evening.

We'll do turn to Genesis chapter 48. While you're turning that up, let me just say a word about your singing. You're in very good form tonight. Well done.

Genesis 48, which is all about the blessing of God Almighty. Now, dying saints, dying believers who are aware that they are very much on the threshold of eternity, they tend not to be taken up with trivialities, but their minds are usually focused on much, much more important matters, particularly family matters.

And Jacob's deathbed scene here shows him in this chapter and in the next speaking about matters of momentous importance for his own family, but not just his own family, indeed for the whole world. [5 : 44] And what we're seeing here is the zenith of his faith. That's what's singled out in Hebrews chapter 11. Verse 21 says, He's old. He knows he's near death. We saw that at the end of chapter 47.

And he's now only concerned with the weightiest matters, matters of life and matters of eternity. So what are these great concerns? What are his words going to be about?

What is the chief concern he has to pass on to his sons and to his grandsons by way of his legacy? Well, you see it there in verse 3 of chapter 48, loud and clear.

He's determined to explain his whole life in terms of God, El Shaddai, God Almighty, the all-sufficient God, the great covenant God, in terms of God and of the blessing of God Almighty, which he says had been his all through the days of his life, and which he coveted above all other things for his beloved family.

El Shaddai, verse 3, appeared to me and he blessed me, says Jacob. And that explains everything, everything of truth, everything of moment about my life.

[7 : 12] There was nothing in Jacob himself to wax eloquent about. He told Pharaoh back in chapter 47, verse 9, that few and evil have been the days of my life, but the blessing of God Almighty, El Shaddai, the all-sufficient God, the God of promise found me, and that changed absolutely everything.

He buried my past and he gave me a future. And it's that blessing, above all other earthly treasures you could think of, that blessing that is the great legacy that this man wants to pass on to his family. And indeed, that is the greatest thing that any man can pass on to his family, to his children, to his grandchildren, to those that he loves, to those that he cares for.

We're always warned, aren't we, not to die intestate, not to die without a will, because that'll bring all kinds of complications, because we haven't testified, we haven't testified to what we want to pass on to others.

And in a sense, a Christian must never die intestate. We mustn't live intestate without pointing others to the most important legacy that our life has to pass on, which is the knowledge of the blessing of God Almighty, and the way to share that abundant life-changing promise.

[8 : 45] So let's look at Jacob's deathbed testimony and see what he was so determined to pass on. You'll see that the chapter divides really into two main sections, verses 1 to 12 describe the formal adoption by Jacob of Joseph's two sons, and then verses 13 to 20 narrate the blessing that he gives them.

And then there's this little epilogue in the last two verses, which are rather wonderful. But look first at verses 1 to 12, where Jacob's concern above all is to bequeath to Joseph's sons a precious birthright.

A precious birthright, which is a secure home among the people of the God who is all-sufficient. The God whose promise transcends all the possessions of Egypt, and indeed which transcends all the pain even of our own mortality.

Verse 1 says that Joseph was informed that his father was ill, so immediately he senses that the end is near, and naturally he goes to see his father. But we're told very specifically that he takes his two sons with him.

And in verse 2, it seems Jacob was expecting this, because he got something planned. He summons his strength. He sits up to address them formally. So what's going on? Well, here's Joseph, the grand vizier, the ruler of all Egypt, the greatest power in all the world.

[10 : 06] He's more powerful, he's more wealthy now than ever before. Chapter 47 makes that very clear. He shares with Pharaoh absolute power, absolute wealth, not just in that nation, but as the empire of the world.

So what on earth can an old dying shepherd possibly offer to these sons, who are going to be heirs of the highest position in the Egyptian court?

Well, that's what verses 3 to 11 explain. Probably verse 3 should read, Jacob had said to Joseph, because these verses 3 to 7 rather interrupt the action.

You could read right on from verse 2 to verse 8. Apart from this parenthesis. But you see, the writer's explaining what's happening. And the point is that these verses tell us that Jacob, and indeed only Jacob, can offer something to Joseph's sons, that not even he, the great Joseph, the ruler of Egypt, can.

Joseph may be very great in the world, and indeed he may be very great in God's eyes, and he was, but he was not the patriarch. For all his dreams, for all his faithfulness to God, God himself had never appeared to Joseph in the way that he appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

[11:27] And God had appeared to these patriarchs and bestowed on them the great covenant promises to pass on to the chosen seed in every generation. But Jacob had seen El Shaddai in person.

He appeared to me, he says, verse 3. God Almighty, the all-sufficient one, is often the translation. And that is a name that's used particularly through Genesis, as we've seen in connection with the promise of descendants.

He's the God who can make the barren fertile. He's the God who will fulfill his promises despite all obstacles. And this God had appeared to Jacob and promised these things, not to Esau, but to Jacob.

Jacob, remember, had rightly desired that birthright, but then he'd sought it deceitfully from his father. But now, you see, he desires, above all things, to pass on that birthright.

And so he purposes here to formally adopt Joseph's two sons to be his own, so that they'll be equal sharers in the blessing as full sons of Israel. And that's what verses 5 and 6 mean.

[12:34] You see, they're not to be just grandsons, but he wants them to be legal sons and heirs through adoption into Israel as his sons. Now, remember that these two boys had a pagan mother, an Egyptian mother.

But Jacob doesn't want there to be any sense at all of a sort of second-tier status for them. They will have a secure home as equals among the 12 patriarchs of Israel.

They'll have tribes named after them. And indeed, we're also being shown that they're inheriting the birthright of the firstborn.

Remember, Reuben had forfeited that because of his sin against Jacob back in chapter 35. And you can read the detail of that later on in 1 Chronicles 5. It makes it very explicit. So these two half-Egyptian sons of Joseph are inheriting the double portion, the birthright of the firstborn as Jacob's own seed.

It's really extraordinary. And yet, it ought to surprise us to find things like this buried here in the pages of the Old Testament. It's just another one of those wonderful hints, isn't it, that this whole story of the Bible is about just that, something wonderful, because El Shaddai, the covenant God, is a God who loves adoption.

[13:55] His whole purpose in redemption is that He should become the great adopter. Remember what Paul says, when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son to redeem so that we might receive the adoption as sons.

So that we who didn't even have half a claim on God's blessings, who'd inherit the full rights, the full privileges, sons and heirs, alongside God's rightful Son, His only true Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

For in Christ says, Paul, we are all now sons of God, through faith. And in fact, this story is all about faith in God. It's not just Jacob's faith, expressed in passing on the blessing, but it's about the faith of Joseph and his sons in receiving the blessing.

Look what it is that Jacob's blessing entails. It's all about a promise of the future, isn't it? A promise, verse 4, of everlasting possession over against the present possessions, considerable possessions, of wealth in the land of Egypt that these boys had.

It's a promise of everlasting hope over against the very present reality of weakness and death, which is right up front in this story. You see, verse 7, isn't it odd that there's this sudden mention in the midst of all of this of Rachel's death.

[15:19] It doesn't seem to be relevant at all to what's going on, but if you go back and you remember and you read Genesis chapter 35 where God appeared to Jacob as El Shaddai, what he's talking about here, where he appeared and blessed him, it was right after that, wasn't it, that Rachel died.

And no doubt, Jacob could never recall that experience of the blessing of El Shaddai without also being reminded of his own sadness and pain in the face of mortality, the loss of his wife and his own mortality.

I'm sure that as he was looking there at Joseph and at his two sons, two grandsons rather, he saw in their faces, remind us of his beloved wife, Rachel.

It's what we see in our children and grandchildren, isn't it? Remind us of the faces of their parents. And he couldn't but help that sense of mortality, of death, and his own approaching mortality. It couldn't be otherwise, could it? And yet it was right in the midst of that helplessness that God revealed himself to Jacob and gave him great hope.

[16:28] And that promise had sustained him then, and that promise was sustaining him still, right to his very deathbed. The hope of solid joys, the hope of lasting treasures in the presence of his God, El Shaddai, the all-sufficient one, forever, as he promised him, a glorious hope.

And yet still, just a promise for the future. It couldn't have looked like much there and then, could it, to Joseph's two sons. Just an old man on his deathbed in a tent over against all the finery of, well, what must have been a magnificent residence that they lived in as the Grand Vizier of Egypt. And all this talk about an everlasting possession in a faraway place that they couldn't see and they'd never even seen. Thinking about that over against all that was theirs, all that could be theirs in the land of Egypt.

And these boys were being faced with a choice in what was happening. To be Joseph's sons? To inherit all the wealth and the position and the noble rank among the finest in Egypt, the power of the world?

Or to become officially Jacob's sons? And to inherit what? Well, just a promise about the future.

[17:47] And as John Calvin reminds us, they could not be reckoned among the progeny of Abraham without rendering themselves detestable to the Egyptians. What we saw last time, herders, detestable.

They would be leaving the place of acceptance by the world and become despised by the world by accepting that blessing. And all for a reward that was unseen, far off, a promise of the future.

And so Jacob's blessing, you see, the blessing of God Almighty, was not only the bestowal of an extraordinary privilege from God, it was also a great call to faith.

It was a faith to be manifest in leaving behind the treasures of Egypt and facing reproach with the people of God. Leaving all for the sake of a reward that God had promised but was yet still unseen and untouched.

And that's exactly how the New Testament puts our faith, isn't it? It's what it teaches faith is. Paul's gospel, Christ's gospel, and Moses' gospel is all about the future.

[18:59] It's about the last things. It's about what's still to come. Now remember when Moses was writing this and speaking this, the first people who heard and read it, it was to the Israelites, wasn't it, in the wilderness who had left Egypt behind and were journeying to the land promised but not yet possessed, not yet seen.

And they'd experienced terrible slavery, terrible hardship in Egypt and God had rescued them out of that but what did they do? They kept talking about wanting to go back. They thought it was better back in Egypt than being with the people of God.

But look, Moses is saying, look at these two. They weren't slaves in Egypt. They had power and wealth beyond imagining in Egypt. But they put it all behind them and they rather cherish something far better, a precious birthright among the people of God whose promise utterly transcends every possession that this world can afford and a promise which utterly transcends even the pain of our own mortality.

Now Moses himself knew that perhaps better than any cost of that decision because he too had faith. He too was a prince of Egypt and he too trusted the promise of God and put it all behind. Hebrews 11 tells us, by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God. He counted the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt for he also was looking for the reward.

[20:28] So it was a costly choice here for Joseph and his sons as it was for Moses but it was a clear and a deliberate choice they made. Joseph took his sons to Jacob knowing what was to be transacted and then you see in verses 8 to 12 we have narrated to us this formal ceremony of adoption and that's what the language conveys to us.

Who are these he says? Well he knows who Joseph's sons are he's just named them in verse 5 but this is a formal ceremony it's like in a wedding who gives this woman to be married to this man? Well everybody knows otherwise they wouldn't be there but it's part of the ceremony isn't it? Although verse 10 does remind us that his eyes were bad and we can't help remembering can we that scene of Isaac's blessing of Jacob all those years ago but you see this is different there's no deceit here there's just open-hearted thanksgiving you see verse 9 Joseph's thanking God for giving him these sons and then Jacob again thanking God for his goodness in verse 11 allowing him to live not just to see Joseph again but to see his sons and so they all formally embrace and kiss and these boys are kneeling at Jacob's knees and they receive the adoption of sons and Joseph is absolutely thrilled look at verse 12 he removes them and then he bows with his face to the earth in worship it's a wonderful picture that isn't it?

don't you think of a man bowed in worship in the presence of his children having led them to the place of that wonderful blessing from the covenant God and you can't help can you but think about the Lord Jesus think of those parents who brought their little ones to him because they also desired above all other things on this earth the blessing of God Almighty at the hand of the Son of God the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus commended them vocally that's the right thing there's nothing in this world more precious than to desire and to seek for your little ones the blessing of God Almighty wonder what Joseph's sons thought when they when they saw their father the great ruler of all Egypt bowed to the ground in this tent before this old dying man well surely what they saw to use John Calvin's words is that Joseph regarded it as a greater privilege to be a son of Jacob than to preside over a hundred kingdoms he prefers reproach to every kind of wealth and glory if they may but become one with the sacred body of the church and it prompts a question doesn't it to all of us what is our family what do our friends see in us what do we value what do they see that we value that we cherish more than everything else in all the world more than glory and success in life it's a really important question for parents isn't it especially for fathers what do we want for our children above all things what are we determined that they'll know that we regard as the greatest gift the greatest legacy that we can possibly give them not just on our deathbed but long before it's a searching question isn't it and the answer to that question of what they do see we value is going to be revealed in all kinds of things not just on our deathbed but all the choices that we make all through our life is what we value for our children above all things is it educational achievement is it sporting achievement musical prowess social acceptance all of these things are all these things so important that

Christian education and church involvement things to do with the living faith well they'll squeeze them into our busy timetable if we can but there often just won't be time for those things of course life is busy when you've got a family of course time's in short supply of course it's a struggle balancing everything and prioritizing things and there's no formula and in fact formula legalism is no answer but the real issue is our heart isn't it it's what's in here it's what our real heart's desires are for our own lives and also for our family's life is it is it the promise of God or is it the treasures of Egypt see when you're about 20 as Joseph's sons must have been by this time maybe you've come from a Christian home and you're heading off to college or university or off to work somewhere these promises of your parents faith they can seem very very feeble and far away and distant can't they apart from the compared to the bright lights of the city and all that this world can offer you friends what this is telling us here what the whole bible is telling us is that adoption into the precious birthright of a secure home among the people of christ that is better than anything anything that this whole world can ever afford the oldies here will know the words of the tune that was being played during the offering there it was one that George

[25 : 53] Beverly Shea Billy Graham singer often used to sing I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold I'd rather be his than have riches untold I'd rather have Jesus and houses or lands I'd rather be led by his nail pierced hands than to be king of a vast domain or be held in sin's dread sway I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause I'd rather be faithful to his dear cause I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame I'd rather be true to his holy name I've got those words actually stuck up on a card in front of my desk where I work every day to remind me what really matters for my life for my family's life and for our church's life I don't want ever to forget that I don't want you ever to forget that the grace of adoption as John

Calvin says as soon as it is offered to us should by filling our thoughts extinguish our desire for everything splendid and costly in this world and so it was here for Joseph's family they grasped that

precious birthright and so you see in verses 13 to 20 Jacob passes on a prophetic blessing a prophetic blessing of a future service for them in the purpose of God the God who is all sovereign the God whose plans transcend all our imagining all our human conventions verses 13 and 14 show that Jacob as Bruce Wolke says may have lost his sight but not his insight so when Joseph lines up Manasseh the firstborn to Jacob's right hand and Ephraim on his left Jacob isn't mistaken in what he does he crosses his hands he knows full well what he's doing you know back in verse 5 he named

Ephraim before Manasseh he reverses Joseph's order from verse 2 so he's right on the ball and again there's shades of chapter 27 and Isaac's blessing of Jacob but this time there's no double crossing is there there's just a single crossing deliberately to bless the younger before the older it's a deliberate act but he blesses both boys the young men now really and they represent their father Joseph it says in verse 15 in blessing them he blesses Joseph and Jacob first invokes the God of blessing and then he pronounces the blessing of God acting as he does as God's prophet as God's priest his patriarch in the world so who is this God of blessing well look at verse 15 Jacob bears personal testimony doesn't he to the God of sovereign grace who has blessed him and his fathers all the days of their lives a sovereign presence before whom his fathers

Abraham and Isaac walked ruling their lives as the covenant Lord remember God said to Abraham walk before me and be blameless but he's a God who's a sovereign provider he's a shepherd shepherding Jacob leading him and feeding him through all the wandering paths of his sojourning in faith that we've seen and verse 16 he's a sovereign protector he's the angel redeeming him rescuing him from all evil coming right down to meet him to rescue him remember even to wrestle with him in fact to wrestle him into the grace of God saving mercy the angel of God God himself in human form revealing himself as the great redeemer of his people and again pointing to the great future mission the great mission when he came at last as man to redeem all the seed of Abraham and to do so forever in the person of our Lord

Jesus Christ just think back of Jacob's life story that we've read of in these weeks it's mess it's folly it's disasters the sins but this God you see had met him and blessed him and given him that everlasting hope and this is the God whose blessing Jacob is determined to share to pass on to those he loves that he longs for them to share that blessing of a life that is ruled and shepherded and redeemed by this God of abundant grace that's the same God isn't it whose blessing we long to share with those that we love because we're people who share Jacob's testimony but what this blessing consists of in verse 16 do you see a blessing means serving him and being part of his marvelous sovereign purpose for the world in them let my name the name of Israel the name of God's covenant people be preserved and let them grow into a multitude like immeasurable fish in the sea as the footnote suggests the translation means to share in the blessing of God you see is to preserve the name of faith and it's to propagate the people of faith in the world and indeed

[31 : 38] Ephraim and Massa did become a multitude their numbers increased vastly Ephraim actually became a synonym eventually to the whole of Israel especially later on in the time of the divided kingdom Ephraim in the north Judah in the south but you see the wonderful truth that we're being told here that the greatest blessing from almighty God is to be given a part in serving that great purpose of God unfolding in the world the all sovereign God delights to share his marvelous story of saving grace in the world with his people for them to be taken up and be part of it even those who are adopted into his family by faith and not naturally born in and that's so important because you know there are Christians sometimes who feel they're outsiders they may feel in a church well they don't have a Christian pedigree they didn't grow up in a Christian family as many others did they don't have the abundant blessings of that that many others seem to have and because of that somehow well you think well we're second rate we perhaps can't have a role in serving in God's kingdom well of course there's no doubt that there's a huge benefit in growing up from earliest age being brought up in the faith and being equipped by the church to serve the

Lord from the earliest age we should expect our young people who grew up among us here to have a great responsibility for their future lives in serving Christ's church but of course God loves also to draw in to adopt into his family right from outside people that he's going to bless and grant a place in that blessing and a place in the sovereign service of his purposes for the world preserving the faith of Abraham bearing witness to Christ in the world and preserving and propagating the seed of Abraham and bringing others to Christ there's no greater blessing that the Lord can grant than that to bring people in and to give them a role to play in the wonderful joy of his unfolding kingdom to be

a laborer in his harvest field sharing the marvelous purposes of the unfolding work of his kingdom in whatever particular way it is that he gives us and it's right that we should desire that blessing for ourselves it's right that we should desire that blessing for our loved ones for our children for our friends for those that we love but of course and this is important being blessed in serving the sovereign

God also means that we must submit to the sovereign God's way because he is sovereign and no one can control his hand not even a Joseph you see Joseph naturally here resists Jacob's preference for the younger son doesn't he in verse 17 no not this way my father oh yes this way says Jacob because God's blessing can only be received God's way and God's way so often in fact nearly always turns man's way on its head because God is sovereign that just means he's God he rules he's Lord we are not he is and covenant blessing the saving mercy of God comes from God's hand alone and God's way alone it can't come can it to the proud who demand that God's blessing fits in with the way we want it to be in our lives now you can you can fit in Lord with my view about life my view of morality my view of religion whatever else it is no the scripture is quite clear isn't it the proud man he will not bless especially not the proud religious man only the humble only the penitent only the one who says your way

Lord not mine he doesn't say no not this way Lord but yes your way and that's a principle isn't it that's fixed from the very beginning of the Bible right to the end from the story of Cain and Abel Cain said I'll worship God in my way and God said no you must do it my way like Abel right through the Bible in the ministry of Jesus the rich young ruler do it my way no says Jesus leave all of that and come and do it my way that's a principle for the salvation of God it's a principle for the service of God he is sovereign his blessing the blessing of serving his covenant comes to those and those alone who will submit to his choice who will buy to his sovereignty and that's hard it's hard for all of us even Joseph here with all his extraordinary divine insight even he's struggled with the natural human instinct they wanted to say oh come on Lord this is the better way and I think often the Lord will test us in our lives won't he some particular thing or other to see if we really can be blessed in his service by submitting to what our place that he gives us is to be at his hands not insist on the place that we want and some of us may very well find in our lives that we don't have the role that we wanted to have we don't have the calling that we thought was our calling we don't have the opening that we thought was the way that obviously

God was going to bless us with and when that happens it's very easy isn't it for us to be resentful it's very easy for us to try desperately to engineer things for ourselves to say no not this way Lord surely this way but you will never succeed in that will you because God is the sovereign Lord not you and if you try and push and push and push in that way it won't lead you to the way of blessing it will just lead you to more and more bitterness in your life God's blessing the blessing of God Almighty comes to those who humble themselves who submit to the fact that God is sovereign and he loves us and he knows what's the best way to bless us in our lives remember verse 15 here he's the shepherd who provides for us he's the mighty angel who protects us including protecting us from our own selves when we have foolish ideas about ourselves and that's hard isn't it can feel like a right wrestling with

[38 : 13] God as it did for Jacob and even Joseph here had to be reminded of that but he submitted to Jacob the prophet and his sons were blessed God's way and they were given their place along with all who are inheritors of the covenant promises today through faith in Christ a place serving the ongoing purposes of God and his grace and his mercy and so we need to remember don't we we need to help one another to remember that the Lord does know best how to bless us in life that he is a providing shepherd that he is a protecting angel and when we find ourselves saying no Lord not that way not that way we need to be willing to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God knowing that he does care for us knowing that we can trust him trust him in our life together as a fellowship here whatever the future holds but also in our own personal life and our own Christian discipleship and it's that very tender individual focus that we see right at the end here in the last two verses isn't it verses 21 and 22 in this little epilogue where

Jacob turns from these great concerns for all Israel to bless Jacob very much personally and it is a personal benediction sons sons with Joseph himself in his grief and in his ongoing life in Egypt after Jacob's death.

And it's a promise of Joseph's personal portion, his very own inheritance in the everlasting possession in the land of promise. So verse 21, I'm about to die, he says.

It's the end of an era. It's like Moses, isn't it? At the end of his life saying to Joshua, I'm about to die. He says the same thing, but God will be with you. His presence will go with you just as it has always gone with me.

And he will bring you all again to the land of your fathers. It's both a reminder of where Joseph's home truly was and of the great helper who would keep him and surely bring him there.

[40 : 26] It was an assurance of personal presence of God Almighty and an assurance of a personal portion for him, a sharing in that promise.

Look at verse 2. Already he says a place has been prepared for him, an inheritance for Joseph, most probably the place Shechem, where you remember Jacob had bought land and then the family had later conquered, although it was very sad circumstances that happened.

But need had actually become Jacob's and now Jacob gives it to Joseph. And when you read later on in the book of Joshua, you'll see that is the very place where Joseph's bones were buried when Israel came into the land.

And it's a very personal benediction of a father to his son. Don't be troubled, Joseph, he's saying. Trust in God and trust in me because he'll never leave you.

He'll never forsake you. And you will have the assurance of his presence and you'll have a place, a true home. It's already been prepared for you. And you can't help but think, at least I can't help but think, of the words spoken centuries later by the Lord Jesus himself.

[41 : 40] Do you remember? Ahead of his coming death to assure his troubled disciples, his grieving disciples, with a wonderful word of great assurance just like this. I will not leave you as orphans, he said.

Do you remember? My presence will be with you. I'll send another comforter. A personal presence and a personal portion. I'm going to prepare a place for you.

And I'll come again and take you so that where I am, you also may be. What a wonderful assurance that personal benediction was to Jacob.

That was to Joseph. It must have been. Surely it strengthened his faith. Surely it helped him to stand firm in God's grace right to the end of his life as he had that promise to his very dying day.

But what a more wonderful promise we have, surely, in that personal benediction to us on the lips of our Lord Jesus himself, the great redeeming angel. For him to say to us, Behold, I am with you even to the very end of the age and I will come again and I will bring you to be where I am.

[42 : 50] To a place that's already been prepared in the Father's house where you'll find your true home forever and ever. Friends, that is the blessing of God Almighty.

It's the same promise. But how much fuller, how much more wonderful, how much better for every one of us. And there's no greater blessing, is there, to pass on to your son or your daughter or your husband or your wife or your friends or your neighbors or all whom you love and to hold out this same promise to them.

And it is a promise that if you will walk with this God, then he will be with you always as your shepherd. He will be a personal presence. He will be a providing shepherd.

He will be a protecting and redeeming angel to deliver you from all evil. And at your life's end, he will bring you at last to your personal portion in your true home in the Father's house where there are many mansions.

To an inheritance that, as Peter says, is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you.

[44 : 05] Jacob said, God Almighty appeared to me and blessed me. And he promised me an everlasting future. And that's the blessing I must pass on.

I must pass on to you. That was Jacob's testimony of faith at the end of his life. I wonder if it's yours. Well, if it doesn't, make it yours.

Make the blessing of God Almighty yours today and share it with those that you love as the greatest legacy that you can leave to anyone in this world.

Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have poured out abundantly to us the blessing of God Almighty through the gospel of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our great shepherd, our protecting angel, the one who has gone ahead, prepared the way for us, and who has promised to come again, take us, to be where he is.

So, Lord, may this gospel thrill our hearts and be, indeed, more precious to us than anything this world can ever afford, both now and to our life's end.

[45 : 28] For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.