

Children, Young Men, and Fathers as Seen in the Life of Jacob

Hello, brothers and sisters. Good morning. This is the day of my salvation because I have been in prison since they let me know I will be sharing. So, in less than an hour, I am going to do a prison break. I think the nap that I am going to have after this is going to hit differently. I am not going to wake up until Tuesday, maybe.

Introduction

Anyways, let us turn to I John 2:12-14, "I am writing to you, little children." The term "little children" here seems to address all three groups. However, he says, "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for His name's sake." You would expect him to say, "for your sake," but he does not. Our sins are forgiven for His name's sake, the sake of His name.

I just want to stop there and consider that. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. His name represents who He is as a person, His character. We see that when He does something for the sake of His name, He does it because He is expressing who He is. He is showing who He is. He is revealing who He is through His actions. I sometimes consider the Trinity in eternity past. There was no debate concerning what they would do. There were no pros and cons list. It was just so true to Himself, true to who He is, that He knew that He would save us and forgive our sins. It is so true to Himself that He is a redeemer, a savior, a rescuer, as our brother shared this morning.

But let us continue. "I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning." The first time you read that, it is hard to know what it even means, "because you know Him who is from the beginning." But as you consider it more and more, it might be the best way to say it, honestly. "I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father."

Now, these two things for the children and for the fathers seem like they might be the same. Because we know that when it says, "you know Him who is from the beginning," it is talking about God. And for children, it says, "because you know the Father." But we see that there is a world of difference between these two different things.

Let us continue. "I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

I hope that we can consider, John puts it so neatly and perfectly here, our Christian progression throughout our lives as we go from children to young men to fathers. It is something that the Lord does. But, of course, we have a part in that. He pours His grace on us. But how do we respond to that grace?

Outline

So, I want to consider these three things through the life of our brother Jacob. Jacob is so pivotal in this book in the Bible. His name is Israel later. What a man! But we are going to use the picture of his life, the way the Lord works in him, works with him, and works through the situations in his life to take him from a child to a young man to finally a father.

Jacob's Early Life

So let us jump over that story in Genesis, and that story begins in chapter 25. I love this part about Rebekah because the twins, Esau and Jacob, were struggling within her. And what does she do? She inquires of the Lord. The amazing thing is that the Lord answers her and reveals a part of His mind to her. In Genesis 25:23 says, "And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.'" We see that Rebekah has spiritual insight and spiritual revelation concerning what God will do. However, we can say she did not have the spiritual maturity to leave it to God. She puts together that beautiful scheme, which I love so much.

Jacob's Deception

But the first story we have about Jacob is with Esau and Jacob together. The story about the stew is right there at the end of chapter 25. We see that Jacob has his eye on something. He has his eye on that birthright, and he is going to use any means to get it, even taking advantage of his brother when his brother thinks he is about to starve to death if he does not get some stew. I sometimes wonder about Esau; how hungry was he that he had to sell his birthright for a little bit of soup? Sometimes I think, what was he even thinking? But of course, the chapter ends, "Thus, Esau despised his birthright."

He is a man of the flesh, foregoing eternal things, spiritual things, things that actually matter for instant gratification of the flesh, a man of the flesh. Sometimes we forget he is the firstborn of Isaac, the son of Abraham. But now we remember him very differently. Focusing on Jacob, just a little introduction about him: we see that his eye is on the birthright. But just like his mother and himself, he thinks he can get it by his own means. He wants to get something, but he is quite conniving. He is quite good at deception. He is quite talented at that. As we see later, Rebekah gives him the plan, dress up with goat skins, and prepare the food that Isaac loves. You could say Rebekah was the mastermind there. But who actually went into the room and went through with the deception? It was Jacob. Can you imagine? He walks into that room and lies to his father something like four to five times.

And then we see here, the most interesting lie is in chapter 27:20. "But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?'" Now, if Jacob were an honest man, he would have folded at this point. He would have said, "Well, you see, I don't know what happened." But Jacob is ready. He is talented. He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success." He is ready with that answer. Man, he is talented in deception.

But just a little bit of background about Jacob that we all know. He is deceptive, but there are some good qualities there. We see that he is a quiet man living in the tents. He is obedient to his parents concerning not marrying the women. But there is a mixed testimony there, I guess you could say. Anyway, what we want to focus on is the way the Lord reveals Himself to Jacob.

Jacob is like us, a little bit good, a little bit bad. But the Lord has a plan for Jacob. And we see that through this plan of deception; Jacob finds himself in a pretty precarious situation in chapter 28. He is alone for the first time. He is running away from home, and he is afraid. We can see how emotionally distressed he is. Later, when he meets Rachel, he just weeps aloud so loudly.

God's Promise

But here, in a desperate situation like this, the Lord reveals Himself to him. Now, we can consider that portion in Genesis 28:10-15.

“Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac.””

Here the Lord proceeds to give Jacob such a promise.

Let us commit this time to the Lord as we consider the moments when the Lord reveals Himself to Jacob.

Lord, we thank You for this time. O Lord, we thank You that it is You who brings us through, from children to young men to fathers. Lord, as we consider this man, Jacob—who is not a perfect person—but, Lord, You have Your eye on him. Lord, You reveal Yourself to him in situations like this, and You bring him, from child to young man to father. Lord, speak to us this morning, and reveal Yourself to us. Amen.

Now let us consider this promise. There are six parts to it, maybe six to eight. “The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” That is such an amazing promise. Of course, He gave it to Abraham in the beginning. But that promise that your offspring will spread everywhere encapsulates the idea that your life will be fine too if your offspring makes it. Of course, we have this amazing promise that in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Not just your family, but all the families. And we know that this points to our Lord Jesus Christ, so that Jew and Gentile are blessed.

“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Jacob's Response

The Lord reveals Himself to Jacob. Just consider that vision, that dream, a ladder, or in some versions, it says a staircase. And the Lord standing right at the top there, speaking directly to Jacob. Of course, we see in John 1:51 that this staircase is the Lord Himself, the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. The burden for my sharing, I thought, was going to be related to us taking time to meet the Lord one-on-one alone, spending that alone time with the Lord. But as I considered the story of Jacob, we see that he never really separates himself or isolates himself for this purpose. It is the Lord who does it through situations, and he finds himself alone here so that this revelation can take place.

But how does Jacob respond to this promise? This promise, which is almost like everything, all at once? He says, first of all, God's promise to him is unconditional. There are no conditions like "if you do something, then this promise will be fulfilled." Instead, Jacob responds with a conditional promise. In Genesis 28:20-21 Jacob made a vow saying, "If God will be with me." The Lord comes to us unconditionally, sometimes we respond conditionally. We do not match His energy at all in the way that He approaches us. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God."

I just jumped ahead there. What does he say at the end of verse 21? "And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you." A full tenth of what? All he asked for was a sandwich and a T-shirt. When the brothers went up to the castle retreat in Pittsburgh, there is a place called Primanti Bros. The sandwiches are so big that I think a tenth of one would be a decent snack. But here we have the Lord reaching out to Jacob, giving him a promise that basically includes all of eternity, with all the families of the world being blessed through his offspring, his offspring being the Lord Jesus Christ. But how does Jacob respond? "Lord, I get all that You are saying but let us put that to the side really quick. I just need a Primanti Bros sandwich and an H&M T-shirt, please. That is all I need."

The way that we miss what the Lord is saying, but here is the part that I want to focus on. "And Jacob awoke from his sleep." This is verse 16, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." Is that not what happens to us? We are roaming around on this earth, not sure what we are even up to. What was Jacob up to right before this? He was dressing up in a goat costume and swindling an old blind man. And the same with us, we are up to all kinds of foolishness in this life we think is important. But then the Lord reveals Himself to us, and that moment comes where we, who are spiritually dead, are now spiritually alive. Somehow, this would have been impossible any other way. But through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have become aware of the existence of God. We have come to know that we have a Father. As it says in First John, "I write to you, little children, because you know the Father." So now we become children here. And as Jacob says, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."

God's Response to Jacob's Response

Now I want to consider the Lord's response to this. He gives one of the greatest promises, I think, that there is in the Bible. Jacob responds with his conditional promise, asking for basically nothing—just bread and clothing. How does the Lord respond to that? Do you think He is disappointed? Do you think He says to Himself, “Wow, Jacob, you missed everything that I said.” I do not think so. Because the Lord, when He looks at Jacob, sees the entire life of Jacob. He sees him growing into a young man, into a father. He sees the very end where he is blessing Pharaoh himself. And He sees, of course, way past Jacob's life to the coming of the Lord Jesus, to all the families on earth being blessed. The Lord sees this all-in-one moment. And I know that regardless of Jacob's response, He sees Jacob turning to his Father, saying, “God, I need You. I need Your help.” The Lord is so pleased. He is overjoyed to start His work in Jacob because He knows He is able to do it. He is able to complete it.

Spiritual Children and Stages of Spiritual Growth

Now, little children, one thing I want to say about little children is that, in most churches, most people are children. Of course, Richmond is a bit of a special case, but it is so nice to have children. There is that verse, maybe in Proverbs, where it talks about when there is no ox, the stables are clean. So here in Richmond, we do not have too many spiritual children, I think. But it would be nice if they were here. Sure, they will make a mess. They will ask all kinds of crazy questions, but we need more people like that.

There are two ways you can have children. You can either have children who have stagnated and not grown up. Of course, that is unfortunate, but you can also have children who should be children because they have just been saved. This one brother put it best. Here in Richmond, we are like those who have gone up on the mountain and seen the glory of the Lord, the transfiguration. We have seen such amazing, beautiful things. But then we decided just to stay up there. We never came down from the mountain because you know what happens when the Lord comes down from the mountain. It is like instant chaos. He gets rushed by a bunch of people. There is a demon-possessed person. I am sure the disciples thought we should have stayed up there.

So, the Lord has revealed so much to us. But I hope that we can come down the mountain and be evangelists again, as the Lord calls us to be. If that is the case, then there will be many spiritual children in our midst. Hopefully, even children who are so newly born they do not even know who Jacob is. Wouldn't that be beautiful? s

The Transition to Young Men

Anyways, let us move on to young men. Now Jacob receives this promise. He asks for bread and clothing. And of course, that prayer is answered immediately. One more thing I want to say about children: when you first get saved, you have all sorts of small requests that have nothing to do with God's will or His eternal purposes. But the Lord answers those prayers. It is not about what you are asking for, and it is not about that prayer

request being fulfilled. It is about faith being built in the little children. It is about the children realizing and knowing that they can depend on their Father.

The School of Christ - Jacob's Time with Laban

As children, we ask for all sorts of small things, basically things that even unbelievers would desire. But many times, the Lord answers those prayers because He knows we are children and He knows that faith has to be built up. But what happens to Jacob here? His prayers are answered of course, as he goes to Laban's house, but that is when the school of Christ begins. It is amazing that the Lord, in His divine wisdom, put Jacob with Laban of all people because, you know, Esau was weak. Jacob got the best of him every time; with the stew he got the best of him; with the blessing he bested him.

But what do we read about Jacob and Laban's interactions over those 20 years? Let us see Genesis 31:38-41.

“These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was: by day, the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.”

I want to focus on that part. You know, when you think of your wage being changed these days, it is usually a pay raise of 2 to 3%. That is not what Jacob is talking about here. Ten times he and Laban had negotiations, and he got the worst end of the deal every time. Look at Laban. He is not like Esau. He is quite a deceiver. He is better than Jacob—much better. Every time he and Jacob negotiate, Laban wins and gets the better terms. And this is the way the Lord works. In the beginning, as a child, Jacob depended on his skills. The Lord took him to a place where his skills were not enough.

This is the way the Lord brings us to the end of ourselves, is it not? The Lord tells us to do something at times, and we try to do it, and that is our issue. We find a way to do it, and maybe we even succeed. But do you know what the Lord does? If you succeed by your own strength, He gives you another task where you are sure to fail.

There is a story I heard from probably an Indian preacher, and this is the reason the Lord brings us to the end of ourselves. You know, in India, there are people who carry baskets on their heads and sell things as they go along. So, someone was driving along in their truck and saw this woman walking for a while. She was probably really tired; that heavy weight, you know, is a lot of weight—it is like 30 or 40 pounds on their head. They are strong. He comes along and says, “I can give you a ride to wherever you need to go.” So, she gets in the truck, and as he is riding along, he realizes a couple of minutes later that she still has the basket on her head as they are riding along. And that is the way we are. The Lord says, “I am giving you every spiritual gift, everything you need to do this

task." And we respond to the Lord saying, "I am good. I do not really need Your help right now. I am going to do it myself." And that is the way we are every time.

The Marks of a Young Man

In the school of Christ, Laban is the tool the Lord uses to bring Jacob to the end of himself. And finally, we see here in Genesis 31:42, "If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night." Is Jacob depending on his own scheming, conniving intelligence? No. He knows it. He knows that if it were not for the mercy of God, he would have gone away empty-handed. He understands that Laban was just too much, way too much better than him, and he would have gone away empty-handed. But now he is trusting in the Lord.

We are starting to see marks of a young man in him. Because in I John it says, "I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." Let us move on. We can see the Lord working in Jacob, removing his dependence on himself. It took 20 years to do it, but the Lord did it. And we see the results of that. But right as he is escaping Laban, he turns around and now here is Esau again.

Let us read that part, Genesis 32:6, "And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you."" I am sure it was probably fine up to that point. And then he hears this, "And there are four hundred men with him," a small army. That is the part where Jacob's heart just dropped right out and fell on the floor. It says it in verse 7, "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed."

Here is Esau. "I knew I was going to have to face him again if I went back. But I did not know about the small army part." Oh goodness. What do we see Jacob do here? He is very distressed, and his old way of doing things comes out. Genesis 32:7-8 says, "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps," thinking, "If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp which is left will escape."" You see him scheming again. It is a great plan. Start dividing up the group. If Esau takes one, the other will survive. Good plan.

But the work that the Lord did while he was under Laban is evident because we see this amazing prayer. Jacob prays in Genesis 32:9-12.

"And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,' I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'""

Do you see that the promises that sort of went right over his head the first time are now in his heart? In I John, it says, “Young men, ... and the word of God abides in you.” Here we see Jacob, through his prayer, standing by faith on the word which the Lord spoke to him. He is standing by faith; we see the marks of a young man.

The Wrestling Match

But now, in this second case, we see that the Lord reveals Himself to Jacob. This time, He shows up in the manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Genesis 32:22-24 says, “The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. And Jacob was left alone.” I am not sure what his plan was here. He was sort of dividing the camps and sending them along, but finally, he even sends the mothers and the children ahead of himself. He is just not ready to face Esau, and he sends literally everyone ahead of him. He is left alone there. Jacob had no idea the Lord would show up. He was just sending everyone ahead, and he was sort of stalling, procrastinating maybe, and he was left alone there. And that is when a man shows up. This is one of the most amazing stories in the Bible, and the way that it is presented is just so matter of fact. But what does that even mean? A man appeared and wrestled. Can you imagine the Lord appearing there?

Genesis 32:24, “And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.” You have to picture that scene. What kind of wrestling were they doing? Did Jacob know some karate or jujitsu? I am wondering what kind of moves he was putting on the Lord. You know, actually, Krav Maga is one of the most effective martial arts, and it was invented in Israel. So that is probably what he was using on the Lord. But this is amazing. In verses 25 and 26, “When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.”” Our brother Madhu shared this with me. It is amazing to consider. In verse 28, the Lord later says, “For you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.” Does it look like Jacob prevailed here? I do not know if you have seen much wrestling, but once you are missing a hip, the match is over. You have to forfeit. It is quite clear that Jacob lost against the Lord.

But that is what we see. The way to prevail with the Lord is to be defeated by Him, to be defeated by the Lord, but to not let go. That is what we see Jacob does here. Whenever I read verse thirty-one, “The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip,” this used to bother me a lot. I did not like the fact that he was limping. Even in movies or TV shows, the second someone loses a finger or a hand, I just turn the TV off. I hate the idea of irreparable and irreversible damage. If someone gets bruised or something in a show, in the next episode, they are 100% again. But once you lose a limb, that is the rest of the season. But here Jacob is limping, and he never stops limping. But what we need to focus on here is not the limp, but the staff that he now has. That staff is Christ, and he is depending on the Lord.

Lean on the Lord

The young men are strong, and they are strong because they are depending on the Lord, no longer relying on their fleshly strength or earthly strength. They are compelled to do so because they are broken; they have no other option. They lean on the Lord, the staff. The word of God abides in them: they stand on the promises of the Lord by faith; they hold the Lord to them. And they are overcoming the evil one. Related to that, I want to mention something in Revelation about the idea of overcoming the evil one.

Starting in Revelation 12:10 we see that, “the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, the evil one.” And how did they conquer him? Revelation 12:11 says, “And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” It is not like we grow up in the Lord and start depending on our spirituality or our piety or the fact that we are not doing the foolish sins we committed as young people. It will always be the blood of the Lamb, our reason, and our way of conquering the evil one. It says here that they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb. It is not about how many times you fall; it is about how quickly you get up by faith. How quickly do you get back into the fight?

I think some of us have a habit, after we have fallen, to sort of punish ourselves for a couple of days, not really receiving the forgiveness of the Lord. But that is what made David stand out so much. He knew how to receive that forgiveness. This man fell; fell multiple times, but every time he turned to the Lord and he received that forgiveness. So, I hope we can do the same. “And by the word of their testimony,” the second way they overcame the evil one. This testimony the Lord is building in Jacob, all the amazing things that He is doing in his life. He is bringing him through, giving him salvation. And you can see that testimony being built in him. He says, “I crossed over here with just my staff, empty-handed and alone. And now I have become two camps.” And it is the grace of God. And finally, “they love not their lives, even unto death.” And the Lord is starting to do that in our brother Jacob.

The Transition to Fatherhood

When I was born, my mother and father told me this; they said mentally I was probably 50 years old. So that means right now I am about seventy-four. So, we are all old together. But somehow, we found the spiritual fountain of youth. And though we have become old, we are still young men. It is nice to be called young. It might not happen most of the time, but the Lord is now desiring that young men become fathers. And you all know more than anyone what a father looks like. There was quite a father here in Richmond for something like 40 years—our brother Stephen, undeniably a father. And now the Lord is looking for more fathers. Just like children become young men, and it is unfortunate if they stagnate as children, it is equally unfortunate if they stagnate as young men.

But let us consider the life of Jacob, how the Lord takes him from a young man who is strong, who is depending on the word of the Lord, who is overcoming the evil one in

various ways. Now the Lord wants to take him and make him a father. If you read the story of Jacob, you see him leaning on that stuff; you see he has gone through so much. You might want to say it is probably smooth sailing from now on. Maybe the work of the Lord is done, but there are some dark days ahead for Jacob.

Let us jump all the way over to Genesis chapter 42. At this point, Joseph was already gone, the son that he loved so much. And now there was famine in the land. Look at the way he addresses his sons. In 42:1 he says, “Why do you look at one another?” Basically, he says, “go down to Egypt and buy us some grain.” And you know this story about how they go down and it turns out it is Joseph who is the king of the land. You know, Pharaoh is just a figurehead. He does not even want to answer questions anymore. If anyone had a question for Pharaoh, he would say, “Go ask Joseph. I do not know.”

The Surrender and God’s Response

But they go down to Joseph and come back without Simeon, their brother. Then they had to go down again. This time, Joseph says to them, “Do not show me your face again until you have Benjamin, so that I have evidence for your claims.” We can see the distress that Jacob has to go through now, and that is in chapter 43:14. In the life of a father, or maybe a young man about to be a father, there is, of course, overlap between these three phases. We see the final strongholds onto which they are holding. Jacob loved his son Joseph so much, and he is gone. Now he is holding on for dear life to Benjamin.

He loves Benjamin so much, and he just will not let him go. Here we see Jacob say, “All these things are against me.” It is really quite a situation of turmoil for Jacob. But finally, the Lord brings him to a place where he lets go of Benjamin. In Genesis 43:14, he says, “May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.” You can see the surrender that happens there. The last thing that he is holding onto as an old man is precious Benjamin, the only thing left. His brother is dead, at least he is dead to Jacob. He is holding on dearly to Benjamin. But the Lord brings him to a place where he lets go of even that last thing.

And what does the Lord do once He sees Jacob has let go of that last stronghold? He immediately relents. The Lord only does that which is minimally necessary for the good that He is looking for in each of us. The Lord never goes overboard; He never does more than He needs to. It is just the fact that we are so resistant that the stakes have to be increased. But once the Lord sees what He is looking for in Jacob, He relents immediately. And we see the way the Lord pours His blessings onto Jacob, the son that was dead, not only Simeon and Benjamin, but even Joseph, something like 20 years that they were separated. It was a long time. And even Joseph is returned to Jacob. And of course, they go from starving due to famine over there to the best of the land in Goshen.

The Marks of a Father

And let us just take a look at a few marks of a father. The first one being this amazing story in chapter 47:7. This is something we cannot fully appreciate, how awe-inspiring this

is. There is no man more powerful than Pharaoh and no civilization that was greater than Egypt. But we see here in 47:7, Joseph brought in his father Jacob, “and he stood him before Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.” In Hebrews, it says the inferior is always blessed by the superior. This is just God's testimony about His child Jacob, that he is greater than Pharaoh.

And of course, later we see the discernment of a father. They know the mind of Christ. And we see that when Joseph brings his two sons, what does Jacob do? He crosses his hands because he knows. He knows what is on the mind of Christ. And I just want to read a few things. Chapter 48:3, “And Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me.”” Look at him as an old man, he is starting to fully appreciate that first vision. Luz is Bethel, that place where he saw the staircase. In verse 4, “And said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.’” You see, as fathers, that promise which he first gives to us, it is starting to dawn on Jacob. It is sort of like Isaiah. His vision in chapter six broke his brain. He saw a Man sitting on the throne, and it turns out He was God. That must have made no sense to him. Of course, it took a lifetime for him to understand that vision. But here we see Jacob at the end of his life as a father, starting to fully grasp what the Lord was saying to him.

And he blesses Joseph's sons by crossing his hands with that discernment. And, of course, he is starting to see the eternal purposes of God as well. In chapter 49:8-10, his blessing to Judah. I cannot speak to how much Jacob saw, how much he understood; but in this blessing to Judah, we see that he sees something more than just his son Judah. “Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies.” This is speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ and the ultimate victory that He has on the cross. “Your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples,” not just the people of Israel, but all the peoples. We see Jacob in some way sees the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus as its King coming from Judah's offspring.

This is one of the clearest statements in Genesis 49:11, “Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.” Looking forward to that day of Calvary when the Lord's robe became red with blood, so that we could have garments of righteousness, so that we could wear garments of white.

Conclusion

I am sure his sons had no idea about what he was talking. But through the life of Jacob, we are considering that it is the Lord who does this, taking us from children to young men to fathers, and we need more children in our midst. We need more young men, and we need fathers.

It is unfortunate if we have to look to the past for an example of a father; but the Lord is working in us, and there will be fathers soon enough if we stop resisting Him. It is like when the Lord was being tempted by the devil; the devil was using the word of God against Him. And I feel like sometimes we do the same because when the Lord is working on us, He is doing a faithful work, we turn around to the Lord and we say, "Thus far and no further." We sort of chase the Lord out of there, but it is what we do.

If you think back, even this year, I am sure there are situations where the Lord came in, and we pray so much, "Lord, speak to us." And then when He finally speaks, you say, "It is the wind" or something. You try to act like it never happened. You say, "Lord, that is too much. I am not going to do it. You are out of here." But let us not be that way.

Lord, thank You for this time where we consider young men, children, and fathers. Lord, You are so pleased with each of these stages. O Lord, You are pleased with the children who look up to You with their small requests, but they are turning to the Father. Lord, You are pleased with young men because they are strong. The word of God is abiding in them, and they are overcoming the evil one. And of course, spiritual fathers Lord, how precious they are. They know Him who was from the beginning, the Eternal Father. They start to realize and understand what is on Your mind, what is on Your heart. And, Lord, we ask that we would have more of each of these in our midst. Be with us, Lord. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.s

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Speaker	Gathala, Isaiah
Venue	Richmond, Virginia, US
Date	November 16 th , 2025
Link	https://christiantestimonyministry.com/item/children--young-men--and-fathers-as-seen-in-the-life-of-jacob
Bible	ESV