

It Begins and Ends with God
Genesis 48:1-22

“Jacob had learned how great a failure he was when he had been trying to shepherd himself. This is an image, of course, “Self-shepherding” means trying to run your own life. But that is precisely what Jacob had been trying to do all the long years that led up to his confrontation with God at Jabbok. He was like many Christians. He acknowledged God. He would have described himself as a believer. But he had taken the opposite course from that wise and godly path described in Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” In his early days Jacob’s paths were not straight. They went in many devious ways. But even though he was not aware of it then, Jacob had possessed a Good Shepherd: the Lord Jehovah. And the Lord eventually straightened him out and prospered him.”
Boice

- I. Knowing who we are in Christ will determine in many ways how firmly we stand in the faith. Upon salvation, Jesus became our identity, which set us apart from the ways of the world. We read verses like, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17). But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10). But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (John 1:12)* and so much more to show us what His grace has given us and how valued we are by Him. Like with Jacob, it takes us a while to fully grasp what our salvation means for us. He faltered in many ways throughout his faith journey, but what kept him true to the Lord was the hope he had been given when he first met God on a lonely, despairing night when He introduced himself with promises that were sure to be fulfilled because they came from God Himself. Likewise, we too were given precious promises the instant we met Him as our Savior, promises that will surely be fulfilled because they were given to us by God Himself.

Gen. 48:1-4
1 Thess. 4:15-18
Gen. 28:10-15
Gen. 12:2-3
Gen. 26:3-5
Gen. 27:28-29
Gen. 28:15
Rom. 8:15-17
Heb. 11:21
2 Tim. 4:7-8

- II. What does it mean for us to pass on the importance of our faith to others before we go home to be with the Lord? Whether its seamless or not, what matters most is that it is taken from our heart and placed into the heart of another, with the hope of it too being passed on to the spiritual benefit of those God has brought across their path, be it a son, daughter, family member, friend or stranger. Jacob was about to give his grandsons a tremendous blessing of promises and hope that would forever guarantee their eternal existence in the kingdom of God as two of the twelve of the tribes of Israel. It is safe to say that Joseph made sure his sons embraced the covenant promises of God over the ways of godless Egypt. He, like his father, did not let the ways of the world take him out and render him impotent in living life God's way and for His glory. For those of us who know Him, it begins and ends with God. I can't think of a better place to be than in His will for His glory, no matter what the world throws at us.

Gen. 48:5-7

Ps. 78:4-7

1 Chron. 5:1-2

- III. Our spiritual legacy also means passing on the blessings we've received from living well for the Lord. It is a legacy that protects others from being affected by the tragic consequences of squandering grace to the detriment of generations to come. Jacob, when he blessed his grandsons, reflected on two powerful truths that apply to all God's children. He let them know that God was like a shepherd who took good, personalized care of him throughout his life. And he let them know that God was like a protective angel who redeemed him from the empty way of life of those who couldn't have cared less about Him. He attributed everything in his life to knowing God and being loved by Him, truths he hoped would resonate in the hearts of his grandsons. *"For when all is said and done on the subject of a successful Christian walk, it can be summed up in one sentence. 'Live ever aware of God's presence.'" (Keller)*

Gen. 48:8-22

"The phrase, "the God who has fed me" is literally, "The God who has shepherded me." This is the first mention in the Bible of God as a shepherd to His people." Guzik

לָאָה גָא'אל - to act as kinsman, do the part of next of kin, act as kinsman-redeemer. To redeem (with God as subject) individuals from death, Israel from Egyptian bondage, Israel from exile.

Matt. 25:23 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

1 Peter 1:18-19 "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect".