

Genesis: From Creation to New Creation

[Genesis 48:1 – 22](#)

“He Will Hold You Fast”– November 19, 2023



Introduction

What is important to you? What do you look forward to? What do you hope will happen next week, next month, or next year? What gets you out of bed in the morning? As an athlete willingly endures difficult workouts for a finite prize, we are willing to work hard for what we value. However, when life doesn't go the way we thought, our hopes can be shattered.

When Jacob first arrived in Egypt in chapter 47, he was in that shattered phase. ([47:9](#)) Life was hard. Life was horrible. Life was evil. Life had not gone as he had planned. But here in chapter 48, after living in Egypt for 17 years, Jacob was full of hope, thanksgiving, and worship. ([Heb. 11:21](#)) How do we explain this transformation in Jacob?

When you go to a funeral, you stare death in the face. It clarifies what is really important in life. ([Ecc. 7:2](#)) As Jacob lay on his own death bed, he had gained perspective. This set him free. He understood who was ready to receive God's blessing.

Sermon Outline

1. The benefit of weakness vs. 1 – 13
2. Hands that bless vs. 14-22

Read & Discuss

1. Read 1 – 13

Moses, the author of this text, zooms in on Jacob's weakness. Jacob was about to die. Joseph brought in his two sons, and Jacob was so weak that he had to summon the strength to sit up. He was also blind. What is ironic about this is that when Jacob's physical eyes failed him, it was then that his spiritual eyes were 20/20. When he was physically weak, he was spiritually strong. Our weakness is the platform on which God displays His strength. ([1 Cor. 12:9 – 10](#)) How have you seen God work in your weakness?

In Genesis 12, God promised to make Abraham a great nation that would bless all the nations of the world. This promise was passed on to Isaac and then Jacob. (Genesis 35) When Jacob reflected on the promise here, the emphasis was on how **God** would accomplish it. Jacob seemed to be celebrating his weakness. ([vs. 3-4](#)) Who do **you** think is in a position to receive God's blessing? All too often we think it is the people who have performed well or are accomplished because those are the people who the world celebrates. God's economy is not the world's economy. Think of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son and compare the younger son and the older son. It was the younger brother who came home who was blessed. Think of Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. In the end it was the tax collector who was blessed.

We don't like being weak. One danger of strength and prosperity is to assume that life is going ok. It is at those times that we don't think we need God. Religion is one of the things on a long list of things to be good at. Jacob had been plagued with self-reliance to gain control of his future rather than trusting in God. He didn't like being weak. If God has you in a place of weakness in your life, it's fine to acknowledge the difficulty. Seeing and accepting our weakness will help us look to and rely on God.

Wealth, land, education, etc. will perish overnight. Then what? Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” ([Matthew 5:3](#)) This is what Jacob had learned. The next generation would become slaves in Egypt and would need to learn what Jacob had learned. We don't need a problem free life, more stuff, or the applause of this world that would distract us from God. We need to love and trust Jesus. What older saint in our church could you go to for a testimony of God's faithfulness? Are you the older saint? Don't be silent. You have so much to share with the next generation about your walk with God. Speak of God's power. ([Psalm 78:4 – 5](#))

Additional Reading: Genesis 12 and 35; Luke 15 and 18

2. Read 14 – 22

Now the focus zooms in on Jacob's hands that Moses mentions nine times. Jacob was using his hands as he blessed his grandsons. Seeing his hands provided a snapshot of all he had done in his life. As the old, weak, and blind Jacob stretched out his hands to bless them, he no doubt remembered the blessing of Isaac that he received through deception. These were hands that cheated, lied and rebelled against God. These were hands that wrestled against God and held the blood-stained garment of Joseph. Under all of that sorrow, it seemed that these were hands that let go of God when he refused to be comforted. Do you see Jacob's hands? Can you identify with Jacob when you look at your hands? What story do your hands tell? Do you look at Jacob's hands that have gone from deceiving to blessing and wonder, as you look hands, if that is possible for you as well?

How do we account for the change in Jacob's hands? ([vs. 15](#)) Not only had God been strength in Jacob's weakness, but He had also been Jacob's Shepherd. Jacob may have let go of God, but God held him fast from beginning to end - through all the ups and downs. When Jacob looked back on his life, he saw a trail of goodness and mercy. God has redeemed Jacob, and he saw how the Shepherd was with him and how the Shepherd had redeemed him. The ransom was paid. God, the Shepherd, covered the cost. All his schemes, lies, etc. had been redeemed by the Shepherd. So now he was free to bless the boys.

What does it mean to bless? If we are to understand this, we must recover the biblical sense of the word. Blessing means "to not fall under God's judgment." Jacob wanted God's judgment to be turned from his sons. He wanted them to know the reconciled relationship, forgiveness, and the presence of God.

God has done this for us in Jesus. ([Gal. 3:13-14](#)) Because you and I have sin on our hands, we deserve God's punishment - the curse of the law. The good news is that Jesus came, took on flesh so that He might redeem all those who trust in Him. On the cross, he paid the debt to redeem us. He drank the cup of God's wrath so that we might drink from the cup of God's blessing.

Moses also included a lot of details about the crossing of the hands in the blessing. While the oldest was to receive the blessing, Jacob reversed the order. The blessing of God is not based on your accomplishments, family, or status, it is based on grace. This is good news. For ALL who come in repentance and faith, there is forgiveness and redemption. Come to Jesus and trust in Him.

In the blessing of the grandsons, Jacob elevates their status to that of his sons. Will Joseph and his sons trust God and renounce the treasure and pleasure of Egypt and go to the promised land? We know that he does because in Joshua 4 he is buried in Shechem. What about you? Will you submit your entire life and trust God with your entire life to receive the blessing of God?

Additional Reading: *Psalms 23; Joshua 4*

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at fbcum.org

Next week's sermon text: we turn to [Psalm 50](#) "God the Giver"