

Main Idea: As we look at Jacob's final interaction with his twelve sons in Genesis 49, we see him pointing his family to God in two ways. We also see an important principle illustrated. We have been blessed in order to bless.

- I. We see a blessing that points a family to God (1-28).
  - A. Jacob's blessing involved a prophetic element (1).
  - B. Jacob's blessing involved a personal element (28).
    1. Jacob knew his sons.
    2. Parents, how well do you know your children?
- II. We see burial plans that point a family to God (29-33).
  - A. He made it clear who his people were.
  - B. He made it clear who he was trusting.
  - C. He made it clear what he wanted for his family.

Make It Personal: Like Jacob, we too can leave behind a legacy.

1. Jacob was a man of desire.
2. Jacob was a man who had learned to depend.
3. Jacob was a man who discovered the source of real blessing.

### *Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14*

We have been blessed. And not just a little either, but with every spiritual blessing, says Paul. So God has given those who are in Christ every spiritual resource necessary for living a God-pleasing life.

But why does God bless us? That's a vital question for blessed people like us to consider. Let's start by affirming what's *not* the answer.

God didn't bless us because we deserve the blessings. What we deserve is certainly not His blessing, but His judgment, for we have transgressed His holy law.

We're living in an entitlement society. I read this week that spending on entitlements is the highest in American history. In 1960, entitlement spending accounted for less than a third of all federal spending; in 2010, it was just about two thirds of government outlays, with everything else—defense, justice, all the other duties of government—making up less than one third. In 2010, entitlement spending had grown to be almost 100 times higher than it was in 1960.<sup>2</sup>

Let's be clear. We are not entitled to the blessing of God. He doesn't owe us. Indeed, it's because God is merciful and gracious that He extends blessing to sinners like us, because His Son took what we are entitled to—divine wrath—and gives us what He is entitled to—divine blessing.

So why then does He bless us? What's the response He wants to see? We've been blessed in order to bless. That's what we're going to see in Genesis 49.

We're just about to conclude our series on the life of Joseph. The story of Joseph is really part of the story of Jacob, which is really the story about the Creator God, who reveals Himself in Genesis. First He creates the universe. Then He creates the chosen family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through which He purposes to send the Savior into the world.

Last week we investigated chapter 48. There we saw aged Jacob in his final years. He's bedfast, and terminally ill. The touching scene unfolded as his beloved son Joseph came to his bedside, along with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob rallied and sat up on the side of his bed.

We entitled the message, “*The Difference Grace Makes When Death Approaches.*” We saw divine grace show up in three ways as Jacob nears death. First, as the body breaks

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> This message is adapted from two series at WBC in 1992 and 2002.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2012/12/19/the-shocking-truth-on-entitlements>

down (1-2). Second, as the blessing is given (3-20). And third, as the benefits are anticipated (21-22).

Though bedfast, Jacob is dying with dignity. Though he had blown it many times in life, when the end came he influenced those closest to him in a way that would live on after he was gone.

That doesn't happen automatically. One of the most tragic stories I know is the account of Eli in 1 Samuel 2. Eli was a priest. God had blessed him with an honored position in Israel.

But he blew it at home. The text says (2:12), "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men." What was their problem? According to 2:12b, "they knew not the LORD." And where did the breakdown begin?

With Eli. The Lord confronted Eli with this probing question, "Why do you honor your sons more than me (2:29b)?"

Eli mishandled God's blessing. He honored the blessing instead of using the blessing for the honor of the Giver of the blessing.

Like Jacob did. In Genesis 49 we see Jacob's final interaction with his twelve sons. We see him pointing his family to God in two ways. We also see an important principle illustrated, that *we have been blessed in order to bless*. What we receive, we are to give.

#### I. We see a blessing that points a family to God (1-28).

Verse 1, "Then Jacob called for his sons and said: 'Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come.'"

Jacob's journey of 147 years is nearly over. God has blessed him richly. His grandfather Abraham had the son of promise, Isaac, and the son of bondage, Ishmael. His father, Isaac, had twin sons, Esau and himself.

But God blessed Jacob with twelve sons. And though they'd been through some rocky times, Jacob now calls them all together on his deathbed. He wants to give them something.

A blessing. We're blessed in order to bless.

Before we read the blessing, let me give a brief overview. It's full of strange imagery. Reuben is said to be "turbulent as waters" (4), Judah is called "a lion's cub" (9), and so forth.

In giving the blessing, Jacob spoke to his sons individually, yet collectively. That is, he addressed them one at a time, yet he allowed the others to hear.

Interestingly, he did not bless the sons according to their birth order (#1-4, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, born to Leah; then #5-6, Dan and Naphtali, born to Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; then #7-8, Gad and Asher, born to Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; then #9-10, Issachar and Zebulun, born to Leah; and finally #11-12, Joseph and Benjamin, born to Rachel.

Instead he gives the blessing in this order: #1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 9, 5, 7, 8, 6, 11, 12. That's as follows:

1. Reuben (3)
- 2 & 3. Simeon & Levi (5)
4. Judah (8)
5. Zebulun (13)
6. Issachar (14)
7. Dan (16)
8. Gad (19)
9. Asher (20)

10. Naphtali (21)

11. Joseph (22)

12. Benjamin (27)

Judah received the longest blessing in verses 8-12, while Joseph's was longer and more privileged, in verses 22-26.

Jacob's blessing involved two elements. Take a look at the first and last verse of the section and you'll see these two elements.

**A. Jacob's blessing involved a prophetic element (1).**

In verse 1 Jacob asked his sons to gather so that "I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days (as the KJV puts it)." What he's about to say has a prophetic element to it. As was also the case with his grandfather and father, Abraham and Isaac, the patriarch Jacob received from God special revelation that enabled him to predict the future of his sons and the tribes that would bear their names.

So his blessing is prophetic. He refers to what will happen "in the last days."

What time period does Jacob have in mind? The phrase is used in several ways in the Bible. Here the sense is general and broad (as in Deut 31:29). If you have an NIV you'll notice, "Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come." The ESV also says, "in days to come."

A word of caution is in order. Let's not try to put Jacob's prophecy into a neat, tidy package. We tend to want to chart and diagram prophecies we find in the Bible, like Jacob's. That's because we approach prophecy from an Americanized, analytical, scientific, western perspective.

And while there's a place for trying to systematize what the Bible reveals, we must remember that Jacob wasn't an American. He of course was a middle-easterner, a Jew, the father of the Jewish nation.

Why is that important? Jacob didn't seem to have a well-defined timeline in mind when he uttered these predictions. In much of this prophetic blessing, Jacob looks ahead to the conquest of Canaan which would happen 400 years after his death. In another place, he looks ahead to the coming of the Messiah, which was 18 centuries away from him. In another place, he describes the Messianic Kingdom, which has yet to come.

So there may be a gap of hundreds of years between a prediction Jacob makes in one verse and a prediction he makes a few verses later.

What's the point of Jacob's blessing? God is showing Jacob, and then his sons, and then everyone else who would read this, including us, the certainty of His plan. History is indeed *His Story*. Nothing just happens, but it all unfolds according to His sovereign, wise, and gracious purposes.

So following Jacob's death, his descendants will have many bumpy roads to travel. Does that catch God off guard? Not all all. It's what He predicted. And what He predicted makes it clear that He is in control, and therefore, His people can trust Him.

Keep this in mind when studying the Scriptures. God intends prophecy to produce this practical benefit for His people. To encourage us to trust Him no matter what's happening.

We'll see more of this prophetic element in a moment. But first, let's talk about a second element.

**B. Jacob's blessing involved a personal element (28).**

Go to the end of the blessing and notice the next verse. Moses, who wrote Genesis, offers this commentary in verse 28, "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate

to him.” In the KJV it says that Jacob “blessed them; every one according to his blessing, he blessed them.”

What's Moses saying? The Hebrew phrase is ambiguous. The NIV's "the blessing appropriate to him" and the ESV's "the blessing suitable to him" suggest that Jacob's blessing was not generic. His sons weren't clones, and he didn't treat them as such. There was an intensely personal element to the blessing he gave them.

So let's walk through the blessing more carefully, and let's look for the prophetic and personal elements in it. Jacob begins in verse 2, “Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israel.”

He calls his sons to gather around him, calling them “sons of Jacob” (the name his parents gave him), and then calling himself “Israel” (the name God gave him later in life, which represents the covenant He established with him and his descendants).

Once the sons took their place around his bed, he began to address them individually starting with the oldest, Reuben.

**1. Reuben** -- Verses 3-4, “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power. <sup>4</sup> Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father's bed, onto my couch and defiled it.”

Notice the two elements; the personal--"my firstborn, my might...", and the prophetic--"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

Reuben the person, and Reuben the tribe, never did excel. As firstborn, he was entitled to a double inheritance. But he forfeited it. When? As Jacob reminds him, it was when he “went up to your father's bed.” Reuben violated Bilhah, his father's concubine, as recorded in Genesis 35:22.

Sex is a good gift from the Creator to be enjoyed by a husband and wife within the covenant of marriage. But using sex for self-gratifying purposes is something men and women have done ever since the first man and woman rebelled against the Creator. Reuben slept with Bilhah, who was the mother of his half-brothers Dan and Naphtali. It was “an arrogant and premature claim to the rights of the firstborn—here the right to inherit his father's concubine,” says the *NIV Study Bible*.<sup>3</sup>

At the heart of sexual sin is always pride. *I want this. I deserve this. I know what's best and I'm going to do it.*

Pride always leads to a downfall. In Reuben's case, for a few moments of prideful self-gratification, he lost his legal status as firstborn.

Notice how Jacob described his firstborn son. With majestic terms, he said he was strong and powerful. But then, in front of his brothers, he exposed Reuben's true character. He told him he was as unstable as water. He was indiscriminate. He was out of control. His passions ruled him. He was impulsive.

Why bring up the past? Why not just keep this between Jacob and Reuben? Apparently because the others already knew about it, and it affects them too. Jacob is taking severe action with his firstborn, and he wants him to know, and his brothers to know why.

How many families have been torn apart because parents didn't communicate their wishes clearly before passing? There will be no misunderstanding in this family.

Next, Jacob addresses sons 2 & 3 together.

**Simeon & Levi** -- Verses 5-7, “Simeon and Levi are brothers—their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. <sup>7</sup> Cursed be their

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<sup>3</sup> NIV Study Bible, p. 59.

anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.”

In verse 5 he refers to these two as “brothers.” Obviously they're brothers. So why does Jacob say this? Because these two men were two of a kind. Birds of a feather flock together. These are the only two brothers that Jacob lumped together in their blessing.

Notice the personal description. It wasn't very complimentary. Jacob says they possessed “swords” or “instruments of cruelty” (5). In verse 7 he says [KJV], “for in their anger they slew a man.” You can read about it in Genesis 34:26. These two brothers slew the Shechemites.

You say, “What's the big deal? David killed people, and God blessed him. So did Gideon, and a lot of others.”

The difference is this. God distinguishes “holy war” from vengeance. David did the former. He served as God's instrument of judgment on wicked people who had offended God's holy standard. But Simeon and Levi massacred people because of a personal vendetta.

And Jacob refused to justify it. Again, for all the brothers to hear, he condemns their actions. Not just as a dad, but as God's spokesman. This is the message God revealed to him concerning these sons.

Notice the prophetic element in verse 7. “I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.”

And so it happened. The tribe of Simeon eventually disintegrated within the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Levi dispersed honorably as the priestly tribe.

Realize this. God doesn't just forget the past. Numbers 32:23 says, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” Galatians 6:7 records, “Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” It was because of past sins that Reuben and Simeon and Levi experienced the consequence of having to forfeit positions of honor in the chosen family.

This is sobering, for our sin has consequences too. We can ignore it, but it's still there. We can try to cover it up, but it remains. Until it's dealt with God's way.

How does God deal with sin? So many today have the idea, “Well, He's loving. So He just says, let's forget it happened. It's in the past.”

But He's also holy, and ignoring transgression would be a violation of His justice. No, He will not say, “Well, that wasn't so bad. Let's just pretend it never happened.”

The truth is, a holy God must judge sin. And that's why He chose this family, and worked with them for centuries, through sinful blunder after blunder. So that through this family He would His own Son into the world, the sinless God-man, who would take the just punishment deserved by every sinner who cry out to Him in repentance and faith.

No, God doesn't just forget the past. But He will forgive the past on the basis of what His Son did, Jesus Christ, who died in the sinner's place and rose again for the sinner's salvation.

Do you have sin in your past? Which of us doesn't? God cannot ignore it, but He will forgive it. His Word says it so clearly in 1 John 1:8-9 (ESV), “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

This tremendous salvation has come through Jacob's next son.

**4. Judah** -- Jacob commended Judah. Notice the prophetic announcement in verse 8, “Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you.”

In verse 9 he shares a personal element, “You are a lion's cub, O Judah;

you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?”

Listen to what Jacob predicted about Judah in verse 10, “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff [KJV ‘lawgiver’] from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.”

Jacob announced that the "scepter" and the "lawgiver" (NIV "ruler's staff") belonged to Judah. What's that mean? The words are somewhat cryptic, but the idea is clear. Judah is going to have a great leadership role in the nation of Israel. Judah will hold an honored position. Judah will give direction to the twelve tribes.

Until... The word "until" in verse 10 is pivotal. Judah's leadership role would continue until what? Until, as the KJV puts it, "Shiloh come." The NIV says, “until he comes to whom it belongs.” When Shiloh would come, the focus, the honor, the attention of Israel would be on Him. He would then be the leader of His people.

Who or what is Shiloh? Luther translated the word "hero." I believe it refers initially to King David, the descendant of Judah that God sent to rescue Israel, and ultimately to the Son of David, King Jesus, whom God sent to rescue the world.

Verse 10 is a snapshot of Israel’s messianic. Jacob anticipates the day when, from his own seed, from the tribe of Judah, the Savior will come.

“And the obedience of the nations is his,” concludes verse 10. This coming ruler will exert influence, not just on Israel, but the nations.

Verses 11-12 describe the prosperity of the kingdom He will establish. “He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. <sup>12</sup> His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.” I see here an anticipation of the Messianic Kingdom.

Notice what’s happening here. On his deathbed Jacob is affirming his reliance on the coming descendant of Judah. He is the hope of the nations. He is my hope.

Salvation comes by faith alone. Jacob was saved by faith, for he looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah, and God credited the merit of the Messiah to his account. We too are saved by faith. We must look back to the coming of the Messiah.

That’s what Peter told the unbelieving Jews in Acts 4:12. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men, by which we must be saved.”

**5. Zebulun** -- Verse 13, “Zebulun will live by the seashore and become a haven for ships; his border will extend toward Sidon.”

There’s no personal element here, but there is a prophetic element. He shall dwell by the seashore. Actually, the tribe did not occupy coastal land, but was near enough (within ten miles) to be enriched by seaborne trade.

Later Moses recorded this prophecy about Zebulun in Deuteronomy 33:19, “Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and you, Issachar, in your tents. <sup>19</sup> They will summon peoples to the mountain and there offer the sacrifices of the righteous; they will *feast on the abundance of the seas*, on the treasures hidden in the sand.”

**6. Issachar** -- Verses 14-15, “Issachar is a rawboned donkey lying down between two saddlebags. <sup>15</sup> When he sees how good is his resting place and how pleasant is his land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and submit to forced labor.”

Jacob said Issachar's descendants would be strong and patient. But eventually they would become subject to forced labor under oppressors.

**7. Dan** -- Verses 16-17, “Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel. <sup>17</sup> Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider tumbles backward.

Jacob announced that Dan, like Reuben, would never exhibit the place of leadership for which he had the potential. He would administer justice in subtle ways, acting like a serpent by the roadside.

Verse 18 is interesting. Jacob switches to the first person, “I”, and says, “I look for your deliverance, O LORD.” He’s apparently taking a break from the blessing to offer this quick prayer to the Lord. He says he looks for the Lord’s deliverance. Remember he’s on his death bed, but he’s affirming that his death won’t be the end.

**8. Gad --** Verse 19, “Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels.”

There's a play on words here. "Gad" means "troop." Jacob says that a "troop" (or "band") of enemies will overcome him, and that later he will fight and regain control. That's what happened. The tribe of Gad settled in the Trans-jordan region and constantly battled the mauraders to the east in the Arabian desert, just as Jacob prophecied.

**9. Asher --** Verse 20, “Asher’s food will be rich; he will provide delicacies fit for a king.”

The descendants of Asher settled along the Mediteranean coast. Using that rich soil, they raised (as Jacob said they would) delicacies for the kings of Tyre and Sidon.

**10. Naphtali --** Verse 21, “Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns.” This son, and the tribe that would bear his name, was like a doe, apparently implying swiftness in self-defense. A “doe set free” possibly refers to “an independent spirit fostered in the descendants of Naphtali by their somewhat isolated location in the hill country north of the Sea of Galilee.”<sup>4</sup>

**11. Joseph --** Verses 22-25, “Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. <sup>23</sup> With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. <sup>24</sup> But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, <sup>25</sup> because of your father’s God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb. <sup>26</sup> Your father’s blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.”

Jacob's main blessing falls on Joseph. He is like a fruitful vine (22). Jacob reflects how he was hated, harrassed, and attacked (23). Yet he prospered (24). Once again Jacob praises Joseph for his character and eloquence, the "prince" of his sons.

And what was Joseph's secret? His dad tells everybody gathered at the bedside in no uncertain terms. He repeats the words “because of” four times.

Verses 24-25, “His bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, **because of** the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, **because of** the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, <sup>25</sup> **because of** your father’s God, who helps you, **because of** the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb.”

How did this man overcome such adversity? How did he not give in to bitterness? How did he fight the fight of life God’s way? *Because of God.* God was real to him. God was his shepherd. God helped him. God blessed him.

**12. Benjamin --** Verse 27, “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder.”

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<sup>4</sup> NIV Study Bible, p. 79.

A ravenous wolf. Was that this man's temperament? It was for the tribe that bore his name. As predicted, the descendants of Benjamin were known for their ferocious warriors.

So there it is. Dying Jacob delivers a message to his twelve sons which included both prophetic and personal elements. He finishes his life by giving a powerful blessing.

Notice verse 28 again, "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, *giving each the blessing appropriate to him.*"

There's a lesson in this for us. Obviously, we can't predict the future of our children, like Jacob did. But we can influence it. How? By sharing with them words, our own words that let them know what we see and think regarding them.

It's interesting how Jacob used vivid images to depict the character of his sons. He compared Reuben to boiling water. Here he says Judah is like a lion. He called Issachar a rawboned donkey! He likened Dan to a viper, Naphtali to a doe, Joseph to a fruitful vine, and Benjamin to a ravenous wolf.

Again, I know Jacob had special God-given prophetic abilities. So he was able to see and describe the future of his sons, which we cannot do. But it strikes me that here was a dad who knew his sons.

1. *Jacob knew his sons.* He knew what they were like, how they approached life, what they did, and more. He knew their personalities, their habits, their interests, their traits. He knew his sons, all twelve of them.

2. *Parents, how well do you know your children?* A good exercise for any parent is to do an assessment. What's true of your children? What are their individual strengths and weaknesses, their gifts and passions, their tendencies and challenges? They're each different, so it's vital that we get to know them.

But don't just store away with that information. Share it with them. Let them know what you see and think, specifically about what you see the Lord doing in their lives, and how He could use them for His kingdom purposes.

Give them a blessing. We are blessed in order to bless.

When you read Jacob's story you notice that he began his journey with nothing but God's promise. By the time he ends his journey, he has a huge family and makes sure they too have God's promise.

There's nothing more important than knowing and passing on to others the promises of God. Everything else comes and goes, but what God says remains.

So Jacob pointed his family to God in two ways. First, we see the blessing.

## II. We see burial plans that point a family to God (29-33).

We'll actually see his burial next time, in chapter 50. But notice what Jacob said...

Veres 29-32, "Then he gave them these instructions: 'I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, <sup>30</sup> the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field. <sup>31</sup> There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. <sup>32</sup> The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites.'"

There's something so practical here. As Jacob prepares to leave this life, he brings his sons together and addresses his burial plans. He wants them all to know what he's thinking. He made three things perfectly clear.

**A. He made it clear who his people were.** That's verse 29. "I am about to be gathered to *my people*." Who are my people? They are God's people, for the Sovereign Lord has graciously established a relationship with us.

Friends, there are only two categories of people in the world. There are God's people, and there *not* God's people. And before we leave this world we need to make sure those around us know who our people are.

We don't belong to the world, not if we're God's people. Have you made it clear to those around you who your people are?

**B. He made it clear who he was trusting.** Why does Jacob make such a big deal about where his body will be laid to rest? Because by that action he's making it clear who he was trusting. Bury me where Abraham was buried, the man who believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Where Sarah was buried, and Isaac, and Rebekah, and my wife Leah. When you put my body in that burial place, you'll be reminded of the One in whom I am trusting, the One who chose this family by His grace, for His purposes.

Again, have you made it clear to those around you who you are trusting?

**C. He made it clear what he wanted for his family.** And what's that? He wants them to make the same two things clear. Make it clear who your people are. And make it clear who you are trusting. That's what his blessing was all about.

These were the patriarch's *final words*. Verse 33 says, "When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people."

Death is not a cessation, my friend, but a change in location. Jacob didn't cease to exist. He merely moved to a different realm. He "was gathered to his people."

And *he left behind a legacy that lasted*. Don't get me wrong. Jacob's life had had more than its share of turmoil. Had he had infirmities? Many. Did sins dot the landscape of his life? Unfortunately, yes. Jacob had blown it many times in his 147 years.

But listen. His life ended in blessing. He had been blessed in order to bless.

Make It Personal: Like Jacob, we too can leave behind a legacy.

What made the difference? When it was all said and done, what legacy did Jacob leave behind? He left his descendants three traits to follow:

1. *Jacob was a man of desire.* As you look at his life, you see failures, yes, but beyond that, you see a man who had an inquenchable desire for God's blessing. He wanted God's blessing. In fact, he wanted it so badly he wrestled with God (back in chapter 32; Gen 32:24 "And Jacob...wrestled a man..."; Gen 32:26 "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.")).

Jacob had the right desire in life. He wanted God's blessing. Do you?

2. *Jacob was a man who had learned to depend.* Earlier in his life, Jacob was a go-getter. He was a proud conniver. He knew how to get things done. Or so he thought. But as the years past, he learned that he wasn't as smart as he once thought. He got himself into jam after jam.

Until he learned the lesson God was patiently teaching him. He needed to learn to depend, to depend not on himself, but on God. And that he did. He learned to trust God. He learned to walk by faith. He learned to live in the light of God's promises. That's what he wanted his children to do as well.

3. *Jacob was a man who discovered the source of real blessing.* Verse 18 again, "I look for your deliverance, O LORD." We can't manufacture blessing. We must receive it, for it comes from the Lord. And having received it, we must pass it on.