

Christ Community Covenant Church
Beginnings: Genesis 50 - "You reap what you sow!"
Pastor Dave Scherrer - June 26, 2016

Children's

What is a rule of thumb?

Have you heard the saying, you reap what you sow? What do you think that means?

What do you think it means for people?

I have a present for each of you . . .

Spiritual laws

You must be last to be first

Those who wish to keep their lives must first lose them

You have to be a slave to righteousness if you want to be free from sin

Reaping what you sow

2 Corinthians 9:6

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Galatians 6:7-10

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ ***For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*** ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Proverbs 11:18

The wicked earns deceptive wages,
but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.

Proverbs 14:14

The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways.

Now I want to change direction here briefly but I don't to lose track of what we have been saying here so far. There is important connective tissue between these two ideas . . .

Whatever happened to Blessings?

The Old Testament terms for 'blessing' - **B-R-K, or Barak** - abounds in the Old Testament, occurring over 600 times. The major terms are related to the word meaning "**to kneel**" since in earlier times one would kneel to receive a blessing or to worship. Interestingly, it can mean either 'to bless' or 'to curse.'
(If you know someone by the name of Barak, you can decide if he has been curse or a blessing.) In the Old Testament **husbands** would *barak* their wives and children, **kings and governments** would *barak* their subjects and the **Levites** were charged to *barak* the people of God. These blessings were at once the pronouncement of recognition of harmony in the relationship, but it might also be seen as a prophetic voice over the one kneeling. Kind of on the line; "If you keep on thinking and behaving the way you are you can expect more of the same." That might be good or it might be bad. **A pronouncement of reaping what you sow essentially.** There is our connection to our previous conversation.

"God bestows blessing on those who are in harmony with him. Curses are upon those who are not."

James McKeown

In verses 1-28, we have a series of pronouncements in which Jacob blesses his sons. Sometimes that literally means pouring out his favor, acknowledging God's hand of favor on his sons. In other cases, he characterizes his sons, and speaks of God's providential future for them in light of that character. In all cases, **he foretells the future** and couple of things need to be noted about these specific passages before us. First of all, these prophecies are retrospective and prospective; **they look back and they look forward. They look back often to things which these men have done in their lives. Characteristics that they have, deeds that they have done, whether good or evil. And then they look forward into the future, as to how those characteristics are going to come to pass.** The future brings to fruition some of the tendencies that are described in these young men, and in other cases it brings to fruition or fulfillment, some of the consequences for their past behavior. That is the first thing to note.

Second thing, is to note that this is specifically a prophecy. It is **not simply** looking at the characteristics of the men and projecting that onto the future as **an educated guess**. "Well, son, you have acted like this all of your life, I guess that when you get older, you are going to act like that too." **This is specifically a prophecy. In fact, much of it, most of it comes to pass not in the lifetime of these young men,** but over four hundred years later when their tribes enter into the land of Canaan. Let's go ahead and look at these prophetic blessings of Israel.

The Prophecy of Israel

Genesis 49:1-2

Then Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.

² "Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father.

An Old Testament blessing of a father to his sons included words of encouragement, details regarding each son's inheritance, and prophetic words concerning the future. For example, **Isaac's blessing on Jacob** (which was meant for Esau) **gave him the earth's bounty and authority over his brother** (Genesis 27:28-29). It also promised that those who blessed Jacob would be blessed, and those who cursed him would receive a curse.

When Esau discovered that Jacob had deceived his father and had received the blessing meant for Esau, he was distraught and asked, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" (Genesis 27:36). Isaac's words to **Esau reinforced Jacob's superiority but also prophesied that Esau would one day rebel against Jacob's rule (verses 39-40).**

When Jacob blessed his twelve sons, he also made predictions regarding their future (Genesis 49). **The Bible records the direct fulfillment of many of these predictions, revealing the supernatural ability given to Jacob as the father of the twelve tribes.** We tend to just flip past these blessings, but every word of Scripture has meaning and if you are willing to work a bit and drill a bit deeper, you will reap what you sow!

The context is one of urgency. You will readily notice in the first two verses the insistence of Jacob that his sons dropped everything and all of them came together to hear his final words. He was a dying man, and so it was impossible for him to travel to the boys. So he insisted that they came to him, without delay. "Leave your flocks and herds. You must even leave tending Pharaoh's sheep. Come from the fields of Goshen because I have something important to tell you." There's this refrain in the opening verses . . . "he called for them," we learn, and then he urged them, "Gather around." Then Jacob exhorted them even more, "Assemble and listen . . ." and then he repeated the word, "Listen!" You can feel his sense of haste. There was a gathering crisis in the life of this old man. There was no guarantee that he was going to have another opportunity to speak to them like this again; he was asking for their attention; he was getting frail and weak. So he called them to gather around and assemble and, "Please listen!" he begged. He didn't want any one of his sons to turn up simply in order to hear what Dad's message just to him was: he wanted them all to listen intently to what he had to say to each one of the brothers.

Let's take a brief look at a few of these blessings and then I want to make it all personal for us as we close our study. Let's look at the first **barak** given by Jacob to his oldest son.

Jacob Blesses Reuben

Genesis 49:3-4

Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

⁴ Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch!

In verses 3 and 4, he speaks of Reuben, and he begins with a pronouncement about his dignity and his preeminence. You see all this hopefulness about son, Reuben, and yet this great potential is disappointed. And you see it specifically in the revulsion that Jacob displays at the sin of Reuben. In Genesis 35, verse 22, we are told that Reuben went up and slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah. Now it is interesting, in Genesis 35, Moses, the author of this account, makes no comment upon the morality in that moment of the narrative. But, in this passage, we see the displeasure at that sin on the part of Jacob. And it is seen actually in a very strong way if you look at verse 4. In verse 4, he is speaking to Reuben, **uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed and then you defiled it.** And then at the end of verse 4, it is almost as if he turns away from Reuben and he looks to his sons, and he says, he went up to my couch. He castigates him in front of his brothers, so great is his revulsion at this sin that Reuben has committed. Of course, the tribe of Reuben did indeed fail in leadership, thus fulfilling specifically Jacob's. No great leaders of Israel came out of Reuben. And so we see this great potential of Reuben, his dignity and preeminence disappointed and brought to nothing because of his own sin. You reap what you sow.

Jacob Blesses Simeon and Levi

And then in verses 5-7, we see Simeon and Levi.

Genesis 49:5-7

"Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. ⁶ Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company.

For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. ⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

And again, we see God and Moses pronounce their view on the massacre which Simeon and Levi engineered in chapter 34. And again, in chapter 34, Moses makes no comment about the rightness or the wrongness of the massacre that was perpetrated by Simeon and Levi. **Once again, Jacob brings his judgment; he makes it clear that this is displeasing in the sight of God.** Genesis and the whole of the Old Testament knows the difference between a God-ordained warfare where the ban is placed on people and God's judgment is visited upon them, and a massacre which is based upon a sinful human desire for vengeance. God makes that distinction.

It is interesting too, isn't it, that both of these tribes were indeed scattered as the prophecy says. The tribe of Simeon all but disappeared. The tribe of Levi, however, was scattered purposely through Israel and became the ministering priests of that land. And you see even there, in God's prophecy the different destinies based upon the heart response to the people. **One is scattered and goes into oblivion. Another becomes the priest servants of Israel, ministering God's word and serving in His sanctuary for the rest of the history of the land. You reap what you sow.**

Jacob Blesses Judah

Genesis 49:8-10

“Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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.

The birthright is passing down the brothers. It should have gone first to Reuben, but he was disqualified by his character. The same with Simeon and Levi. Now my guess is Judah is thinking “Dad is in a bad mood, now I'm going to get it.” **Instead Judah receives the birthright!** Hear the great words that his father Jacob used; “The scepter will not depart from Judah, or the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him.” (v.10). **The exact translation is “until Shiloh come.”** Shiloh is a Prophetic name for Messiah. This is a difficult word to translate because it is so rich; it means peace, it means prosperity, it means worthiness. All of these speak to Messiah.

This is the greatest of the prophecies in length, and in range. It stretches far into the future; it speaks throughout of the dominion that Judah would have, not only over the other tribes, but over their enemies. And it speaks of the reign of the Messiah. **The language of the end of that prophecy speaks of the exalted days of the fruition of all of God's plans.** Look at the incredible language that is used. They don't wash their clothes in water; they wash their clothes in wine. They take the best vintage and they are washing their clothes in wine. This is the richness and the prosperity of the days of the Messiah. He washes His robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine, his teeth from milk. This is the prosperity of the land being spoken of in the days of the reign of the Messiah. Ezekiel, in Ezekiel 21 verses 26 and 27, picks up on the verse 10 here actually and expounds on it. That is something you may want to follow up on sometime.

[I skip several slides here]

We don't have time to go through all of the **barak** expressions of Jacob over his sons. But each come true and interestingly we see one of his sons, Joseph then blessing Israel.

Joseph blesses 'Israel' – His jealous and conniving brothers

Let's look at this passage in Genesis 50;

Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.” ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ ‘Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.”’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

His brothers are still suspicious, jealous and spiteful. They can't believe Joseph's good will, they think, “If I were Joseph I would kill us for what we did.”

So they invent one more lie and blame it on their dead father. Instead he utters these wonderful words that characterize so much of God's love for us.

“Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Joseph blesses the sons of Jacob and in so doing he blesses Israel for generations to come. It makes us ask the question;

Who are you blessing?

From the life of Joseph we have learned some critical things about God's sovereignty and how our character can reflect those truths. We have learned that . . .

Believing in providence can give us a new perspective on our tragedies. That perspective might be stated this way: God is involved with us even in the worst moments of life. It is at such points that God's providence is so crucial. It doesn't tell us everything we would like to know about the mysteries of life, but it does assure us that God is there and that he cares for us. He is somehow in control even in our darkest moments in a way we cannot see—and probably wouldn't understand even if we could see it. Because of God's providence, we can keep believing in God even when things happen that make no sense to us. **And this perspective can make us a blessing to others.**

Believing in providence gives us courage to keep going in hard times. Because God is there, we know that he cares for us, even when life is tumbling in all around us. You know the phrase, "Life is hard but God is good." You know Psalm 115:3, "*Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.*" **Let's believe these truths and we will be a blessing to other.**

Believing in providence constrains us to live by faith. Many times we won't feel like believing in God. But faith is a personal commitment to believe that God is in charge – "Our God reigns" – is good and that he can be trusted in every situation. Faith rises above feelings to choose to believe even when our circumstances may argue against it. **This blesses others.**

Blessing of the Church

The church blessing the young . . .

Parents blessing the children . . .

Our Lord and God,
How blessed is everyone that trusts in You – to You and You alone be all blessing and honor, glory, might, majesty and power - for Your loving-kindness is better than life itself.

Surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous. I, therefore, declare that I am blessed through Jesus Christ. Thank You for surrounding me with Your favor as with a shield. I thank You, Lord, that I can abound in your favor and blessing today. I, therefore, expect Your favor to go before me today. I anticipate the favor of God surrounding me and I expect my Heavenly Father to give me favor with men, even with the ungodly.

I thank You Heavenly Father for opening doors for me that neither man nor the devil can shut. Thank You for blessing the works of my hands as I walk under an open heaven. May I experience your supernatural increase and provision in every area of my life this day. I choose to walk in faith and in victory.

How blessed I am Father to be Your child. How blessed I am to have all my sins forgiven and to be imputed with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. How blessed I am that You are my Shepherd and You my Provider – You are my Defender; You are my Healer and You are my all in all. How blessed that I have been given eternal life as a free gift of grace and that You have crowned me with Your steadfast love and mercy – satisfying me with all good things and renewing my strength like that of an eagle. May I come to know You better with every passing day and I pray that Your abundant blessings will pour down on all that trust Your name and abide in Your love. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who has indeed blessed us with EVERY spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

AMEN