**Scripture Reading: Genesis 26:1-19**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 26:7**

***Like Father, Like Son***

Two very important things stand out in today’s Scripture reading, those being that God’s *promises to* Abraham continued through God’s relationship with Isaac and that God’s *problems with* Abraham also continued with Isaac. Compare verses 3-4 of today’s reading with Genesis 12:2-3 and you will see that to be true. The last part of verse three of today’s Scripture clearly indicates that God planned to fulfill His promises to Abraham through His blessing of Isaac and his descendants. However, God’s problems with Abraham are seen in Isaac as well. When faced with famine, Isaac looked to the Philistines much like his father had looked to Egypt in the past. The Bible clearly states that God had to command Isaac *not* to go down to Egypt for food (verse two). But, unfortunately, the similarities between Abraham and Isaac do not end there. A careful look at our focus verse reveals that Isaac committed the same cowardly sin as his father when he lied about his wife’s true identity to protect his own hide! Just like it was with Abraham, the so-called “worldly” people had to step in to make sure that things were made right. How sad it is that the world sometimes exhibits more respect for God than His own people.

**Pray**e**r Emphasis:**

* **Remember** that Romans 15:4 tells us that, “The things that were written aforetime were written for our ‘learning’” (KJV) or “to teach us” (NIV). **Learn** some valuable life lessons from the people that we are reading about as we study the lives of God’s Kingdom Patriarchs.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 26:20-35**

**Focus Verses: Genesis 26:24 & 25**

***Like Father, Like Son, Continued***

The similarities between Abraham and Isaac continue as we read that God “appeared” (compare 26:24 to 12:7) to Isaac just as He had earlier appeared to his father. And, as a result of that special appearance, Isaac had responded exactly as his father had when God had appeared to him. Verse 25 tells us that Isaac, like his father, built an altar and called upon the name of the LORD. But, just as surely as we can see these similarities now, those who knew both Abraham and Isaac saw their similarities then. Verses 26-28 disclose that Abimelech approached Isaac and stated that he had “certainly” (KJV) or “clearly” (NIV) seen that the LORD was with Isaac and had, therefore, concluded that he needed to make a treaty with Isaac. If you recall, this is almost identical to what this same man said to Abraham (21:22-23) when he came seeking a treaty with him. It is encouraging to know that even if we fail God in many ways, others can still see God’s blessings upon our lives and be influenced by them.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Praise God** that He can use frail, broken people like Abraham, Isaac, and the rest of us to reveal His blessings to others. Take some time today to **thank** God for blessing us on an *in spite of* and not a *because of* basis! **Contact** a fellow believer to let them know how they have been a blessing to you and **thank** them for their commitment to Christ.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 27:1-23**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 27:8**

***An Elaborate Scheme***

There is often confusion between the *birthright* and the *blessing*, but they were two separate things in Bible times. Earlier (chapter 25) we read how Jacob *traded* Esau out of his birthright. In today’s chapter, we read about how Jacob *tricked* Esau out of his father’s blessing. The saddest thing about this great deception is that Rebekah, Isaac’s wife (and the mother of both boys) is the one who instigated this deceitful act. Our focus verse records her encouraging Jacob to carefully follow her instructions regarding this deception. The word that is translated “obey” (KJV) or “listen carefully” (NIV) in our focus verse comes from a Hebrew word that means “to hear with attention” or “to give undivided attention” to what is being said. The main idea of this word is to make sure that you *perceive* and *obey* what is being spoken to you at that moment. This word is generally used when there is no, or very little, margin for error concerning the events that are about to take place. Such was the case with the elaborate scheme that Rebekah and Jacob are about to put in place to ensure that Jacob receives Isaac’s blessing rather than the intended Esau. While Esau is out trying to obey the request of his dying father, his own mother and brother are taking multiple steps to make goat meat pass for venison and Jacob pass for Esau. Perhaps Isaac’s own love for venison (see 25:28) played a part in his being so easily fooled.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Avoid** selfishness and greed whenever possible. **Do** something unselfish for someone today. **Be** a blessing to someone and see how much you are blessed by doing so.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 27:24-46**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 27:36**

***A Fitting Name***

As I mentioned yesterday, the birthright and the blessing were two different things. Our focus verse clearly states that. It also reveals Esau’s great sorrow over how his own brother had deceived him once again. Esau declared that his twin brother had been “rightly” named because “Jacob” meant to “supplant” or “to supersede by force or cunning.” Verse 19 (from yesterday’s reading) and verse 24 (from today) both indicate that Jacob had no qualms whatsoever about lying to his father in order to get what he wanted. Although Jacob and Rebekah might have felt that they had “gotten away” with their deception, the chapters ahead will reveal that Jacob spent a lifetime reaping what he sowed at the hands of others. He lived much of his life in fear of his own brother and was forced to flee from his home, leaving behind his mother and the flocks of his father that he desired so strongly. Eventually we will see Jacob deceived by his own sons when they lied to him about the death of their brother, Joseph. Rebekah had some reaping of her own to do. In verse 43 she once again commands Jacob to “obey her voice,” but this time it was to send her son away to live with her brother, Laban, who repeatedly deceived him. It is sad to note that Jacob never saw his mother alive again.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Realize** that the Bible clearly teaches that we always reap what we sow, more than we sow, and often our reaping comes much later than the time of the actual sowing. **Practice** the “Golden Rule” by treating others the way that you would want to be treated. Take every precaution to **be honest and fair** in your dealings with others.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 28:1-22**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 28:15**

***Two Wonderful Promises***

No matter how undeserving man may be, God is always faithful in His promises. We certainly would not think that Jacob *deserved* to receive the kind of blessings that God is promising him in these verses – but that God, because of His grace, *desired* to make them. God made two wonderful promises to Jacob in our focus verse. The first promise involved God’s *presence* and the second His *protection*. He said to Jacob, “I am with you.” Notice that God’s presence was described in the present tense. Later, in this same verse, He promised Jacob that He would not leave Him until He had fulfilled His every promise to him. God also promised Jacob that He would “keep” (KJV) or “watch over” (NIV) him. In return, Jacob made a promise of his own. He promised God that he would give a tenth of all that God provided back to God. Abraham (then Abram) was the first person in the Bible that was said to give “tithes” unto the LORD (14:20). Jacob now becomes the second. These two places are the only two places that the “tithe” or “tenth” is mentioned in Genesis. The word that is translated “tenth” here is translated “tithe” in most places in the Scripture.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Ask** God to help you trust Him enough to become faithful in the matter of tithes and offerings. Many people who once thought that they could not afford to tithe would now tell you that they could not afford not to tithe. **Pray** much about it and begin to **give** to God on a regular basis.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 29:1-30**

**Focus Verses: Genesis 29:10 & 13**

***Jacob Meets His “Match”***

The title to today’s devotional thought carries a double meaning. In our verses we read of Jacob meeting his life “match” when he met his beautiful Rachel. It is interesting to note that Jacob met Rachel at a well while she was there as her father’s flocks were watering. If you recall, this meeting is very similar to how Abraham’s servant first met Rebekah when he was searching for a bride for Isaac, Jacob’s own father. The memories of that story might be what first led Jacob to stop at the well that he just “happened” upon in his journey. But Jacob met his match in another way on that very same day. Upon learning that his sister, Rebekah’s son, was at the well, Laban “ran” (KJV) or “hurried” (NIV) to meet him. It would be through his own “Uncle Laban” that Jacob would learn some hard lessons, reap some harvest from his own seeds of deception, and receive a very strong dose of his own medicine. The story is simple. Jacob loved Rachel and served Laban for seven years for the right to marry her. But on the wedding night, Laban slyly substituted his older daughter, Leah, and then tricked Jacob into serving an additional seven years for Rachel. What was Laban’s excuse for doing such a terrible thing? Read verse 26 again! He did it because of “birthrights!” It was not right to wed the younger before the older! We can only imagine how Jacob received these words!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Read** Galatians 6:7 and memorize it. Remember that God’s laws of sowing and reaping still apply today. **Determine** to sow good things into the lives of others by **being** fair and upright in all of your dealings, associations, and relationships.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 29:31-30:24**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 29:31**

***Three Striking Similarities***

It is interesting to note that the wives of the first three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) were all three “*beautiful*” women (see 12:11; 24:15-16; and 29:17). But there is a second similarity among these women that demands our careful attention. All three of these beautiful women were also “*barren*” (see 16:1; 25:21; and 29:31). How interesting it is that these three men who received the promise of having ancestors that would outnumber the stars all had to be constantly reminded to look to God for the answer to that promise. The third similarity between Jacob’s wives and the wives of his father and grandfather was found in the fact that they were all “*busy*” trying to fulfill God’s promises in their own strength and abilities. Rachel watched as her sister Leah gave Jacob six sons and a daughter (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah). In between the fourth and fifth sons by Leah, Rachel, after the manner of Sarah, persuaded Jacob to be with her servant, Bilhah, by whom Dan and Naphtali were born. But Leah also had a willing maid, Zilpah, by whom Gad and Asher were born. Finally, Rachel conceived in her own womb and bore Joseph, who will become one of the greatest types, or images, of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. God gave Rachel one more child, Benjamin, about whom we will read when we get to chapter 35.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Allow** God time to work His will in your life. **Determine to trust** in His *promises* and not in your own *plans* or *power*. **Wait** on the Lord and see if He does not “renew your strength” and help you to “mount up with wings as eagles” (Isaiah 40:31).

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 30:25-43**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 30:25**

***Some Shrewd Negotiations***

The day finally came when Jacob could think of only one thing: going home! He approached his “Uncle turned Father-in-law” Laban and asked for permission to do so. That is when the “bargaining” began! Laban, knowing that God had blessed him as a result of Jacob’s presence in his family, and wanting him to remain with him, asked him to “name the price” (verse 28, NIV) that it would take to keep him there. But Jacob, determined to go home, proposed a settlement that seemed more than fair to Laban. Jacob would separate and retain all of the “speckled and spotted” cattle and all of the “spotted and speckled” goats (verse 32, KJV). I am not sure if there is a difference between “speckled and spotted” and “spotted and speckled,” but I do know that such multi-colored animals were much rarer than the solid colored ones. Jacob also agreed to take only the “brown” (KJV) or “dark colored” (NIV) sheep. These darker colored sheep were also rare. Laban, thinking that this offer was seemingly to his advantage, quickly closed the deal. But, true to his own nature, and perhaps because he did not trust Jacob any more than Jacob trusted him, Laban took all of the animals that might most likely produce the kind that would fall to Jacob, gave them to his sons, and had them take them so far away from the rest of the flocks that it would take a “spotted and speckled” Papa goat three days to come and mate with one of Laban’s own. Thus, two men who sounded so “spiritual” in their dealings acted selfishly to make them come out to their best advantage.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Express** your faith to others by what you do and not just by the “spiritual” sounding things that you say. **Exhibit** true Christian character to someone today by being unselfish and generous. **Examine** the motivations of your heart and **ask** God to make them pleasing in His sight.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 31:1-24**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 31:3**

***“On the Road Again”***

Jacob hit the road for two reasons: 1) The animosity between him and Laban’s family was growing stronger every day, and 2) God told him it was time to go home (verse 3)! Jacob held a “family meeting” and his wives agreed to do whatever God commanded Jacob to do (verse. 16). So, the journey began. But it was more exciting than Jacob might have imagined. Little did he know that sweet, little Rachel had stolen the “images” (KJV) or “gods” (NIV) from her father’s house. In pagan societies, the first born inherited such idols as a symbol of their birthright. Perhaps this was Rachel’s way of getting back at her father for not allowing her to marry first. But, whatever message Rachel had intended to send, the one that Laban received caused him to become very angry. Three days after Jacob had set out for Canaan, Laban heard of it and set out to pursue him. Travelling lighter and faster, he caught up with Jacob’s family and flocks in seven days. Just before he overtook Jacob, God spoke to Laban and warned him not to harm Jacob. Jacob may have been a planner and schemer, but God had a plan for this man and He was not going to allow Laban or anyone else, to stop it.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Listen** for God’s voice on a daily basis and allow Him to speak to you through His Word. **Discuss** what God is saying to you with your family and **seek to serve** God as a unit. Express love and appreciation to you family today.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 31:25-55**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 31:44**

***The Covenant***

After several accusations from Laban and as many answers from Jacob, the two men decided to come to an agreement and make a covenant. Notice that it was after Jacob finally opened up to Laban and told him how he felt about his 20 years of service and the unjust ways in which he had been treated that Laban suggested that they make a covenant of peace between them. It really makes you wonder what difference such honest communication between these two men might have made many years prior to this day. Like most covenants, this one had certain stipulations. The first was the safety of Laban’s daughters and their children (verse 50) and the second concerned the separation of their two estates (verse 52). The “pillar” mentioned in verse 51 represents a land marker that legally separated what was Laban’s from that which belonged to Jacob. After a couple of names for this place of peace negotiations were bantered back and forth, the Hebrew name Mizpah was agreed upon. This word literally means “beacon” or “watchtower” and was to serve as a reminder to both men that God would be constantly watching to see if they would honor the agreement that they made on this day.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Practice** clear Christian communication in all of your relationships. When strong, seemingly hard words are necessary, **speak** from a soft heart and with a soft tone and **watch** how God can get involved in helping you resolve conflict in a positive way. **Read** Proverbs 15:1 and look for an opportunity to practice what it says today or in the near future.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 32:1-32**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 32:1**

***The “Angels of God”***

The phrase, “the angels of God” (verse 1) demands some time and attention. This phrase is found only in two places in all of the Old Testament. Both places are in Genesis and both times that the phrase is found are associated with Jacob and his travels. Back in 28:12, Jacob, upon his first leaving his homeland, saw “the angels of God” ascending and descending a “ladder” (KJV) or “stairway” (NIV). Now, as he finally returns to his homeland, he is met by “the angels of God” once again. Just as the angels represented God’s safety and protection as Jacob travelled away from home, they now represented that same sense of God’s safety and protection as he returned. But even with this divine assurance of safety, the ever scheming Jacob busied himself with his own precautionary plans. After sending presents to Esau, and a long prayer session with God, Jacob settled in for the night to await a response from his once angry brother. But, as if having the very angels of God appear to him once again was not enough, Jacob then had an encounter with the Lord Himself, and wrestled with Him all night long! It was in that battle of wills that Jacob received a new name – Israel! Although this wrestling match was spiritual in nature, it also made a lasting physical impression on Jacob’s life. This man who had once “fled” from home at his mother’s command (27:43) now returns with a “halt” (KJV) or a “limp” (NIV) in his step that will serve as a constant reminder that he should never again trust in his own strength or schemes.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Pay** careful attention to what God is saying and doing in your life. **Refuse** to see anything that He says or does as insignificant or unimportant. **Allow** Him to speak to you through your prayer time and be faithful to meet with Him on a daily basis.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 33:1-20**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 33:1**

***Facing Esau!***

Even after receiving such strong assurances from God, Jacob still exhibited weakness and fear as he approached his meeting with Esau. However, while God used time and experience to bring about some positive changes in Jacob, including giving him a new name, God had been equally busy in the life of Esau! While we are not provided with the details, we have to remember that the last time that we read about Esau was back in 27:41 where we learned that he “hated” (KJV) or “held a grudge” (NIV) against Jacob and that he planned to kill him. Now, the two men meet again. But there is something different about both. God’s power has changed Jacob from a man marked by greed to one marked by generosity while that same, amazing power of God had been working to change Esau from a man seeking revenge to one that now sought reconciliation. Read verses 8-11 again and watch as these two men who fought over a birthright and possessions now argue back and forth over who can be more generous to the other. It is only by the power and blessings of God that Esau could summarize their meeting with the words found in verse 12: “Let *us* be on *our* way!” From this point on, the focus will shift from Jacob (Israel) to more detailed information about his children.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Read** Psalm 133:1 and try to commit its meaning to memory. **Seek** unity with your fellow believers and take definite steps to keep or restore it. **Throw** some long-standing grudge into the deepest part of God’s sea of forgiveness today!

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 34:1-31**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 34:13**

***A Very Sad Day for Jacob***

There are two very good reasons for the title given to today’s devotional. First, Dinah, Jacob’s daughter by Leah, went out to visit with some of her new neighbors. While out, she was raped and defiled by one of the local men. It seems that this man truly loved Dinah, and begged to marry her, but he had wronged her and her family. It must have been a very sad day for Jacob when he heard that his daughter had been defiled (verse 5). Verse 7 tells us how Jacob’s sons reacted when they heard about what had happened to their sister by saying that they were “grieved and they were very wroth” (KJV) or “they were filled with grief and fury” (NIV). The word translated “grief” is the word that is used in Genesis 6:6 to describe how God was so grieved at the sins of man in the days of Noah that He even regretted that He had made man. The word that is translated “wroth” (KJV) or “fury” (NIV) is the word that was used to describe the anger that Cain felt just before he killed Abel. A second reason for this being a sad day for Jacob is found in our focus verse. Jacob’s sons are said to have dealt “deceitfully” with the young man and his father. They tricked all of the men in that city to submit to circumcision under the guise that they would then allow intermarriage between their peoples. Three days after this mass circumcision, while the men were the most sore, Jacob’s sons went in and slaughtered the people of this now defenseless city. The word that is translated “deceitfully” in verse 13 is found only in one other place in Genesis. It is used back in 27:35 to describe the way that Jacob acted when he tricked his father into giving him Esau’s blessing. There is no sadder form of reaping than to see our past sins presently manifested in the lives of our children.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* Make every effort to **model** a righteous life before your children in word and deed. **Pray** for those who have been victimized by sexual violence. **Pray** especially today for all of the women and children in our church.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 35:1-29**

**Focus Verses: Genesis 35:1**

***Back to Bethel***

There are two main themes found in today’s chapter. The first theme is that of *completion*. After over 20 years, Jacob and his family are finally back home in the land of promise. He has learned many lessons and has seen the fulfillment of God’s promise in his lifetime. But, there is a second theme and that second theme is *correction*. Jacob had to go to his family and followers and demand that they “put away” (KJV) or “get rid of” (NIV) the strange gods that were among them. Many believe that these were probably the same idols that Rachel had stolen from her father’s home. Notice that all of the things that needed to be put away were to be taken care of *before* they returned to Bethel. After Jacob returned to Bethel, God confirmed the promise that He had made to Jacob there over two decades earlier (see 32:28). After his return to the Promised Land, Jacob’s family was completed by the birth of his 12th son, Benjamin. Unfortunately, Rachel died during the birth of this child. The chapter closes with the death of Isaac and notes that Esau and Jacob were there together when they buried him.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Pray** especially for your family today. **Seek** to heal any division that might exist between you and any family member. Make sure that your family knows that they are loved and appreciated.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 36:1-43**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 36:1**

***Esau’s Family Tree***

The Bible contains many genealogies. They do not always make for interesting reading, but we have to remind ourselves that every part of God’s Word is profitable to us. As we read through this chapter, I want to suggest just a few ways that we might benefit from doing so. *First*, in these verses we learn something about the faithfulness of God. He made promises to Esau and it is important that the fulfillment of those promises be recorded for us. *Second*, the people of Jacob’s day needed to know that Edom would be founded by the descendants of Esau. The Israelites would someday cross the Jordan River to conquer and possess Canaan and destroy the Canaanites. There were, however, some people who were not to be annihilated. Among those whom God protected were a people called the Edomites, the descendants of Esau. To prevent this command from being violated, it was essential for those Israelites of Moses’ day to know who the Edomites were and to have a carefully documented record of the generations of Esau. *Finally*, this chapter helps us to remember that every person is important to God. Someone else’s family tree may not be of special interest to you, but to the people and families it represents, it is precious. Each of these names represents the life of a man or woman — individuals made in the image of God who had hopes, dreams, and aspirations just like you and me. God made a point to continually remind His people that the descendants of Esau were their brothers (Deut. 2:4; 23:7).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Ask** God to show you something about Him on every page and in every paragraph that you read from the Bible. **Look** for something that you can take with you and meditate on all day long. **Remind** someone that you see today that they are important to God.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 37:1-18**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 37:3**

***Meet Joseph***

Although we have already read this name five times before today, throughout the remainder of Genesis, this book will focus on the life and times of Joseph. Joseph was special to his father, Jacob, for at least two reasons. First, we are told that he was “the son of his (Jacob’s) old age” (KJV) or “he had been born to him in his old age” (NIV). Second, Joseph was the first of his two sons who had been born of Rachel – the true love of Jacob’s life. Joseph’s life was marked by preferential treatment from his father and the “coat of many colors” (KJV) or “richly ornamented robe” (NIV) that is mentioned in our focus verse is just one indication of the special relationship that this young man had with his father. This special relationship was obvious to Joseph’s brothers and they “hated” him for it “could not speak peaceably” (KJV) or “speak a kind word” (NIV) to him. Ultimately they began to “conspire” (KJV) or “plot” (NIV) to kill him (verse 18). They refused to allow their brother’s special relationship with their father to be a source of *inspiration*, and thus, it soon became a source of *irritation*.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Look** again at verse 4 and note that one of the ways that anger is vented is through the way that we speak to people. Be sure to **mark** the “will not be able to attend” box when you RSVP to Satan’s *invitation* to *irritation*. **Refuse** to be a part of any plot that thwarts the work of the Kingdom.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 37:19-36**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 37:20**

***A Very Bad “Place”***

We have to be reminded about something from yesterday’s reading if we are to fully understand today’s verses. Joseph’s father sent him to Shechem in search of his brothers who were there tending his flocks. There Joseph’s brothers conspired to kill him and committed themselves to a plan of action to do so. The name Shechem, no doubt, conjured up sad and angry memories for the sons of Jacob. It was Shechem who had defiled their young sister, Dinah (34:2) and angered the sons of Israel to the point of war (34:25). In that story Shechem was the name of a *person*. In this story Shechem is the name of a *place*, and it did not prove to be a very good place for God’s people to be. It was in this place that Joseph’s brothers set out to kill him. Two of Joseph’s brothers play prominent roles in this story. First, Reuben heard of the plan to kill Joseph and did everything in his power to thwart that plan. After the fact he returned to the pit into which Joseph had been cast hoping to find his younger brother alive and set him free. Judah is important to the story because he is the one who recommended that Joseph be sold and not killed. Notice that these brothers received payment in “silver” coins (verse 28). Does that remind you of something that we read about in the New Testament?

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Refuse** to settle *for* or to settle *in* Shechem! **Remove** all hatred and animosity for others (especially your Christian family) from your heart by confessing it to God and seeking His cleansing from its curse.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 38:1-30**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 38:1**

***Meet Judah & Tamar***

Although we have read the name “Judah” three times since we started Genesis, it was just another name on a list until we got to Genesis 37:26 where we read that it was Judah who suggested that Joseph’s brothers ultimately sell him into slavery for “20 pieces of silver” (KJV). The very next time that this man is mentioned is here in today’s focus verse where we are told that he “went down from” (KJV) or “left” (NIV) his brothers. This name is exactly the same name that was born by the disciple who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and then left the apostles on the dreadful night of Jesus arrest. We know that the New Testament Judas went out and hung himself after he betrayed Christ. Our Old Testament Judas did not use a rope, but today’s reading reveals that he “hung himself” in an entirely different way. The story pretty much speaks for itself, but the main idea is that this man made a promise to Tamar, the widow of one of his sons, when he knew that he had no intention of keeping it. When Tamar realized that Judah had lied to her, she set a trap for him which resulted in her becoming pregnant. When he first heard that his daughter-in-law was pregnant, he was ready to have her die in a way that was even more severe that the Law required. But when she proved to him that the child she carried was his, he acknowledged his guilt and declared Tamar to be more righteous than him. When our focus verse states that “Judah went down” (KJV) it could not have made a more accurate statement.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Remind** yourself that the pleasures of sin are only for a season – and a short one at that! **Refuse** to allow the draw of this world to lead you to make decisions that can harm you or those you love. **Stand** strong against sin’s enticements and realize that the only way that it can take you is “down.”

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 39:1-23**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 39:1**

***Joseph in Egypt***

Joseph, like Abraham, is going to spend some time in Egypt. But, unlike Abraham, who went there in search of food, Joseph was “brought down” (KJV) or “taken down” (NIV) to Egypt through God’s permissive will to fulfill God’s personal plan for his life. Joseph’s time in service to Potiphar is important to the story of the Bible because it allows us to see more about Christ in the Old Testament. Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob (37:3), becomes a servant in Egypt. When we remember that Egypt is a type of the “world” in the Bible, then we begin to see a much bigger story than that of one man unfolding before us. Consider just a few quick points from this story. Like Joseph, Jesus was successful in his mission when He was sent “down” to our “Egypt” (verses 2-3). Another comparison is found in verses 4 and 21 where Joseph, like Jesus, “served” (KJV) or became an “attendant” (NIV) wherever he was and His service was associated with “grace” (KJV) or “favor” (NIV). Verse 5 reveals that the people of Egypt were greatly blessed “for Joseph’s sake” (KV) or “because of Joseph” (NIV). Verse 6 states that Joseph grew in favor while in Egypt (compare to Luke 2:52). You can find many more comparisons, but at least one more must be quickly mentioned. Joseph faced temptation while he faithfully served his master in Egypt, and like Jesus, Joseph resisted that temptation and “refused” (verse 8) to yield. This temptation was not a one-time thing. Verse 10 reveals that he was tempted “day by day” (KJV).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Read** Hebrews 2:18 and 4:15 about Jesus facing temptation without yielding to it. **Ask** God to give you strength to face the temptations of this world on a “day by day” basis.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 40:1-23**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 40:13**

***More about Jesus!***

Just as Jesus suffered with two other men (see Luke 23:32), Joseph was joined in prison by the “butler” (KJV) or “cupbearer” (NIV) and the chief baker of the king of Egypt. Through their association with Joseph, one was fully “restored” (verse 13). But, look carefully at verse 13 again and circle the number of days that are mentioned there! Joseph boldly proclaimed to this “sinner” that “within three days” he would be fully restored to a place of service. While it is true that Jesus told one of His associates in suffering that “today” he would be with Him in Paradise – we know that man’s full restoration came as a result of the resurrection just three days later! We are in chapters that are too rich to mine in short devotionals, but at least one more point must be made from today’s Scriptures. Our focus verse states that Joseph asked the pardoned butler to “think on” (KJV) or “remember” (NIV) him when all was made well with him and to “mention” him to Pharaoh. Jesus asked his disciples to do the same. That is why we “remember Him” when we observe the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19). As sad as it is that the butler did not “remember” Joseph (verse 23), it is an even sadder fact that many Christians go days without bowing their hearts before God and thanking Him for their salvation.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Thank** God for your personal salvation experience today. **Recall** the time and place and relive that moment when Christ first set you free from the prisons of sin and shame. If you cannot *recall* a time where you trusted Christ as Savior, then *call* on Him today (Romans 10:13)! **Mention** Jesus in a conversation that you have with someone you meet today.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 41:1-21**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 41:9**

***Joseph “Remembered”***

Chapter 41, as a whole, deals with Joseph’s exaltation. However, since we are reading this chapter over a three-day period, we can focus on one of the things that led to that exaltation. Two years after the dreams mentioned in chapter 40, Pharaoh had two dreams of his own. When “all” of Egypt’s wise men could not together interpret that dream (verse 8), the forgetful “butler/cupbearer” that had been restored as a result of his relationship with Joseph in prison, “remembered” (KJV) or was “reminded” (NIV) of the dreams that Joseph had interpreted for the baker and him. At the same time that this man “remembered” what Joseph had done for him, he also “remembered” what he failed to do for Joseph. So, some two years after the fact, he finally “mentions” (40:14) Joseph to Pharaoh! Two important points must be made from these verses. First, since Egypt is a type of “the world” in Scripture, then we must conclude that the wisdom of this world was “made foolish” (see 1 Corinthians 1:20) in that it was not enough to answer the spiritual questions with which Pharaoh and his people were now confronted. There was no satisfaction or peace to be found in worldly wisdom then and there is still none to be found in it today. Second, it is when those who have been blessed by their relationship with Jesus “speak up” and “mention” Him that He can be exalted in the eyes of the world! The baker, however late, *mentioned* Joseph and soon Joseph was *magnified* in the eyes of Pharaoh and all of the people of Egypt.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Mention** the name of Jesus in conversation again today – and then **strive** to do so every day. Like the pardoned man in our focus verse, acknowledge it as a “fault” (KJV) or “shortcoming” (NIV) when you fail to do so.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 41:22-36**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 41:28**

***A Faithful Witness***

Joseph explained to Pharaoh that, through his dreams, God was showing him that there were going to be seven years of blessing and prosperity in Egypt followed by seven years of famine. To avoid being destroyed by that famine, Pharaoh and his people were being warned to take immediate action. In order to help Pharaoh to see this, Joseph had to tell him the whole truth, including both the good and bad parts about the dreams. It is such a blessing to be able to speak with people about Heaven. I mention it to people that I meet even though I do not know whether they are Christians or not. One thing is sure, Heaven is a real place whether people believe in Jesus or not and they need to know that the followers of Jesus are firm believers in both the *Person* and the *Place* that awaits us after this life is complete. But, it is not enough that we speak only of Heaven. Just as it was with Joseph, we must be faithful witnesses who warn people about the dangers of not obeying God’s instructions. When people die without Christ, they go to Hell. Although Heaven is mentioned many more times than Hell in the Bible, Hell it is just as real. We do well to share about Heaven, but we do need to be faithful to warn people of the wrath that is to ultimately come upon those who refuse to obey God’s command to be saved.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Pray** for an unsaved friend or associate today and **plan** to be a faithful witness to them by being straightforward about what the Bible has to say about those who reject Jesus as Savior.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 41:37-57**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 41:45**

***“Pothiphar” vs. “Potipherah”***

Both of the names mentioned in the title to this devotional come from the Egyptian language. We read earlier (Genesis 37:36 & 39:1) about Potiphar. That Egyptian name literally means “belonging to the sun.” One could certainly say that Joseph’s relationship with Potiphar brought some much needed light into some very dark days in Joseph’s life. The other name mentioned in our title is found in today’s focus verse. It is spelled “Potipherah” in the KJV and “Potiphera” in the NIV. This Egyptian name literally means, “he whom Ra gave.” In Egyptian religions, all forms of life were believed to have been created by Ra, who called each of them into existence by speaking their names. The interesting thing about these very similar names is that the first speaks of something that is a part of the *creation* while the second speaks of something that is a gift from the *Creator*. For Joseph, the trusting follower and faithful witness of God who refused to grow bitter, things just seemed to continually get *better*!Today’s verses reveal another way in which Joseph becomes a type of Christ. Verse 46 reveals that Joseph was “thirty years old” when he stood before the king and was commissioned to go “throughout all the land of Egypt.” During these seven years of preparing for the coming famine, Joseph was given two sons. The first was named Manasseh, which means “forgetting” and the second was named Ephraim, which means “fruitful.” If you read verses 51 & 52 you will see that the Bible explains those names to us.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Strive** to **forget** the wrongs that have been done to you and to **remember** to serve God in every situation and you, too, will turn your *forgetting* into *fruitfulness*. **Read again** verse 55 and **note** that the people were only blessed with bread when they were obedient to the commands of Joseph!

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 41:1-20**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 42:6**

***“Down, Down, Down”***

I have mentioned before that the Bible states that Abraham went “down” to Egypt (12:1). We later read where God appeared to Isaac and told him not to go “down” to Egypt (26:2). After Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery, he was taken “down” to Egypt (39:1). In today’s verses we see Jacob commanding his sons to go “down” to Egypt to buy food (verse 2) so they went “down” to Egypt as commanded (verse 3) and wound up bowing “down” at the feet of the brother that they thought they would never see again and even assumed that he was now dead (verse 6). It is interesting to note that the word that describes the way that Joseph’s brothers “bowed down” to him is the same word that was used to describe the way that their sheaves had bowed down to his in the dream that he shared with them almost 20 years earlier (37:7). The first law of sowing and reaping is that you always reap *what* you sow (Galatians 6:7). The second law is that you always reap *more* than you sow (Hosea 8:7). The third law of sowing and reaping is that you always reap *later* than you sow (Ecclesiastes 11:1). From the moment that these men made their decision to thwart God’s plan and replace it with their own, they had nowhere to go but down.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Choose** to look “up” to God and Heaven rather than to go “down” to the level of seeing this world as your source. **Remember** the three laws of sowing and reaping and **humble** yourself before God before He has to humble you before others.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 42:21-38**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 42:21**

***It’s Harvest Time!***

The word that is translated “distress” in our focus verse is found only three times in Genesis, and two of those times are here in 42:21. But, before I discuss the “distress” that we see Joseph’s brothers facing today, let’s take a quick look back at the only other verse in Genesis that contains this word. In 35:3, Jacob recalled the day that he had to finally face his brother Esau and described it as “the day of my *distress*.” After that, we do not see the word again until we get to our story today. However, the word that is used to describe the “anguish” (KJV) or how “distressed” (NIV) young Joseph was when he realized that his brothers intended to kill him is the same word that is used to describe the “distress” that they are feeling now as they bow before him! It is clear that they knew that it was “harvest time” because they fully acknowledged that they were reaping what they sowed when they said, “Therefore” (KJV) or “That’s why this distress has come upon us” (NIV). How interesting it is to see that the only times that this word is found in Genesis is in situations where brothers are meeting after one has been treated wrongfully by his fellow brother(s). Since God chose to use the same word to describe the “distress” that they had sown into Joseph’s life to describe the “distress” that they now faced, we have no choice but to say that there is no escaping God’s laws of sowing and reaping.

**Prayer Emphasis**

* **Sow** only the kinds of things that you desire to reap. **Remember** God’s laws of sowing and reaping and **respect** them by sowing good things into the lives of others. **Sow** a special seed of kindness to someone today and come back to this devotional to **praise** God at “harvest time!”

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 43:1-17**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 43:2**

***More of the Same!***

In yesterday’s reading, we saw that Joseph instructed his people to fill his brothers’ sacks with food and to put their money in the sacks as well. When the brothers realized that they all had their money, they had yet another day of “harvesting” and believed that it was God dealing with them (42:28). Joseph told his half-brothers that there would be no more grain unless they returned to him and brought his only full brother, Benjamin, with them. So, when the grain was gone, Jacob is willing to send them back to Egypt, and allowed Benjamin to go with them along with double the amount of money needed so that the money that Joseph secretly put back into their grain sacks could be returned to him. There is some great irony in the words of verse 15 as we see that these men took their presents, double money, and little brother and “*rose up* and *went down*” (KJV) to Egypt. Remember the second law of sowing and reaping? The one about you always reap more than you sow? We see this *second law* in full operation in the lives of these men as they head to Egypt this “*second time*” (verse 10, KJV). Just for kicks, go through today’s verses and circle the number of times you read the word “down.” In chapter 42, when their first trip to Egypt was described, you read it three times while in today’s chapter you will find it five times! You always reap more than you sow!

**Prayer Emphasis**

* **Ask** God for the wisdom to learn from experience and the strength to admit wrong as soon as it is committed. **Realize** that there is no way to hide sin or for a sinner to hide from God.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 43:18-34**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 43:29**

***Benjamin***

Although he may not be as well-known as some of the others, Benjamin is one of our Bible Patriarchs. He was the youngest son born to Jacob, and after the loss of Joseph, he became now the only living child of Jacob and his beloved Rachel. Our focus verse states that Joseph viewed this man in a different light than others, considering him to be “his own mother’s son.” We read about Benjamin’s birth in chapter 35. Unfortunately, we read about Rachel’s death in that same chapter. As she was dying, Rachel named her baby, Benoni (“Son of my sorrow”), but Jacob changed the boy’s name to Benjamin (“Son of my right hand”). This certainly helps us to understand why Jacob refused to allow Benjamin to travel to Egypt with his brothers and why he was hesitant to do so after Joseph’s demand that his guests bring their youngest brother with them. It is obvious that all of Benjamin’s brothers knew how much their father loved him. Even Judah, who had been the one to suggest selling Joseph into slavery, was willing to pledge his own life to protect his younger brother.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Thank** God for your family today. **Express** your love, admiration, and appreciation to them in a special way. Be both verbal and visible in your expressions of love to those closest to you.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 44:1-17**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 44:13**

***Graduate School!***

After all that we have read, you might think that the sons of Jacob might have finally done enough “reaping” for their terrible sin of betrayal against Joseph and their lying to their father. But, our focus verse provides yet another opportunity for the laws of sowing and reaping to be illustrated in their lives. After Joseph had his own silver cup placed into Benjamin’s bag, he allowed his brothers to leave and then sent his steward after them to accuse his brothers of stealing the cup and then proceed to “discover” it by starting with the bag of the oldest brother and searching each bag until he came to the bag of Benjamin, the youngest. We can only imagine how tense these moments were for these men. Even though, to the man, they were sure that they had not stolen the cup, they had to be thinking about the unexplained event regarding their money being found in their bags after their first trip. We can only imagine their agony when the cup was finally found! Our focus verse states that the men “rent” (KJV) or “tore” (NIV) their clothes. This was done by grabbing each side of the neck opening and tearing the garment down toward the heart. It was symbolic of a breaking heart. If you recall, this is exactly what these men caused their father to do when they reported Joseph’s loss to him (37:34). I would say that these guys are getting their “Graduate Degree” from the School of Sowing and Reaping!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Remember** that the third law of sowing and reaping is that we always reap *later* than we sow. **Refuse** to allow known sin to create a separation between you and God. **Seek** forgiveness and restoration at the earliest opportunity after straying from the walk that He has designed for your life.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 44:18-34**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 44:33**

***Judah***

Judah is one of the most important names in the Old Testament. He was the fourth son of Jacob and was born to him by Leah. It was Judah who advised his brothers to sell Joseph into slavery (37:26-27). This is the same man that slept with (and impregnated) his former daughter-in-law, Tamar, thinking that she was a prostitute (38:16-18). However, we see a much better man in this same Judah in today’s reading. After Joseph proclaimed that Benjamin would have to remain in Egypt with him as his slave, Judah *stepped up*. Verse 18 states that Judah “came near” (KJV) or “went up” (NIV) to Joseph and asked to have a private word with him. That is when Judah *spoke up* and explained why Benjamin was so precious to his elderly father. But, most importantly, Judah *stands out* in the sense that he volunteers himself as a “bondman” (KJV) or “slave” (NIV) to Joseph if only he will allow Benjamin to return home with his brothers. There was a great difference between a “hired servant” and a “bondman” in the Old Testament. The first received wages for his work and was treated like an employee while the latter was rewarded only by the fact that he was allowed to live. Most “bondmen” were prisoners of war. A hired servant could be redeemed by his family at any time, or could be legally free after six years of service. A bondman could not be redeemed and would forever remain a slave. Thus, Judah was willing to trade his own life for that of his brother.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Remember** that there is always hope that someone will make a change for the good and commit their lives to God and His purposes. **Pray** specifically for someone today who needs to grow more Christ-like in their daily walk. **Believe** that God can do a great work in their lives.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 45:1-14**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 45:4**

***A Startling Revelation***

Most translations of the Bible begin chapter 45 with the word “then.” It was “then,” after Judah offered to give his own life in exchange for that of his youngest brother, that Joseph could no longer contain himself and commanded everyone but his brothers to leave the room (verse 1). He began to weep so loudly that everyone in the house could hear him. He asked his brothers to come “near” (KJV) or “close” (NIV) so that they might have a good look at him when he declared his true relationship to them. We have to remember that Joseph was only a teenager (37:2) when his brothers last saw him and now he is a young man in his mid-thirties. As an Egyptian ruler, he would be clean shaven on his face and head, and he would be made up and dressed in a manner unlike any to which they were familiar. When he made his startling revelation to them, he wanted them to be able to see him for who he really was. At the same time, he wanted them to see God for who He really was, too! He wanted them to understand that he believed that God sent him to Egypt ahead of them so that their family could be preserved. Verse eight clearly indicates that he believed that God was in control even through some of the darkest days of his life!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Believe** that God is in control of your life and circumstances. **Trust** Him even when you cannot fully understand all that He is allowing to happen in your life. **Know** that God is always working with our best interest in mind!

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 45:15-28**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 45:15**

***Sweet Fellowship***

The way our focus verse reads indicates that the tears continued to such an extreme that Joseph and his brothers were unable to speak. Note that it is only “after” they had finished with this time of weeping that Joseph was able to “talk” with his brothers. We can only imagine what that conversation must have been like as 12 brothers sat together and tried to recapture over 20 years of life! The word that is translated “talked” in our focus verse is a very general word in the Hebrew language that is used to describe almost every manner of speaking. However, the first time that this word is used in the Bible, it is used to describe the way that God talked with Noah (8:15) and Abram (12:4). All of the previous hatred, envy, and jealousy were now gone and only the love of brothers was known amongst them. Joseph was a man who was not afraid to weep before others. He wept when he made himself known to his brothers (45:2) and again when his brothers were reconciled to him (45:15). We will later see him weep as he finally sees his father (46:29) and more tears are shed when his father dies (50:1). We see him weeping once more (50:15-17) when his brothers question his love and intentions towards them after Jacob’s death.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Show** compassion and **express** your love for others openly. **Refuse** to allow anyone to lead you to believe that weeping is not common among even the strongest people.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 46:1-17**

**Focus Verses: Genesis 46:3-4**

***A Promise of His Presence***

Even though God changed Jacob’s name to Israel in Genesis 32:28, we will see the names Jacob and Israel used interchangeably thereafter. Surely we can understand Jacob’s hesitation to move his family to Egypt. He was obviously aware that God had warned his grandfather, Abraham, that his descendants would someday serve in affliction there (15:13) and that God had once commanded his father, Isaac, not to go to Egypt (26:2). In verse four, God said, “I will go down to Egypt with you!” So, any fears that Israel might have were to be subdued by God’s divine *presence*. In verse three, God said, “I will there make of you a great nation.” He later promised to one day bring Israel’s family back out of Egypt. Therefore, Israel’s fears were also subdued by God’s divine *promises*. It had to be difficult to comprehend that the “there” in which God would make Israel a great nation was not the Promised Land but Egypt! We will later read that only 70 people entered Egypt with Israel (Genesis 46:27; Exodus 1:5-7) and then even later see that hundreds of thousands of people finally left Egypt with Moses. The promises that God made to Israel are much the same as the ones that Christ made to the church before He ascended to Heaven to be with His Father. After commanding His followers to go unto the ends of the earth, He promised that He would always be with them.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Notice** that God made all of the necessary provisions and arrangements prior to commanding Israel to go to Egypt. **Believe** that, in the same way, God makes every provision for our success as we go out “there” (into the world) to serve Him.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 46:18-34**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 46:29**

***A Grand Reunion***

Our focus verse describes what must have been some of the happiest moments in Israel and Joseph’s lives! They had not seen each other or conversed since Joseph was a 17-year-old boy (37:2) and Jacob sent him out to find his brothers (37:13). Their tearful reunion was obviously very emotional and, since no conversation between them upon their initial meeting is recorded, it must have been some time before they were composed enough to speak. Israel spoke first, saying to Joseph, “Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive” (verse 30, NIV). These words remind us of the words of the New Testament’s Simeon whose story is found in Luke 2:25-32. Simeon was a just and devout man who longed to see the coming of the Messiah. It had been revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Christ. When Joseph and Mary first brought Jesus into the temple for dedication, Simeon took the baby into his arms and blessed him. Then, he stated that he could now die in peace because he had seen the One who was to be the Savior of the world! Jacob must have felt much the same way when he first saw Joseph.

**Prayer Emphasis**

* **Express** love to your family and friends while the opportunity to do so is here. **Realize** that we, or our loved ones, could be gone before we ever see them or speak with them again. **Leave** nothing unsaid that might lead to regret later.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 47:1-17**

**Focus Verses: Genesis 47:5-6**

***The Great “Underestimation”***

As we finished with yesterday’s reading, we read where Joseph advised his brothers to say that they were, just like their ancestors, cattlemen. His reason was because the Egyptians hated shepherds. But, as some of his brethren stood before pharaoh, they stated that they were shepherds just as their fathers before them had been (verse 5). They continued speaking and mentioned their “flocks” again (verse 4). Verses 5-6 record what must have been pharaoh’s next conversation with Joseph and he never once mentioned the fact that his family came from a long line of shepherds. Instead, he offered them the best of his land for their flocks. However, he did offer to put some of them in the cattle business! However, God had a plan to do the same thing, and before long, people were trading their cattle and horses to Joseph’s family for bread. I find it interesting to read that Joseph, who had shown so much faith in God for such a long period of time, felt it necessary to try to “handle” pharaoh by having his brothers not be totally honest about their profession. Obviously, God was able to make that “sheep thing” a complete non-issue with Pharaoh and the people of Egypt.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Trust** God to prepare the hearts of people before you ever meet them or speak to them about Him. **Believe** that He can soften the hardest hearts and cause them to be open to receiving the truth about Him. **Refuse** to fear being honest and forthright in all of your dealings with people. **Remind** yourself that Satan would love for you to believe that people will not be open to the truth.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 47:18-31**

**Focus Verses: Genesis 47:29-30**

***Jacob’s Last Wish***

Some 17 years after he came to Egypt (verse 28) a 147-year-old Jacob realized that the time of his death was near. He called Joseph to him and asked that one final request be granted to him. He asked that he not be buried in Egypt, and that his body would eventually be carried out of Egypt so that he could be buried with his family in the cave that Abraham purchased for a burial plot (23:19-20). After receiving Joseph’s promise to have him buried in the Promised Land, Jacob “bowed” (KJV) or “worshiped” (NIV) the LORD. How blessed it is to see that even a “death bed” can become an altar unto the LORD and that God’s people can worship Him at all times and in any situation. The New Testament writers understood the meaning of what was said here and mentioned the fact that Jacob, “When he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshiped, leaning on his staff” (Hebrews 11:21). Of all of the moments from Jacob’s life that could have been included in the great faith chapter of the Bible, this moment of his worshiping God and blessing others was chosen over even the account his wrestling match with God!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Never** underestimate the importance of worship. **Speak** to your family about important matters and make sure that they know your wishes about your own end-of-life experience. **Prepare** your own heart to face death with dignity and great anticipation. .

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 48:1-22**

**Focus Verses: Genesis 48:5**

***Ephraim and Manasseh***

Joseph came to visit his dying father and brought his sons with him. Upon hearing that Joseph and his grandsons were there to see him, Jacob “strengthened himself” (KJV) or “rallied his strength” (NIV) and sat up in his bed to meet with them. Our focus verse tells us that Jacob planned to transfer the birthrights of Reuben and Simeon (his two firstborn sons) to Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Sensing what was about to happen, and knowing that his father’s eyesight was failing (verse 10), Joseph carefully guided his two sons towards his father, making sure that the firstborn, Manasseh, was near his father’s right hand (verse 13). The blessing of the firstborn was traditionally done with the right hand, and Joseph was trying to make sure that the “right” son received the blessing. But Jacob, “the trickster,” had one more trick up his sleeve. He crossed his hands over the two boys and placed his right hand on the second son, Ephraim, even though he knew that Manasseh was the firstborn (verse 14). Like we often do today, Joseph had assumed that God would work in a certain way – *the usual way* – and that the firstborn would receive the blessing. But Jacob had learned many things in his long walk with God, one of them being that God often works in unexpected and unconventional ways. So he blessed the younger over the older and continued a four generation history of God doing so. Check it out. Isaac was blessed over Ishmael. Jacob was blessed over Esau. Joseph was blessed over Reuben and now Ephraim is blessed over Manasseh. This history of the blessing being placed on the “second son” would eventually lead to our blessing through the “Second Adam” – Jesus! Never forget that it is only after we have experienced a “second” birth that we can fully receive God’s blessings.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Remember** God’s thoughts and ways are higher (better and more noble) than our thoughts and ways. **Allow** God to work in His own way in your life. **Refuse** to confine God to any limitation in your heart and mind.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 49:1-18**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 49:10**

***Jacob’s Final Words***

The second to last chapter in Genesis includes the final words that Jacob spoke to his sons before his death. The fact that these words are so direct and straightforward is evidence that there is no more of “the trickster” left in this man. Time will not allow discussion of what was said to every son, but it is worth our time to read all of these final words and learn as much from them as we can. However, his final words to Judah demand some time and attention. Jacob stated that the scepter would not depart from Judah. The scepter was a special staff carried by a ruler as a symbol of his authority. Jacob was saying that Judah would remain in a role of authority “until Shiloh comes” (KJV) or “until he comes to whom it belongs” (NIV). Jacob is prophesying that the Messiah would come through the line of Judah and that is what the New Testament genealogies confirm. In Matthew’s genealogy, Judah is the son that is mentioned after Jacob (Matthew 1:2). It is the same in Luke’s record (Luke 3:33-34). However, we do not have to wait until Jesus comes again to determine who holds the “scepter” in our lives. We can willfully choose to put the final authority for our lives unto the One “to whom it belongs” now.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Surrender** your all to Jesus Christ and allow Him to be your true Lord and Master. **Dedicate** your life to doing His will. **Share** a testimony of His Lordship with someone today and **help** them to know why He is worthy to be Lord in their lives, too.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 49:19-33**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 49:33**

***Jacob Dies***

There are so many things that might have been appropriate to say if one would have been asked to speak at Jacob’s memorial service. Some of those things would have been more flattering than others. Perhaps some of the things that could have been said would have been quite embarrassing! He began his life “struggling” with Esau while still in his mother’s womb (25:22) and he had many more struggles thereafter – including a wrestling match with God (32:25)! Beyond his struggles, he also had his share of infirmities. He walked with a limp (32:31), eventually lost his eyesight (48:10), and was so weak before he died that he could barely sit up in his bed (48:2). It could truly be said that this man had his share of disappointments, which are far too many to record in one devotional! But, if I had been invited to speak at this man’s memorial service, I would have said that he had an unquenchable hunger and thirst to know God and to have God’s blessings on his family. He learned to rely on God more and more as his days passed, and, in the end, he died as a man of genuine faith. After all of his life was said and done, this “man of many tricks” proved to be the real deal for God! Perhaps the most distinguishing thing about him was the change that his walk with God brought into his life. We must always remember that Jacob (“the trickster”) received a new name from God. God decided to call him Israel (“having power with God”).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Allow** God to bring change into your own life and **submit** to His will in every situation and circumstance. **Refuse** to allow your failures to keep you from growing in your faith.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 50:1-14**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 50:7**

***Jacob’s Funeral Procession***

At his father’s death, and the appropriate time of mourning, Joseph kept his father’s wishes by taking his body back to the Promised Land for burial. Even though he, like Abraham and Isaac before him, had not ever fully inherited the land, they would all become one with the land by being buried there. The Cave of Machpelah is called “The Tomb of the Patriarchs” and is considered to be the second holiest place to the Jewish people. Only the Temple Mount is held in higher esteem than this final resting place for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives. Our focus verse tells us that, Pharaoh, his personal servants, and all of the leaders of Egypt accompanied Joseph to his father’s burial grounds. Verse nine describes this vast entourage as a very “great” (KJV) or “large” (NIV) company. In fact, so many Egyptians went to Jacob’s funeral that the Canaanites called the place where they stopped to have the service Abel Mizraim, which means “the mourning of the Egyptians.”

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* We never know the impact that our lives are having on others. **Believe** that God is using you as His witness and live like the ambassador that He has called you to be. **Remember** that any word could prove to be our last.

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 50:15-26**

**Focus Verse: Genesis 50:17**

***Joseph – A Type of Christ***

I have mentioned several ways that Joseph was a type of Christ in these devotionals, but I have not come even close to discussing them all. It would do any believer good to research the life of Joseph and discover the many ways that he prefigured Christ and His own earthly ministry. Here, in this final chapter of Genesis, we see one more way in which Joseph becomes an image of what Jesus would be when He came from Heaven to save us from our sins. After Jacob’s burial, Joseph’s brothers falsely assumed that he would finally act against them in revenge for the things that they had done to him in his youth. They sent a “messenger” (KJV) or “word” (NIV) to Joseph stating that Jacob had left some final instructions that included forgiveness for his brother’s sins against him. Our focus verse says that, when Joseph received that message he “wept.” This marks the sixth time that we are told that Joseph “wept” (42:24; 43:30; 45:2, 14; 50:1; and now 50:17). Since six is a number closely associated with “man” in the Scriptures and weeping is closely associated with “sorrow,” we can then conclude that the last image of Jesus that is prefigured in Joseph is the fact that He would be, according the prophet Isaiah, “a man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Thank** God for the witness and testimony that His Kingdom Patriarchs left to us. **Seek** to continue that witness by fully committing your own life to God’s work. **Make** every effort to pass this great ministry “baton” to the next generation. **Pray** for one of the younger people in our church today and **let them know** that you have done so.