

00-07-23b

In Psalm 80 verse 14, Return, we beseech you, O God of hosts, Look down from heaven and sea, And visit this vine and the vineyard, Which your right hand has planted, And the branch that you made strong for yourself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down. They perish at the rebuke of your countenance.

Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, Upon the son of man, Whom you made strong for yourself. Who does Joseph picture? It's the Lord Jesus Christ. When we summarize our study of the book of Genesis here shortly, we'll go into this in some detail.

But you can already see, Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand. We have the right hand here in the blessing of Ephraim, the son of Joseph. And although he starts out just like his father, being the younger son, and being small and insignificant, he doesn't look like he's going to be the one of blessing.

He's going to end up prevailing. Upon the son of man, Whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will not turn back from you.

Revive us, and we will call upon your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts. Cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved.

The career of Joseph is one of starting in adversity and ending in triumph. The career of the Lord Jesus Christ himself starts in adversity and ends in triumph. Even in the account of Jesus, the first thing that happens after his baptism is the forty days in the wilderness and the temptation by Satan.

But his career on earth closes at the ascension, where he is raised in clouds of glory. And we have the expectation of his return again. So here, once again, you have the children of the younger wife, Rachel, Benjamin, and Joseph's two tribes mentioned here.

O shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. And because this is a psalm of Asaph, and we don't have time to talk about Asaph and his context, but it appears that at the time this psalm was written, there was already danger of the northern kingdom disappearing because of their unfaithfulness and so on. And this is a cry for deliverance.

And this is a cry by the remnant for deliverance that their breaches be healed and that they once again be the sons of the right hand, that Ephraim be raised up to fulfill the blessings that were pronounced on him by Jacob. But there is this intermediate period of discipline and suffering where he's burned with fire and broken down. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts.

And once again, you have this idea that some of these things will not be fulfilled until the resurrection. Because Ephraim, the son of the right hand, who grew to be numerous and

whose name is synonymous with the whole northern kingdom, winds up going out and disappearing. When is the fulfillment going to take place of all of these blessings? Well, it's the same as what Jacob said about Joseph.

God will bring you back to this land. And it's going to be in the resurrection where the remnant is going to dwell in the land and have the fulfillment of all these blessings. You get over to a passage that Janelle mentioned earlier this week in Psalm 78, verse 67, where you have the tent of Joseph mentioned.

And you can see that Psalm 78 is a very long psalm. And it's subtitled in the New King James, God's Kindness to Rebellious Israel. This is the theme.

Every time you find these references to Joseph and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, it's always in the context of bad things happening. Things are broken down and needing to be restored. And the hope implicit in that that the promise of God will be fulfilled.

And so after rehearsing all of the good things that God has done, striking the rock and giving them bread and meat, but then they did not appreciate and they did not remember God until they slew Him. Then they sought Him in verse 34, and they returned and sought earnestly for God. Then they remembered that God was their rock and the Most High God was their Redeemer.

But it's only after failure and great discipline that the people seem to turn back. So then by the time you get down to verse 56, and God gives them an inheritance and an allotment, in verse 55, He allots them an inheritance by survey and makes the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents. But they tested and provoked the Most High God and did not keep His testimonies.

And it talks about how they turned back and were turned aside like a deceitful bow, provoking Him to anger and so on. You get down to verse 65, the Lord awoke as from sleep, like a mighty man who shouts because of wine, and He beat back His enemies and put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover, He rejected the tent of Joseph and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.

Here's Ephraim that's been given the blessing of the right hand, has been chosen, yet God does not choose him, but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which He loved and built a sanctuary like the heights. Why is it that Ephraim is not favored and that it's going to ultimately be Judah and it's going to be Zion? Why is that? Well, because of that principle that we saw at the beginning in our Scripture reading. We have to turn.

We have to choose. Northern Israel is the first to go out under discipline and lose their status as a part of the nation of Israel. It's because of their idolatry, because of their apathy toward the things of God, their toleration of evil, their intermarriage and intermingling with the peoples that God commanded them to drive out that David had

driven out.

They brought them all back and all of their practices. And He chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds to shepherd Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance. And He winds up shepherding Joseph.

He winds up shepherding these tribes, shepherding them according to the integrity of His heart and guiding them by the skillfulness of His hands. The deciding factor regardless of birth order, regardless of pronouncement of blessing, past, present or future is what we choose. How we individually decide to order our priorities.

And if there's one lesson that comes from this, you can start with all of the advantages and they can become disadvantages if you take them for granted. There's a teaching in the church today that we are all overcomers just because we've accepted Christ as our Savior. And that all of us are going to share equally in His victory.

And we are all laying claim to the blessings that are promised in the Word of God. But if you look carefully, you will see that just like all of these other covenanted blessings, all of these other promises given in oracles and prophecies, it depends on what you choose. You can opt in or you can opt out of this potential.

And it depends on how we decide, on how we choose. If we get distracted, if we're deflected, if we are insensitive to the opportunity that's there, it doesn't matter if you're Ephraim and you've been given the right hand. Out of order, out of precedent, God says, I'm going to bless you in spite of your birth, in spite of circumstances.

We can still lose it. We're the church. We're the younger son as it were.

Israel has been passed over and we have been grafted into the tree. And yet we can still lose those blessings if we don't seize and lay hold of the opportunity and the power of God to claim them. We have to make daily decisions to put God first, to remember who we are and why we're here.

It takes daily commitment. It takes that vow that we saw in the psalm to come to God when we fail, claim His atonement, claim His cleansing, and make our soul a dwelling place for God. That's when the potential can be fulfilled.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll finish up with Ephraim and Manasseh and move into chapter 49.