

00-08-27a

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning in our Bibles to Psalm 102. Psalm 102. The doxology that we sang came from the Psalm 100, that's probably on the same page there, talking about the greatness of God and His worthiness as the object of worship.

Psalm 102 is subtitled in the New King James, The Lord's Eternal Love. Sometimes it's difficult for us to remember as the circumstances of life go along. We find ourselves in relationships with people.

We are in circumstances of employment or challenges that face us financially and in many other areas. That, to us, seems to be the real substance of life. This is what we have to grapple with each and every day.

And sometimes it's difficult to remember that our real identity and our primary reason for being is defined by our relationship with God. And all of these things that take up our attention and that cause us to concentrate and to think, they're all going to vanish away like waking up in the morning from a dream. I very seldom remember anything that I dream, only if I'm awakened in the middle of the night and for a little while I can remember, but by the next morning, Patty will say, were you dreaming about something last night? And I say, yes I was, but I can't even remember what it was.

We're going to wake up one of these days at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it's resurrection or transformation, when He returns. And all of the things that seem so large and so important and so overwhelming in this life, it's going to be like waking up from a dream. And once we see His face and enter into the glory of His kingdom, these things are going to vanish and we'll think, why did I spend all my time thinking about that instead of thinking about this, thinking about the presence of Christ and His kingdom? If I had only spent more time preparing and being ready for this instead of all of these things, they're gone now.

I always think about a particular situation that occurred to me when I was in kindergarten. I had a half a day kindergarten out there in California and it only lasted a few hours. But of course, when you're that age, the days just stretch in infinite length.

I think my theory is that your brain works so much faster that you can slice time into more pieces and it seems like the days are longer. I remember a two-hour nap was just an eternity. My mother used to have to lay down and take a nap and I had to nap when she napped so that she wouldn't be disturbed.

And it just seemed to me like a prison sentence. It stretched for weeks. But now, two hours, I can pick up a book and look at it and two hours have gone by by the time I turn the first page.

So I think my brain has slowed down. Time is constant and it's me that has changed. But when I was in kindergarten, there was a little boy that rode the bus.

He didn't seem little to me at the time. He was much larger. And he used to tackle me and sit on me when I would come home.

And he wanted to fight and he was trying to provoke me into getting into a fight so that he could just beat the daylights out of me. But I took the Gandhi approach, the passive resistance approach, and I said, I'm not going to fight you. Because I knew he would just massacre me if I got into an actual fisticuffs.

And he would, there for a period of time, every day, he would come from behind, tackle me in this same yard, somebody's yard up the street, and just sit on me. It was too far away from home for my mother to know or do anything about it. He would just sit on me and say, come on, fight me, fight me.

And I wouldn't fight him. And I would wish for deliverance. I would wish that somebody would rescue me from this bully.

And day after day, the same thing would happen. And he would finally get weary and get bored and get up and go do something else. But I finally got the idea that he needed to be discouraged from doing this anymore.

And one day I got so infuriated that I, in this yard where he would always tackle me, there was a tree with a little ring of bricks. And I reached over and got a brick and just bashed him with it. And then he didn't bother me anymore.

It doesn't have anything to do with Psalm 102. But when I think back on that, it seemed like a big deal at the time. This bully sitting on me would ruin my whole morning.

Because I knew when I got off the bus, he was going to sit on me and try to fight me and try to hurt me. But now it's just an amusing, it's just a faded memory. It doesn't affect anything.

There's a lot of things in our life that seem really important, really challenging, all-consuming at the moment. But if we think about what's coming, if we think about the great days ahead and keep our focus on that, we can keep a good perspective on these challenges. They are real, and they do need to be dealt with.

But they shouldn't consume us. They shouldn't ruin our day. Because there is a hope that sustains us.

This is our expectation of the future. And looking at that is what makes our life now worthwhile and what puts these challenges into perspective. That's what this psalm is about, Psalm 102, which is our scripture reading this morning.

The first thing that's going to happen is, the psalmist here is going to complain. He's going to talk about the bully sitting on his chest. And then he's going to talk about the deliverance.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me in the day of my trouble. Incline your ear to me in the day that I call.

Answer me speedily. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth. My heart is stricken and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.

Because of the sound of my groaning, my bones cling to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness. I am like an owl of the desert.

I lie awake, and I'm like a sparrow alone on the housetop. My enemies reproach me all day long. Those who deride me swear an oath against me.

For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. Because of your indignation and your wrath, for you have lifted me up and cast me away. My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass.

But you, O Lord, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion. For the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come.

For your servants take pleasure in her stones and show favor to her dust. So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord and all the kings of the earth, your glory. For the Lord shall build up Zion.

He shall appear in his glory. He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer. This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.

For he looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven the Lord viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death, to declare the name of the Lord in Zion and his praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are gathered together and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord. He weakened my strength in the way, he shortened my days. I said, O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days.

Your years are throughout all generations. Of old, you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will endure.

Yes, they will all grow old like a garment. Like a cloak, you will change them, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.

The children of your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before you." It's a difficult thing when we're in the midst of challenges. It's also a difficult thing when we're in the midst of blessing, and when we have prosperity and comfort. It's a difficult thing to keep our eternal perspective and remember that the one constant in our universe is God.

He's the one unchangeable thing. Sometimes we get in dire straits because of our own failures, and we're actually under discipline from God. The psalmist mentions this when he says, You are the one that has lifted me up and cast me away.

You're the one that has weakened my strength and shortened my days. Why would God do this? Well, that's something we're going to see when we go forward in our study in Genesis 49 this morning. There are times when we need to be weakened, when we need to have our days shortened, and we need rebuke and correction and instruction from God because we're thinking in a bad way.

We're going in a wrong direction. We're living too much in this world and not enough in the next. And because we belong to God, and because He is a good Father, He will not let us just run amuck.

He will bring our attention to the fact that we are straying from the path. That is a sign of His love. If He didn't care about us, if He thought, Well, let them waste their life.

Let them invest their energy and their time in things that are going to be rolled up like a blanket and cast away. God could leave us alone and let us enter the kingdom without any fruit, without anything to reflect the glory of Christ. But He loves us, and expressing that love, He disciplines us consistently and faithfully and in love.

And He shows us where He will bring us up short. He will draw us up short and show us that we need to get our mind back on the things of heaven and not the things of this earth. And that's what this psalm is about.

And the confidence that the psalmist has, even when he's an owl like the desert and his bones are clinging to his skin, he never loses his confidence in God's love. He never loses his confidence to go to God and make an appeal to Him. He says, Hear my prayer, let my cry come before you.

In verse 17, He will regard the prayer of the destitute. And sometimes that's the best way for us to come to God, is destitute, recognizing that we don't have anything to offer Him. We are not a prize addition to His fold and His flock.

We are destitute, but those are the ones whose prayers are heard. God will hear and regard that prayer and will not despise it. Sometimes we think, well, I'm despicable.

I always remember that. I learned that word from Bugs Bunny cartoons. Remember

Sylvester the Cat? You're despicable.

Well, it means the object of being despised. And sometimes when we recognize that we've failed, that we have willfully gone astray, and we're under discipline from God, and we think about approaching Him in prayer, we think, God knows how bad I've behaved and what I've done, and I have no excuse, and He's going to despise me. But the psalmist says, No, He's not.

He will hear the prayer. This is the whole reason that He has brought us up short. He desires to turn us, to cleanse us, and to make us whole.

So He will weaken us in the way, as it says in verse 23. But our prayer, like the psalmist in verse 24, Do not take me away in the midst of my days. Give me a chance to redeem the time.

Give me a chance to take advantage of the great opportunity to live in this life and to learn and to grow and to be prepared for that next life that is coming. That's really why we're here. Our life and the circumstances in it, both the good things and the bad things, are just story problems that give us exercise in faith and give us exercise in thinking about and putting into application the things of God.

Well, this applies directly, if we turn now, to our study for this morning in Genesis chapter 49. And you might think at first that this is an odd place to bring those concepts up, because this is a patriarchal setting. Here's Jacob on his deathbed.

Jacob, the one who tricked his brother and connived his way into receiving the blessing and then had to flee and go up with Laban. He got two wives up there and two concubines. He's not only a bigamist, he's a quadramist or something.

He's a four times wife guy. So he has 12 sons. He has six sons and a daughter with Leah.

He has two sons with each of the two concubines. And he has two sons with Rachel, which are Joseph and Benjamin. After returning to the land and having many adventures and misadventures, including the loss of his favorite son, again through treachery and deceit, Jacob's son Joseph is sold into slavery and disappears from the scene.

You have the episode with Judah and Tamar and the birth of Judah's two sons with his daughter-in-law, which is another unhappy episode. You have the sacking of Shechem by deceit with Simeon and Levi being prominent in that deception and trickery. It's a very up-and-down account.

There are places where there's great faith expressed. There's other places where there's all kinds of failure. You think these are the people God chose to put in the Bible as examples for us, but that's exactly why they're there because we are capable of being just as bad.

Now Joseph has risen to be the second Pharaoh in Egypt. The famine is on. Jacob finds out that he's still alive and is overjoyed and is brought down to the land and lives there in prosperity.

We've seen the close parallels to Joseph, the one who is dead and yet lives, who through his death or apparent death with his coat of many colors drenched in blood, becomes the Savior of his family. And Joseph picturing and foreshadowing the work of Jesus Christ is a very powerful symbol in the Old Testament, a very powerful shadow of good things to come. So now here's Jacob and he's in the land of Egypt.

He's on his deathbed. He knows he doesn't have long to live and he calls all of his sons together and he delivers an oracle. This deathbed prediction is something that has happened before.

We saw Isaac do this with Jacob and Esau. And it seems that in the days of the patriarchs, in the days of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, that at the point of the old member of the family on his deathbed, the Holy Spirit seemed to come upon them and give them inspiration and a prophetic insight into the future. And these oracles were inspired and they were binding.

This is why Esau was so upset when Jacob got the blessing because it wasn't just like, well, say the same words to me that you said to him. These are binding words. These are words from God that set the future in a certain way.

So when Jacob speaks these words to his sons, this is a very important thing. And so he says, I'm going to tell you what will befall you in the last days. We've already studied the oracle on Reuben.

Here's Reuben the firstborn, his strength, his might, the beginning of his strength, the excellence of dignity and the excellence of power there in verse 3 of chapter 49. But what happened? Reuben decided after Rachel's death, Rachel had a handmaid named Bilhah. And so you have kind of two halves of the family.

You have Leah and Zilpah and all of the sons and things associated with that. And then the other half of the family is Rachel and Bilhah and their sons. Well, Reuben is a son of Leah.

And so once Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin, some time passes, but Reuben is the next in line to Jacob. So he's going to be the president of the corporation. He's going to be the big cheese of the family.

And he wants to kind of take possession politically of the other half of the family. So he has a liaison. He sleeps with Bilhah.

And this is not just, it was a hot, sweaty night sometime and they were looking at each

other and all of a sudden they ran off to a tent together. If you look at the later history of Israel, you can see that these liaisons, that this sleeping with someone is a political move. This is what will happen when David is on his deathbed and one of his other sons, not Solomon, wants to take the throne.

And so he wants to get David's nurse. He asks permission to marry her and get ahold of her because that will consolidate his political power. So Reuben tries to take possession of the family on his own instead of waiting.

He would have had it if he had just waited, but he gets impatient and he's unstable. He doesn't think. He just sees and goes.

He probably would have made a great marine. See the hill, take the hill. Don't give it a whole lot of thought.

Then we saw Simeon and Levi and how angry they got when their sister Dinah was taken away by Shechem, the son of Hamor. And he slept with her and they weren't married. And this incensed them and so they did deception.

They said, well, sure, we'll let you... Shechem tries to make it good. He says, I really love your sister. I want to marry her and make everything right.

They said, sure, fine. All you have to do is be circumcised, enter into the same kind of covenant that we have with our God, and then you can marry her and everything will be great. So they all say fine and they get circumcised.

Well, about three days later when they're very sore and unable to move around, Simeon and Levi at the head of the brothers go in and slaughter them and sack the city and make a big devastation there in Shechem. And this gives Jacob possession of the city of Shechem. And later on when he gives a blessing to Joseph, he's going to give him the deed to Shechem.

But in the meantime, it makes him a stench in the nostrils. And they've taken the covenant of God represented in circumcision and they've perverted it into an instrument of cruelty. And so they are condemned for that in verses 5-7.

Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce. Cursed be their wrath, for it is cruel. They're going to be divided and scattered.

And then we come to Judah in verses 8-12. And Judah, the rulership of the family that should have been Reuben's and then would have been Simeon's and would have been Levi's, it bypasses those first three and falls on Judah. Judah makes that eloquent speech that takes up most of the chapter in defense of Benjamin.

And you can see a change of heart on his part. He is willing to sacrifice himself for the

sake of his brother, in his mind, the only remaining child of Rachel. And when Joseph says, I'm going to keep Benjamin, you all take all the grain and go back, they will not make the same mistake that they made.

They were willing to abandon Joseph, the son of Rachel. They were willing to let him die and be sold into slavery and go back home with the money that they got for selling him. But Judah, speaking for the brothers, says we've changed, we're different.

Because now Benjamin was a favorite son just like Joseph was. And they could have been rid of him and rid of the attitude that Jacob had. But they've learned something through that first experience.

And Judah makes an eloquent speech and says, take me instead. I've pledged myself on behalf of my brother. I promised my father I would not return without Benjamin.

And we can't go back without him. Leave me here. I will stay.

But you must send my brother back. This is a complete 180 degree reversal. And the nobility of soul and the character that Judah has developed in the intervening years since the selling of Joseph is expressed in that speech.

And because of that, that change of mind and change of heart, he is given the rulership in Israel. He's a lion's whelp. He goes up from the prey and bows down like a lion.

Verse 10, the scepter will not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until tribute is brought to him. And that's what that Shiloh comes means. He's going to have the rulership until tribute is brought to him by the nations and the obedience of the peoples comes to him.

And this is going to be fulfilled in Judah's great-great-great-great ex-member of great's grandson, the Lord Jesus Christ. He's going to bind his donkey to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine. All of this imagery of vines and grapes and donkeys that the king rides in on the colt of the donkey, all of these are expressing the future in terms of kingship.

But it also says, he washes his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine and his teeth whiter than milk. Even in the course of blessing Judah and talking about this, it says his eyes are darker than wine.

And last time we went over to Proverbs and we saw where your eyes being dark with wine can be a symbol for drunkenness and having too much wine. And his teeth are white with milk. You get the idea even from Judah's history in thinking that he sees this harlot's tent by the side of the road and goes in and has relations with her and it turns out to be his daughter-in-law, that he is subject to passion.

We see this in King David when he as a man from the tribe of Judah becomes the king in Israel. But what is David's great weakness? You think about Bathsheba and you think about the other wives that he has and he can be seduced. He can be filled up with the passions that wine can represent.

And this can be his undoing. So even in the blessing of Judah, there is the clue that his Achilles' heel, his weakness, is going to be getting too focused on the wine and too focused on the prosperity, the land flowing with milk and honey. His teeth are white with milk.

He just has a super abundance of these things and it literally goes to his head and clouds his judgment and makes him unable to perceive. And this is going to be when you study Kings and Chronicles and get into the later history of Israel, the divided kingdom, the kings of Judah, last longer than the northern kingdom of Israel, but their downfall is their passion, their rulership and their authority goes to their head. So it's a warning and a caution.

But we pick up this morning in verse 13. And you think, why did God even put these in the Bible? Here I am. I'm a Christian.

I live in the year 2000 here. I'm in my city. I have my circumstances, my family, my job, my situation.

And this portion of the Bible says, Zebulun will dwell by the haven of the sea. He will become a haven for ships and his border will adjoin Sidon. Well, that's not something I can reach out and grab when my car quits working or when my financial picture is not happy or when I get into a situation with people and I've got things being said on this side and things being said on that side.

This is not the verse I go to for my comfort and encouragement and strength. Zebulun will dwell by the haven of the sea. What good does this really do me? Why should I spend my time studying this? Well, take a look at the next.

Issachar is a strong donkey lying down between two burdens. He saw that rest was good and that the land was pleasant. He bowed his shoulder to bear a burden and he became a band of slaves.

Now that last thing is like a hook. You think, well, he's in a pleasant land. He's laid his burdens down.

Reminds me of that gospel song, We'll soon be done with troubles and trials. All of my burdens went rolling away down at the Savior's cross. So you think, well, Issachar's got a good deal.

He's been this donkey bearing the burden. Now he's settling down, letting his burdens

rest. He's in a good land.

The land is pleasant. But then you get this weird thing at the end. He became a band of slaves.

And again, we ask ourselves the question, well, that's rotten luck for Issachar, but what's that got to do with me? I want to take a look at Zebulun and Issachar this morning in particular because these are the last. You have six sons of Leah and they are all mentioned first. This is their birth order.

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, until you get to verses 14 and 15. The next one in order is Issachar. Issachar ought to be the next one if Jacob is going in birth order, but he mentions Zebulun first.

It says Zebulun will dwell by the haven of the sea. Issachar is the strong donkey. So how did this happen? If you go back to Genesis 29, you'll find the birth order.

29 ends with the birth of Judah. And then chapter 30, Rachel gets into the act and says my sister's had six sons and I'm losing in the son competition here. The score is six to nothing.

I've got to come up with a... In football, when you get way behind, that's when they start bringing out their trick plays, fake punts and fake field goals. What's the thing where you flip the ball out to the fullback or the halfback and then he throws a pass? You bring out your trick plays when you get real far behind and you need something to shake the situation loose. So Rachel kind of brings out a trick play.

She says, you know, there's this custom where you can have a handmaid have children by proxy. And so she gets Bilhah to go in with Jacob. And Bilhah has a couple of sons.

But they're not mentioned next because that's Dan and Naphtali. And they would be next in birth order, but they're skipped over. Then Leah says, well, if you're going to pull out your trick plays, I'll pull out my trick plays.

I've got a handmaid too. She's Zilpah. And she hasn't had any sons in a while, so she runs Zilpah out on the field.

And Zilpah scores a couple of sons there. And that's Gad and Asher. Then they have this episode with the Mandrakes.

We went through that when we were back in chapter 30. And then you get Leah conceiving and bearing Jacob the fifth son in verse 17. And in 30.18 of Genesis, Leah said, God has given me my wages because I've given my maid to my husband.

So she called his name Issachar. Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob the sixth son. She said, God has endowed me with a good endowment.

Now my husband will dwell with me because I've born him six sons. So she called his name Zebulun. I guess I misspoke earlier.

The score was four to nothing when Leah pulled out her trick play because this is five and six right here. And then you have the seventh child, which is Dinah being born there. But what is the story here? Why should we spend any time looking at the oracle of Jacob on Zebulun and Issachar? I was thinking about this because I didn't have a good answer.

I thought, I don't know. It doesn't even seem very interesting to me. I don't really care if he's going down to ships or not.

But as I sat back and looked at the entire oracle on all of these sons of Jacob, it occurred to me that every single son has weaknesses. There's something that trips them up. There is a failure that is brought forward and is going to characterize their descendants.

They seem to be an emblem or a symbol for all of the people that are descended from them. The people of Reuben are strong but unstable. The people of Simeon and Levi are impulsive.

Their anger gets the best of them. And as I began to look at each of the sons and realized that each of them represents a besetting sin. Each of them represents something that can happen to you and can happen to me.

Have we ever been in a position of strength and been in a place where we thought we were cooking on all four burners and hitting on all eight cylinders and everything was going great, but we do something rash? We're a little unstable. We can't seem to consolidate our gains and just rest in them. We make a move and we wind up unraveling the whole thing.

We had a good situation and we just took one too many steps, put one too many plates on the sticks and it all came crashing down. Well, that's Reuben. Have we ever done something in anger? I know we have.

I know you have because I know I have and I know that we all do. We commit sins of the tongue in anger. Anger is a mental attitude sin.

It starts as an attitude. We have a flash of anger and our logic processing just goes offline. The things that say, I should be sensitive, I should forgive, I should stop and think that I may have brought this situation on by something I have done.

All of our reasoning power, all of our understanding and our sympathetic view of others goes on hold. When we have a flash of anger, you know what it feels like. It's just like a flush of some chemical that goes into your brain and all you can think about is I'm going to launch something that will hurt.

I'm going to sting that person. I'm going to inflict an injury on them to make them pay for this thing that they have done to me. I've been slighted.

I've been wronged. I've been overlooked. Whatever it may be.

And we don't even think. We just lash. We lash out.

And it's a Simeon and Levi thing. You've raped my sister. All's fair in war now.

Sure, I'll deceive you. I'll act like I'm going to be your friend and bring you into the family. And when you're sore and you can't stand up, I'm going to come in and slaughter.

And I'll rape your sister. And I'll take your animals and burn down your town. Anger that just flashes forth like fire in an uncontrollable way.

We are subject to that. We have the Simeon and Levi stuff inside us. Just like we have the Reuben stuff where we can't hold on to our position of strength.

Even when we have it, we don't have the stability. We don't have the settled foundation in our soul sometimes to keep hold. We sang the song this morning, I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.

We have to let the Lord Jesus Christ consolidate our gains and be the foundation and hold on to the permanent things for us because we don't have the power. We've got that Reuben part of us in our soul. And what about Judah? Here we are in the church.

We're the body and the bride of Christ. We're going to rule and reign with Him. We're going to walk with Him in white and sit with Him on His throne and all of the things in Revelation 2 and 3. And we think, wow, we've got it so much better than the Old Testament saints.

We've got the Holy Spirit. We've got the gifting and the sealing and the filling and the indwelling. We've got the baptism.

We've got the Word of God in our souls. We've got redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation. We've got the 35 things that come to a believer in the church age.

And boy, we're ruling. We're on top. What is Judah's weakness? Passion, the susceptibility to be seduced, to let that go to one's head, to sort of rest on your laurels and think, well, I'm in the ruling position and I don't really need to put out an effort.

It's like Mel Brooks says in his movie, it's good to be the king. It's good to be the king. Look at all of this.

Got the milk. Got the wine. My eyes are dark with wine.

My teeth are white with milk. I'm sated. I'm satisfied.

I've got everything I need. And we become complacent. And as soon as we become complacent and we lose our hunger, what did Jesus say? Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

There's nothing worse. They even talk about this in sports, boxing and things like that. If somebody loses their hunger, if they're not thirsty anymore, they kind of get on top.

They did a parable of this in the Rocky movies. Remember Rocky? He's hungry and he's punching meat and running in the middle of the night and everything. Then he becomes the big-time champion and he's on top and he kind of goes soft.

And first thing you know, he gets beaten because he's taken it all for granted. Well, we have that Judah part of our soul too, don't we? We love to revel in the things that God has given us, but do we lose our hunger and our thirst for righteousness? Are we sated with the wine and sated with the milk? Clouds our vision. Dulls our sensitivity.

This was the downfall of the kings in Judah. When you read Chronicles, they lost their hunger for the things of God. So this gave me some help in realizing this when I got down to Zebulun because dwelling by the haven of the sea, I don't know what to say about that.

This doesn't even have a historical fulfillment. I'll tell you how bad off it is if you're trying to interpret this passage because what you can do, you can go to a lot of these and say, well, when Israel went into the land of Canaan, this became true. You go over to Joshua when the land is portioned out, you probably have a map in the back of your Bible, the Old Testament Palestine.

And it shows, here's Gad and Asher and Levi, not Levi, but Judah and Dan and all the different tribal areas that were assigned in the land. And they're different colors and they're real easy to see. Well, you don't have to do it now, but if you look at your map and look at Zebulun, you would think, well, his land, his territory is going to be out there with a shoreline.

It's going to be on the Mediterranean. And it will probably go up north and border with Sidon. Sidon is in Lebanon now, but it was the north.

Well, you look at the map, that's not his area. He doesn't have a seacoast and his border doesn't go to Sidon. So, now what are you going to say? Maybe I'll just stop at this point and if any one of y'all would like to come up and talk about Zebulun dwelling by the haven of the sea, this is kind of how I felt.

I'd have to get somebody else to talk about this. But, what does the sea represent in the Old Testament? The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters

cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked.

The sea in the Old Testament consistently is a symbol of the chaotic forces of darkness, the chaotic forces of evil. Where does Leviathan live? Where does Behemoth dwell when you get to Job and some of the Psalms? It's in the chaotic seas. It's uncontrollable.

Man has no ability to tame the sea. But, where is it that God establishes His throne? The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the worlds and they that dwell therein. For He is the one that established it and He has founded His throne upon the seas and established it upon the floods, the Psalmist says.

God is the one who can calm the sea. And that's some of the significance when Jesus stills the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He's God.

God is the only one that can tame the wicked troubled sea, the dwelling place of Leviathan and the dwelling place of Behemoth. So, this gives us a clue when we think about Zebulun dwelling by the haven of the sea. He's going to be a haven for ships.

What does a ship do? Well, a ship floats around on the sea. Very lucrative. The Phoenicians who came over from the region that became Greece and Crete and all of those areas, the northern region of the Mediterranean Sea, lots of trade and lots of commerce.

If you had a seaport and you could have ships coming and going, the shipping trade and the commerce was a very lucrative business. But in order to get that, you had to sail in ships. It was a lot faster than going over land, but it also had some hazards that you didn't have like storms and sinkings and being attacked by other people that had ships.

Dwelling by the haven of the sea and being a haven for ships, what is Zebulun going to do? And by the way, another clue here is this word for dwell doesn't mean to permanently build cities and things. It's the same word that's used for dwelling in tents. It means to settle there.

The same word is also used for the glory cloud that settled on the tabernacle or the cloud that settled over Mount Sinai. It's something that stays there for a while, but it's not a permanent settlement. So they're going to establish outposts.

They're going to have trading posts. I saw a thing on PBS about the... Who's the big company that... No, the Hudson's Bay Company. The Hudson's Bay Company.

It's the oldest continuously established business in the world. The Hudson's Bay Company is still going. And they started back in the 1500s, I think, or 1600s when Hudson's Bay was first discovered.

And they have been in business ever since. Their headquarters is still up in Canada. They

had the same headquarters for over 300 years up there in Canada.

It still sits there. They showed pictures of it. But what they did, they were granted some land up there that took in part of the northern United States and a lot of Canada.

And then they had outposts beyond that. And they would go out and mingle with the Indians and get furs and different things. And then they had to diversify when the fur trade bottom dropped out of that.

Well, this is what Jacob says Zebulun is going to do. He's going to reach out and establish links. He's going to go out from his own land and have outposts, have trading settlements and things that are going to go all the way to the sea.

And he's going to link up with people who do commerce on the sea. And he's going to have prosperity. And his border is going to adjoin Sidon.

And Tyre and Sidon are typically symbols of the pagans and evil. So what's he going to do? He's going to go to the very edges and do commerce and do trade. He's going to get his prosperity by getting in league with the Phoenicians.

He's going to get in league with those who dwell on the sea. And this is a picture of compromise. This is a picture of seeking prosperity by compromising with evil.

We don't settle there. We don't dwell there. We're not unbelievers.

But we reach out and make liaison. How does this happen in our own lives? Do we hedge our bets? We pray and we try to do the things of God, but we also take human measures that don't express faith. We compromise our integrity.

We compromise the principles of the Word of God because we're anxious to have security. We want to be sure that we don't have trouble. We compromise.

We're going to see that each of the sons of Jacob represents an area where we can be weak, where we can and will fail. And what is the answer? How can we avoid these pitfalls that the brothers represent? Well, the answer is going to be in Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment.

He is the strength. Just as we saw in Psalm 102 this morning, when we are weak, when we have failed, even when it's our own fault, when we go to God, what is His answer? The way to the Father is through Jesus Christ. John 14.6 I am the way, the truth, and the life.

He is the one that will fill those gaps in our soul. He's the one that will give us the strength. Well, that sounds great on Sunday morning, but what about on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday at 10 a.m. and Thursday at 4.30 or Friday night at 9 or 10 o'clock at night? How does that principle work out in practice? We have to remember

who we are and why we're here.

We're not here just to be so silly to get so caught up in the story problem in a math book that you forgot all about the fact that you're a real human being in a classroom and you get all wrapped up in the two trains. I used to always wonder about that. The train from Chicago and the train from New York heading toward each other.

I'd think, oh, they're going to crash. Oh, the humanity, the people, the devastation. Who cares about what time they're going to meet? What about the people? What about where they're trying to go and so forth? Well, that would be ridiculous.

But we do the very same thing in our life. We get caught up in our circumstances and lose sight of the eternal weight of glory that is on the line. That's what we have to remember.

So the first step in applying this is to lift ourselves out of the perspective of humanity. I had a really interesting experience yesterday that I think I'll save and tell you after the break that relates to this. But we have to, first of all, regain our perspective.

When we go to God, remember that He will not despise our prayer no matter where we're coming from or how long it has taken us to get there. Go to God. Ask Him for cleansing and forgiveness.

And then look for the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to come in and fill these areas of weakness. That is the beginning of wisdom, and that's the beginning of fruit bearing in our lives. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll continue with Zebulun and Issachar in Genesis 49.