



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hosea 11:12 -12:14

“Hosea on Jacob and His Seed”

TRANSCRIPT

We are turning to Hosea chapter 11 and verse 12 through chapter 12 and verse 14, but in view of the fact that this morning, the message is going to touch on two other passages in the Book of Genesis, I'd like to also read those passages as well. But let's read first the passage in Hosea, and then we'll read the passages in Genesis. And I won't make any comments today in order to save a little bit of time, because it will be helpful for us to read those other passages. Hosea chapter 11 and verse 12,

“Ephraim surrounds Me with lies  
And the house of Israel with deceit;  
Judah is also unruly against God,  
Even against the Holy One who is faithful.”  
Ephraim feeds on wind,  
And pursues the east wind continually;  
He multiplies lies and violence.  
Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria,  
And oil is carried to Egypt.  
The LORD also has a dispute with Judah,

And will punish Jacob according to his ways;

He will repay him according to his deeds.

In the womb he took his brother by the heel,

And in his maturity he contended with God.

Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed;

He wept and sought His favor

He found Him at Bethel

And there He spoke with us,

Even the LORD, the God of hosts,

The LORD is His name.

Therefore, return to your God,

Observe kindness and justice,

And wait for your God continually.

A merchant (or a Canaanite) in whose hands are false balances,

He loves to oppress.

And Ephraim said, ‘Surely I have become rich,

I have found wealth for myself;

In all my labors they will find in me

No iniquity, which would be sin.’

But I have been the LORD your God since the land of Egypt;

I will make you live in tents again,

As in the days of the appointed festival.

I have also spoken to the prophets,

And I gave numerous visions,

And through the prophets I gave parables.

Is there iniquity in Gilead?

Surely they are worthless.

In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls,  
Yes, their altars are like the stone heaps  
Beside the furrows of the field.  
Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram,  
And Israel worked for a wife,  
And for a wife he kept sheep.  
But by a prophet the LORD brought Israel from Egypt,  
And by a prophet he was kept.  
Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger;  
So his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him  
And bring back his reproach to him.”

Now turn back to the first book of the Bible. You probably have noticed, as we have been reading these verses here, that Hosea is giving us something of a commentary on the life of Jacob the Patriarch, referring to several of the preeminent experiences of Jacob. And the first one to which he refers is found in Genesis chapter 25 and verse 19 through verse 26. And I’d like to read these verses. Genesis chapter 25 verse 19 through verse 26,

“Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, (this is a most important prophecy, and as you know from reading the Epistle to the Romans in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter, the Apostle Paul lays

great stress on this to show the sovereign grace of God in divine election. All that Paul is doing is just exegeting Genesis chapter 5. The LORD said to Rebekah,)

‘Two nations are in your womb;  
And two peoples will be separated from your body;  
And one people shall be stronger than the other;  
And the older shall serve the younger.’

(That obviously, as we shall see, is a reference to the fact of Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated, and God determined the destiny of these people before they were born; that’s the point that the apostle makes in Romans 9) When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.”

That’s Jacob’s name, incidentally, “he who is at the heel.” And of course, it ultimately comes to suggest the supplanter.

Now let’s turn over to Genesis chapter 28, and in Genesis chapter 28, Jacob is fleeing from Esau, because Esau after, Jacob has received the blessing from him by deceiving Isaac, who himself did not believe these words of this prophecy, and was seeking to give the blessing to Esau instead of Jacob, Esau had said that he was going to kill Jacob. And so it was necessary for Jacob to flee, so Rebekah thought. And so he’s fleeing to the east to find a wife, so he thought, and he’s also trying to get away from Esau.

We think of Jacob as being the father of crookedness and deceit. Well, he’s going to learn that his uncle originated it in the family before Jacob. Laban will make him work for twenty years for his two wives, and he will make him work one week of years, or seven years, and then give him the wrong one, and then require him another one because

he loved Rachel, and then he will work even seven more years, but finally the master of maneuver, Laban will discover that he’s met his master in his nephew.

Now on the way to Laban’s home in the east, 400 miles away, Jacob has this remarkable vision at Bethel. God met him there, found him there, and in verse 12 of chapter 28 of Genesis we read,

“He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, ‘I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your seed. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (In other words, the Abrahamic promises are confirmed to Abram’s grandson). And behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’”

That’s the Old Testament Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ.”

“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’ He was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’”

House of God. And so the place that had been named Luz became Bethel, house of God.

Now turn over to Genesis 32. Jacob has spent his twenty years. He now has his two wives and he has eleven children. And he’s going back to the land because God has

called him back, and he knows now he’s got to contend with Esau after twenty years. The last he saw Esau, Esau was ready to kill him if he could get his hands upon him. And so, he’s worried about Esau feels to him. So with a lot of characteristic machinations which exhibit the fact that he’s still immature, not really relying wholly upon the Lord, but nevertheless praying, he arranges to meet Esau with an elaborate series of maneuvers by which he leans on the flesh a bit.

And as everything is arranged, and he has his number of people that are going to meet Esau, one after another with a lot of gifts in order to placate Esau, that night we read in verse 23 of Genesis 32,

“And he took them, (his two wives, his two maids, his eleven children after crossing the ford of Jabbok) and sent them across the stream, and he sent across whatever he had. Then Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. And when he saw that he had not prevailed against him (that is, when the man saw he had not prevailed against Jacob) he touched the socket of his thigh (Jacob’s thigh, so the socket of Jacob’s thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with this man).

Then he said (that is, the man with Jacob was wrestling) let me go, for the dawn is breaking. But he said (and this Jacob’s prayer, and Hosea tells us he accompanied it with weeping) ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’

So he said to him, what is your name? And he said, Jacob, supplanter. And he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be, supplanter, but Israel.’ (Or as we might say, ‘He who strives with God,’ or ‘God strives.’ For you have striven with God and with me, and have prevailed.

Then Jacob asked him and said, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And he blessed him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said (that means “face of God”), ‘I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been preserved.’”

So it is evident from this that the man with whom he wrestled was a pre-incarnate appearance of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, very God of very God. Those are magnificent passages of course, and that’s why Hosea makes so much of them, because he’s going to say, Look at your past history, Ephraim. Jacob is what he calls you. Look what he did for Jacob. This is what, of course, he can do for you if you turn to him.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of reading the Scriptures. What magnificent hope we have. What tremendous blessings are ours through the divine revelation and through that which the divine revelation enunciates for us, the saving ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. How marvelous it is to be able to gather in 1984 and give thanks to Thee, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and the God of us. For all of Thy blessing to us.

Lord, we bring before Thee the saints of God wherever they may be. Bless the whole body. Deliver us from the departure and decline characteristic of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms characteristic of the days of the Prophet Hosea. Deliver us from that departure and decline and rebellion in our lives, for we know that naturally that is the way we respond to divine things: we turn away. Forgive us our sin. How great it must be.

We pray especially, Lord, for those whose names are in our calendar of concern. We pray a special blessing upon them, and if it please Thee and be in accordance with Thy will, give healing where healing is desired. Give direction, guidance, encouragement, strengthening. Solve the problems and the questions and the puzzles that affect our lives. And then Lord, we ask Thy blessing upon us in the ministry of the word.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] This morning we are turning to Hosea chapter 11 and verse 12 and seeking to center our attention upon the things that the prophet writes from that verse through the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, paying particular attention to the experience of Jacob, and the things that the prophet makes of that ancient patriarch’s experiences.

As you read through the Book of Hosea, as I have mentioned in the last couple of messages, one notices that the note of disobedience and judgment which has characterized the earlier chapter of the book, has now become chapters that have to do primarily with divine compassion. A divine compassion that is free, that is God gives it in sovereignty; a divine compassion that is unconditional because it is something that he says will take place, dependent purely upon divine intention.

One can see from this why Hosea is called the prophet of unconditional love, or the prophet of wounded love, looking at it from the standpoint of the divine nature. One of the interpreters of the prophecy of Hosea, who wrote a book just a year or so ago on this particular book, has entitled this section, “Look Back and Learn.” And what the prophet is asking the nation to do is look back and learn from the history recorded in its earliest beginnings, learn about the things of God that one may learn from it, and learn also the things about man. And central is the recall of the life of Jacob as a lesson for the nation.

Jacob is the big, burly – he was big; we know from various things that happened in his life – the big, burly momma’s boy. But at his heart, he was moved by divine longings. I have a friend who is a Bible teacher, and he likes to say, with reference to the apostles, that the Lord prayed before he chose the Twelve, but when one looks at the apostles, one asks the question, did our Lord make good choices? After all, he chose one who was a denier of him. He chose one who betrayed him. He chose one who is the symbol of doubt – doubting Thomas. He also chose two dirty politicians, James and John, who wanted to deal out Peter so far as being on the right hand and the left hand of the Lord in the kingdom of God.



But, he says, “Now that the layer of tradition has fallen upon these men, what do we call them? St. John. St. James. St. Peter.” But then he adds, “But they were really birds.” Well, we can learn some things from that, because we learn as we study the prophets’ lives and the patriarch’s lives that these men were men of like passions with us. They’re not so different that they are not men. And when one looks at Jacob, one sees a man.

He’s guilty of many of the things that Christians are guilty of. But there was something fundamentally right about Jacob. And the thing that was fundamentally right about Jacob was that in the midst of all of his scheming and planning, all of his machinations in order to get his way, he had a longing to know God.

That’s evident, first of all, when he obtained the birthright. He wanted the birthright because the birthright gave him certain spiritual privileges. He wanted the blessing, because the blessing gave him certain spiritual privileges. Now, he should have rested in the word of God. The word of God had said the elder shall serve the younger, before he was born. He didn’t have to engage in those machinations, but after all, he wasn’t yet the saint that he became. And so he sought in his own strength and in the power of the flesh to fulfill the will of God. You know, that is something that we try to do even after we’ve been believers for a long time. We try to force God’s hand.

We try to make him accomplish his will in our way. That’s being like Jacob. That’s what Jacob wanted to do. And there’s some magnificent lessons to learn from the life of Jacob. But in the midst of his experiences, this crafty crook did ultimately become a spiritual giant. And finally, near the end of his life, he’s a man who finally has been brought to confess the God who led me all the days of my life. This is the one who said earlier, “All these things are against me.” But now he recognizes the sovereign hand of God in all of his experiences, inclusive of course of these that we have read today.

And what is the magnificent climax of it all is that when God identifies himself in the Old Testament, he identifies himself as the God of Jacob. Think of that. The God of

Jacob. You might think he would be embarrassed to acknowledge that Jacob was a member of his church, but he calls himself the God of Jacob. What an accolade for the patriarch, but what also a magnificent statement of the sovereign mercy and grace of God.

Well, Hosea is raising a lot of complaints against the Northern Kingdom. And he includes the Southern Kingdom, too, but he’s really a missionary from the Southern Kingdom to the Northern Kingdom, and so it’s not surprising that Ephraim – the name for the Northern Kingdom particularly; a name that is given to the whole of the nation is spots, too – is before him. He complains, for example, that Ephraim surrounds me with lies and the House of Israel with deceit. Judah is also unruly against God, even against the Holy One who is faithful. And it will be just a century before the Southern Kingdom also will go off into captivity as well. Ephraim feeds on wind, and pursues the east wind continually. He multiplies lies and violence. Moreover, he makes a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.

John Bunyan, in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, speaks about the town of Fair Speech. And in the town of Fair Speech, there are two leading citizens. Their names Bunyan gives as My Lord Timeserver, and My Lord Turnabout. Well that’s what Ephraim was. Ephraim was a timeserver. Anything that would suit their interests, one follows. And so if lies suit the situation, lie. Ephraim surrounds me with lies, the House of Israel with deceit. They act as if they really serve the Lord. They’re carrying on worship all the time, remember.

They’re not only carrying on worship in the temple all the time, and the priests are offering the sacrifices, but they actually are worshipping the gods of Baal and saying, We’re worshipping, really, the same gods. These are really gods like Jehovah. And when we’re worshipping the gods of Baal, we’re worshipping Jehovah just as well. After all, is not Baal a term that means “master,” and is not Yahweh master? And so they were filled with deceit and lies, just like people who claim to be Christians who will not stand up for the uniqueness of the person and work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who will not even lift their voices when someone will say, Yes, we’re all going to heaven. We’re going in

different ways, but we’re all going to heaven. You believe in Christ, we believe in the church; you believe in grace, we believe in good works. We’re all ultimately going to be heaven. And some Christians have so little spiritual courage that they will not say anything in a situation like that, and in fact, will even act as if they are true followers of Christ.

Israel was futilely seeking alliances with Assyria in order to protect themselves with others. And if it was not Assyria, it was someone else. They had their little diplomats, their little Kissingers, and their little John Foster Dulleses, and their little Schultzes who were racing back and forth across the borders in order to make things nice with the kings around them, all for self-preservation, forgetting the one who had made it possible for them to be there in the first place.

Isaiah said, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.” There is no safety outside the Lord God. There is no security outside the Lord God. There is no security in strength or wisdom or cleverness or force. There is security ultimately only in the Lord God. How difficult it is for us to accept that.

And even in the Christian life. Where is our security? Where is our assurance? On what can we really rely? There is only one person, and that is our great God in heaven. We can only rely upon him. There is no security and safety in sermons, in attending church, in the preacher. Even less in the psychiatrists and psychologists. And in the messages and books that we read which supposedly give us little insights, little short cuts into the relationship with God that gives us security. There is no security except in the teaching of holy Scripture as it is found in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we would just learn those lessons.

The complaint against Ephraim is followed by the charge against Judah. And here is the story of Jacob, and it is the story ultimately of what God can do in grace. Jacob learns through sad experience that Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, for he trusteth in Thee. Listen to what he says. He says in the third

verse, “In the womb” -- you see, he had mentioned Jacob, he had punished Jacob according to his ways, and evidently the Holy Spirit used that in the mind of the prophet, causing him to reflect upon the history of Jacob the Patriarch, for whom the nation is now named. And we read, “In the womb he took his brother by the heel.” And the thought of the prophet goes back to the beginning, and Jacob’s action is designed to be a reminder of the earnestness in seeking the divine blessing, even in the womb. Even in the womb, the Patriarch Jacob, has grasped Esau by the heel.

Now, the Hebrew interpreters, such as Rashi, for example, indicated that this was a sign for supremacy of Jacob over Esau. A later interpreter, well-known in Believers Chapel, John Calvin, said -- this was an extraordinary thing for Jacob to reach out and grasp the heel of Esau, because he didn’t take hold of the heel by choice or by design, or maybe you think that Jacob out of his free will decided that he would grasp Esau’s heel.” No, I’m sure you would not think that. You would think that it was an accident. An infant, think of it. But he grasped his heel.

And what Mr. Calvin says is that God did it. It was a testimony ahead of time to the divine elective good pleasure in grace. After all, he had said to Rebekah, when Rebekah asked him about this strange feeling that she would have of this struggle that was going on in her womb before they was born. And God said, two peoples are within you, two nations are within you, and further, the elder shall serve the younger. That was already laid out in the divine intention. And so when Jacob came along, by divine intention, by divine, sovereign providence, he grasped Esau’s heel. It was, of course, designed to express the fact that the hand of God has been upon the history of the nation from its beginning.

The Prophet Jeremiah, when he describes his own call, goes all the way back to his mother’s womb. In Jeremiah chapter 1 and verse 5, the prophet says before giving the words of God that came to him, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you. I have appointed you a prophet to the nation.”

So, Jacob is who he is by divine intention. Not because he’s better than Esau. In fact, Paul will say before those children were even born, or before they had a chance to do any good works, that he might show that men are blessed by divine grace, he said, “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.”

Well, that’s the beginning of Jacob’s life. But the prophet continues. He says, “And in his maturity, he contended with God.” And he alludes to that later experience when, Jacob, concerned about Esau, wrestles with the angel; notice how he puts it, “He wrestled with the angel and he prevailed. He wept and sought his favor.” So, Jacob had that magnificent experience of wrestling with the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. In the text of Genesis it says he wrestled with a man, but when Jacob got through, he named the place Peniel, not simply because the man represented the Lord God, but he said, I’ve seen God face to face. In other words, he wrestled with the man who was also God, the God-man, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And he wrestled and he wrestled and he wrestled, and he would not give in, and the day was beginning to come, and we know of course in the Old Testament that the Old Testament saints are warned that they cannot look upon the face of God and live. And so, finally the angel says, it’s almost dawn, let me go. And Jacob wouldn’t let him go, and so the angel, in the power of deity, reaches out and touches his side. Just touches it. And immediately, it’s dislocated and Jacob is lame for the rest of his life.

But when it became evident to Jacob that he was wrestling with someone who was not simply a man – it was not Esau, and it was not one of Esau’s representatives, obviously; he was so afraid of meeting him – and he realized now that he was wrestling with someone who was more than a man, he begins to plead for mercy. And as Hosea says, he wept and sought his favor. He said, I’ll not let you go until you bless me. And that of course was an exhibition of the great, deep desire implanted by God in Jacob’s heart to know the true God and to live in fellowship with him.

So he wept and he sought his favor, and he discovered that if we’re going to truly prevail with God, we have to be defeated. And so it’s in defeat that he overcomes. For as long as we struggle in our own strength we will never prevail. It’s only when we come to recognize that we cannot prevail, and that we can only prevail by pleading for mercy, for we deserve nothing, that is when we really do prevail.

The Apostle Paul, writing in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 8 through verse 10 says something of the same thing when he is talking about the doctrine of justification. He says in Philippians 3 verse 8, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death.”

And one of the commentators said, Jacob after this struggle and during this struggle, and when he came to the defeat of Jacob, he was knighted in the field by God, who gave him a new name. No longer, “Supplanter.” Israel. God’s striver. Prince with God, someone has said. Yes, if you want to overcome in divine things, you have to be defeated. So, he contended with the angel and he prevailed. He wept and sought his favor – that’s how he prevailed.

Now Hosea goes on to say he found him at Bethel, probably that means he, God, found him at Bethel. And probably the Bethel that he refers to, though its possible the later Bethel is in mind due to the chronology of things. But since the first occurrence there when the ladder came down from heaven is shown him, I tend to think that still must be in the Prophet’s mind. He God found him at Bethel.

Bethel was the place where Jacob was worried, disturbed, wondered about God being present. He had left home. Now as a young man, not knowing the things that he

later knew, worried about Esau perhaps pursuing him, and so God gives him this magnificent vision of this ladder that reached up to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and then God standing by the ladder and saying, “Look Jacob, I am with you.” He confirmed the promises made by Abraham to him and he said further, Jacob, I am never going to leave you until I do everything concerning you that I said I was going to do. That’s magnificent. That’s grace unsought. Grace unexpected. Grace unfrustratable. That’s the kind of God we worship; a God who says he will do this, and then does it.

There’s a story about a man who was an officer in a church. It wasn’t Believers Chapel. Could be, I guess. He was not really a Christian man. I hope that’s not true of any of our office bearers. But he was not. And one night he dreamed he saw a ladder in his dream; I guess somebody in the church had read about Jacob’s ladder, and he’d heard it. And the ladder was stretching up to the sky and he dreamed that he was going up the ladder toward heaven. And he thought about the services that he had rendered to the church and that enabled him to take some steps upward, thought about the fact that he had become an officer in the church, that enabled him to take some further steps. He was ascending very rapidly. He thought about the money he had given, and that enabled him to make some fast momentum up the steps further.

But as he climbed, he noticed the ladder began to sway a little bit. He went on climbing, thinking of the things that he had done for others, the poor and the needy, but the ladder swayed more and more. It seemed to be getting top heavy. And by and by, as he continued to climb, the ladder fell to the ground with a crash and the dreamer awoke with the cry on his lips, “My God, it wasn’t hooked on to the sky!” [Laughter, Johnson laughs] And so are all attempts to get to heaven by our good works. So are all of our attempts in the Christian life to please the Lord God by our own maneuverings. And so Jacob has to learn that important truth, that we are saved by faith in the atoning work of

Christ. We are saved through faith, and we advance in Christian living by faith on the principle of grace.

Everything that comes from God comes through grace by means of faith. So, Jacob has to learn by God’s experiences things that in the New Testament are taught so plainly. It’s a shame we have to learn them in our own experience, by the sad experiences that we often have.

Coleridge once said of Jacob, “No man could be a bad man who loved as Jacob loved Rachel.” Well, not from the human standpoint. And I admire him for that magnificent love that he had for Rachel. He really never got over Rachel. But that’s not the kind of thing that makes a man right with God. If you go back and study the life of Abraham, you’ll notice that God appeared to him about seven times, and every time he appeared to Abraham, he was urging him to some new venture.

He appeared about five times to Jacob, some think seven, but almost every time that he came to Jacob, it was to correct something about him. Jacob is a great lesson in sanctification. He’s a lesson in the fact that men who are truly the Lord’s are a long ways from being spiritual through a great portion of their lives. Jacob is one reason why I can believe there is such a thing, contrary to some of my Christian friends, as a “carnal believer.” And when I mean a carnal believer, I don’t mean that God approves that – he doesn’t approve that. Obviously, in Jacob’s case.

But there are experiences in life, after we have come to faith in Christ, in which the flesh is still predominant, and we make those mistakes of immaturity that Jacob made. And Jacob continued to make them, on into the final days. Near the end of his life, though, Jacob’s a different man. By the work of the Holy Spirit through the years, he’s come to be a man who rests in the Lord God. Not perfectly, yet – now he does – but not perfectly. But oh how much maturity has meant to him.

In one of the last days of his life, Joseph – he’s now down in Egypt – Joseph, anxious to have his father bless his sons Manasseh and Ephraim, arranges to bring them



to Jacob. And he brings them to ancient patriarch who doesn’t see too well, remember. And he pushes the boys forward, hoping that Jacob will put his right hand on Manasseh and his left hand on Ephraim and bless Manasseh, because he is the oldest. And he arranges it, pushes them forward so that the patriarch will reach his hands out and put his hands on the tops of the heads of the people that Joseph wanted him too.

And Joseph is startled to see that Jacob reaches out his hands. Scripture says, using a term that means “laying cross-wise,” according to Brown Driver Briggs, one of the authoritative Hebrew lexicons. Or perhaps “acting wisely,” for that Hebrew word has that senses, too. But he reaches out his hands and crosses them. He puts his right hand on Ephraim, and his left hand on Manasseh. And then pronounces the blessing.

But Joseph objects. He says, Not so, Father. But Jacob said, No, I know what I’m doing. And so, by laying his hands cross-wise, he does the will of God. It’s an evidence of course of the fact, I think, that blessing comes by the cross of Christ. And even in the expressions of the patriarch, we have exposition of what will ultimately come to pass.

So Jacob, who said, finally, All these things are against me, at one point in his life, speaks about the God who fed him all the days of his life. I think I like that. I think I like what God has done with Jacob because, you see, that’s what he’s really doing with us, also. All of us.

Now Hosea continues there. And he says, shortly after that, “There he spoke with us at Bethel.” He confirmed the covenant again with reference to the Patriarchs and with reference to the nation. Then he says even the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord is his name. And then, in the sixth verse, after saying that everything depends on Yahweh, the unchanging, immutable God, notice the sixth verse of chapter 12, “Therefore, return to your God.” The Hebrew text is very interesting at this point. It’s something like this. With stress on the opening *etab*, “And as for you, and as for you, return to your God. Observe kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually.” In other words, you, Ephraim, you Judah, the solution to the sin and disobedience and rebellion and deceit

and trickery that characterizes you today, is to return to the Lord God as exhibited in the life of the ancient patriarch, whose name has been given to you, for you are the sons of Jacob. So, listen to the lesson that is taught by the life of Jacob.

Now we don’t have much more time, and I’m not going to keep you this morning, but just about two minutes more. In verse 7, strikingly, the prophet says, “A merchant.” But if you have a Bible with some marginal notes, you will notice that that word, merchant, maybe rendered, “Canaanite.” *Kna’an*. Think of it. The Israelites are called Canaanites. That’s amazing, isn’t it? You see, Israel came out of the land of Egypt and into the land of Canaan in the sense that Canaan might become Israel. But now that Israel has come out of Egypt and come into the land, and by association with people in the land, Israel has become Canaan. Instead of transforming the world, the world has transformed Ephraim.

Now, a Canaanite was a term that came to be used for a lying, cheating merchant. We have some names for those in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. No need to repeat them. I’m sure you’ve thought of some others and of some friends, both Gentiles and some other races that you might call Canaanites. But you see, what God is doing is simply saying is Look, you have become like the people. The old Jacob of greed and trickery has now taken over, and you’ve become better Canaanites than Israelites.

Now, in characteristic, magnificent, sovereign grace, having said that, the prophet says, now Ephraim says, “Surely I’ve become rich; I’ve found wealth for myself and all my labors. They will find in me now iniquity which would be sin. Can you imagine anyone saying that? In the midst of all of their religion and all of their life and all of their trickery and deceit and all of their rebellion and godlessness they say, We’re sinless. And furthermore, we’re rich. The hand of God is upon us. He’s blessed us. I can’t help but think of Revelation chapter 3 and verse 17 when the church at Laodicea gives an opinion of their own spiritual condition and they say, look, John says, “Because you say, I’m rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing, and you don’t know that are

wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.” That’s what happens to people who think that they can get along without the Lord God, and who think their riches are evidence of the blessing of God upon them.

And finally he writes, in the last verses of the chapter, “Jacob fled to the land of Aram, and Jacob worked for a wife; he kept sheep.” Think of this. This is the great Jacob, and how was he treated? Well, in his experiences, he was just a servant. He was just a shepherd for someone else. But think of how I have cared for you, Israel? Verse 13, “But by a prophet the Lord brought Israel from Egypt (Moses), by prophet he was kept. Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger. So, his Lord will leave his blood guilt upon him and bring back his reproach to him.” So, Israel has provoked the Lord God with bitter provocation. Why? Because they’ve had so much.

They are the objects of the divine blessing, the divine election. The showering of blessings upon them, but now, having turned away from him, they are a bitter provocation to the Lord God.

May I close by just saying this? This is the special danger, the special danger of a people blessed by the Lord God. It’s the special danger of a once enlightened nation, Israel. It’s the special danger of a once enlightened church. And it’s the special danger of a once enlightened, blessed, local church. And my dear Christian friends, it’s the special danger of Believers Chapel. And it’s the special danger of you individually and me individually. Blessed by God. All of the blessings of heaven showered upon us from divine, electing grace through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, through all of the other blessings. And then, to turn away from him. To live religiously, filled with religiosity, but no real seeking after the face of God.

That’s the message that Hosea has for us. It wouldn’t hurt us at all to go home, get down by our bedsides, we in Believers Chapel -- forget about Grace Bible Church, forget about other churches in this city that are evangelical, forget about them -- think about Believers Chapel, think about me and our relationship to the Lord. Get down by

your bed and pour out your heart in confession and ask God to implant within you a deep desire to know him, to go in the kind of life that will be pleasing to him. May God help us to do just that. May we stand for the benediction?

If you’re here and you’ve never believed the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, your responsibility is to turn to him who offered the all-atoning sacrifice and gave himself, shedding his blood for sinners. If you know you’re a sinner, flee to Christ. Don’t leave this place without the assurance of everlasting life which comes not by climbing the ladder of good works, but by acknowledging the sufficiency of Christ, the impossibility of gaining salvation by our good works. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Thank him for what he’s done. Receive freely the gift of life. Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the blessings of life. We confess that we have so often failed Thee. O God forgive us our sin. May Thy hand be upon this assembly of believers, upon the individuals who are here, for there are some who do not know our Lord who’ve been totally bored by the things that are said. O God, awaken us spiritually.

For Christ’s sake. Amen.

“Hosea on Jacob and His Seed” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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