

# Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

**Subject: Going through, but I'm not giving up! Genesis 49:22-27**

go through a bad/difficult/rough/sticky patch

informal

to experience a lot of problems in a period of your life:

## Worldliness

When Brothers Quarreled

I knew of two brothers who had a quarrel. The mother could not reconcile them. She could not sleep. Her prayers went up night after night. One of the sons saw how she felt and was sorry for her, so he bought a costly gift and took it to her. "I don't want any gift," she said; "I want you to be reconciled to your brother." God doesn't want your gifts until you are reconciled.

**That strength which God gives to His Josephs is *real* strength;** it is not a boasted valour, a fiction, a thing of which men talk, but which ends in smoke; it is true--*divine strength*. Why does Joseph stand against temptation? Because God gives him aid. There is nought that we can do without the power of God. All true strength comes from "the mighty God of Jacob." Notice in what a *blessedly familiar way* God gives this strength to Joseph--"The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Thus God is represented as putting His hands on Joseph's hands, placing His arms on Joseph's arms. Like as a father teaches his children, so the Lord teaches them that fear Him. He puts His arms upon them. Marvellous condescension! God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from His throne and lays His hand upon the child's hand, stretching His arm upon the arm of Joseph, that he may be made strong! This strength was also covenant strength, for it is ascribed to "the mighty *God of Jacob*." Now, wherever you read of the God of Jacob in the Bible, you should remember the covenant with Jacob. Christians love to think of God's covenant. All the power, all the grace, all the blessings, all the mercies, all the comforts, all the things we have, flow to us from the well-head, through the covenant. If there were no covenant, then we should fail indeed; for all grace proceeds from it, as light and heat from the sun. No angels ascend or descend, save upon that ladder which Jacob saw, at the top of which stood a covenant God. Christian, it may be that the archers have sorely grieved you, and shot at you, and wounded you, but still your bow abides in strength; be sure, then, to ascribe all the glory to Jacob's God.

## Use the Abilities that God Has Given You

On the subject of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, J. R. Miller writes:

"It would not do for all to be great—to be five-talented. If all the soldiers were fit for generals, who would make up the rank and file? If all church members were eloquent preachers, who would do the countless little, quiet services that need to be done? If all men and women were great poets, who would write the prose? There is need for far more common people than great brilliant ones. One Niagara is enough for a continent, but there is need for thousands of little springs and rivulets. A few great men are enough for a generation, but there is work for millions of common folks. So this diversity of gifts is part of the divine plan. The world needs more people of average ability than it needs of the extraordinary sort, and so we are always sure of being in good company. Lincoln said "God must love the common people, for He made so many of them. People who are very great must feel lonesome, for there are so very few of them."

Jacob didn't hesitate to make it known that Rachel was his favorite wife and that her two sons were his favorite children. This kind of favoritism caused a great deal of trouble in the family, and yet God overruled it to accomplish His own purposes. Jacob said more about Joseph than about any of the other sons, but he didn't have much to say about Benjamin.

Joseph (v. 22-26). Jacob used the word "bless" at least six times in his speech to and about Joseph. He compared Joseph to a fruitful vine (or bough of a fruit tree), drawing water from a spring (Psalms 1:3) and growing over the wall. It was Joseph who was taken from home and lived in Egypt, and the word "fruitful" points to his son Ephraim (Genesis 41:52), founder of a tribe that grew greatly and expanded its territory (Joshua 17:14-18). Neither Joseph nor his sons could be hemmed in!

Jacob used the image of "archers" to describe the suffering that Joseph experienced at the hands of his brothers and his master in Egypt. In Scripture, shooting arrows is sometimes an image of telling lies and speaking hateful words (Psalms 57:4; 64:3-4; Proverbs 25:18; 26:18-19; Jeremiah 9:8). Joseph's brothers couldn't speak to him in a civil manner (Genesis 37:4), and they lied about him to their father; and Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph and helped put him into prison. Indeed, the archers shot mercilessly at the innocent young man.

### **Kept your Integrity**

**But Joseph didn't shoot back!** God strengthened him so that his words were always true, and it was this integrity that eventually led to his release from prison and his elevation to being second ruler of the land. But the reference to bows and arrows goes beyond the image of lies; it also reminds us of the military skill of the men of Ephraim (Judges 8:1 ff; 12:1 ff; Joshua 17:17-18).

### **God help him with his harassment and delivered him from dangers seen and unseen.**

Jacob used three more special names of the Lord: the Mighty [One] of Jacob, the Shepherd, and the Stone [Rock]. Jehovah deigns to be called "the God of Jacob," and as "the mighty God," He

cared for Jacob's needs, helping him with his difficult work (31:36-42), and delivering him from danger (v. 24).

### **Genesis 31:36-42**

Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. "What is my crime?" he asked Laban. "What sin have I committed that you hunt me down?"

37 Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us.

38 "I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks.

39 I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night.

40 This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes.

41 It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times.

42 If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you." NIV

Jacob had already referred to the Lord as "the God who shepherded me [looked after me]" (48:15). Since Jacob himself was a shepherd, he knew what was involved in caring for sheep. The concept of God as the Shepherd is found often in Scripture (Psalms 23:1 ff, 80:1; 100:3; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:1) and culminates in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep (John 10).

The Stone [Rock] is another familiar image of the God of Israel (Deuteronomy 32:4,15,18,31; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:32) and also points to Christ (Psalms 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:7). When you think of a stone, you think of strength, stability, and security, and God provided all of that and more to Jacob during his difficult earthly pilgrimage.

Jacob promised Joseph that God would give his descendants blessings on the soil that they farmed by sending the rains from heaven above and providing the streams in the earth beneath (see Deuteronomy 33:13-16). He also promised fertility to the people so that the tribe would increase to God's glory (Hosea 12:8). Ephraim and Manasseh were important tribes in Israel. In fact, the Northern Kingdom was frequently called "Ephraim" (Isaiah 7:1-2; Hosea 13:1).

God had blessed Abraham richly (Genesis 13:6), and Abraham had shared his wealth with Isaac (25:5), who in turn gave it to Jacob. But Jacob's hard work had generated even more wealth.

Thus, from generation to generation, the wealth increased because of the blessing of the Lord, like filling the land up to the very mountains. But the number of heirs had also increased, and now there were twelve sons. But Joseph was the firstborn, and his two sons would share the inheritance of their father.

Benjamin (v. 27). You would expect Jacob to say more to and about his youngest son Benjamin, the "son of his right hand," but his words were few and puzzling. Why compare Benjamin to a "ravenous wolf? The men of Benjamin were brave and helped defeat Sisera (Judges 5:14), but when you read Benjamin's tribal history in Judges 19 and 20, you see the ravenous wolf in action. Saul, the first king of Israel, was from Benjamin. During his career, he more than once tried to kill David (1 Samuel 19:10), and he ruthlessly murdered everybody in the priestly city of Nob (22:6 ff). Other Benjamites known for their ferocity were Abner (2 Samuel 2:23), Sheba (chap. 20), and Shimei (16:5-14). Saul of Tarsus, a Benjamite (Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:5) was like a wild animal when he persecuted the church and tracked clown Christians to imprison them.

It's remarkable that Moses' words about Benjamin say nothing about the ferocious behavior of an animal (Deuteronomy 33:12). Instead, Moses called him "the beloved of the Lord" and promised him constant protection from God. In fact, Benjamin shall "dwell between His shoulders" (NKJV), which suggests either being carried on his back or over his heart. When the nation divided after Solomon's death, the tribe of Benjamin remained faithful to the Davidic line and stayed with Judah. Together they formed the Southern Kingdom of Judah.