

Genesis 192

Down Not Out

Genesis 49:22-24

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Let's take our Bibles this morning and open them to Genesis 49:22. The title of our message this morning is "Down Not Out." We are in that section of the Book of Genesis where God has used Joseph so strategically. In Genesis 49, Joseph's father, Jacob, gathers his Dozen (his twelve sons)—Joseph being one of the Dozen. And he begins to articulate on them, just prior to Jacob's death, blessings and prophecies, because these twelve are going to be the progenitors of the Twelve Tribes of the Nation of Israel.

So what does the future hold? It is interesting, you are starting to see the whole structure of the Nation of Israel coming into existence here in the Book of Genesis, including what is going to happen related to those twelve tribes when they finally enter the land in the days of Joshua—yet future.

Jacob has articulated prophecies and blessings on Reuben, Simeon and Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and there are just two left. He begins to focus now on Joseph (Genesis 49:22-26). In fact, there is probably more material about Joseph than anywhere else in these prophecies. And that would stand to reason, because Joseph has been such a key player in the Book of Genesis. He receives a lot of data about himself and his future via Jacob.

In fact, there is so much here about Joseph that I'm not sure we can get through the whole thing today. Here is kind of a rough outline as Jacob is now speaking to Joseph, and he deals with his progeny.

1. Progeny (Gen. 49:22)
2. Persecution (Gen. 49:23)
3. Survival (Gen. 49:24)
4. Future blessings (Gen. 49:25)
5. Joseph to receive blessings (Gen. 49:26)

Here Jacob begins to talk about Joseph's fruitfulness. We pick it up at Genesis 49:22, it says, *"Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a spring; Its branches run over a wall."* The first thing Jacob says here, about Joseph, is he talks about his fruitfulness. This was a man that was extremely fruitful in his life for the things of God.

In fact, you might remember that Joseph was married to a woman that Potiphar had appointed for him in Egypt as his wife, and through her came two of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. This is what it says concerning Ephraim (why did Joseph choose the name Ephraim for one of these sons), *"He named the second Ephraim, 'For,' he said, 'God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction'"* (Genesis 41:52).

You'll notice that Joseph not only was fruitful, but he was fruitful in the land of his affliction. He was fruitful when things were going well; he was fruitful when things were not going well. He was fruitful when he was a free man; he was fruitful when he was in a place of incarceration. And what a beautiful picture that is for us today as we walk with the Lord.

The Lord wants us to be usable and fruitful and pliable no matter where we are. That fruitfulness does not rise or fall according to the favorableness of human circumstances or circumstances in your life—health-wise, financially, or however, we measure. Our circumstances might be going really well, and the Lord wants you to be fruitful in the midst of those.

The opposite could be true. You know, things could be falling apart from the human perspective, and the Lord still wants us to be fruitful in those circumstances as well. I can't promise that everything in your life is going to be smooth sailing, but I can promise that as you walk with the Lord, God will use you no matter where you are and no matter what circumstances you are in. And that is why Ephraim was given this name by Joseph.

Fruitfulness—what an important word for the Christian life. This is what Jesus said to the disciples in the Upper Room in John 15:5. He said,

*"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

There, the word "*abides*" is very important.

Then a few verses later in John 15:8, He says, *"My father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."* Not to prove you are believers—because that issue got taken care of the moment we trusted Christ as our Savior—but to be His disciples. How do we know if we're really walking in discipleship? Well, we prove that we're walking in discipleship because we bear fruit. We bear fruit that will last.

One of the most helpful things to me as a Christian was to discover that I am not called to produce fruit; I am called to bear fruit. There is a world of difference between those two things. A lot of times in my Christian life, I found myself running out saying, "Okay, I've got to do this for the Lord. I've got to do that for the Lord. I've got to produce for Jesus." And there is no verse in the Bible that tells us to do such a thing. Rather, we are to bear fruit.

Well, how do we bear fruit? The formula is given right there in John 15:5. We abide (or remain) in Him by way of fellowship. You see, as long as I, as a Christian, am in fellowship with the Lord, then the fruit that He wants to produce in my life is going to come organically; it is going to come spontaneously. It is not going to come through human effort, production, or energy, in and of itself. It is just something that shows up.

He is using this illustration, with the disciples, of the vine and the branches. What does the branch need to do to bear fruit? It needs to simply remain in the vine. As the branch remains in the vine, here comes the orange fruit; here comes the lemon fruit. Whatever that branch is designed to bear, it bears it automatically. As long as the branch is in the

vine, things are fine. The fruit is borne in that sense. Think of the folly of an orange branch disconnected to the vine, trying to bear oranges in and of itself. It just wouldn't work.

As Christians, our responsibility is not to go out and say, "Okay, I am going to do this. I am going to do that. I am going to do that. I am going to do this." It is just to be with (abide), remain with Jesus. That is your goal. The fruit is a byproduct of that. It comes about by way of bearing rather than production.

So I get up every day of my life and I say, "Lord, I just want to be with you today. I want to be in prayer. I want to be in Your Word. If I do anything which is displeasing to You, I want Your Holy Spirit to convict me of that, and I am going to confess that and move on." I don't do those things to prove that I am a Christian. I do those things because I want to be a fruit-bearing Christian. I want the fruit to come in my life that will survive the test of time—which is eternal. How can a human being bear eternal fruit unless he is connected, by way of fellowship, to an eternal God?

Christianity at that point becomes very simple. We have a tendency to complicate it. Our responsibility is not to go out and to produce; it is to be with Jesus, and whatever fruit He wants to bring into our lives—ministry-wise, conversation-wise, evangelism, conversations, whatever the case may be—those things will occur spontaneously, organically. Rather than make those things the focus of my life, I just need to make fellowship with Jesus the focus of my life.

How do we fellowship with Jesus anyway? Well, how do you fellowship with anyone? To have fellowship between two people, there has to be communication. Should you run into people and they say, "So-and-so is my best friend." "When was the last time you talked to your best friend?" "Oh, about five years ago." "Well, they are really not a friend at that point; they are an acquaintance.

A friendship—a relationship—takes place when they talk to you, and you talk to them. If you've done anything obnoxious or rude, you apologize; anything that might hurt or offend them, you apologize. That is how you stay in fellowship with anybody; and that is how we stay in fellowship with Jesus. You talk to Him via prayer; He talks to you by His Word.

He can use many, many circumstances for that private Bible reading time, which I recommend to you: listening to healthy sermons on Christian radio, going to church where the Word of God is taught. As you avail yourself to these things, God is speaking to you and you are speaking to Him, by way of prayer. If unconfessed sin happens in your life, then you confess it, and you move on. And we just learn to grow in terms of our relationship to the Lord.

What you start to discover is that all of the things that you thought you could do on your own for God, start getting accomplished in a much more powerful way, where the fruit is not the focus of our lives, but rather it is this man, Jesus Christ. You can bear fruit that will last doing that. You can't do it operating on your own.

Joseph was able to do that. He just walked with the Lord. His brothers turned on him; he walked with the Lord. He was elevated to second in command in Egypt; he walked with the Lord. He was in prison; he walked with the Lord. He was tempted; he walked with the

Lord. He was a free man; he walked with the Lord. And look at what God did through this man, Joseph. Joseph doesn't have any corner on God. God is the same yesterday, today and forever; and He wants us to be fruit-bearers as well.

The capacity to do things that impact eternity: that is what kind of fruit I am talking about. The fruit that doesn't fade away (which is described later on in John 15). We don't need to go to a self-help course or a three-point strategy session to get this done; just walk with the Lord and the Lord will orchestrate how, when, where, and what, eternally, is going to be manifested in our lives. I am not a fruit producer; I am a fruit-bearer. The purpose of my life is not to produce fruit; it is just to be with Jesus.

By the way, that is what the enemies of the early church saw in the disciples. "Who are these men? They are unlearned fishermen. How are they able to do such things?" And then they took note, the Book of Acts tells us, that they had been with Jesus. Their fruit-bearing came out of their intimacy with Jesus Christ. That certainly simplifies our Christianity, doesn't it? And that is what Joseph was.

He was a man that had his own source, because, as you look at Genesis 49:22, it says, *"Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring."* What does it mean when it says, "by a spring"? He had his own supply of water; and because he was by a spring, metaphorically speaking, he was not dependent on the rain. He had his own spring.

That is what you have with God—you have your own source of vitality. In Philippians 4:19, Paul writes, *"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."* He is our supply.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:10, says, *"...but I labored even more than all of them."* Paul wasn't lazy, but he continues on in that verse and says, "Yet not I, but the grace of God with me." "Yeah, I labored, and I sweated, and I was productive, and I was active, but at the end of the day, it really wasn't me doing these things. It was the Lord using me. All I was doing was spending time with Him—staying in intimacy with Him."

We understand all these things in the area of human relationships. Married couples can each become so busy that they forget to be intimate with each other. We can correct that with counseling. "What is your communication level like? Are you spending time together? Do you have a date night?" It is really the same issue with God. "Are you with God? Are you spending time with God?"

I realize everybody's life is very, very busy; very, very hectic these days. But the Lord will allow you to carve out time to be with Him. It could be as simple as driving to and from work, where you just turn on perhaps a teacher or a preacher on the radio or media that you like, and you are fed; or you devote that time to prayer; and you are with Jesus Christ. He is that source of vitality in your life. That is what Joseph had here. He had his own spring, which was his relationship with God.

Joseph was fruitful to the point where that branch that Joseph is given, in this prophecy by Jacob, ran over a wall. Look at Genesis 49:22. *"Its branches run over a wall."* Certainly that played itself out in biblical history, because when the Nation of Israel will come out of Egypt after 400 years of captivity, a census will be taken (Numbers 1), where the tribe of

Joseph actually would have less of a population than Judah. Judah, of course, as we know, is very prominent in these prophecies because the Messiah is going to come into the world through the Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). So in the Numbers 1 census, Joseph is less than Judah numerically.

There is another census taken, because in the Book of Numbers there is a climactic failure in faith by the generation that came out of Egypt; and God began to work with the kids, and He gave a second census as they were en route to enter the Promised Land. Those are the two censuses: the first one in Numbers 1, and the second in Numbers 26.

Why two censuses? Why do we need two population counts? Because of the failure of generation one, a second census was taken for the youth. When you look at that second census, what you discover is that Joseph, numerically, was more than Judah. Him being this vine connected to its own spring, *"its branches running over a wall"* because of its productivity, is something that happened in biblical history.

It wasn't easy on Joseph, as we have studied, because as he went through these things—he experienced great persecution. That takes us to Genesis 49:23. Notice what happened to him. It says, *"The archers bitterly attacked him, And shot at him and harassed him."* I would understand this, as Joseph went through his walk with God, there were many times he was grieved. Jacob is sort of reflecting on that.

Joseph was mistreated by his brothers (as we have studied). He was mistreated by Potiphar. He was accused of a crime he didn't commit by Potiphar's wife. Then he was left to rot in prison for a number of years. The cupbearer promised to remember Joseph when Joseph interpreted a prophecy related to him—"When this prophecy happens and you are re-elevated, I want you to remember me in prison."

The cupbearer forgot about Joseph for two years. I think this is what is being sort of rehearsed when it says *"the archers bitterly attacked him and they shot at him"* (Genesis 49:23). All of the ordeal that Joseph went through (and he was persecuted) the end of Genesis 49:23, these forces "harassed him."

A lot of people have in their mind that to be fruitful for God means it is going to be easy. That is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible never offers us a bed of roses, so to speak. Things in people's lives can deteriorate very, very badly from a human perspective; but through it all, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. As we walk with the Lord, we see that we can be fruitful with Him—for Him—when things are good and things are bad.

A lot of people, particularly here in the West (probably because of the advent of the Prosperity Gospel) think that God wants you to be rich and healthy. If you are not rich and healthy, then you don't have enough faith. "You haven't claimed your promises because you are a king's kid." This type of thing, unfortunately, is taught around the clock on so-called Christian television.

A lot of people have in their minds that, "Boy, if I lose my job or I lose my health or something, then somehow I am outside of God's will, and I can't be fruitful." Look at the story of Joseph to correct that bad doctrine. He was very fruitful, regardless of negative

circumstances in his life (and there were many). Here is a guy that was left for dead by his own brothers.

Peter instructs us when we are in the midst of difficulties. He says in 1 Peter 4:12:

*"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you."*

Things in life can get very, very difficult. Certainly the audience that Peter was addressing was experiencing those things as they were being persecuted via a mad man named Nero.

In the midst of all of that, Peter makes this statement: "Don't be surprised at that. God is actually using this for your testing. Don't act as if some odd or strange thing was happening to you. This is part of the walk that we have with God." God uses things that we think are negative in our lives for positive character development and other things. So Genesis 49:23 is a rehearsal, if you will, of everything that Joseph has gone through.

In spite of the whole thing, he was down but not out (hence the title of this sermon "Down Not Out"). Why? Because of whom he had a relationship with. He had a relationship with God. Joseph's survival is described there in Genesis 49:24, through Jacob's prophecy to him,

*"But his bow remained firm, And his arms were agile, From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel)."*

There is a comment here in this prophecy at the beginning of Genesis 49:24 of Joseph's strength. Here is a man that had spiritual and emotional strength. He obviously had to have that to go through what he went through. The question is, "Why did he have this spiritual strength?" The answer is given earlier in Genesis 49:22. He had his own spring. He had his own reservoir of energy and power because he had a relationship with the Lord; and this source of power that he had, because of his relationship with the Lord, is explained in these subsequent verses.

Joseph was a man who was tested and yet grew through the testing. Someone has put it this way: The trials of life for the Christian will do one of two things, and it is largely our reaction as to what happens to us. You can't control, many times, what happens to you, but you can control your reaction. The trials of life will make you very bitter, or they'll make you better. Whether they are going to make me bitter or make me better depends on how I react to them.

I can treat trials in life (I am talking about things that are unforeseeable, that come into our lives as some sort of unwanted intruder), and say, "How dare God bring this into my life! Hasn't God been watching Christian television where I am supposed to be exempted from all of this stuff?" Or I can just say to the Lord, "You know what, Lord? I didn't ask for this. I didn't want it, quite frankly, but it was outside of my control. And obviously, You sovereignly allowed this into my life for some reason. Whatever it is, I am going to grow through it. I am going to walk with you; I am going to be teachable; I am going to be

learning along the way, because there is something about to happen to me related to character development, which can't happen absent these trials."

Joseph had that mindset and he was tested. As he walked with the Lord, he became stronger. This is what the Book of James is telling us in James 1:2-4: *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials."* The interesting thing about trials is that they come in all shapes and sizes.

In fact, this word translated "various" there is the same word used in the Septuagint (which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament) to describe Joseph's multicolored coat that his father gave him—the coat of many, many colors. Just as that coat had many different colors, so the trials of life have many different shapes and sizes.

I have noticed that in my own life, the Lord will bring circumstances to deal with something; and then when that is finished, He brings a completely different circumstance to deal with something else. A lot of times, I am not even aware of the character deficiency that the Lord wants to rectify in my life.

There is not a one size fits all for trials: there are health issues, there are economic issues, there are job issues, there are relationship issues. We can go on and on. But you have to understand that everything that is happening has been allowed into your life through the sovereign hand of God, to deal with a particular target or issue.

James tells us, *"Consider it all joy, my brethren,"* and these are people (in the context of the Book of James) that were evicted from their homeland. You can imagine being evicted from your homeland and dwelling 350 miles to the east in Babylon. (These are Jewish brethren—believers.) What do you tell a group of people like that?

James 1:2-4:

*"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

In other words, let this happen—meaning I have a choice to not let it happen. I wouldn't say, "Let this happen." Let this run its course because God is doing something in your life that you can't necessarily see. He is testing your faith to produce endurance. Leading us into maturity. My understanding of this is: no trial, no endurance in my life, no maturity in my life. That causes me to look at suffering, that we all go through at different levels, through a different set of lenses.

Joseph is tested, and yet he grew through it. It talks here in Genesis 49:24, about how he prevailed through God. Genesis 49:24, says, *"From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob."* God allowed the attack, and God actually caused these various attacks on Joseph not to prevail. What he went through with Potiphar, Pharaoh's wife, his brothers, these were like arrows that were aimed against him constantly, but some way, somehow God did not allow those things to destroy Joseph. Joseph probably could have destroyed

himself in the midst of these things just through bitterness, but God used these things to make him not bitter, but better.

Isaiah 54:17 says:

*"No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their vindication is from Me," declares the Lord. "Are you a servant of the Lord? I hope you are. Then this is your heritage. Your heritage is 'no weapon that is formed against you will prosper.'"*

These attacks that came against him, God didn't allow them to grow out of proportion to where Joseph was destroyed through these things. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 says this, *"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted; but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."* Another way of saying it is: "Down, but not out."

It is amazing the things that you can survive as a Christian, because God is on your side. Things that the unsaved world just marvels at, because they know that if they were in your—in your circumstances—they would have given up a long time ago. Yet, here you are walking through a valley and the Lord is with you, as Psalm 23 says.

First John 4:4 says, *"...greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world."* Yeah, Satan has a lot of power and he causes a lot of trouble. (And by the way, his day of reckoning is coming. Do you believe that?) However, in the meantime, *"greater is He that is in me than He that is in the world."* You have this capacity to go through trials and yet prevail through God.

Why was Joseph a prevailer? Because of the word "mighty" there. Genesis 49:24: *"His arms were agile," "his bow remained firm,"* etc.. *"From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob."* He had his own stream, independent of the rain. He had his own source of vitality.

I had a youth pastor that put it this way. One time he said, "One plus God is a majority." The whole world can stand against you, but if you find yourself in God's will, fulfilling God's design, then what you will see is that there is a source of power that will enable you to stand up under unfair criticism, unfair treatment, and in some cases abuse—circumstances that we would call unfair, perhaps abusive.

These were all of the things that Joseph went through, and yet, here is the man at the end of his life, walking with the Lord. That is how I want to be, Lord, when I get old. I hope the rapture happens before then, but if it doesn't, I don't want to have a cantankerous, grumpy, pharisaical heart; I want to have a soft heart. I want to be walking with the Lord right to the very end. I want to prevail through God, which is what Joseph had.

This mighty God was the means of Joseph's survival. Without Joseph, who knows what would have happened to the Nation of Israel? I guess God could have used somebody else to preserve Israel, but to the best of our knowledge, Joseph was the guy that God used to preserve Israel.



This God, that Joseph served, was so big and He was so mighty that He is actually, according to this prophecy, going to bring the Savior of the world, to the world through the Jewish nation. You see that there, at the end of Genesis 49:24, *"From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob."* And then it gives this sort of parenthetical comment, Genesis 49:24: *"For there is the Shepherd and the Stone of Israel."* The same God that sustained Joseph is the same God that is going to produce the Messiah through the Nation of Israel.

He is given here two names: One is the Shepherd. We know that the Messiah is a Shepherd. Psalm 23 tells us that *"the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."* He is not a taskmaster; He is not a negative athletic coach. He is a Shepherd. Psalm 23 goes on, and it describes what a Shepherd does for the sheep.

A Shepherd basically does three things for the sheep: He grazes (feeds them), He guides, and He guards. Guard, graze, guide—that is what the Lord seeks to do in our lives as we are submitted to Him. He is a Shepherd.

The Book of Ecclesiastes, in Ecclesiastes 12:11 concludes this way: *"The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd."* I am so grateful that the Lord is our Shepherd. I am so grateful for the way He treats us as He Shepherds us and guides us.

That is, if you think about it, also the role of the undershepherds, the pastors and the elders that govern the church. What is their basic function? It is to function as undershepherds under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Peter in 1 Peter 5 talks all about that. So we seek to do what the Lord does for us. We seek to guard the flock. We seek to graze or feed the flock. *"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4).

We seek to guard and protect physically and theologically. We seek to graze, or feed. And we seek to guide, to give you the spiritual guidance that you need as a Christian for one's life. Why would we do that? Because it has already been modeled to us as undershepherds by the ultimate Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

There is more to this coming Messiah, this "Mighty One of Jacob." It says there, Genesis 49:24: *"From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."* Jesus is the Shepherd, but He is also the Stone. It is interesting how the rest of Scripture develops Jesus as the Stone.

In Matthew 21:42, talking about the national rejection by Israel of their own Messiah:

*"Jesus said to them, 'Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The Stone which the builders rejected; This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*

Matthew 21:44 says:

*"And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."*

Wow! Peter said this about the Lord as this Stone, he called Him:

*"A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed" (1 Peter 2:8).*

It is interesting how people will stumble right over Jesus Christ. The whole nation of Israel, nationally, its leadership did that back in the first century. "This salvation by faith alone, it can't be that simple." It was a stumbling block to them. They were so wrapped up in their religious traditions and their own self-effort that this idea that you are saved by faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:16) is just too simple. They just stumbled right over it.

People are like that today. When you explain to them the simplicity of the gospel, they kind of act like, "Is that it? You mean the only thing I have to do to be made right with God is to place my personal faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ? There are no mission trips I gotta do? When are you going to make the plea for money? How much money do I gotta give?" And what we say is, "Salvation has nothing to do with that."

Salvation is so simple that a child can understand it, yet it is deep enough for a theologian to drown in, when you think about it (the simplicity of salvation). Now all these things—evangelism, mission trips, whatever God's going to do in your life—He deals with us in the area of growth later, but I am not talking about growth here. I am talking about initial salvation.

The religious crowd, they came and asked Jesus a question in John 6:28-29. This has become sort of a lifelong verse for me. John 6:28:

*"Therefore they said to Him, 'What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.'"*

That sounds like a religious question, doesn't it? "What have we got to do?" "What action do we have to perform?" "What have we got to do, Lord, to be right with you?" "Believe in the One He has sent." "Is that it? It's that easy?" And that was a tough message for this crowd to digest because you keep reading John 6 and He still had a big crowd there at Capernaum until He started talking like this, and the crowd disappeared.

Human works (what have we got to do) feed our flesh, because if it is something I have to do, that way I can brag about it, right? But God has designed salvation in such a way that you have to receive it, as a gift, or you can't receive it. These folks, they stumbled right over the stumbling Stone. It was a simple teaching, but to them it was a hard teaching.

The whole crowd disappears, until the only people left are the Twelve. That is when Jesus asked them, at the end of John 6, "Are you going to leave too?" I love Peter's answer: "Where else are we going to go? You alone have the words of eternal life." And then Jesus says, "Okay, but one of you is a devil" (speaking of Judas). So he just took a crowd of 12 and shrunk it to 11.

I have a sermon I did on John's gospel. It is called "How to Get Rid of a Crowd." Today, the big focus in pastors' conferences is how to grow the church, as if a pastor has the

ability to grow anything. God grows the church or shrinks the church—it is His church. The pastors can just be faithful where God has put them.

I don't even think Jesus' resume would get very far in most pastoral searches, to be frank with you. "Hey, I started with the church of hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, and I shrunk it down to 11." That is what Jesus did in John 6, because His message was so simple. It was a stumbling block that they tripped over. It couldn't be that easy. It didn't fit their religious mindset.

Jesus, of course, is that Shepherd. He is the good Shepherd that lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11-14). There are seven statements that Jesus made about Himself in John's Gospel.

1. I am the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35)
2. I am the Gate of the Sheep (Jn. 8:12)
3. I am the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:7; cf. v.9)
4. I am the Light of the World (Jn. 10:11, 14)
5. I am the Resurrection and the Life (Jn. 11:25)
6. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6)
7. I am the True Vine (Jn. 15:1; cf. v.5)

One of the things He says is: "I am the good Shepherd." You see that prophesied here in Jacob's words, when the Messiah shows up, He is going to be a Shepherd, and He is also going to be a Stone—He is going to be a stumbling Stone. Beyond that, He is going to be a cornerstone.

Paul, in Ephesians 2:20 tells us:

*"Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone."*

It is fascinating to study what the cornerstone is in temple imagery. When this was written, the cornerstone, when you built a structure, was the first stone that was placed on the ground. You measured all the other stones in the building by the cornerstone. So the cornerstone is the most important stone. That is Jesus in this metaphor, where the church is analogized to a temple that God is building.

Then God put in the foundation stones, and that was the apostles and the prophets. And He has been building on that structure for 2000 years. In my opinion, I think He is working on the roof. I think we're pretty late in the game here, and I think the Rapture of the Church is an imminent event. It has always been an imminent event, but God is waiting for that last Gentile to be saved in the Church Age. This whole structure comes into existence because Jesus is the cornerstone.

He is also called the *"smiting stone"* in Scripture. Daniel 2:34 says, about this image that Daniel saw in Daniel 2, *"You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them."*

Daniel 2:45 gives the interpretation:

*"Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."*

Those feet mixed with iron and clay—the ten toes, which corroborate with the ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel seven—are the final form of world government that will exist on planet Earth before Jesus comes back—the world government of the Antichrist.

"Yeah, but, Pastor, we really need to be worried about this. We've got Klaus Schwab and the World Economic Forum, and we have the One-Worlders, and we have the globalists, and we have Bill Gates (who is in the Bible: "The gates of hell will not prevail against the Church"). We've got all this stuff going on. We really need to get worried about this."

This vision is saying, "Why worry about that? God's got that under control." In fact, Jesus is going to return at the end of the Tribulation period, and He is going to strike, as this stone—strike the feet of the statue—and the whole thing is going to instantaneously crumble. Then Daniel saw there is a wind that blows the pieces away on the threshing room floor.

The Stone cut without human hands—the coming Kingdom of Jesus (which is the only New World order I want to be a part of, quite frankly)—will grow and grow and grow till it fills the whole earth. We are to pray for this to come about, because Jesus, when He taught us to pray, said we should pray this way: *"Thy kingdom come"* (Matthew 6:10). I can't wait for this to happen. Lord, bring it!

This is all found in this imagery of, not just Shepherd, but also of Stone. You are seeing the analogy of the Messiah to a Stone developing here in infant form—seed form—that the rest of Scripture will develop in these prophecies related to Jacob. Notice that it says of this Messiah that is coming, *"From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."*

That is why so much information has been dedicated in the Book of Genesis, that we have been studying towards the origin of the Nation of Israel. Why do we need an entire book, Genesis 12-50, explaining the origin of the Nation of Israel? What God said I am going to bring my Messiah to the world through that nation.

Genesis 1-11 says, "Why do we need a Messiah?" We're in a fallen state—Creation, Fall, Flood, and Tower of Babel reveal that. And then God says, "I am going to save the world through this Messiah. He will be a Shepherd; He will offer salvation; and then He will rule the world one day."

"I need a nation through which to bring this Messiah, because all of the other nations had polluted their way (Genesis 11). So I'll raise up a new nation." That is why you have all of this meticulous detail given about this new nation. This nation is going to be the one that is going to bring forth this Messiah, and that is why we have been tracing the coming of this Messiah through the Book of Genesis.

At this point in the Book of Genesis, we already know six things about the Messiah.

1. A Man (Gen. 3:15)
2. Semitic (Gen. 9:26)
3. From Abraham's line (Gen. 12:3)
4. From Isaac's line (Gen. 17:18-19)
5. From Jacob's line (Gen. 28:14)
6. From the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10)

Number one, He is going to be a man. He said to the serpent in Genesis 3:15, "You'll bruise him on the heel, but He will crush your head"—a man. Genesis 3:15: He is a man.

Number two, He is going to be Semitic. Genesis 9:26: He is Semitic. He is not going to come from the line of Ham, one of Noah's sons. He is not going to come from the line of Japheth, one of Noah's sons. He is going to come from the line of Shem—the people, groups of the earth that gave forth the Semitic peoples.

Then we learn He is going to come from Abraham's line (Genesis 12:3). Then the narrowing focuses more. He is going to come through Isaac's line (Genesis 17:18-19), and He is going to come through Jacob's line (Genesis 28:14).

Here we are in Genesis 49, as Jacob is ready to die at the age of 147; and Jacob, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, "I am going to tell you the exact tribe He is going to come from." There are going to be twelve tribes. He is going to come from the Tribe of Judah. And the rest of the Scripture is not going to contradict this, but just add more details.

This is why Matthew 1 ties Jesus into a lineage that goes back to Abraham. Jesus was as Jewish as they come. I understand, in the state of Texas I can get myself lynched for saying this, but Jesus was not a Southern Baptist; He was not a Methodist; He wasn't even a Bible Church guy. He was Jewish.

In fact, in John's gospel there are the five times that Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate the various feasts. Why did He do that? Because He was Jewish, and Leviticus 23 told Jews to show up at the central sanctuary and celebrate various feasts. Jesus did as He was told, as a good Jewish person would do. He was very Jewish.

Do you realize that the whole ministry of Jesus took place within the borders of Israel? He never even left the borders of Israel. He never went on a mission trip. Now Paul, of course, would, but not Jesus Christ. I think this is what it means when it says, (Jesus telling His disciples), "You are going to do bigger things than Me." And I used to read that as, "Oh, that is out of sight! I am going to walk on water. I am going to turn water to wine." I don't think that is what He is talking about—I think He is talking about geography.

Jesus, in John 6, spoke to a crowd and He emptied the place out. Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spoke to a crowd in Acts 2, and 3000 people were saved. Paul took the gospel of Jesus Christ all the way to Rome. And here we are in the 21st century, totally on a different continent, speaking to primarily a non-Jewish audience, and numerically and geographically, we're actually doing greater things than Jesus Himself did, when you think about it.

It is just amazing to me that I am standing here in 2025, speaking into a microphone, which can be heard by anybody in the world or archived after the fact. Jesus Himself didn't even do that. Are we better than Jesus? No. But He says, "You are going to do bigger things than Me."

We know that He is coming into the world through the Nation of Israel. And these blessings keep coming. In Genesis 49:24-26, as Jacob is speaking to Joseph, you'll see the word "*blessing*" five times. In that section, you'll see about five different names for God. That material is so big I can't even start it today. So I'll have to stop here, unfortunately, but it is just an amazing set of prophecies given to Joseph at the end of his life, which prophetically enumerate the things that are going to come.

I guess the major takeaway from all of this is: Look what God did to get us the Messiah. Look at the steps He took. Why did God do it? Because He loves you that much and wants a relationship with you. "How can you have a relationship with God? That is sort of arrogant—a man having a relationship with God."

You have to go through the God-man, and there is only One of those. At the point of the virgin conception, humanity was added to 100% deity, and Jesus, at that point, became the God-man who can mediate between God and man. Unless there is another God-man around—100% God and 100% man—salvation is found only in Jesus.

I would encourage anyone, as the Holy Spirit places people under conviction to respond to that convicting ministry of the Spirit, to fix something in your life that only the God-man can fix—that is your eternity with God, the forgiveness of your sins, because Jesus paid the sin debt 2000 years ago. His final words on the cross were, "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30). There is nothing for a human being to do other than to receive what Jesus did for us 2000 years ago—to receive it as a gift. The only way to receive a gift from God is to believe in the One He has sent.

"*Believe*" is another way of saying "*trust*". It is more than just head knowledge and data of Jesus. It has to include the element of trust, where you hear the truth of the gospel and you place your trust for the forgiveness of your sins for your eternity exclusively into Jesus. It is not something you have to walk an aisle to receive, join a church to receive, or give money to receive. It is a matter of privacy between you and the Lord, where you trust in the provision of Jesus. And just like that, you are made a newborn child of God.