

# THE TRUE EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

## A SERMON

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“And they are the ten thousand of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.” Deuteronomy 33:17

I SHALL this evening deal with these words in their ultimate meaning. We must view them in and by Christ Jesus, for none of the scriptures realize such a fulfilment anywhere as they do in Christ. A great part of the holy scriptures would without him be meaningless. The ceremonial law itself would be an unmeaning thing were it not that that law realized its ultimate meaning in the one great antitypical priesthood of Christ Jesus the Lord. And at the same time God's law, or the law of condemnation, by which we stand condemned, that law has not realized such a standing and such a satisfaction anywhere as in Christ; for that law is eternal in its fiery indignation, and the period will never come to those that are in hell when the law will say: Now I am satisfied; its fire be quenched, and they delivered; no, it is a fire that burns as long as the Almighty himself shall live, for the breath of the Lord does kindle that fearful scene of things. But the man who is brought to see that this law has realized its satisfaction in Christ, that is one of the things that heightens the dear Savior in such a one's estimation. And so, of course, of all the predictions and testimonies of the everlasting gospel; how wonderfully they did, and do, and will realize their fulfilment by the person and work of the dear Savior. Now these people here spoken of, the ten thousand of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh, were partakers of certain blessings of the temporal covenant; these blessings we shall take spiritually; and I shall take Ephraim and Manasseh to represent the true people, the true Israel of God, and I shall describe what it is to be partaker of those blessings in their spiritual meaning. To be a partaker of those blessings in their spiritual meaning, is to be one of the true Israel of God; and if we can read out some evidences of belonging to the true Israel of God, I am sure such kind of reading will comfort us concerning our faith, will strengthen us in our hope, and will make us more desirous than ever to walk in fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. With these views I notice the text under a threefold aspect: First, *the people*; secondly, *their names*, Ephraim, and Manasseh; thirdly, *the order of the numbers*; first ten thousand, and then thousands.

First, then, I notice *the people*, the true Ephraim, the true Israel of God. And we will go back to the forty-eighth chapter of Genesis, and see if we can read out there how the people of God are distinguished from others; because the blessing which Jacob there pronounces upon Ephraim and

Manasseh, like our text, has in its ultimate meaning a spiritual reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the first thing in the blessing Jacob pronounced was to be brought into an acquaintance with God in the new covenant. He says, "God, before whom my father's Abraham and Isaac did walk, bless the lads." There are other words before he comes to these, but we notice these first. The meaning is that they should be brought into the same manifest relationship to God. When the Lord lays home to a sinner's heart and conscience his real condition as a sinner, and that man becomes conscious that the Lord looks upon the heart, he then labors to put his heart to rights, to put his thoughts to rights, and to put his inclinations and desires to rights; and the more he strives, the further he is off. He says, Now what is to be done? By-and-by, in the Lord's own time, he learns the way in which Abraham was blessed, that Abraham was blessed independently of anything in the creature, independently of any works whatever. The Lord called Abraham and revealed to him the great Melchizedek, Christ Jesus, revealed to him the immutability of God's counsel, and as God could swear by no greater he swore by himself, saying, "In blessing I will bless you." Now some of you, perhaps, live in doubts and fears, and cannot help it, as regards your interest in these things; but you do not know anything clearer than this, that you are brought in your faith and in what little hope you have to just where Abraham was, with the exception of the assurance which he enjoyed; and whether we believe that our hope shall never give up the ghost or not, the Lord says it shall not. Let me once more quote the beautiful words, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Our forerunner, what a sweet thought is that. Know you not, friends, that our sins every one of them stood between Christ and God; and that as long as one of our sins stood in the way, Christ could not enter heaven. Before he could enter heaven, he must outrun all our sins, he must overcome all our sins, he must atone for all our sins, he must put away all our sins; on account of which it is said that he entered by his own blood; "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Thus, he is our Forerunner. If we view him in this light, can anything be more encouraging? In what way must we expect the Lord to approve us, or to be with us, or to accept us, or to guide us, or to receive us at last, but in this selfsame way? What is the song in heaven? "You are worthy to take the book, for you was slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood." Mark these words: "Which enters into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered." Let us pause here a moment. There is not a day in which sin does not stop us; it hinders us in prayer, in praise, in everything spiritual; there is not a day in which we are not hindered by what we have within us, so that we cannot do the things that we would. But there was not one day in which the Savior was hindered. He travelled in the greatness of his strength; he could not be hindered, he could never be stopped. He then has entered for us, "being made a high priest forever," because his atonement has in it eternal efficacy, "being made an high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." This is one part of the blessing, then; "God, before whom my father's Abraham and Isaac did walk," in the same faith, believing the same blessed testimonies. The next part is the faithfulness of this God: "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day;" which words, of course, must be taken spiritually and providentially. Providentially it is true he often suffers our way to be hedged up, in order to show us what he can step in and do. He often suffers the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil to get very low, that he may step in thereby, and make himself known. He often suffers the disciples to be so reduced in provisions as to have, as it were, but five loaves and two small fishes, and they know not what they shall do; everything seems going, and it is almost gone. But the Lord steps in; he knows how to do the work. We find on one occasion, when

a city was under famine, and it appeared that all must die, the Lord made use of four lepers. So, we know not, you see, what afflictions are for. That leprosy put those men where they would not otherwise have been. And they said: Well, if we sit still we shall die, and if we go out to the adversary we can but die. And when they came, they found that the Lord had caused the enemy to hear a great sound, and they were alarmed and fled, and the way was strewn with gold, and garments, and provisions of all kinds. And they said, "We do not well; we must go and tell our brethren this." They came and told what they had seen, and after a little misgiving, and unbelief, and fear, the people began to realize the truth of it. There was one there, as you are aware, who said it could not be. When the prophet declared the day before that matters should be so, the wise man said, it cannot be; it is impossible. Well, the prophet said, you will see it, but you will not have any of it. So, when tomorrow came this wise man put his big self in the gate, in order to falsify the prophecy of Elisha; but the people did not care for his great self, his important self. They made a sort of threshold, a sort of stepping-stone, of him, by which they could get the provisions; they trod him to death in the gate, and everything came to pass just as the prophet said it should. It is a blessed thing to have faith in God, to have confidence in him. Now, if you are a true Israelite, you will be brought into the relationship I have spoken of to the God of Abraham; you will have confidence in him as a God of providence. Look to him, trust in him; he sees your sighing, and trembling, and fears. Ah, say you, I know he does; that is encouraging, but, then, the worst of it is he sees my sins as well. No, it is not the worst of it; he has found a way to put the sins away. Is it not written that "he will not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor see perverseness in Israel"? He will look at your necessities. "Your heavenly father knows that you have need of these things." It does not say he knows you deserve them, but that you need them, and because you need them you shall have them. "Cornelius, your prayers and alms are come up for a memorial," but your sins are forgotten; they are forgiven. Here, then, is a faithful God. The third part of the blessing that distinguishes the child of God from others is his being a partaker of the grace, shall I call it? of eternal redemption. "The angel," meaning the messenger of the new covenant, "that redeemed me from all evil." Jacob attributes his final deliverance from all evil to the redeeming efficacy of this redeeming angel. And why does Jacob call him an angel in that case, or, as the word means, messenger? Because Jacob well understood the new covenant, and that Jesus Christ was the messenger of that covenant. "The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in; behold, he shall come, says the Lord of hosts, that redeemed me from all evil." If it had said "all sin," that would have been a great deal; but you can hardly imagine that Jacob could use a word more significant, "from all evil." Now, tribulation is an evil in itself; everything that is the result of the fall of man is in itself an evil. But "from all evil." If death be an evil, if hell, be an evil, whatever it be, redeemed from all evil. The fourth part of the blessing was the nomination. Jacob said, "Let my name be named on them, and the name of my father's Abraham and Isaac." That is to say, whatever Abraham as a believer was nominated to, that Isaac was nominated to; and whatever Isaac was nominated to, that Jacob was nominated to; and whatever Jacob was nominated to, these are nominated to. "The whole family in heaven and in earth is named after Christ." Now, was he nominated to eternal life? Was he nominated to a fulness of joy in God's presence and pleasures for evermore? Was he nominated to die no more, that death has no more dominion over him? Was he nominated to be a priest and a king forever? Was he nominated the chosen of the Most High? All this is true of the people as well; they are one with him, named after him. "Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince," that is the Prince of Peace, Christ Jesus, "have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed." Was there ever a person in being that had such power with

God as Christ has? Was there ever a person in being that had such power with men, and has such power with men, as Christ? "You have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him." Named after him; and what is his name? His name is Jehovah, our righteousness. And what is the Church's name? Jehovah, our righteousness. "As a prince have you power with God and with men and have prevailed." Your power with God is Christ. Whatever power he had with God, that power faith has with God. And if he prevailed so that men could not move him from God's truth, have not tens of thousands of our wonderful brethren that have gone before us, have they not endured tortures that no human language can describe? Yet they have not been finally or fatally moved from God's truth, but have prevailed. Oh! when we look at the Bastille of France, the Inquisition of Spain, the Tower of London, the valleys of Piedmont, the caverns of Rome, and the deserts of Persia, we can hear, as it were, the voice of the blood of the saints still crying to the Most High, "How long, O Lord, do you not avenge our blood at their hands?" But the enemy could not prevail over the saints. No, they had power with God and prevailed, and are now living in all the triumphs wrought by the Savior, having realized the faithfulness of God. "As your days, so shall be your strength." Our burdens may be great, our trials may be many, but the Savior is able to overcome the whole. "Let my name be named on them." The Lord said to Aaron, "After this manner you shall bless the children of Israel; put my name upon them." As there is no fault in my name, there is nothing else but fault in their name; so, if you take their name, that will entitle them to nothing but wrath; but if you put upon them my name, that will entitle them to nothing but favor, and blessing, and mercy. "Put my name upon them, and I will bless them." Being nominated after Christ, they are thereby nominated to all that he himself possesses. "You shall eat and drink," said the Savior, "at my table." Bless his holy name! he never means to part with the people, not one of them, that cost him so much to redeem. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

Now it is said of Joseph, in connection with our text, that "his glory is like the firstling of his bullock." The Savior put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; rather than we should be lost, he sacrificed himself to the consuming wrath of God. The fire descended upon the sacrifice, the sword cut this wonderful Messiah off; cut him off out of the land of the living, and who shall declare his generation? There is something in this that one rests upon with great pleasure, the substitutional, sacrificial perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is the root of every curse and every evil; and this wonderful sacrifice has taken the root away, removed the curse, and the effect must cease. Secondly, the firstling of the bullock could not be given to God; be set apart and sanctified. The Lord said, in the 27th of Leviticus, "You shall not sanctify unto me the firstling." You say, Whatever in the world does that mean? Why, because the firstling belonged to the Lord as a matter of course. Jesus Christ belonged to God as a matter of course; he was God's own Son. Jesus Christ did not need an act of election to make him God's Son; he needed an act of election to make him God's servant. "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen;" not "my Son." Jesus Christ was God's Son as a matter of course; his service was a matter of choice. God chose his own Son to serve him because he knew there was none other able to serve in the way that Christ has served. "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my elect, in whom my soul delights." The firstling was the Lord's as a matter of course; so, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Now the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was in the same way;" and so, it goes on. Therefore, he is called the only begotten Son of God. No other person was ever born as he was; he was born not only as the Son of God as a matter of course, but he was born in the place of others. He was made under the law, and became a debtor to do the whole law. Here, then, is sacrifice; and the sacrifice by one that belonged to God as a matter of

course. Bless the Lord for this. He had but one Son, and he gave that one Son for all those that he had made sons. But we needed mighty acts to make us sons of God; we needed the sovereign love of God to embrace us; we needed election, not merely to make us servants, but to make us sons; we needed the precious blood of Christ to deliver us from the thralldom we were under; and we needed regeneration to make us sons manifestly; and we needed the Lord himself in his immutability, and that perfection that is in Christ, to continue our sonship. "One with Jesus, by eternal union one." We needed these great transactions in order to be put among the children. "How," said the Lord, "shall I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land:" how shall I do this? And he teaches us how he himself does it. The firstling, also, means that Christ stands first. The Savior said, when speaking as a shepherd, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." The Savior does not mean that all that ever came before him in the order of time are thieves and robbers, because to make the Savior mean that would be to make the prophets out to be thieves and robbers. The meaning evidently is, All that ever came before me in the order of place. If you take the Savior's place by your righteousness, by your holiness, by your duties, by your ceremonies, and by your doings, you thereby rob the Savior of his honor, and the most high God of his glory, and the people of God of their rights, as far as words can do it. Therefore, all that ever came before him in the order of place are thieves and robbers. But those that are taught of God, like the Publican, they dare not face God; they will not lift up their eyes to heaven until they can see some way in which they can lift up their eyes to heaven. The Publican stands afar off. One of the best thoughts, I think, of John Bunyan upon this matter is, that the Pharisee went so near to God as to leave no room for a mediator; but the Publican stood far enough off to leave room for a mediator. Just so it is now; those who are taught of God stand afar off. There is a fiery law, there is a mountainous scene of guilt; there are innumerable debts; there is an awful death, and a still more awful hell, said such a one; I can face none of it, if I overcome, it must be by the Lord Jesus Christ. Now just notice what follows this sacrifice. What is the next step? "His horns are like the horns of unicorns." Leaving out all disputations of learning as to what the unicorn is, let us take what we believe to be there spiritually meant, that the horns there are a figure of regal power. Now you observe this follows upon the sacrifice, so Jesus Christ has acquired his power by the sacrifice he has made, by the righteousness he has brought in; there is the power, all power in heaven and in earth, given unto him. What a contrast between him and the first Adam. The first Adam lost all his power, and became as we are; and we became by the fall what he was; our power is lost. What poor, weak creatures we are. See the stalwart, muscular man, that dreams he is always going to be as strong; that he will always be that iron, muscular, healthy sort of man. It does not signify to me, he says, what I eat, and what I drink, and where I go; I am a giant, and shall be a giant. By-and-by, in a few years, mortality progressively does its work, and we see this giant waking first with a staff, and then with a staff and a crutch, and then drawn out in an easy chair. Is that the man? That is the same man. I have seen instances of this in my day. So, I say, the strongest are but poor creatures. But what a mercy it is for us that Jesus Christ never lost his power; he still retains his power. Did he die at Jerusalem? Look at the power that followed on the day of Pentecost, and in the ministry of the apostles; and see the power that has followed from that day to this, and will go on down to the end of time. Then it is added, "With them" with these horns, "he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." Do you not see that that has an ultimate reference to the gospel? Did not Jesus say, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"? just showing that the ultimate meaning of these words is the ingathering of sinners from all nations. The Savior said, "Compel them to come in." And how are they to be compelled to come in? By necessity. You must either come in or perish; there is no food anywhere else. You must either

come in, or be naked and exposed to God's almighty wrath, for there is no wedding garment anywhere else; you must either come in or be lost to all eternity, for there is no refuge anywhere else. It is of necessity. When the Lord taught Saul of Tarsus his necessity, that necessity forced him to submit to Jesus. The Jews of whom he speaks were not pushed by necessity, for he said, "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." But the poor and the needy, his disease, his poverty, his guilt, all these things necessitate him to receive the truth, necessitate him to look to Christ, and to Christ only. "He shall push them together." The 1st chapter of Ephesians will show you the great center of unity. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him." The temple of old was the center of typical unity; Christ is the center of saving unity. And so, necessity brings them to Christ. When I look back to that happy moment, I shall never forget it, if I should live a thousand years. All necessities had pushed me out of everything. I went to church, that would not do. Then I heard my old friend, the zealous Wesleyan, that would not do. Then I heard duty-faith, that would not do. I had made up my mind to go nowhere else; I did not see the good of it; I could not find a minister that knew my case; they all passed by me, did not come to where I was. By-and-by the Lord himself came to where I was, and brought me to where he was, and I liked the place; he brought me to a great deal better than the place he brought me from; for he found me in prison, and brought me out of it; found me in darkness, and brought me out of it; found me in the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set my feet upon the rock of eternal ages, established my goings. That is forty-two years ago, and I have never been moved from that day to this. If I were to die now, before I leave this pulpit, I could say with the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." If I have kept nothing else, I have kept that; bless the Lord for it. Now that is the secret of our getting on, abiding so unitedly as we have been favored to do by God's truth, as a church and congregation. For we are a company of poor creatures; we cannot do without the Lord. We never could arrive at Mister Wesley's perfection, to say that we are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. We have been going the other way, at least I have, all my days. And the happy consequence is that as necessities abound, the Lord's mercies abound; as sufferings abound, through downward and painful experiences, consolations also abound. The Lord knows whether we do feel our need of these truths or not. He knows whether we enter at all into the apostle's meaning when he says, "Necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." I see and feel what a wretched man I am, and if I preach anything, it must be the gospel. "By the grace of God, I am what I am." I cannot preach anything else than the gospel, unless I preach my wretched self. As to my old Pharisees-ism, it was carrying me to hell as fast as it could. Therefore, I have nothing else but the gospel to preach. Let the haughtiness of man be brought down, and the Lord alone be exalted; no halting between two opinions, but living decision, enabling each to say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." Such are the people of God, partakers of these blessings.

Secondly, just a word upon *their names*, Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim, as you know, means "fruitfulness;" and the Lord makes use of this name, Ephraim, to denote fruitfulness, for in the last chapter of Hosea it says, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." Take the wine of Lebanon mystically to mean the blood of the everlasting covenant. What are the next words? "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" When shall Ephraim say this? Ah!

when the scent thereof is as the wine of Lebanon; when he shall know the efficacy of a Savior's blood; when he shall know the heart cheering power of a Savior's blood; when he shall know the healing, cleansing, victorious power of a Savior's blood; when he shall be refreshed as a giant with new wine. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Then the Lord said, "I have heard him, and observed him." I like to hear Ephraim talk like that. So, you have done with idols. Yes, Lord, "Other Lords beside you have had dominion over us; but by you alone will we make mention of your name." Now comes the reference to the name of Ephraim. The Lord said, "I am like a green fir tree. From me is your fruit found." There's Ephraim, you see. Ephraim signifies fruit-fulness; and now, Ephraim, "from me is your fruit found." Ephraim, you love me: that is the fruit of my having first loved you; Ephraim, you have chosen me: that is the fruit of my having first chosen you; Ephraim, you are looking to me: that is the fruit of my first looking to you; you are coming to me: that is the fruit of my first coming to you; you admire me: that is the fruit of my giving you to my dear Son, and approving you in him. And so, all our love to and confidence in him is the happy consequence of what he has done to us and for us; and so, we may say of all the good words and good works of the saints of God. "From me is your fruit found." Thus, then, "the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon, Lebanon meaning perfection, and greatness, and purity, pointing to the precious blood of the everlasting covenant. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Until you come into necessity; until you are guilty and filthy enough in your own eyes before God to feel your need of a Savior, you will be sure to have some false god, some fake confidence, something or another to help you out. But when once brought experimentally into the knowledge of the truth, you will say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Down with them forever, as the old divines used to say, never to take them up again. Then you will indeed say, "This God is our God forever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death." So much for Ephraim, then. He is blessed you see, as his name indicates. Now Manasseh means "forgetfulness." Say you, That is very bad. I think it is very good. "Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, for God, said he, has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." And God has made us forget all the toil and all the woe of our old Adam house. It is a broken down house, a leprous house, it must all come down; but our God has another house for us, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; our God has another and a better Paradise for us; our God has another and a better inheritance for us; and so he will make us forget all our toil and all our father's house. But that is only one part of the meaning. The people of God shall so realize ultimately the blessing of the Lord as to forget all their toils; but then there is another thing indicated by Manasseh. The Lord says, "I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions, and will not remember your sins." Ah, says the devil, I will remember them. Well, what's the good of that? I don't care for that, if the Lord does not remember them. Ah, says the Pharisee, I will remember them. What's the good of that, if the Lord will not remember them? And there is no forgetfulness like willful forgetfulness, you know friends. When a man forgets a thing by accident, he may think of it again; but when he forgets it willfully, he says, "I will never think of it again." So, our God has forgiven our sins willfully, with a will. "I will not remember your sins." But while he thus forgets the sins of his people, he will never forget the people themselves. "O Israel, you shalt not be forgotten of me."

"Though I oft have him forgot,  
His loving-kindness changes not."

So much for the names

Lastly, I notice *the order of the numbers*. You have here a diminution: first, ten thousand, and then only thousands. Now we have taken Ephraim and Manasseh in the Christian sense, to set forth the true Israel of God, and I will not spoil this by entering into the diminution of numbers in relation to professors, when all mere professors shall be taken away and nothing but real possessors left, because I think that is not the meaning. I take this to be the meaning: that when the Lord first began to gather in his people, in the apostolic age, there were then tens of thousands, and he gathered them in then by tens of thousands. But there are not so many to gather in now as there were then; by-and-by there will only be a few thousand to gather in, and then by-and-by a few hundred; then a few scores, and then by-and-by only one to gather in; and so, the top stone shall be brought in with shouting of "Grace, grace unto it." There is a complete contrast here between the literal Ephraim and Manasseh and the spiritual Ephraim and Manasseh. The literal Ephraim came to nothing, whereas the true Ephraim shall shine forth to all eternity. The literal Manasseh came to nothing; their numbers dwindled down, to nothing. But the saints of God, though there are few now to be gathered in, in comparison of the numbers there were at the first, still all are to be gathered in; all are safe. You have in this world both decrease and increase, but in heaven you have no decrease; every soul that enters there stops there forever; heaven goes on increasing, but never decreasing; those that were there thousands of years ago are there now. I therefore take the ten thousand of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh to represent this truth, that in the apostolic age vast multitudes were gathered in, there represented as ten thousand; then, when we come down to later times, the number remaining to be gathered in becomes less, until, as I have said, the last is gathered. Now Jacob said, "Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." It is a remarkable thing, literally, that Ephraim's lot fell about the center of the land of Canaan; it seemed to be a literal fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy, "Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." Then if we take it in the Christian sense, where are the people of God? Why, they are in the midst of the earth.