

“THE FAITH OF THE PATRIARCHS - PART 3: JACOB AND JOSEPH”
Hebrews 11:21-22

INTRODUCTION:

I. THE FAITH OF JACOB V. 21

A. Faith that Follows God’s Direction v. 21a

- Jacob was 130 years old when he was brought with his entire family of 70 into the land of Egypt
- God had mercifully provided a well-supplied area of Egypt, the land of Goshen, for his family to live in and care for their herds and flocks
- 17 years had gone by since that time; Jacob had the blessing of not only seeing Joseph once again, but Joseph’s two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim
- to Jacob it was as if Joseph had come back from the dead; these last 17 years were times of greater blessing than he ever had hoped to experience
- during those last years Jacob could reflect upon all the stories that his father, Isaac, and grandfather Abraham had passed down to him
- these history snippets contained all that God Almighty had promised to them
- the promises included of a prolific heritage in souls and in the land of Canaan
- Gen. 48 records the incident that is referred to here in Heb. 11:21
- turn in your Bibles to Gen. 48 and follow along to catch what went on then
- read Gen. 48**
- Joseph had brought his two sons with him that they might honor their grandfather and see him before he died
- Joseph’s sons, Manasseh and Ephraim would become the recipients of the double blessing that was part of the firstborn’s inheritance
- in effect Jacob was adopting Joseph’s two sons as his own
- Joseph was 56 years old at this time; his sons were probably in their 20’s
- this private meeting was before the full family blessing was passed down to all the sons of Jacob (Gen. 49)
- although Reuben was Jacob’s firstborn son, his incestuous relationship with his step-mom’s handmaid, Bilhah, as well as his weak leadership cost him
- the next two sons, Simeon and Levi, were overlooked for this blessing because of their cruelty at Shechem, when they slaughtered all the males of the town in their anger over what had happened to their sister, Dinah
- Jacob had the Spirit of God upon him at this moment; he believed what lay in store for his family as promised by God, although he wouldn’t see it
- yet he acted upon that promise in faith, imparting the firstborn’s blessings upon Joseph’s sons
- why was this included in this ‘hall of faith’? I believe it had to do with the trials of faith these Hebrew believers were going through at the time
- just as Jacob believed God for the promises made of an inheritance far greater than Egypt, so these Hebrew believers needed to follow that same faith
- God will be faithful to fulfill all He has promised in His own way and time
- you can’t figure out the ways of the Lord in their details; but you can count on His faithfulness to His word

B. Faith that Finishes Well v. 21b

- Jacob was at the end of his life when this blessing was imparted; his strength is waning; yet his faith was as strong, if not stronger than ever before
- he had been through so much during his lifetime; he told Egypt's Pharaoh

Gen 47:9 *And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." NKJV*

- now here he is seventeen years later, and his body is failing quickly
- his hip had been pulled out of joint many years earlier by the Lord as a reminder that his strength lies in hanging onto the Lord and not his conniving ways
- even though his body was shutting down, he was still sensitive to the Spirit's promptings; it was Jacob's desire to worship the Lord with his last breath
- I want to finish well in my Christian walk here on earth; I've made many mistakes during my 40 years as a believer in Christ
- but I want my latter years to be more fruitful than my former years; but I don't know what that means, or even what that looks like
- I've asked God to enable that to happen according to His accounting, not man's
- there is still time for all of us to get back on track with the Lord; it doesn't matter how long you have whittled away the years; now is the day of salvation
- the world counts a person's value by how productive they are to society
- if they only drain the resources and can't give back in a meaningful way, unfortunately many times they are seen as a liability to society
- is that how God views us? when we can't 'produce' for Him in some fashion we are seen by Him as a liability? God forbid! That is not what the Bible says
- we all need to rethink this truth; those who are in their last years are seen by God on an equal basis with the most productive servant of the Lord
- He doesn't compare us with anyone else; we are seen by Him as an eternal soul, His very own child, and anxiously waits for us to meet Him in heaven
- how do we treat the elderly? when we look into their eyes, especially of those who have walked with the Lord for years and years, do we honor them?
- those believers who are unable to actively serve the Lord can still worship Him; the sacrifice of thanksgiving is of the highest value to the Lord

II. THE FAITH OF JOSEPH V. 22

A. Faith that Looks Forward to the Future

- Joseph lived to be 110 years old; this means he had lived in Egypt 93 years
- he was 17 years old when brought down to Egypt, and 30 years old when finally released from prison
- all of his 10 half-brothers were older except for Benjamin, his biological brother
- life had been wonderful for the last 80 years; but he knew their home was not Egypt; their home was the promised land of Canaan
- there must have been an inner sense in him concerning what lay ahead for the family in Egypt; this together with the prophecy of upcoming affliction
- this prophecy was given to Joseph's great-grandfather, Abraham just after he believed God's promise concerning descendants as numerous as the sands of the sea and stars of the sky

Gen 15:12-16

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."
NKJV

- understand that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob believed the Word of God concerning the future
- they passed down those promises carefully to the next generation until it came into written form
- those promises identified them as the people of God; it sustained them through much hardship and suffering

B. Faith that Leaves the World Behind

- Joseph believed that Egypt wasn't his home; he knew that God would someday bring them safely to their real homeland
- in the same way the word of God continues to sustain the people of God today
- our homeland is being with Jesus in heaven; this world is not our home
- think of it: our entire world-view has been dramatically altered since before we trusted Christ for our salvation!
- for those of you here who have trusted Christ Jesus for your salvation: think about what actually took place when you came to believe the gospel
- someone presented to you the words of Scripture concerning the love of God, the sending of Jesus, the forgiveness offered by the Father because Jesus bore that sin on the cross, the resurrection life for those who believe
- the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of our hearts to 'catch it' and we suddenly realized that if it were really true, it would be the greatest thing of all
- we took a step of faith to trust the gospel message and opened our hearts to receive Jesus as our Savior, repenting of our sins
- the Holy Spirit was sent into our hearts that very moment and we became born again by His Spirit; the Bible became the food for our spirit
- suddenly we say, "Why can't everyone see how right this gospel message is?"
- but we forget the words of the Lord Jesus when he said:

John 6:44 *For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. Holy Bible, New Living Translation ®, copyright © 1996, 2004 by Tyndale Charitable Trust. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers. All rights reserved.*

- we who are Christians in this room believe what the Bible says about things that are coming in the future
- we may not know exactly how they will come to pass, but we believe they will definitely come to pass in God's timing and in God's way
- if all religions worship the same God, then God sends conflicting messages to man; if all the religions are the same, then it is up to man to choose which road he would like to travel on to get to God

- that may seem to some like the right way it should be; after all we choose which grocery store to shop at, which clothing store to use, even which church to attend
- world religion classes in College and Universities put all religions on the same level; but in doing this they have to water down the gospel message to come under the tone of all other religions
- all other religions are based upon man's efforts to attain god or god-likeness
- the Scriptures teach that man cannot be made righteous in God's eyes by his good deeds
- man is condemned to eternal separation from God because of his sin nature, not just his sinful deeds
- no amount of good deeds can cancel out that issue of his sin nature
- this is why Jesus came down from heaven: to take our sin upon Himself and give to us His righteousness if we will believe on His name and become His disciple

2 Cor 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. NKJV*

- no other religion on earth teaches this; so how can all religions be worshiping the same God?
- those who were worshiping false gods in the land of Canaan were not serving the God of Israel; it wasn't all the same
- as a matter of fact the Scriptures declare that those nations were serving demons and not God; demons were behind the gods of those religions

Deut 32:16-17

16 They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. 17 They sacrificed to demons, not to God, To gods they did not know, To new gods, new arrivals That your fathers did not fear. NKJV

- we are called to honor all people because they were created in the image and likeness of God
- but that doesn't mean we must accept all their belief systems as equal to the God of the Bible