

Jacob and Joseph's Faithfulness

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Date: 13 August 2017

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in Genesis, reading in verse 29.

And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me.

Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my father. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place. He answered, I will do as you have said.

And he said, Swear to me. And he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed. After this, Joseph was told, Behold, your father is ill. So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

And it was told to Jacob, Your son Joseph has come to you. Then Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed. And Jacob said to Joseph and so on.

[1 : 05] Now it doesn't matter how long we live in this world. However long or however short, there's going to come a time when our life will come to an end.

Sometimes it's incredibly brief, our life. And sometimes it's very, very long. Jacob lived 147 years. But of course, the day came when he had to leave this world. And one of the things I love about Jacob is the passion and the energy and the zeal that he was showing as an old man.

You know, very often elderly people can begin to lose interest in things. Maybe lose interest in the future. Sometimes there's just this slow disintegration of things.

Maybe the mind and the body is just everything is like it's shutting down slowly. But it seemed to be with Jacob that there was still this vitality, this energy, this passion.

[2 : 10] And it was spiritual in its making because you can see he's really, he's virtually bed bound. It was a big effort for him. We can see that in verse 2 of 48.

Then Israel, that's Joseph, summoned his strength and sat up in bed. So even just to sit up in bed was a huge thing for him.

So here he is, he's an old, old man. He's come to the end of his days. But listening to him, you would never think that he was just about to die, that he had reached the end.

Because as we say, there's this energy, there's this passion, and there's this zeal. And that is because he was such a spiritual man.

He was so just passionate about God's promises, about what God had done for him, what God had done right throughout his life.

[3 : 07] He was very aware of who he had come from. He was so aware of his father Isaac, his grandfather Abraham. He was locked into the history of his grandfather.

But he was also locked into the promises of God regarding the future. And so we find that Jacob is an example of, as it says in Psalm 92, about how others fade.

But some of the old, it says that their fruit shall still, the fruit they'll still forthbring. And that's true.

You will sometimes see old people, and they've still got this vibrancy about them. And that's the way it was with Jacob. Now, as we know, if you study the history of Jacob, it wasn't always like that. Because when he was younger, he was a bit of a grabber. He was a bit of a deceiver. He was a twister. He was always somebody who was out on the make. He was always trying to get one over somebody so that he would better himself.

[4 : 12] That kind of was his nature. A bit deceitful. But as the years went on, we find that Jacob is being broken bit by bit by bit.

And the old Jacob is so different to the young Jacob that we meet, who managed to twist the birthright out of his brother, and managed to deceive his old blind father in order to get the special blessing.

Very different man at the end of his days. So totally different. And that's what God does with us. You know, we're really bad at locking people where they are.

Not giving God, in our own minds, the opportunity of changing people. We see people and we think, ah, that's how they are. But God is at work all the time.

Moulding, reshaping. And it's often through the difficult things, through the setbacks, through the pains, through the losses, that God is working.

[5 : 17] And when you look at Jacob's life, although he got a lot, he was this grabber, he was always, remember he was a twin with Esau, his brother.

Esau was born first and then Jacob. And Jacob, when he was born, seemed to be grabbing the heel of his brother. And that was just exactly how he lived.

He was like a grabber. And he was like pulling Esau out of the way. And he got everything that by right should have been Esau's. So that was his nature. But as we say, God was at work.

God was molding and shaping him. And we should realize that people are changing. People change. They should be, as a Christian, you should be changing. Being molded bit by bit by bit.

More and more and more. Being conformed to the image of Christ. Because that's God's great purpose for you in this world. It is the purpose. He might have a lot of purposes for you and plans in your life.

[6 : 17] But he has one main plan. One main purpose. And that is to make you. Mold you into the image of a son.

We are told that in the word. That we have been conformed. That's it. It's an ongoing. It doesn't happen straight away. It has been conformed. And then at death.

Immediately pass into glory. And it is there then that we will fully resemble our Lord and our Savior. But in this world, it's ongoing. And it's often through these things.

Jacob had a hard life. He had four wives. But there was one he loved. Remember, we don't have time to go through the history of Jacob. But he completely fell in love with Rachel.

And he was going to marry Rachel. But Laban deceived. It's interesting. You know, it says in the Bible, what a person sows, they will reap.

[7 : 18] There's a law of return. And if you spend your time twisting and deceiving and doing people in order to get on, don't be surprised if it comes back.

And that's exactly what happened to Jacob. Because, it's almost hard to imagine, but they would be covered in this long veil and such like.

At the wedding, it was supposed to be Leah he was marrying. But Leah's and Rachel's father thought, I know what I'm going to do.

Because Jacob is working for me. He had worked seven years for Rachel. That was a price. Because Laban said, if you work seven years, I'll give you Leah.

I'll give you Rachel. But what he did was he got Leah dressed with a veil over. And Jacob ended up marrying Leah instead of Rachel.

[8 : 17] And I can't even begin to imagine when that veil comes off to discover. Ooh, that's not who. That's not who I want. That's not who I love.

But that's what happened. He was married. And then Laban came up with the idea. He says, work for another seven years and then you'll get Rachel. So, you see, it was payback to a certain extent.

Now, there's a whole, so many lessons along there. But Rachel was the love of his life. And Rachel had two children. There was Joseph and there was Benjamin.

And she died giving birth to Benjamin. And that, he mentions that, how he had to bury her on his way. So, there was that pain. And then there was Joseph who was sold as a slave.

And remember, the brothers brought back Joseph's clothing covered in blood. They had killed a wee good kid or something and dipped Joseph's clothes in the blood.

[9 : 14] And they had sold Joseph as a slave. But they brought back the clothing to their father. And they said, look, we found this. Is that not Joseph's? Poor Jacob.

He nearly died with grief. Because there was, he'd lost his son. And he had lost his wife. And he was just beside himself with grief. And there's no doubt that the brothers were saying, oh, what have we done here?

It's such a complex story. The whole story of Joseph and Jacob and such like. But anyway, these things were all part of the past. But through all these blows and all that was happening, God was working in Jacob.

And he became such a mature believer. With his passion for God. And a passion for God's promises and God's purposes. And he was aware that he was part of God's history. And that God was going to bless him. And bless the family. Bless the children. And so we find here that it's now come to the time when Jacob is going to die.

[10:19] And it's very interesting because it tells us in verse 28 or chapter 47. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for 17 years.

Very interesting that for the last 17 years of his life, Joseph was looking after him. For the first 17 years of Joseph's life, Jacob was looking after him.

Because Joseph was sold as a slave when he was 17. And again, we see these sort of things so often happen. Just the way things turn around. But that's just by the way.

But one of the great qualities when you look at the life of Joseph and the latter life of Jacob. Is you see their faithfulness. Faithfulness to one another and faithfulness to God.

And it's one of the great characteristics of Joseph's life. His faithfulness. He was faithful to his father as a youngster. When he was sold as a slave, he was faithful to Potiphar, his master.

[11:28] Even in prison, when he was put there for years, he was faithful to the prison keeper.

When he was taken out and exalted to become governor, second only to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt, he was absolutely faithful to Pharaoh.

His whole life was one of absolute faithfulness. And again, when we look at the outworking of Joseph as governor of Egypt, again, there's just so much in this particular chapter.

But if you go back and see the whole way of the famine that had taken place in the land, and Joseph was dealing with the situation, it really is full of instruction.

One of the things that prominently comes out is that Egypt was in dire straits. The most fertile, the best part of the land was this part called Goshen.

It was incredibly fertile. And Pharaoh, in his wisdom, gave that part of the land to Jacob and his family when he came down.

[12:41] So right throughout the time of famine, Jacob and all the family were being provided for, and they had a form of nourishment that nobody else in the land had.

And you know, God often does that with his people. That even when there is famine, and we can talk about it as spiritual famine, even when we might be living in a time where people are saying, oh, it's hard being a Christian today, it's a struggle being a Christian, the Lord is still able to individually feed his people, and to nourish his people, and to make their bones, as it says in Isaiah, to fatten their bones, to make them strong, to fill them.

And that's one of the wonderful things that the Lord continues to do. And you know, as you look back over your life, you will be able to see, sometimes not at the time, but afterwards, you will see the way that the Lord helped you, the way the Lord nourished you, the way the Lord kept you. But here was Israel, and here they were in the land of Egypt, during a fearful famine, and yet the Lord kept them and provided for them all the time.

Now, as we said, it's quite interesting when you look at, when you follow through this chapter, because we see the way that God restores people's fortunes.

[14:09] We're going to finish, I've changed the last singing to Psalm 126. You know that Psalm where you say, when Zion's bondage God turns back, or how God restored Israel's fortunes.

And God is continually doing that. He changes everything around. Joseph, remember, was a slave in Egypt.

When you read this chapter, Egypt actually becomes Joseph's slave. It's quite amazing. All the people of Egypt sold themselves, because they had no money.

They had paid, they had sold, they had used all their money to buy food. Then they had used all their cattle and sheep and donkeys to buy food.

And in the end, they said, we've nothing else, but our land and ourselves, buy us. So that's exactly what Joseph did. He bought the whole of all the people.

[15:13] And we saw there that when he gave them grain, and when they sowed, and then when it would come harvest time, one-fifth had to go to Pharaoh. They were able to keep four-fifths themselves.

So it's very interesting the way God turns it right round. For years, Joseph had been a slave in Egypt, and now Egypt becomes Joseph's slave.

It's really quite amazing. And you know, God will not be mocked. And you'll see this often in the Bible, that people who've oppressed the people of God, that everything turns round on them. A classic example is Haman. Haman, remember in the book of Esther, he hated Mordecai to such an extent, he was decided he was going to obliterate the Jewish race. When he discovered that Mordecai was a Jew, he said, that's it. I'm going to kill Mordecai, but I'm going to kill all his people. And he built incredibly high gallows in order to hang Mordecai.

[16:18] What happened? Haman ended up swinging on these gallows himself. Pharaoh, not this Pharaoh, but down throughout the generations, remember the Pharaoh that began to persecute the Israelites, start a term of infant genocide amongst them.

And then Pharaoh were led out by the Lord, and then Pharaoh went back, and he was going to get them. And yet Pharaoh and the armies were destroyed in the Red Sea. And this is the way God works. So when Zion's bondage, God turned back as men that dreamed were weeds. Like Naomi in the book of Ruth. Remember poor Naomi. Oh, her life, she lost her husband, and she lost her two sons. She came back to Bethlehem. And they said, oh, it's Naomi back. Oh, she said, don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara. Bitter. My life has just been broken. I am in a state of perpetual mourning.

[17:21] But God wasn't finished. That wasn't the end. Because we find that God reversed the fortunes. Remember how Ruth and Boaz got married? It wasn't long until the one who thought that she would never see him.

There was a granny again. And it was just, there was so much blessing brought into her life. Same with Job. God restores fortunes. So here we find that Jacob has called for Joseph. And he says to Joseph, right, I want you to make a promise to me. That's why he said, put your hand under my thigh. This is a way of making a solemn promise. I am going to die. Now I know the last 17 years have been amazing. And that I have been fed and nourished here in the land of Egypt. But I don't belong to Egypt in any shape or form. I belong to Canaan. It's a land of promise. And I insist that I be buried there with my fathers. That's where I have to go.

[18:23] Because this is a land that God has promised. He has promised to me and to you and to all the generations. This is our place.

And Jacob was seeing ahead. He was so persuaded of the fullness of God's promises. And that, of course, is all great faith. And that we find that Jacob then begins to reflect. Verse 2, And we find that Israel summoned his strength and he sat up in bed. And Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Lezor, Bethel, in the land of Canaan and blessed me and said to me, Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession. And that's what Jacob is saying to Joseph. Yes, you're in Egypt but you're not an Egyptian. You don't belong here. You belong to the land of promise. And we know, of course, when Joseph came to die, he was exactly like Pharaoh, like Jacob, sorry. He was saying to his family, you have to take me up to Canaan.

[19:42] That's where I belong. It was the same with Moses. When Moses was going to be elevated, he was there as a prince in Egypt when he had to make the choice. Do I get all the riches, the wealth he was on running to become a Pharaoh in the land? Or do I stay and align myself with God's people? He chose to align himself with God's people who were suffering and being afflicted. And you see, this is faith because faith sees beyond the present. Faith looks to God. And you know, when God fills our vision, our whole future opens up. And you know, one of the things that we see is that this world is not our home. We're just passing through. We're on a journey. God doesn't allow our roots to go down too deep. There's always something that brings a little bitterness in this world. There's always something because God says, yes, there are many blessings here, but there'll also be little things that will keep you from becoming too attached to the world because you're only passing through.

[21:01] Heaven is your home. That's where you're going to live forever. That's where your eternal dwelling place is. This is temporary. This is only for a wee while. We've always got to remember that.

And Jacob was so persuaded and assured of that. I'm just passing through. Egypt is for a while, but the land of promise. And we've got to be persuaded that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, were seeing way beyond the land.

They were seeing the city whose builder and maker was God. The Bible tells us that. That their faith, yes, they saw the land as a land of promise, but they also saw the spiritual land of promise. And I hope that that's where your heart and my heart is today, that we're seeing way beyond. And Jacob then, he's in reflective mode and he's saying to Joseph, you know, there was a night when he talks about this.

God Almighty appeared to me at Lez in the land of Canaan and blessed me. That was that wonderful night. Remember when Jacob had to run from home after he had stolen the special blessing from Esau.

[22 : 16] And Esau said, I'm going to kill him. So Jacob had to run. And that night with only the starry sky as a blanket, he lay down, probably very homesick because he was a home-loving boy.

But God appeared to him. Remember the ladder that he saw from stretching down or going up from earth to heaven. He saw this. And the Lord spoke to him and he said, remember the words.

We find that these words are in Genesis chapter 28 and at verse 15. It's one of the most beautiful promises. The Lord said to him, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go.

That must have been the most marvelous experience for Jacob. I'm sure he had many wonderful experiences but for God to say that to him, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and you know what?

I will bring you back to this land for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. And you know when you find it saying that, I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised, it means I am never going to leave you.

[23 : 32] It is kind of just guaranteeing the promise that he has made. It is not that the Lord is going to fulfill a promise and then leave him. This means it is an eternal, this promise is a guaranteed one.

Jacob could never have forgotten that night and I am sure it is the same for you. There will be occasions, there will be days, there will be nights, there will be times that are etched in your mind, spiritual times.

times where the Lord drew so close to you, you felt like the very dew of heaven was melting your heart. Times might have moved on and you might have gone through hard times, backslidden times, times you say, oh I wish it was different today.

But you will never, ever, ever forget that time because it was so powerful, it was so real. There might have been a few of these times, God was there with you, deep within you, personal.

And so, Jacob is reminding Joseph and he's saying, God was absolutely faithful to his promise. He took me back but it's up to you now to make sure that you take me back with you.

[24 : 48] And we find, there's just so much more that we could say but Jacob is now, we see there how he blesses Joseph's children.

And we've seen it before, he crosses, he crosses his hands because normally the oldest child got the bigger blessing. and Manasseh should have been blessed by the right hand and Ephraim by the left hand.

Jacob crosses his hands. Joseph wasn't pleased and it's very interesting in the book of Genesis, there's a few of these reversals of blessing. Cain was older but Abel was the one who was blessed. Jacob was the younger but he was the one who was blessed. Reuben should have had the blessing but it's Joseph that got it. Manasseh should have got the blessing but it's Ephraim who got it.

See, God is sovereign. God is sovereign in everything that he does. He has a purpose, he has a plan. Today, it might not, it didn't make sense to Joseph. Joseph actually was angry.

[25 : 55] We don't often find Joseph being angry but he was displeased with what his father did. But his father was moved by the Spirit of God. God does things sometimes in our lives that we might be displeased about as well.

But God has a purpose and as we say, God is in the business of restoring fortunes. The greatest thing that we can do for our families is bring them to the Lord for blessing.

And remember, the Lord blesses children at every level from the womb onwards. We know that in the womb he blessed Jeremiah and even in the womb he told Jeremiah when he grew up he said, I separated you.

