

*By Faith Jacob Blessed Joseph's Sons
Hebrews 11:21*

INTRO:

Several years ago, Kathy and I attended the NRBFC conference in Lincoln, Maine. There were many good things that we took home with us from that conference. But one thing that struck me was something that one of the older pastors in the fellowship said. Pastor Campbell said to us as a fellowship, *"When you pray for me, pray that I will finish well."*

We studied many lessons about faith as it is illustrated in the lives of the men and women in God's hall of faith. As we pick up our study in verse 21, we learn the lesson the pastor in Lincoln, Maine, was talking about. True faith finishes well. The writer of Hebrews showed us this in a snap shot from the end of Jacob's life.

I. True Faith Finishes Well Because It Remains Faithful To The End.

(Genesis 47:29-48:7)

II. True Faith Finishes Well Because It Rejoices In God's Faithfulness (v. 8-20)

III. True Faith Finishes Well Because It Plans For A Future Yet Distant (v. 21-22)

I. True Faith Finishes Well Because It Remains Faithful To The End. (Genesis 47:29-48:7)

Hebrews 11:21 *"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff"*

A. To understand what the writer is saying we will have to go back to the account in **Genesis 47**. At the end of Jacob's life we find him becoming very aware that he is about to die. In **Genesis 47:30-31** we find Jacob, driven by his faith in God and God's promises, making plans for what must happen to his body when he dies.

"Let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And [Joseph] said, 'I will do as you have said.' Then he said, 'Swear to me.' And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed."

1. We may wonder why this is so important to Jacob. Why must he be buried in a land that is far away? It is important because while all of the promises of God are bound up in Jacob's family, they are also inseparably linked to a land.

2. The land of promise is Canaan. God gave Canaan to Abraham. Jacob wants to make sure none of his descendants forgets this truth. That is why he makes Joseph swear he will take Jacob's body back to be buried in the family grave yard in Canaan. Even in his death Jacob wants to be obedient to God.

B. By faith, Jacob also regarded God's promises as his present possession. We see this in that as he rehearses God's promise to make of Jacob a nation and to give him the land of

Canaan, he makes arrangements for the distribution of the land to Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh on an equal basis with the other sons of Jacob.

1. In Jacob's mind, the promise of God is so secure that he could give it as a gift to his grandchildren.

2. Joseph did not dispute this plan because those promises were real to him too. While we do not have a promise related to a land like Jacob had, wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to give our children something of our heavenly inheritance here in this world?

The Apostle Paul traced such a godly heritage in Timothy.

2 Timothy 1:5 *"When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."*

We may not be able to give our children faith, but we can give them a godly heritage that demonstrates the truth of our faith.

II. True Faith Finishes Well Because It Rejoices in God's Faithfulness (Genesis 48:8-20)

A. True faith finishes well because it is faithful to the end. True faith also finishes well because it remembers and rejoices in the faithfulness of God. Jacob rejoiced in the faithfulness of God in allowing him to not only see his son, Joseph again, but he also was able to see his grandchildren through Joseph (**v. 8-11**). Remember that for a number of years Jacob believed that Joseph was dead. This is no small miracle in Jacob's eyes and no small reason to glorify the LORD.

B. Jacob also rejoiced in God's faithfulness in bringing him to the place where he now was in God's plan.

vs.15a *"God, before whom my fathers' Abraham and Isaac walked."*

Jacob's God has always been faithful to Abraham and Isaac. Now, He committed Himself to the family of Jacob and the family of Jacob must recognize God's faithfulness and respond with devotion to God.

C. The LORD is Jacob's God. He is:

vs.15b *"The God who has fed me all my life long to this day."*

This is the God who appeared to Jacob in Bethel and who has provided for him every step of his journey from Canaan, to Laban's household, back to Canaan, and now to Egypt. Jacob says my God led me all the way!

D. God took Jacob from his old life of cheating, scheming, and plotting and has made him a new man. He is:

vs.16 *"The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil."*

This probably refers to Jacob's night of wrestling with God in **Genesis 32**.

E. True faith finishes well because it remains faithful to the end. True faith finishes well because it can see God's faithfulness every step of the way! Finally, true faith finishes well because it plans for a future yet distant.

III. True Faith Finishes Well Because It Plans For A Future Yet Distant (v. 21-22)

A. Jacob blessed Joseph's sons and adopted them as his own because he was preparing for the fulfillment of God's promise (**vs.21,22**). Joseph did not receive a double portion because he replaced Ruben as the first born. He got a double portion because he was now two tribes instead of one. When Israel came into possession of the Promised Land, Ephraim and Manasseh both received portions with the other tribes. This division of Joseph into two tribes was important in God's plan because when the Israelites came out of Egypt, God took Levi as His inheritance. Levi was no longer counted with the tribes. Joseph's two sons brought the number back to twelve!

B. How about us? Are the promises of God so certain to us that we live our present lives in view of them? I think of two passages of scripture. First, in **Matthew 6:19-21**;

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

What treasure are you seeking? What treasure are you living for?

C. The second passage is in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**. Here, the Apostle Paul is talking about what keeps him going in the ministry. He gives it to us simply.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Eternal glory is important because our whole perspective is focused on the unseen realities which are eternal. Paul wrote that he was living for the promises yet to come. They were so real to him that present decisions were made in view of eternal things. Can we say that? May God help us to walk so close to Him that the unseen reality becomes more real to us than the reality in which we now are living. Then we will finish well.