

Genesis 46:1-30
Walking by Faith, Not by Sight

The Christian life is a life of faith

- Faith is the means by which we initially believe in Jesus at conversion
- Faith is the means by which we continually believe in Jesus after conversion

At the moment of conversion, God does not infuse us with perfect knowledge to make every decision in our lives

- Rather, our lives consist of a step-by-step process by which we look to the Lord for guidance and direction

Sometimes, the road seems very foggy

- We look to the Lord even more passionately during these days
- We want to ensure that we are pleasing Him with our decisions

This morning, we will examine the first part of Genesis 46

- God will personally appear to Jacob and reassure him that he is making the right decision to leave Canaan for Egypt
- Later on, Jacob will be reunited with Joseph

Sandwiched between these two pieces of information is a long genealogy of Jacob's descendants

Let's read Genesis 46:1-30

As followers of Christ, we are commanded to walk by faith, not by sight

- We are commanded to trust God, even when it doesn't make perfect sense to us

God has always called His people to walk by faith

- The Old Testament believers had far less revelation than we have
- Yet many of them stand out as great examples of trust and faith

This morning, we will consider three encouragements that we gain when we walk by faith

- These are blessings that can only come about when we trust in God, and not in ourselves
 - o We are encouraged by His promises (46:1-7)
 - o We are encouraged by His blessings (46:8-27)
 - o We are encouraged by His grace (46:28-30)

I. We are encouraged by His promises (46:1-7)

¹ So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

At the end of Genesis 45, Jacob's sons told him that Joseph was alive

- Jacob had believed that Joseph was dead for 22 years

But now that Jacob realized that Joseph was alive, his spirit was revived (45:27)

- He was awakened out of his complacency

With renewed vigor, Israel prepares to move to Egypt

- He has undoubtedly heard about the length of the famine
- He knows that Joseph will take care of him

As best we can tell, Jacob is still living in Hebron (37:14)

- If he has moved, the Biblical data doesn't tell us

Jacob travels from Hebron to Beersheba

- Beersheba would be about 25 miles southwest of Hebron¹
- Beersheba is on the southern border of Canaan (Jdg 20:1)²

Beersheba would have been the point of no return

- There would be no turning back after this

Beersheba has been an important city in the book of Genesis

- Abraham had worshipped the LORD at Beersheba after his treaty with Abimelech (Gen 21:31-33)
- Beersheba was the place where Abraham returned to live after he was asked to offer Isaac on Mt. Moriah (22:19)
- Jacob's father Isaac had received God's Word and worshipped at Beersheba (Gen 26:24-25)
- And it was from Beersheba that Jacob had fled to Haran many years before because of his deceit and the anger of his brother, Esau (Gen 28:10)

Jacob proceeds to offer sacrifices at Beersheba

- Specifically, Jacob offered sacrifices "to the God of his father Isaac"

Jacob was grateful and thankful for what the Lord had done in his life

- He wanted to offer a voluntary sacrifice

² And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."

God appears to Israel in "visions of the night"

The last time that God had appeared to anyone in the book of Genesis in a vision was chapter 15

- This was where God reaffirmed the Abrahamic Covenant and its promises

How humbling it must have been for Jacob to receive this vision from God

- As a matter of fact, this is the last time that God will reveal Himself to anyone in the book of Genesis

The next revelation of God would come to Moses in Exodus 3

- That would be the burning bush incident

We notice that Jacob's sacrifices preceded God's revelation of Himself

- His sacrifice was not a response to the visions

¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 2*, 441.

² Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 628.

Once again, Moses mixes the two names of Jacob and Israel

- Both names are used in verse 2

But when God speaks to Israel, notice what He says, “**Jacob, Jacob**”

- First, notice that God uses the old name, “**Jacob**”
- Second, notice that God repeats his name twice

We are allowed to see Jacob from God’s perspective

- Jacob is acting like his old self
- He is not acting like the man who wrestled with God and was victorious

On a human level, we can relate to this

- The man has lost a son
- Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob
- To hear that your son was killed by a wild animal must have been devastating!

Yet, God uses the old name to remind the man that he is not acting like he should

- He is not acting in a manner that is worthy of the title “**Israel**”

This is similar to when Christ would sometimes refer to Peter by his old name Simon

- It was a mild rebuke for the way that he was acting

Nevertheless, when God called Jacob’s name, he responded, “**Here I am**”

- He was a willing instrument in the hands of God

In Genesis 22, we encounter a similar statement, “**the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am’**” (22:11)

- Abraham was being tested in his faith regarding Isaac
- Now Jacob was being tested in his faith regarding Egypt

³ And He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.”

Verses 3-4 record what God told Jacob

- These are powerful words given by God

You can imagine the apprehension that Jacob must have felt

- He was leaving Canaan
- This was the Promised Land!

Jacob needed to know that God was approving this move

- What God said was more important than what Joseph said

God was gracious to give him the assurance and affirmation that he needed

As a matter of fact, God tells Jacob, “**I am God, the God of your father**”

- Literally, the Hebrew reads, “I am the God, the God of your father”

Remember, God did not allow Isaac to go down to Egypt

- Yet here is the same God giving different marching orders to Jacob

Furthermore, God tells Jacob, “do not be afraid to go down to Egypt”

- Why would Jacob be afraid of going down to Egypt?
 1. Jacob had never been to Egypt
 - o He didn't know what to expect
 2. Jacob remembered how God did not allow his father Isaac to go down to Egypt (26:2)
 - o Perhaps he was a little hesitant about traveling outside the Promised Land
 3. Jacob remembered the story of Abraham's terrible trip to Egypt
 - a. Sarah was endangered
 - b. Why did they travel to Egypt – because of a famine

We can't know exactly what caused Jacob to fear

- Perhaps it was a mixture of these things

Jacob needed to realize that the Exodus into Egypt was as much a part of God's plan as the Exodus from Egypt

We notice in these verses four (4) Divine promises that God gives to Jacob

- “I will make you a great nation there”
- “I will go down with you to Egypt”
- “I will also surely bring you up again”
- “Joseph will close your eyes”

Let's look at these briefly

1. “I will make you a great nation there”

We have read about this great nation time and time again in the book of Genesis

- Various promises were given to the patriarchs
- Now God is repeating this promise to Jacob

Notice that last word, “there”

- Jacob thought that the Promised Land would be the place where God would build the great nation of Israel
- But not so

This was yet another reassuring statement from God

- He would build the nation of Israel
- But He would build it in Egypt
- Therefore, Jacob needed to leave the Promised Land

Egypt would become the womb for the nation of Israel³

- Egypt would be the place where the house of Jacob would become the house of Israel⁴

³ Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis 18-50*, 591.

⁴ John H. Sailhamer, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Genesis*, 259.

2. “I will go down with you to Egypt”

God promises to be with Jacob as he travels to Egypt

- The presence of God must have been very comforting
- He certainly didn't want to travel that far from Canaan without the promise of God's presence

3. “I will also surely bring you up again”

Not only did God promise to be with Jacob as he traveled to Egypt

- God promised to “bring you up again”

Of course, Jacob would not be alive when he was brought back

- We know that Jacob will die while in Egypt
- But his body would be brought back and buried in the cave where Abraham was buried (50:13)

4. “Joseph will close your eyes”

Speaking of death, God gives Jacob a very tender promise about his death

- The statement about Joseph closing the eyes of Jacob was a clear reference to death
- A peaceful death

Jacob would die with Joseph near his side

- The son whom he had missed for 22 years would be by his side in death

Jacob had no reason to fear his trip to Egypt

- He had no reason to fear that his sons weren't telling the truth about Joseph

God had spoken

- God would build the nation of Israel
- God would be present with him
- God would bring him back to Canaan
- God would ensure that Joseph would be nearby at Jacob's death

⁵ Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

Now that God has personally appeared to Jacob and reassured him, the family is ready to move to Egypt

- The sons of Israel move their father, their wives, and their children in the wagons that Pharaoh had provided

⁶ And they took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt. Jacob and all his descendants with him:

Jacob and his family “took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan”

- Pharaoh had told Joseph that his family should not bring their own stuff to Egypt (45:20)
- Pharaoh would see to it that they were well taken care of

We are not sure why Jacob brought all of his stuff

- Perhaps he didn't want to presume on Pharaoh's goodness

⁷ his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

Verse 7 is a summary statement about the descendants of Israel who were brought to Egypt

- Sons
- Grandsons
- Daughters
- Granddaughters

This helps us to introduce the more lengthy genealogical listing that occurs in verses 8-27

What a huge ordeal

- Some of you have literally picked up your roots and replanted somewhere
- I know that my family and I have done that on two occasions

Jacob must have been very encouraged as he journeyed to Egypt

- He knew that he would meet up with Joseph
- He knew that he would be taken care of
- He knew that there would be food for his family

But even more so, Jacob must have been encouraged at the promises of God

- Within a short amount of time, how things had changed for this man!

I trust that as you meditate upon the promises of God, that you will be encouraged as well

- It is easy to become fearful or apprehensive about the future

But all it takes is for us to refocus our attention on the promises of God

- We suddenly find ourselves encouraged, motivated, and invigorated

As we walk by faith and not by sight, let us be encouraged by God's promises (46:1-7)

II. We are encouraged by His blessings (46:8-27)

⁸ Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt:

The way in which Moses arranges the genealogical list of Jacob is by his four wives

- The sons of Leah (46:8-15)
- The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid (46:16-18)
- The sons of Rachel (46:19-22)
- The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid (46:23-25)

I am not going to go too much in depth with the names listed here

- But a deeper study into this chapter will reveal much fruit
- This is the family tree whose branches will reach around the entirety of the Old Testament!

I simply want to hit the high points of how God was fulfilling His promise to make a “great nation” from Israel⁵

A. The sons of Leah (46:8-15)

Reuben, Jacob's first-born. ⁹ And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch and Pallu and Hezron and Carmi.

Jacob's firstborn son was Reuben

- He had 4 sons

¹⁰ And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.

Simeon had 6 sons

- The last son, Shaul, is said to have been “**the son of a Canaanite woman**”

We are reminded of the danger of assimilation with the pagan nations around the Promised Land

- God was moving the entire nation into Egypt to keep them separate from the Canaanites

¹¹ And the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

Levi had 3 sons

- We know that the Levites would take care of the tabernacle

¹² And the sons of Judah: Er and Onan and Shelah and Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

Judah had 5 sons

- However, we have already studied how Er and Onan died while in Canaan
- They were both displeasing to the LORD (38:7, 10)

As we have discussed previously, Judah's family is very important

- The Messiah would come through the tribe of Judah

¹³ And the sons of Issachar: Tola and Puvvah and Job and Shimron. ¹⁴ And the sons of Zebulun: Sered and Elon and Jahleel. ¹⁵ These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his daughter Dinah; all his sons and his daughters *numbered* thirty-three.

These are the sons of Leah who were born in Canaan

- One daughter, Dinah, is mentioned
- We remember the events about her life from Genesis 34

The end of verse 15 states, “**all his sons and his daughters *numbered* thirty-three**”

⁵ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 238.

B. The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid (46:16-18)

¹⁶ And the sons of Gad: Ziphion and Haggi, Shuni and Ezbon, Eri and Arodi and Areli. ¹⁷ And the sons of Asher: Imnah and Ishvah and Ishvi and Beriah and their sister Serah. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. ¹⁸ These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; and she bore to Jacob these sixteen persons.

I won't mention anything extraordinary about the sons of Zilpah

In total, there are sixteen (16) descendants attributed to Zilpah

C. The sons of Rachel (46:19-22)

¹⁹ The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.

Moses reminds us of the preferred status of Rachel

- She is the only one of the four women who is designated as "Jacob's wife"⁶

Rachel was clearly Jacob's favorite wife

- Rachel's children were Jacob's favorite children

²⁰ Now to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him.

We already know about Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim

- We encountered this from Genesis 41:50-52

²¹ And the sons of Benjamin: Bela and Becher and Ashbel, Gera and Naaman, Ehi and Rosh, Muppim and Huppim and Ard.

We know that Benjamin was the youngest son of Jacob

- He was probably in his mid to late 20's when he moved to Egypt
- How could he already have 10 sons?

The reality is that some of these names are probably grandsons of Benjamin⁷

- The Hebrew word for "son" is the same word used for "grandson"

²² These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob; there were fourteen persons in all.

In total, there are fourteen descendants attributed to Rachel

- 2 sons
- 12 grandsons

⁶ Kenneth A. Mathews, *NAC, Vol 1B*, 832.

⁷ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Genesis*, 209.

D. The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid (46:23-25)

²³ And the sons of Dan: Hushim.

Even though the stock expression “sons of Dan” is given, only one son is listed

- He is the least fruitful among the sons of Jacob

²⁴ And the sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel and Guni and Jezer and Shillem. ²⁵ These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel, and she bore these to Jacob; *there were seven persons in all.*

In total, there are sixteen (16) descendants attributed to Bilhah

²⁶ All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, *were sixty-six persons in all,* ²⁷ and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; *all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.*

At first glance, this list is very confusing

- Verse 26 states that 66 people traveled with Jacob
- Verse 27 states that 70 people traveled with him
- Acts 7:14 states that 75 people traveled with him

Which one is right?

- Each one, of course!

It all depends on how – and who – you count among these descendants

- It's just a matter of perspective and focus

The number “seventy” is viewed as a sign of completion⁸

- In Genesis 10, we talked about seventy nations that descended from Noah
- All humanity descended from these seventy nations

Here we are discussing the seventy descendants of Israel

- They would make up the nation of Israel

Later, there would be seventy elders of Israel (Ex 24:1)

- In the New Testament, there would be seventy disciples of the Lord (Lk 10:1)

Other instances of seventy are worth mentioning⁹

- Seventy years of captivity
- Seventy “weeks” spoken of by Daniel
- Seventy translators of the Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament
- Seventy members of the Sandedrin

⁸ W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 438.

⁹ Morris, 633.

Seventy descendants of Jacob are given

- Of Leah – 33 persons
- Of Zilpah – 16 persons
- Of Rachel – 14 persons
- Of Bilhah – 7 persons

Jacob was a blessed man

- Just a casual glance at this list tells us that God had blessed him with many children and grandchildren¹⁰

Verses 18 & 25 both reference Laban who gave Rachel and Leah to Jacob

- Why does Moses bring Laban back into focus?
- I thought we were done with him

Moses wants us to remember back to when Jacob was dealing with Laban

- Jacob had no children

In both situations, Jacob faced a crisis¹¹

- Jacob left Paddan-aram for Canaan under less than ideal circumstances
- Here Jacob is preparing to leave Canaan for Egypt under less than ideal circumstances

But in both cases, God was faithful

- In both cases, God provided the necessary encouragement and assurance

Seventy descendants doesn't seem like a great number of people

- But God would take these seventy descendants and cause them to multiply greatly

We are encouraged by His promises (46:1-7)

We are encouraged by His blessings (46:8-27)

III. We are encouraged by His grace (46:28-30)

²⁸ Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out *the way* before him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

As Jacob and his family entourage neared Egypt, “**he sent Judah before him to Joseph**”

- Jacob wanted to make sure that Joseph showed them exactly where he wanted them to dwell
- Jacob didn't know where he was going

We see Judah being selected as a leader within the family

- He is promoted over the rest of the brothers

It is fitting that Judah, who was responsible for separating Joseph from Jacob, would be the one who joined them back together¹²

¹⁰ Hamilton, 596.

¹¹ Hamilton, 597.

¹² Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 585.

²⁹ And Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time.

As soon as Joseph heard that his family was nearby, he immediately went to greet his father

- He had been waiting for this day for many years!

Ever since he had sent his brothers back to Canaan, I bet that Joseph waited to hear the news

- And today was the day!

A very emotional reunion takes place before our eyes, “as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time”

- Notice that there are no words spoken
- We simply see the actions of these two family members

Joseph embraces his father and weeps “on his neck a long time”

- This is a very private moment

The tears of sorrow and grief have been replaced with tears of joy¹³

These two men have been separated from one another for more than 22 years

- But God has brought them back together
- God has allowed them to be reconciled

³⁰ Then Israel said to Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive.”

Finally, the silence is broken

- Words are spoken

Israel tells Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive”

- This is a fascinating statement, isn’t it?

For 22 years, father and son have been separated

- Now that they are together, Israel says that he wants to die?
- Not exactly

Now that he has seen Joseph and knows that he is alive, Israel doesn’t have to worry or wonder what happened to his son

Of course, Jacob would live another 17 years in Egypt (Gen 47:28)

- Jacob spends 17 years with Joseph before he was sold into slavery
- Jacob spends another 17 years with Joseph after they were in Egypt

Most of this chapter is consumed with a list of Jacob’s family who entered Egypt with him

- On the surface, this doesn’t appear to be a rather exciting or encouraging chapter
- But if we look at this with the right perspective, we will be encouraged

You see, this chapter really isn’t about Jacob and his family

- This chapter is really about God and His faithfulness

¹³ Hamilton, 602.

God had promised Abram that he would have many descendants

- They would be like the stars in the sky (15:5)
- They would be like the sand on the seashore (22:17)

We have to keep in mind that God's first promise of a large family came when Abram didn't have any children!

- As a matter of fact, Sarai was barren
- Humanly speaking, she couldn't have children!

But what is impossible with man is possible with God!

- God can do things that are humanly impossible

Israel was the father of 12 sons

- These twelve sons of Israel would later be known as the twelve tribes of Israel
- They would raise up a large number of children and grandchildren
- We read about this growing family throughout the remainder of the Old Testament

Genesis 46 could be looked at as a very boring list of dead people

- Or it could be looked at as a very exciting tribute to God's faithfulness to bring about His promises

We know from reading the Old Testament that God's promises came true

- The nation of Israel did grow
- The nation of Israel eventually moved back to Canaan

Every step of the way, God was faithful

- Every step of the way, God's promises were being fulfilled

The same is true in our lives

- At any given moment, we may look around and scratch our heads
- We may wonder what God is doing
- We may question what God is doing

But friend, try and see the big picture

- Your life is not really about you
- Your life is really about glorifying God