



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 11:20-22

“The Faith of the Patriarchs”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the opportunity again to look at the Scriptures and ponder them and learn from them the things that will be of use to us in our Christian lives. We thank Thee for the marvelous illustrations that are provided by the lives of the patriarchs and of the other faithful men of the Old Testament and the New Testament. And we thank Thee that they speak so directly to us in our day and we know, Lord, while the outer appearance of things is different in the 20th Century from the first or for many years before the time of our Lord, nevertheless, the same principles pertain to the life of a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray that our study this evening may be helpful to us in our daily lives here in nineteen hundred and ninety-three. We thank Thee for the opportunity that is ours. We pray Thy blessing upon each one present, may we learn from the Scriptures the things that will profit each one of us, in our family, in our work and in our daily life. And we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well we are continuing our series of studies in Hebrews chapter 11, and our topic tonight is “The Faith of the Patriarchs” and we are looking at just three verses in the New Testament. But I want to look at a number of verses in the Old

Testament, where the key events that are alluded to here in chapter 11, are spelled out in some detail. So let's read first Hebrews 11:20 through 22. And then I want to turn to Genesis chapter 27. The writer of the epistle says.

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave instructions concerning his bones.”

Now, let's turn back to Genesis chapter 27, and in Genesis chapter 27, we have the passage that contains some of the information about Isaac that our author is thinking about. And I want to read verse 1 through verse 4, and then verse 26 through verse 33. Chapter 27 in verse 1.

“Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, ‘My son.’ And he answered him, ‘here I am.’ Then he said, ‘Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.’”

And now, in verse 26, we read.

“Then his father Isaac said to him, ‘Come near now and kiss me, my son.’”

You may remember, that in the meantime Jacob has taken a skin, put it over himself, has come to Isaac with food that Rebekah has cooked, and has attempted to

deceive him and succeeds in deceiving him, in order that he may receive the blessing.

And so now in verse 26.

“Then his father Isaac said to him, ‘Come near now and kiss me, my son.’

And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said, ‘Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you.

Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!’ Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, ‘Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that your soul may bless me.’ And his father Isaac said to him, ‘Who are you?’ So he said, ‘I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.’ Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, ‘Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him.’”

Now, notice these last words.

“And indeed he shall be blessed.”

So the faith of Isaac. I’d like to say a word about these men in each case and then their faith. Now, Isaac was an individual who possessed faith. We have no doubt about that. He was a believing man. But the kind of faith that he had was a very passive kind of faith. You may remember that the Lord had spoken to him and had told him to, well, had spoken to him and confirmed the promises that had been made to him of the fact

that the covenantal promises to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob should be confirmed. He was the individual whom Abraham took to Mount Moriah and in a very passive way he allowed Abraham to take him, to put him on the sacrificial altar and even allowed him to raise his hand to slay him. So far as he knew, that is what Abraham was going to do and still trusted his father during that.

His wife was chosen for him. He accepted her. His last years, it is evident from the account in the Book of Genesis are very flesh controlled. In chapter 25 in verse 28, we read concerning “the mild man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” So it does appear from the text, that he is a man who is interested in his food. Now, I don’t know the way he looked, but I just have the feeling that he had a big pot; because anyone who would love food that much, as it is evidenced, would have a hard time taking care of himself and, particularly, if he was now blind and was located, generally, in one particular place.

And even here, in the passage in which he is getting ready to bless Esau, he wants the meal first, you’ll notice, and then the blessing. He doesn’t say, I will bless you and then I will eat your food. But it’s, “I will eat your food and then bless you.” Verse 4, “Make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”

Isaac is an individual who is noted, other than the fact that he was the one that Abraham took to Mount Moriah, for the fact that he generally went places and built wells. Now, the Romans were kind of like that. The Romans were known for building roads; and wherever you go, after the Romans have been there, you will notice the Roman’s had built some roads in England and also for wells. But Isaac is known for the wells.

What Isaac is, essentially, I think, you can see, is a second generation Christian. He is a Christian, I’ll say believer because we don’t really call the Old Testament believers Christians, they are members of the one body of Christ, the one people of God but, nevertheless, he was a second generation believing man. And the difficulty that the

children of believing parents, who were converted themselves, often from unconverted families, is that children who are brought up and taught by the father and the mother frequently become used to the kinds of things that have to do with Christianity. They go to Sunday school and they are taught the Bible, often by individuals who do not press them for a personal decision, who do not make it very plain that becoming a Christian is, generally, not always, but generally related to a particular time in which a person has a Christian saving experience. And, oftentimes, children who grow up in this kind of environment are baptized because their families want them to be baptized, rather than waiting for them to have a clear conversion experience. Those individuals treat the Christian things as things that they are familiar with but they are not really very real to them.

Now, in Believers Chapel, we have second and third generations Christians in Believers Chapel, that is one of the challenges that all of our Bible teachers must remember, as we seek to teach the word of God; that it is very important for us to have a Christian experience.

Now, I know, there are some of us who may not have had that and, but nevertheless, give ever every evidence of being genuine believers. But in spite of all of that, it's a desirable thing to have that and those of us who grow up in the environment of Christianity should truly know that we are. There is a placidity about his Christian life that's characteristic of a second generation Christian.

Now, remember, about Isaac. Isaac knew the divine activity was going to be carried on through Jacob. We know that because in Genesis chapter 25 in verse 23, we read these things which have to do with the point. Genesis 25:23. Well, I'll read verse 22 and you'll remember when Jacob and Esau struggle in the womb of Rebekah, we read.

“But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If all is well, why am I like this?’ So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, ‘Two nations

are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’ So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.”

So the Scriptures speak very plainly that the promise is a promise that is given to Abraham but is to continue through Jacob. He knew that. That had been given to him. But now, here, in chapter 27, he says, “Bring me the food that I like and I will bless you.” And the promise, if you will notice, contains some words from the Book of Genesis chapter 12, particularly, that last statement. I have to turn back to the passage again in Genesis, chapter 27, where in verse 29, we read, “Let people serve you and nations bow down to you, be master over your brethren.” That’s disobedience. “Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be every,” these are from the Abrahamic promises, remember? “Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you.”

So knowing that the promise is destined to come through Jacob, Isaac blesses Esau, in his mind. He blesses Esau in his mind. And in that sense, he not only shows us that he preferred Esau, but he also was willing to be disobedient to the promises that he, himself, should have been acquainted with.

Now, there are reasons, of course, in the everyday life that caused Isaac to prefer Esau. From what we know of Esau, he was a kind of man that may have played fullback for the Dallas Cowboys, not halfback but fullback. He might have played fullback for the Dallas Cowboys. He is the original, someone has said, “For he’s a jolly good fellow, and all men like the fellow of whom it could be said, ‘he’s a jolly good fellow,’ and he could also play fullback.

Jacob, himself, was a big burly man; I know that may seem strange but some of the things that he did indicate that he was a strong man. He was able to roll those rocks away from the water around the wells, and that took a little strength. But, nevertheless, his character was that, many have suggested, of mama’s Boy. So you can see how Isaac, a man’s man, evidently, might have preferred Esau, and especially he loved that food that Esau knew how to cook so well.

Jacob in this incident is, himself, a picture of a lying individual. Think of Jacob now. It is a sad picture of lies; he cooperates with Rebekah to deceive his father. Rebekah, herself, is the one who suggests the deceit. So the picture is one of lies on the part of Jacob, deceit on the part of Rebekah, and favoritism on the part of Isaac, himself. But there is one thing that characterized Jacob that did not characterize Esau and this is the important thing; Jacob had a desire that the purpose of God be fulfilled. What was fundamental to him was the word of God to him. It meant something to him. And so he was willing to lie and deceive, with his mother, because he did want the birthright and the blessing. Those are the two things that Esau, later on, complains he took away from him. Well, he did, in one sense. But he was the one who really wanted those things and Esau was the one who did not want them. He did not care for them at all. That’s plain to us in both Genesis chapter 25 and Genesis chapter 27. And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the very next chapter, will call him a profane man.

So we have then the picture of lies, deceit, favoritism; but also the picture of Jacob as a man who had faith in the divine purpose, if not in the divine plan. He was not willing to wait for how God would fulfill his plan. But, nevertheless, he had a fundamental desire that the purpose of God be carried out, particularly, as far as the birthright and the blessing were concerned.

The faith, three, now, I’ll turn back again to. I keep turning back to the New Testament and I should keep my hand there. Notice verse 33 again, “Then Isaac trembled exceedingly and said, ‘Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I

ate all of it before you came, and I, Isaac, have blessed him. [Now, notice these words] and indeed he shall be blessed.” Here is a man who tried to alter the channel of the blessing of God. We know that he had already been told through whom these blessings would be fulfilled, but he wanted to alter the channel and have them come through Esau, rather than through Jacob. He wouldn’t try to change the purpose of God. There’s no indication here that he did not agree with the purpose that the seed would come from Abraham, through Isaac, through Jacob and so on, but he wanted to alter the channel of it. And that, of course, was his sin.

But now, when the facts become clear to him, he’s blessed the wrong person. What would you think a person would ordinarily do? If he has blessed Esau instead of Jacob, you would think that since it’s obvious he’s done something that’s wrong, he’s been found out, that he would confess his sin or confess that he’s blessed the wrong person and bless Esau. But he says, “And he shall be blessed.” In other words, he recognized in the midst of it all, the providential hand of God. That indicates to my mind Isaac’s genuine faith. It was something he didn’t want. It was something he was willing to attempt to alter. But when God in effect had providentially caused him to bless the person he didn’t think he was blessing, he said, “And he shall be blessed.” So in a sense he bows to the providence of God. Esau, of course, did not. He did not bow to the providence of God. In the rest of that chapter, you’ll read very plainly that he was very upset and went on to ask that Isaac would bless him and wept and cried over the situation.

Well, you can, I think, see illustrations of this in the Bible; and illustrations of the lesson of it, too, because it illustrates the way in which you and I ought to act, when we have done something that is plainly wrong. When we have done something that is plainly wrong, how do you respond? I think there’s a great lesson here. How do you respond when you have done something that is wrong? Well, in the case of Isaac, at least he acknowledges the fact that he has done something wrong, that God has over ruled

him, providentially, and he acknowledges, “And he shall be blessed.” So his faith is seen in the response to his sin.

Let me give you an illustration of this. We all know Peter denied the Lord. That was not an act of faith. He went on denying the Lord. The act of faith occurred when he heard the cock crow and he realized that he had sinned. And then we read in Scripture, “He went out and wept bitterly.” That’s an evidence of faith. The other is an act of rebellion. But, nevertheless, the act of faith when one has sinned illustrates the fundamental character of the individual.

You can find that in David, also. When you think of David’s great sin, but then when he’s found out, what do we have? That marvelous 51st Psalm, in which he speaks about his sin and the depth of it, and what it meant to him to sin. And for you, my Christian friend, when you have sinned against the word of God, in one way or another, there is an opportunity for you to exercise faith and it will be seen in your response to the truth of the word of God when you discover that you too, have sinned against him. It’s an encouragement to us, I think, when we have been out of fellowship with the Lord or when we have sinned against him to realize also that there is an open door back into the blessing of God. But that the proper response is to do what Peter and others have done after they have sinned.

The apostles were individuals who were not the greatest of individuals before they became apostles. You might ask, if you knew something about the apostles, did the Lord make a mistake when he called them? After all, he went out. He prayed all night on the mountain, remember. And then he chose his apostles. Well, whom did he choose?

I have a friend, I believe he’s with the Lord now, but many years ago, we were in a conference together in California, and I was listening to one of his messages and he makes reference to this. And he said that, “The Lord’s prayer for the choice of the disciples is an interesting thing because he chose a denier, as an apostle. He chose one who will betray him to be an apostle. He chose a doubter, like Doubting Thomas. He

chose two dirty politicians, James and John, who sought to sit at the right hand of our Lord and sought to politic over it.” You may remember. But he said, “Now, since the layer of tradition has fallen upon these, the denier, the betrayer, the doubter, and these two dirty politicians, since the layer of tradition has come upon them, what do we call them? Saint John, Saint Peter, Saint James, Saint Thomas.” And then my friend said, “But they were really birds.” [Laughter]

Well, I think, that probably Jacob would have been something like that, as far as his own personal life was concerned, before he became what he later became. And we know that there were many things about him that would qualify as being that.

Well, anyway, the point I want for you to notice is that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews latches upon the fact of Isaac’s faith, as he was at the point of death. All of these three, incidentally, are at the point of death and manifest their faith. “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.” He did go on to bless Esau, remember? But the fundamental blessing of the channel of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant was not his. God had already determined that, in the context of the Book of Genesis.

Now then, let’s take a look at the faith of Jacob, we read in verse 21 of chapter 11, “By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.” Everybody knows who knows anything about the Book of Genesis, if you’ve read it once, it comes out that Jacob was one of the most arresting lives in the Bible; a crafty crook, who becomes, truly, a great saint; whose ups and downs are remarkable. Hebrews passes over everything. We have had twelve verses devoted to Abraham. But we have one verse devoted to Isaac. One verse devoted to Jacob. One verse devoted to Joseph. So one verse devoted, by the author, to Jacob. That’s a kind of a snapshot. He was one hundred and forty-seven years of age. I hope, when I get to be that old, that I am just as faithful. “By faith Jacob, when he was dying,

blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.” Jacob ceaseless, restless man.

G. Campbell Morgan, in an exposition of him, says that, “he was undoubtedly the kind of child that Isaac would say to him, ‘A penny if you would just sit still for awhile.’” Busy as he could possibly be. But Jacob had some princely qualities and God, himself, of course, had given them to him.

Do you remember in reading the Book of Genesis, that the Lord appears, I believe, seven times to Abraham? Every time he appears to Abraham, he urges him to some new work of faith. He appears five times to Jacob, and it can be said of the five times that every time he appears to Jacob, it’s to correct him, to cause some change in his life. He was that kind of person. Now, I’m not saying he was a bad man. Samuel Taylor Coleridge says that, “Anybody who loved his wife as deeply as Jacob loved Rachel would have to have some good qualities.” And he surely did, no question about that.

But now, about the blessing, you can think of other ways in which Jacob might be used as an illustration of faith. But the illustration that he uses is in Genesis, chapter 48. So let me turn over there and I’ll read these verses again for you. You remember that Jacob is sick. Joseph is told, “Indeed, your father is sick.” Just like Isaac, in the first illustration, now Jacob is sick. “Indeed your father is sick.” This is Genesis 48, verse 1 “and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.” He wants Jacob to bless his two sons. And so in verse 13, they’ve come into the presence of Jacob, the three, Joseph and his two sons, and we read here in verse 13 of Genesis 48, “And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right hand.”

Now, that’s very important! So Joseph brought them forward and they were in front of Jacob, and Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand. He brought Ephraim forward with his right hand, toward Israel’s left hand. Remember, Manasseh is the older, so he brings Ephraim forward like this. Jacob is there. He brings him forward

with his right hand, Ephraim, opposite Jacob’s left hand. And Manasseh, he brings toward Jacob’s right hand, with his left hand.

Now, notice, “And he brought them near to him. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger.” Now, since he was the younger, the right hand of Jacob should have been on the, perhaps, I’ve gotten this backwards, here. Let me see, Joseph brought them forward. Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand, toward Israel’s left hand. Yes, that’s right. Ephraim towards his right hand. So Ephraim was here and Manasseh was here. And then, Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head so he had to move from here to here and then took his left hand and took it and put it on Manasseh’s head. Now, you can see that the hands are crossed. What Joseph thought was he would put his right hand on Manasseh, his left hand on Ephraim. But he puts his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh.

Now, notice the text, “With his left hand toward Israel’s right hand and brought them near him. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly.” “Guiding his hands knowingly.” That’s very interesting, because guiding his hands knowingly is the translation of the Hebrew verb, *sakal*, that’s a word that means “to act wisely,” or “to act designedly,” and one of the leading Hebrew dictionaries says that it means “to lay crosswise.” So you can see what has happened. He has taken his right hand, crossed it, put it on Ephraim’s head, and his left hand on Manasseh. He has crossed his hands and he has blessed the younger instead of the older.

Now, that’s very important because what it suggests is the primogeniture is voided again; in other words, the oldest is not blessed, but the youngest. Now, that had already happened in the case of Esau and Jacob. Esau was the first born; Jacob came out next. But in God’s mind and plan, Jacob is the one through whom the promise comes.

Now, if you'll look at the Bible, itself, you'll see that this is something that God has done in order to magnify his sovereign purpose. There was an Adam, who was born; first born, Adam, in the Garden of Eden. But then there comes, centuries later, another Adam. This last Adam, not second Adam, according to scriptural terminology, but the last Adam, second man, because there are many other men, but the last Adam. If that Adam had failed, there would have been no other Adam anywhere. But we know that the first Adam is passed by in the purpose of God and the last Adam is the divine Son.

Adam is called, that is, the first Adam, is called son of God. Look at the genealogy and it finally winds up and Adam, who was Son of God, first born. You might think, well, he's to get the blessing. No, last Adam is to get the blessing.

In the word of God, when God passes over that which is natural or that which is supernatural, there's a great significance in it. And in this case, the law of primogeniture has been voided again. It is, in a sense, God's statement that the divine purpose is more significant than anything else.

Now, in the case of Jacob, I want you to notice what happens here. When this happens, we read, “And he blessed Joseph and said, “God, before whom my.” Notice, Joseph, he blessed Joseph and said, “God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who fed me all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

Abrahamic promises, to be fulfilled. But now, “Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him;” he wasn't the firstborn. Manasseh was. “It displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, “Not so my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.”

But now, Jacob, “But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know.” He's very sick. He's at the point of death. But he says, “I know, my son, I know. He also

shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.” So he blessed them that day, saying, “By you Israel will bless, saying ‘May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!’” Ephraim first. “And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh. Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, Joseph, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.””

Marvelous expression of faith on the part of Jacob. And what a difference is now evident in the life of Jacob. This is the individual who complained so when the things that were happening concerning the famine were happening. And, I know, you remember when, finally, they felt it necessary to go down into Egypt and ask for wheat, and then they began their dickering with Joseph who was the prime minister. And you know the result of that. And when, finally, Joseph realized what was transpiring, and remember, Joseph was the daughter of Rachel and Benjamin was too. And so you know how much he wanted to see his brother, whom he had never seen, and so finally, Jacob is told by the brethren that the man down in Egypt is holding Simeon and demands that Benjamin come also. And you remember what Jacob said. He spoke about how he was so disturbed over it; and, finally, he had to yield because it was necessary to do it. But then, in chapter 42, and I think it's verse 36, we read this, “And Jacob their father said to them, ‘You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me.’” And then, of course, later on, after he comes to understand what has really happened, he speaks of the God who has fed him, all the days of his life. What a change has taken place in this remarkable man, Jacob.

Our author, of course, sees his faith in that last statement, that he blessed each of the sons of Joseph, “And worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.” There's one other man, and that man is Joseph, and we'll take a look now at verse 22. In verse 22, we read,

in Hebrews chapter 11, “By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.” Now, we also noted, of course, right in the beginning, in connection with Isaac, that Isaac also was at the point of death. And so these are three individuals who really are at the point of death, when their faith is discussed in the word of God. In chapter 27 in verse 1 of Genesis, it said, “Now it came to pass when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau, his older son, and said to him, ‘My son?’ and he answered, ‘here am I.’”

So what we have is the faith of these three patriarchs at the point of death. Joseph, of course, is one of the most fascinating men in the Old Testament; fascinating in many ways, to just think of an individual who rises in Egypt from slavery to the prime minister of Egypt is significant enough, to point out how truly great a man he must have been. As far as a person is concerned, Joseph is a man who has been described as being ingenuous. He’s very simple. Very direct. Not simple in the sense of unintelligent, but simple in the sense of being frank and open. Fearless, he was fearless, that’s very evident. And very statesman-like. In fact, he was the first of the Hunt’s. He was the first to corner a market. Hunt tried to corner the silver market and failed. And now, I know, he’s suffering greatly in poverty. Joseph, actually, cornered the wheat market! Think of that. He cornered the wheat market. And all of that period, all of that part of the earth was subject to him, not simply Egypt, but all of the places around. They had to come to Joseph to buy wheat for Pharaoh. Joseph has his prime minister. I can tell you how great a man he was, aside from his spiritual life, our text says that he made request or mention, of a departure of the children of Israel and gave instruction concerning his bones. I think we ought to read that passage. It’s in Genesis, chapter 50, we have time to do it, and it is verse 24 through verse 26.

And you know, that later on, in your Bible reading, you discovered, of course, that the children of Israel, when they came out of the land, finally, specific mention is made of

the fact that they took Joseph’s bones out and buried them according to his desire. But Genesis chapter 50, verse 24 through verse 26, we read, and Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

By the way, that’s really the whole problem of Israel today. The question today is “to whom does the land belong?” That’s the fundamental question. That’s why Rabin and Arafat will never have the final say about the land of Palestine until they deal with that question. And then it will be necessary for both of them to find faith and to acknowledge the fact that the land belongs to Israel.

The land, that is, the land promised by God! The very fact that you read West Bank is itself a political handicap to the Children of Israel. That belongs to Israel. That doesn’t belong to the Arabs. The West Bank is the way in which people speak of it in order to lay claim to it for the Arabs. The West Bank is Judah! It’s part of Judah! Do you find our papers talking about Judah? No, they don’t talk about Judah? This whole question is a biblical question. That’s fundamentally the question. That’s where there will never be any peace in that land until Israel has her land. But it won’t be the Israel of today, that is, the spiritual condition of Israel today, but it will be Israelites, the ethnic Israel. And they will possess that land.

Now, I know, you will say, Doctor Johnson, you’re acting like a prophet. No, I’m not. I’m just repeating the prophecies. The prophecies of others who are inspired. I’m not. I may misinterpret the word of God. I don’t think there’s the slightest chance that I am doing it with reference to that. Over and over again, all through the Old Testament, through the Book of Genesis, through the Pentateuch, through the law, through the Prophets, these prophecies, these same prophecies, are repeated, over and over and over again. No one could miss it, if they read the Bible. Just read the Bible, which is the word of God, and you’ll realize that what’s happening today may be significant for the future. I wouldn’t, I cannot look ahead, of course, I didn’t have to tell you that, did I?

But how things are going to work out? I don't know, other than what the word of God says. But you can be sure that these papers that they have signed so far, which incidentally will take five years to be carried out, providing they can be carried out, it will be five years. There are maybe twenty-five or fifty decisions that have to be made now, by those two peoples, the PLO and Israel. And they are set forth in the paper that they have signed, along the period of five years. So you can imagine what can happen. But anyway, mark my word! Do not put your money on this being a final arrangement between the PLO and the nation Israel.

Now, I got off on something that's not in my notes. How bad. But anyway, the faith of Joseph now. Now in verse 24, of Genesis chapter 50, we read, “So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” Now, the important thing to notice is the two-fold occurrence of this expression. Verse 24, “God will surely visit you.” Verse 25, “God will surely visit you.” In other words, twice Joseph says, it is certain that you will be visited in this land, where you are out of the land that God has given to you. He will visit you and he will take you back to your possession.

Why? Why did he know that? Because God's word had said that. And we all know, of course, that is true. Later on they do take hold of the land. Not permanently, but they do take hold of it.

So Joseph had faith in the Abrahamic promises, that they concerned a land. A land! Even our Christian friends want to deny that; that the Abrahamic promises have only to do with justification by faith. They have to do with that. But they have to do, also with the land. That is so important! Read the Bible!

So Joseph now, when all the fascinating things of his life are concluding, at the end of his life, when he is about ready to die, he makes these comments, “And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying.” Just as Isaac, just as Jacob, so Joseph was at the point of death, and the faith that he manifests is a faith at the end of his life. Each case, faith at

the end of their life, faith at the end of their lives, a faith that had persevered. And what happened, of course, was that he died, he was embalmed, his bones were put in a coffin and they awaited the time when they were brought back into the land and buried.

Now, I want you to know that that was a magnificent statement of faith. Let me show you why this is such a magnificent statement of faith. How long had Joseph dwelt in the land? How long? Do you remember? Six or seven years. That's all. He's now at the end of his life. Many, many years later, but those six or seven years that he spent in the land had, of course, marked him. He was of the children of Israel. So faith at the end of his life.

Canaan had never been kind to him to start with. Even if he had been there six or seven years, and he could say, that's my country, think of what he did within it. What did his own brethren do? Eleven of them? I never had eleven brethren, I had one brother. Fortunately, I was the oldest, ten years older, I never had any problem with my brother. But how would you be, if you had ten or eleven other brothers? You know, there would be some troubles.

So I can imagine that Joseph, humanly speaking, might have thought when he got down to Egypt, and managed to get out of the prison, and was the prime mister, that he might have said, I never want to go back to that land. I spent a few years there. It was all bad, as far as I was concerned, my brethren were bad to me. They were evil to me. They sold me into captivity. They, actually, tried to kill me. But they sold me into captivity. And, I was a motherless boy, because my mother had died early, and the hostility of the eleven brethren would not have caused him to want to go back, normally.

So the very fact that he makes this request, “Take my bones back to that land,” is evidence of a remarkable faith in the word of God. Specifically, he says, “God will visit you.” Twice, he's moved in his faith by the onward look. That's the whole story of most of the ones in the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11. Their faith is not directed towards the past. Their faith is directed toward the fulfillment of the promises.

We stand, of course, in a different way. We look back at the Lord's sacrifice, on Calvary's cross, and so we are able to look back and look back. But let us not forget to look forward. Let us not forget to remember that the word of God is filled with the promises of the glorious future that you and I have. And so these three men, each at the point of death, look toward the future and illustrate in their life the first verse of this chapter. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” This is really consonant with all of Joseph's life. If you turn back to Genesis, chapter 39 in verse 9, and you will see the making of Joseph. Chapter 39 in verse 9, you may remember, he is harassed. Harassed is the modern word. He was harassed by Pharaoh's wife. Not Pharaoh's wife, but by Potiphar's wife and we read in verse 9, “But he refused and said to his master's wife, ‘Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against him?’”

A man of faith! Look at chapter 40, in verse 8. Now the question of the dreams comes, and we read here in verse 8, “And they said to him, ‘We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.’” The butler and the baker, you remember. “So Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.’” Interpretations belong to God, not to men. Chapter 41 in verse 16, “Pharaoh had said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.’” So Joseph answered Pharaoh and said, “Well, I am pretty good in dreams. Bobby Tilton calls me every now and then to get some advice.” [Laughter] Now, what does he say? “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”

Chapter 41, verse 32, we read here, “And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God,” as he gives the explanation to Pharaoh, “and God will shortly bring it to pass.” In chapter 45 in verse 5 through verse 8, we read,

“Now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here;” he’s made himself known to his brethren, and they are upset. Do you know why they are upset? They are upset because he has all the power of Egypt, and now he knows they are the ones, the very ones, that sold him into captivity. All the times it has been eating on their conscience, and so now, the first thing they think is Joseph is going to get rid of us.

And so he says here, “But do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth.”

Have you ever been asked the question, does God use sin? Yes, God uses sin. It was a sin of the brethren who sent him down to Egypt, would have killed him if they could have, brought him down there. Over and over again, Joseph says, it was God that sent me. Not you! Yes, you did! But God is the one standing behind the affairs of life. “So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, thus says your son Joseph, ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt.’”

Not, “I am now the prime minister.” “God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children’s children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have.”

And then, in chapter 50 in verse 20, I have to read this because he repeats essentially the same thing. Verse 20, now, they are really particularly disturbed because Jacob is dead, and they think now that Jacob is dead, he will do something to their harm. And again he says, verse 19, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in the place

of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” You can hardly find a better illustration of a man in whose life the Lord God in heaven is the preeminent person, whom he listens to and responds to.

Now, our time is up, but I just want to say just a couple of sentences. The faith of the men who at the point of death looked toward the future is the kind of faith that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews urges us to follow. It’s the kind of faith that should be applied to our marriages, to our businesses, for our young people, to our schools, our jobs, our sicknesses, our temptations. The future is in the hands of a sovereign God and for those who are his, the end must be successful, must be glorious.

And the final approval of each of these men, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, of course, is the word of the Old Testament, “I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob,” and the believers of today who believe in him are called the Children of Abraham; they belong to that company too.

What confidence you and I must have, as we live our lives, in the society in which God has placed us. May God enable us to come to the end of our lives, if it is the Lord’s will that we die here, upon this earth, in the faith that he speaks about here, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for these marvelous encouragements to faith in Thee, our Great God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. As we are in Jesus Christ. We give Thee thanks for the status that is ours, through him who loved us, and gave himself for us.

And in His name, we pray. Amen.