

Genesis 50: 22-26; "God's Dying Blessings to Joseph" - Sermon # 121
- The Final Sermon in the Series - "Beginnings", Delivered by Pastor
Paul Rendall on February 10th, 2008, in the Morning Worship
Service.

We have now come to the end of the Book of Genesis, and the end of Joseph's life. Having been so long in this book, I am reluctant to leave it. I began this series on September 12th, 2004. We have been going through the book for almost 3 and a half years. I pray that the lessons that we have gleaned from it will stick with us as a congregation. I hope that the written material will be of help to people for many years to come. It has been a journey which has been very profitable for my own soul, and I hope that it has been for all of you as well. We have been able to see how God led the Patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob into the experience of all of His covenant faithfulness to them. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. This life is just the stage for the life to come. But how important it is that we come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. How important it is to learn the lessons of faith and obedience. The blessings of this life, which God bestows upon us through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, are meant to establish us in our faith so that we are able to look death in the face and understand that God will bring us through that dreaded experience where we think all things are ending; to the place where we understand that we have only just begun to really live. It is hard for us to comprehend this truth, but God is faithful to lead us, as believers, through the valley of the shadow of death, so that we fear no evil. God is with us. We want to learn from these last few verses of the book of Genesis, how God blessed Joseph when it came his time to die. And if we will walk uprightly before God in our walk with Him, living by faith, realizing our own weaknesses and sins, and yet trusting in Him to do what only He can do for us in the great matter of our salvation which we have in Jesus Christ; then certainly we will be blessed, no matter what earthly state we are in.

Our text tells us that "Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household." "And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. This seems like a long life in relation to today's standards. But Jacob, Joseph's father, lived to be 147; and his father Isaac to be 180 years old. So we see that Joseph's life in comparison to his father and grandfather was considerably shorter. Although Joseph did not live as long as his forefathers, nevertheless he was just as greatly blessed. We should always remember this truth, if we would make progress in our Christian faith. It is because of God's blessing alone, that we live and that we continue in this life. Our life is sustained and kept for all of the days of our earthly pilgrimage, only because God is pleased that it be so. We can live a long life and be greatly blessed by God. Or we can live a shorter life and be blessed greatly by God. We can live a long life and be greatly troubled by disappointment, grief,

and trouble. We can live a short life and experience the same. But the Christian comes to know the golden key which unlocks the door of life and eternal life. It is God's blessing us, whether in joy or in sorrow, whether in prosperity or loss, whether we are a success by human standards, or a failure in the eyes of the world. The blessings that he received from God, while dying, convinced him that God was the one who was leading him on to the place where he could triumph in death and where he was certain that he would inherit all the blessings of eternal life. He can do the same for anyone who trusts in Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. The question that we want to ask this morning is this. What were the dying blessings which God gave to Joseph to allow him to triumph in death? Well, there are 3 which are mentioned in these last verses of the book of Genesis. 1st- He lived long enough to see his children's children. 2nd- He experienced peace and hope in his soul while dying. And 3rdly- He had blessed assurance that God would visit his family in the future. Let's look more carefully at these blessings.

1st- He lived long enough to see his children's children. (Verses 22 and 23)

"Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees." Surely this is a triumph of living life and being able to face death; to know that there will be a family to carry on after you; that God has blessed you with children and grandchildren. The triumph is that God had blessed him with a family, and his children with having more children, and this, in the context of his family being in covenant with God through the promises that were given to Jacob his father. Humanly speaking it is a blessing to have children and grandchildren to carry on the family name. But if the children and grandchildren do not carry on the godly Christian faith of the fathers; then there cannot be eternal triumphing. But Joseph's triumphing was because he had the opportunity to see some things and do some things which were very precious to him personally, and should be precious to all who know the Lord. He was able to live long enough to see the grandchildren of his son Ephraim, and the children's children of his son Manasseh as well. But he didn't simply have pleasure in seeing them. He took pleasure in the thought that they had been "brought up on his knees." He was able to be with them personally and evidently he took the time to do it. He not only played with them when they were little, but I believe that the words, "brought up" imply that he participated in their instruction in spiritual and moral things as well. This is a very significant blessing of God, when these things can take place. And Joseph was blessed to be able to do both.

In Proverbs 17: 6 it says, "Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father. To have grandchildren is in once sense to have children all over again, except that these; you can watch for a few hours or a few days, and then you can send them home again. It is a great blessing

indeed. It is a great opportunity to put them on your knee and read them all kinds of children's stories. But it is also a great opportunity to read them Bible stories as well. Let me ask you, grandparents, whether you see the time of your old age as a time in which you might have this kind of input and impact upon your grandchildren? When I say that, I am obviously assuming you're your children will let you read them Bible stories and pray with your grandchildren. This is the kind of think that I believe Joseph had the opportunity to do with his grandchildren. He could tell them the stories of how God watched over him and cared for him in times of trouble and difficulty. He could teach to trust in the sovereign care and loving protection of a God who knows what is best and how to lead us into all the truth. He could teach them the importance of faith and the significance of prayer, and the reality of God being with the one who calls upon His name. This is what it means to fear the Lord. This was the blessing which God gave Joseph all of his days as a believer, from the time that he was young and had his dreams, to the time when he was sold as a slave by his brothers into Egypt, to the time when God gave him a wife and children in Egypt, to the time that he brought his brothers and father to live with him in Egypt. He learned the fear of the Lord, and he would teach it to others as it says in Psalm 34, verse 8 and following. "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" "Oh fear the Lord, you His saints!" "There is no want to those who fear Him." "The young lions may lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." "Come you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." "Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?" "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit." "Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." "The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles." I believe that this is the very thing that Joseph was able to teach his children and grandchildren; the sufficiency of God to hear and answer prayer. The fact that there is no need to speak against those that are doing things and saying things which bother us. There is no need to fret and to complain. There is every reason to trust and to pray and to fear the Lord. I believe that Joseph was able to teach this to his children and grandchildren, even his great grandchildren. It has well been said that God has no grandchildren. A person cannot claim God as being his spiritual father simply because his father knew the Lord. He must, himself, come to terms with his own sinfulness and the demands of the gospel. He must, himself, believe in Jesus Christ if ever he is to enter and inherit the kingdom of God. But there is a legitimate sense in which we can say that the Lord Jesus Christ has spiritual grandchildren. He is called the "Everlasting Father", in Isaiah 9: 6. And every person who believes savingly into Him, His Blessed

Person, and His finished work is saved. And that person, if they can take children upon their knee, and train them to fear the Lord and believe in Jesus Christ, may be the means of becoming their spiritual "father" in Christ. In that sense; our Lord Jesus has grandchildren. Listen to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 4: 15. "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many father; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Therefore I urge you, imitate me." I would urge each of you who are parents and grandparents to see what a great blessing it is to have children and to see and be able to take your grandchildren upon your knees and to teach them the fear of the Lord, and to teach them about the greatness of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2ndly- God bestowed upon Joseph the blessing of peace to his dying soul. (Verse 24)

Turn with me over to Psalm 128 where the truths that I am trying to bring to your attention are mentioned once again. "Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways." "When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you." "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table." "Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord." "The Lord bless you out of Zion, and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life." "Yes may you see your children's children." "Peace be upon Israel." Joseph had this blessing of peace as it came his time to die, because he had lived a life, by God's grace, of fearing the Lord and walking in His ways. He was going to the heavenly Jerusalem even though he did not live in the time period of the foundation of the earthly Jerusalem. He was going to "Abraham's bosom", even though he had never heard it worded that way, as the Lord Jesus did when he told the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. God had prepared a place for him in heaven. "Thus shall it be for the one who fears the Lord," it says. He had seen his children's children. He had been prospered in all of his ways, and because of that, when he knew that he was dying, he could calmly face the fact, and tell his brethren so. Notice with what holy resignation he states the matter in verse 24. "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, Isaac, and Jacob." He knows that he is dying. He can face death because he knew that God had been with him in the hardest times of his life. After Joseph was falsely accused in the matter of lying with Potiphar's wife, it says in Genesis 39: 20, "Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined." "And he was there in the prison." "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Joseph learned something there in that prison. He learned that God cared for him and was with him there when there was no immediate hope for deliverance. God was with

him when no one else was with him, when no earthly person could help him or save him from slavery or prison. And since he had learned these things and proven had these things proven to his soul by God Himself, then he knew that surely God would care for him now that he was dying. The loss of his body was something that he could face if he was going to God. He knew that God was the keeper of his soul. "The Lord, He is my keeper; the Lord is the shade on my right hand." "The sun shall not smite thee by day; nor the moon by night." "The Lord shall protect thee from all evil." "He shall keep thy soul." "The Lord shall guard thy going out and coming in; from this time forth and forever." (Psalm 121: 5-8)

I wonder if each of us here is learning this valuable lesson; of how to walk with God day by day so that when we pass through the shadow of death; that we will fear no evil? Do you know that God is with you in your most trying times? I am speaking to believers now. Unbelievers cannot know the blessed reality of this. Do you have peace when you have been falsely accused, because you know in your heart and in your conscience that the things that are being said are not true? Do you know God working on your behalf even in the prison times in your life, when you have suffered for righteousness sake? The only way that you can have peace as you go through the prison experience is if the Lord is with you. Are you the Lord's prisoner or the prisoner of sin and self? The only way that you can face the shadow of death is if you have come to know and prove to your soul's satisfaction that "God is with you." "His rod and His staff they comfort you...." But even though Joseph knew these things, still he wanted his beloved brethren to understand this truth and come to realize the blessing of it to their souls. "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The plain and unadulterated truth of the matter is, that our God is a faithful God. God will surely visit the believer in Christ, to bring them out of Egypt; out of this world and into the promised land of salvation. God visits the soul of a person in salvation, just as he promised Israel that he would visit their nation with deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Sin always bring bondage, but God always keeps his promises to deliver through Jesus Christ our Lord. He will never leave nor forsake those who have given themselves to Him. No doubt, as Joseph spoke the words of comfort to his brethren, he remembered the words of his great grandfather Abraham; words which had come to him from God Himself. Genesis 15: 12 - "Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him." Then God said to Abram, 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.' "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions." "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age." This word from God to Abraham on that

day long before, was the same word which brought peace to Joseph's soul as the time drew near for him to die." It is always this way for God's people. To find peace and hope while going through the shadow of death, or in facing any horror and darkness in the present, there must be the assurance that these difficult things; these impossible things that we face are all a part of God's sovereign plan. And there must be an assurance coming from God's Word; His promise, that we, or our loved ones who are trusting in the promise of God just as we are; will be delivered from the calamities and distresses of this life, or brought through them. Whether it is the bondage of sin or death or oppression of spirit in any form; there must come to our soul the thought; "My God is in control of this." "My God is greater than this." "I will cry to Him and He will help me and will bring me through this." "He will be with me to the end, and beyond the end of this life." This assurance of faith begins when we become a Christian. When we are looking for salvation to come to our soul, we must believe the promise that God will save the one who looks to Jesus, the one who believes Jesus, the one who takes Jesus to be their substitute and sacrifice for their sins. Faith can only be built upon what God promises in His Word. And all of God's greatest promises of deliverance and blessing are found in the Lord Jesus.

But Joseph was thinking of his loved ones, hoping that they would glean from his words and his example, that God is a God to be trusted; His word to be depended upon. I was reading a little from Vance Havner's book, *Though I walk through the Valley*. It is a book about what his life was like without his beloved wife Sara being by his side. She had died in 1973. He wrote the book a year later. In a chapter entitled - I trust in God--but Why?, he says this. "On my desk is a picture of Sara that I treasure above all others." "It is not a formal dressed up picture of which I have many." "It is a snapshot taken on the Blue Ridge Parkway last summer on our visit to that favored spot." "She wore a plain little pink dress and she stood at a lookout that commands a breathtaking view of the valley below." "It wasn't over-posed and she looks as though she might speak." "The original was a tiny negative and was taken on a cheap little camera." "We sent the print to Eastman Kodak and they enlarged it in to a thing of beauty." "I carry it in a double frame and on the opposite side of the frame facing the picture is that precious poem that begins, "Should you go first and I remain...." "On my lonely walk this morning I realized afresh that God has shut me up to Himself and Himself alone." "There is no one else to whom I can turn." "There are friends and relatives but the half of my life is gone." "God is my portion and my reward." "I know not what to do but my eyes are upon Him." "But I must be sure that I look to Him in truth and trust and love and merely because I must and there is nothing else that I can do." "There is not much to be gained from dependence on God simply as a last resort." "If I go around looking for some broken reed, some arm of the flesh on which to lean, then I have learned my lesson and god must deal further with me." "He does

not come to our relief until we stop trying to save ourselves." "Sometimes a lifeguard must knock out a drowning man because in his desperation that man might hold on so tightly that both might drown." "When we reach utter desperation and are satisfied with God alone, then He may step in with help we never dreamed of and never could have found." "To pretend that we are marooned on God and at the same time make clever plans to meet our own needs is hypocrisy." "Psalm 123 is the prayer of a man shut up to God: "Behold as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us." The New Testament calls it 'Looking unto Jesus'. "When we reach that blessed point we may rest in peace for God will not fail us." "He may test our faith and try our patience but He will perfect that which concerns us." You see, my friends, this is the very thing that Joseph wanted to pass on to his brethren, and it what he would pass on to you and I this morning as well. God bestowed His blessing of peace upon Joseph because Joseph was trusting and depending upon Him for everything; even that God would be with his brethren after he was dead and gone. He had great peace about this; and this is the way that we as Christians go on after those whom we have loved, people who were godly and helped us so very much in living our Christian life; have died. We may have depended upon them very much to show us and give us so many good things in our life, and in living the Christian life they were models and examples of Christ to us. But now they are gone. What are we to do? We remember that God was the One who gave them to us in the first place, and we come to Him and trust in Him alone to be the stability of our times, that Rock of habitation to which we will continually resort. Learning this is very important to our faith.

Then 3rdly- God blessed Joseph with the assurance of his future and Israel's future.

Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying , 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.' We can ask, "What does this mean?" Joseph asking his brethren to take an oath that he would leave his bones there in Egypt, while his father commanded that they not let his body be buried in Egypt but have them buried in Canaan. Shouldn't Joseph have done the same? No, there was a difference in the purpose of God in having it this way. Both Jacob and Joseph in their instructions concerning their bones were acting in faith. Jacob, by faith, knew that in the times of prosperity that they lived in, there would be the temptation in his family and descendents, to stay in Egypt and not to remember the purpose of God. The purpose of God for every Christian is realized when he comes to see that this world is not his home; he is just a'passin through. That is why Jacob would identify with his fathers, looking back to the days when he and the family dwelt in the land of promise, dwelling in tents with Abraham and Isaac. They were heirs together of the same

promise. They were waiting for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, it says in Hebrews 11: 10. The Christian must remember to dwell in the land of promise as well. He must remember to die with the promises of God in his heart and upon his lips. For it is the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, that is the place that he intends to go to. God is the only One who can bring him there. Joseph, in his asking for an oath from his brethren, is portraying a different picture of God's purpose. In Hebrews 11: 22 it says, "By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones." Joseph's act of faith was in regard to his certain expectation that God would bring Israel up out of Egyptian bondage and into the promised land. Jacob's bones were already there. Joseph's faith was that God would bring the whole nation to Canaan; the place where he would bless them and prosper them and it would eventually become the place where Immanuel would dwell. It was Immanuel's land. The picture of the faith of Joseph is the picture of faith that God would surely visit His people; they would not stay in Israel one day longer than God's purpose would have it. He would bring them out with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm. But I think that it is even more than that to us today. It is the picture to us as the New Testament Israel of God, that He will bring us up out of this world, through the death and resurrection of Christ to heaven and eternal life. Christ is risen and He is alive forevermore, and we are His flesh and bones. While we are in the flesh we carry about the body of the Lord Jesus with us that the life of the Lord Jesus might be seen in us. But He is coming back again someday, and we shall on that glorious day all be gathered to Him, to be with Him forevermore. Whenever one of our loved ones dies, who has place their faith and hope in Jesus, let us comfort one another with these words, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus." Not just our bones, but a glorious new body.