

The Bones of Joseph: An Act of FAITH!

Pastor Jose F. Maldonado

Hillburn Drive Grace Baptist Church

July 22, 2012 (PM)

“And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.” Exodus 13:19

I would like to speak this evening on: The Bones of Joseph: An Act of FAITH! I have been enjoying our studies on Exodus 13 and I hope you have also. There is much here in this pivotal chapter of Exodus as God reminds them 4 times that He delivered them by the STRENGTH of His omnipotent hand; look at verses 3, 9, 14 and 16. We will consider this thought, that is, “...for by **strength of hand** the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.” for our Lord’s Table in a couple of weeks.

In chapter 12 of Exodus it has the story of the 10th plaque, where the DEATH ANGEL smites the firstborn of man and beast and the memorial of the LORD’s Passover being instituted and the spoiling of the Egyptians as the Israelites are driven out of Egypt.

In chapter 14 of Exodus it has the story of the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh and his Egyptian army.

Sandwich in between is chapter 13. Chapter 13 has some blessed spiritual truths and instruction and in the midst of all this is the mentioning of Joseph’s bones. You might ask, what is so significant in mentioning of Joseph’s bones, especially in the middle of such important instruction. One verse towards the end of the chapter informs us that Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, in the midst of a massive exodus from Egypt. They were to leave in haste, but Moses stops to make sure he has Joseph’s bones. Why was it so important that before they depart and leave Egypt that they have Joseph’s bones? These bones have been in a tomb for almost 200 years, they have lain in a coffin for 200 years and Moses makes sure they have Joseph’s bones before they exit. Moses took an interest in the 200 year old bones of Joseph. I don’t know if I would take an interest in 200 year old bones, but Moses did.

Moses and the Israelites are finally being delivered from Egyptian bondage and as they prepare to leave after the Passover meal, Moses makes sure that he has Joseph’s bones. What caused him to do this, that is, what prompt him, what motivated him to do this? I have a one word answer: FAITH! Nothing short of FAITH cause Moses to packed Joseph’s bones. Moses would not leave Egypt without Joseph’s Bones? It’s like, what is the one thing you don’t leave home without before coming to church? The BIBLE! The bones are like the Bible in the sense that the bones preach a sermon and Moses would not think for one moment of

leaving Egypt without Joseph's bone in the same manner you would not leave your house without your Bible.

I think I've got you attention now. There are 3 things I would like to share with you this evening:

- I. **The Promise in a Fixed Heart.**
- II. **The Performance in a Faithful Heart.**
- III. **The Perseverance in a Fruitful Heart.**

First of all: The Promise in a Fixed Heart. There is a sense that I cannot wait to get to my second point on The Performance in a Faithful Heart because of the faith exhibited by the example of Moses in carrying out the bones of Joseph out of Egypt, but in this first point I want to concentrate in the Fixed heart of Joseph in laying hold of the promise of God. The promise of God was in Joseph's heart and it was fixed and settled and nothing would shake him or cause him to forget God's promise. It was in his heart, fixed and permanent! It is the unshakable faith of Joseph that caused him to make a prophecy regarding his bones, please turn to Genesis 50:24-26. "*And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and **God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.** 25 And Joseph **took an oath** of the children of Israel, saying, **God will surely visit you,** and **ye shall carry up my bones from hence.** 26 So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."*

Joseph tells his brethren, "I die," and instead of being troubled or disturbed with his will regarding his wife and children and or for the orders of Egypt when he dies, he is concern about God's will and purposes. Habakkuk words resound loudly here, "...*the just shall live by his faith.*" We love to quote Hak.3:2, but I believe in the case of Joseph we can quote Hab.3:2 along with Hab.2:3, "*For the vision is yet for an appointed time, **but at the end it shall speak, and not lie:** though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*" Remember this verse when we make mention of Joseph dreams and promises from God as recorded by the Psalmist. Anyway, Joseph lived by faith and therefore dies in faith. Here we see clearly, how Joseph's faith is cemented in a fixed heart believing and laying hold of the promise of God given to his great-grandfather Abraham regarding the land that flows with milk and honey. He is about to die and his heart, mind and soul is saturated with God's promises, what an example for all of us when death comes knocking upon our door. Will our hearts be fixed on the perishable things of this earth or the imperishable things of heaven? Will you die the death of the righteous or the death of the wicked? Do you have a faith that will defeat death? Will death defeat you or will you defeat death? Or will death defeat your faith or will your faith defeat death? The just shall live and die by his faith! The Promise of God is FIXED in the heart of Joseph! Joseph's heart is not unstable and wavering, no but firm, steady, secured and

immovable, yea FIXED in the PROMISE of GOD. When death comes a knocking for you, your heart better be FIXED in the PROMISES of God!

Let us consider the life of Joseph and consider what made him the man he was, what cause him to lay hold of the promise of God with a fixed heart. One day I will preach a series on the life of Joseph, outside of Moses and David, he is probably my favorite person in the Old Testament. At an early age of 17 Joseph because of the jealousy of his brothers was sold into slavery and carried away into a foreign heathen country. He remained there for many years surrounded by wicked idolaters and in all that time until he saw his father again, many years later, I believe that it is very unlikely that he came into contact with someone of like precious faith. I doubt it very much that he came into contact with another believer, not even one who worshipped the Living and True God; he truly was the lone ranger or better yet the lone believer in the land of many gods. That sounds like our modern 21st century, the land of many gods, what a title for a future message, AMERICA: the Land of Many gods! Well this is where we find Joseph, but the difference is that he is the only believer in that land. Stop a moment and consider this thought, can you imagine being the ONLY believer in America. Can you imagine being in America and the government has removed all and any Christian concept, that is, no churches, no Bibles, no sermons or any Christian teachings on the radio, TV or the internet, that's right, no Facebook for Joseph. Can you imagine being in a land and there is not one evidence of any Christian or not even one Bible or one sermon or message on the airwaves or internet. Being alone, the only true believer in Jehovah God in the LORD Jesus Christ? Well this is exactly where you find Joseph, 17 years old and not one shred of evidence of any other believer. What would you do, give up, forget the promises of God, forget the Bible, forget your faith and be mad with God, live a life of constant murmuring and complaining, why me God o why me?

All alone in a foreign country, which you do not understand the language, not a single child of God around, no Bible to read (the Word of God had not been written yet), no spiritual books to be fed and all various types of temptations, trails and snares around him and all he had were the promises that were pass down by his great-grandfather, grandfather and father, they were transfer down verbally, no brother or sister in Christ to confide and or prayed with, all alone and yet JOSEPH remain absolutely true to His GOD! All he had were the promises of God communicated to him and what we see is an astonishing unbelievable conviction fixed in the promises of God. Joseph was a man tempted by sin and by the possession great prosperity, but Joseph had a steadfast faith that was unshakable. Joseph's faith was in Jehovah God and his faith was unquestionably and absolutely strong! This is all due to the powerful and sustaining divine strength of effectual grace. The operation of the Holy Spirit was no doubt mighty in his heart. Joseph persevered because of God's omnipotence preservation. Joseph was a faithful man; Joseph walked by faith, lived by faith and died in

faith! The grace of God was sufficient for him. Grace gave him faith in Christ and grace kept him faithful to Christ. In the providence of God, Joseph had received in early childhood godly training that was saturated with God's blessing. Oh, dear brethren the importance of early childhood training in the Bible for our children, truly Solomon would declare years later, "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*" Proverbs 22:6. Paul would also remind us of the importance of this in Eph.6:4, "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: **but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.***" No doubt these two principles were used in the raising of Joseph. Consider the next few things: (from A.W. Pink)

- Being sold into slavery did not make him give up his faith.
- Thirteen years of imprisonment did not make him bitter.
- Being made lord over Egypt did not spoil him.
- Evil examples all around did not corrupt him. (last three from A.W. Pink)

"Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come! 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home!"

Joseph in the most severe and relentless trials believed God and continued to serve Him. He did not murmur or complain, but was content in whatever state he was in, because his hearts, his eyes, his ears, his faith was fixed in the unshakable, unwavering and permanent promises of God! Why because he knew God was with him, Gen.39:2. "*And the LORD was with Joseph...*" Genesis 39:3, "*And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.*" Genesis 39:21, "*But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*" Genesis 39:23, "*The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.*" Joseph in all his circumstances was firm and faithful to God and had the faith of his great-grandfather Abraham, "*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*" Romans 4: 20 & 21. Therefore, Joseph against hope believed in hope!

Now, I'm going to get ahead of myself, because I don't think I will finish this evening my study, therefore I'm going to go the end of my message to make the point of Joseph's fixed heart in the promise of God, but let me first ask a question. I'm sure that most of you have read the life of Joseph in Genesis 37 – 50. If I were to ask you what stands out to you what would you say? Let's see who will be the first to give me an answer this evening, in reading the life of Joseph what stands out to you the most? I have 12 things let's see what you have and I am sure we will hit some of the same things:

1. Continued to serve God even though being sold into slavery in Egypt? Most of us would be murmuring and complaining, why me Lord why me! Is this how you repay me for serving you?
2. How about His faithfulness to God, remember what promises God had given him in a dream in Gen 37:5-11?
3. His chastity while being tempted by Potiphar's wife?
4. His recompense or reward for his holy action, which is, being put in prison for a righteous deed, without complaint?
5. Maintaining his faith, by having patience in the promise dreams given to him by God, or as the Psalmist would put it in Ps. 105:16-19, "*Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. 17 He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: 18 **Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:** 19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.*" He was put in the iron of affliction, but in great and unwavering patience, he waited patiently for the promise of God to be fulfilled. I love verse 19, until, until, until the time for the promise to be fulfilled, with great and immense patience, he waited as the word of God tried him. I love what Gordon Bayliss said one time, "God gives us promises, but not dates." God gave Joseph the promise but not the date. The promise word of God tried him as he waited patiently! (Hab.2:3, "*For the vision is yet for an appointed time, **but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.***")
6. His wisdom and judgment: Gen.39:22, "*And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.*" Gen 47:14, "*And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.*"
7. His fear of God, Gen.42:18, "*And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God.*"
8. His compassion for his brethren in Genesis 42.
9. His obedience to his father in Genesis 37 & 47:31.
10. His reverence to his father in Genesis 48:12.
11. His forgiving spirit in bestowing good for evil regarding his brothers. Gen.50:20
12. His spiritual maturity in acknowledging God's providence when it had frowned upon him and calling it good.

There are perhaps many more examples of this godly man which we can look to and say, this stands out to me. Now I've heard yours and you have heard mine and if I had one thing to write about Joseph that would stick out in great faith, what would it be? I think mine would be in Genesis 50:20, "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*" This teaches us to submit to God's providence

even when it frowns upon us and also about the grace of forgiving those who have hurt us the most. Now, the big question is what would God have man write concerning Joseph's faithful life? He lived 110 years and what will God say of him to encourage us in our pilgrimage to heaven? Let me just say this in passing, Isa.55:8 & 9, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" How true is this in our application to Joseph's life, because our thoughts are not God thoughts and truly, His thoughts are not our thoughts! Let's see what God has to say about this whole matter, turn with me to Hebrews 11:22, "**By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.**" Amazing this text passes over all the other events in Joseph's astonishing and exceptional life and makes reference to the bones of Joseph. This is the essence of my message, there's something about the bones of Joseph that preaches to us concerning the perseverance of our faith, thus the title to my message; The Bones of Joseph: An Act of FAITH!

Our text in Exodus 13:19 resonates with the display of both Joseph's and Moses' faith, but what we see so clearly is that when Joseph is about to die, he displays an incredible and prevailing faith. Joseph's coat of many colors comes short in the glorious shade of incredible faith that staggered not at the promise of God. Here we have Joseph at the height of his glory in Egypt who believed God in such trying circumstances that would cause most men to forget God.

Joseph knew he was dying, but his believe in God was cemented and fixed in the promises of God. Death is a great test of a man's true heart; it exposes what really is in the heart of a person. Death knocks down bowing walls and tottering fences. Perhaps the writer of Hebrews is seeking to convey to us that the greatest and brightest instance of faith in this grand old saint of God was at his death. At death he was not concerned what man had to say, no he was concerned with what God had said. Joseph on his death bed was a 37:37 man to whom we can say with such confidence, certainty and conviction: "**Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.**" Yes, AMEN and AMEN, the end of that man Joseph was peace, you see while he lay a dying, he remembered God's covenant and it saturated his heart with great peace. His heart was totally baptized with the promises of God and the thoughts of his heavenly Canaan! He did not dwell in the past, nay my dear brethren he dwelled on his hope for the future. He believed God, he trusted God, he laid hold of the promises of God and therefore was a man of PEACE and so his soul rested upon His God, believing every word and trusting every promise, yes, the end of Joseph's life was PEACE!

Joseph believed God and though to Pharaoh and others, that which God had promised Joseph was totally contrary to reason, YET he fully and completely was persuaded in what

God had promised him! In the time of Joseph Israel was in Goshen and why should they leave? But Joseph believed that God had promised that after 400 years they would inherit the land of promise flowing with milk and honey and therefore Joseph believing God, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel.

Genesis 50:24-26. *“And Joseph said unto his brethren, **I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.** 25 And Joseph **took an oath** of the children of Israel, saying, **God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.** 26 So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”*

Joseph by faith knew that his brethren would be in bondage to Pharaoh and become slaves in Egypt and how would they ever escape? This is where faith comes in and what is faith? *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Hebrews 11:1. Joseph had not seen what was going to happen, he just simply BELIEVED GOD, because faith is the evidence, that is, faith is the conviction of things not seen! You see faith does not reason, FAITH BELIEVES GOD! Therefore because Joseph believed God, he refused to become or even be regarded as an Egyptian and by faith he believed that his bones would be buried in the PROMISE LAND! This is why this is mentioned in Hebrews 11:22, he knew without a shadow of doubt that his bones would be buried in the PROMISE LAND! In real simple terms, Joseph’s faith in Jehovah God bound and constrained him to identify himself with Jehovah God, His worship, His people and yea HIS land! Though Joseph was faithful to Pharaoh and a royal citizen in the land that God placed him and though he served the people and land of Egypt better than any man, but because he was a follower of Jehovah God and an Israelite indeed, a true believer, therefore he would not; he would not be identified with the Egyptians, because Joseph’s heart and mind was settled and he was looking beyond the grave. His affection and confession lay far beyond anything he could see with the naked eye, his eyes were set upon the promise land. Joseph followed in the footsteps of his forefathers; he followed the paths of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and identified himself with them and not the Egyptians. In other words, like his forefathers he was looking for a city whose builder and maker is God and therefore, Joseph by faith sought to identify himself with heaven and not with Egypt. Hebrews 11:13-16, *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 **But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.**”* Joseph is about to die and you think he is concerned about vengeance, no he had his heart set upon the glories of HEAVEN, he was going to see his father, his grandfather and his great-grandfather, yea HIS GOD!

Thus, “**By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.**” We’ll make a deeper application next week from Hebrews 11:22, but Joseph died in faith as a true follower and true believer in the Living and True God.

So as Joseph prepares to die, he isn’t looking backwards, no, he is looking forward to the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham and his posterity. Again, Joseph firmly and wholly believes what God had promise him and his forefathers and is concern that one day his descendants and of his brothers will one day leave Egypt and occupy the glorious promise land and when that would happen, Joseph wanted to make sure his bones would be present in the promise land, because he is identified with God’s people and not the infidels of Egypt. Joseph is not being superstitious and after being in heaven for 200 years does he worry where his bones are, no, but while he was alive, IT WAS A MATTER OF FAITH that his bones would be buried in the promise land so that all would know that HE IS IDENTIFIED with the people of God. It was a testimony to the promise and power and of God and to the followers of God. There is a sense that it also pictures the resurrection and therefore sets forth the hope of all believers. It was a powerful act of faith on his behalf, but also in the behalf of Moses.

Joseph is about to die and he is concern for his brethren and encourages them God will surely visit you, that is, God will take care of you, “**And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.**” Joseph might sit upon Egypt’s throne, but his heart and mind was in and on his God and God’s promises. We might sit upon this world’s blessings, but by faith one day I will inherit the heavenly Canaan, the heavenly Jerusalem made without hands! We can say all we want but when death comes a knocking, it will determine the strength of our faith because, death is the acid test of faith for all people and the question I ask you as we conclude our study this evening is, will your faith defeat death, when death comes upon you? Will your faith defeat death or will death defeat your faith? Will you faith die with your death or will your faith carry you to the glories of heaven? Will you die the death of the righteous or will you die the death of the wicked. Can you say with the Apostle Paul, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” Does your faith believe that death is swallowed up in VICTORY?

At death can you recite the words of Paul with an unwavering and unshakable faith when he said in 2 Tim.4:6-8, “*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 **I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:** 8 Henceforth **there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,** which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*” May God add to the preaching of His word, let’s pray: Sing: It is well with my soul