

Joseph Died By Faith

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INI - SDG

Genesis 50:22-26 ²² So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. 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. 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, to Isaac, and to Jacob." ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ So Joseph died, *being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.*

We make choices about death and burial for all kinds of different reasons. Some people chose that which is most practical. Some people want something grand. Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal as an immortal emblem of his love.

There's nothing wrong with any of those choices. There's no right way and no wrong way to be buried. Those who die in faith will be resurrected whether they are buried or cremated whether they have a tomb or whether your ashes are spread across the ocean.

However Joseph chose to use his burial as a proclamation of the same faith by which he lived his life.

The life of Joseph is the life of a man who lived by faith in the promises of God. It's one of the favorite Sunday School stories for kids and adults.

Throughout his life Joseph showed his faith in God. He was sold into slavery and yet instead of living in depression lived that life of slavery to the Lord. He was falsely imprisoned and yet trusted that it was according to God's plan. By faith he became ruler, second in command of all of Egypt. By faith he brought his brothers and his father down to live with him in Egypt. By faith he brought both of his sons to his father Jacob to be blessed knowing that God would be with them and fulfill His promises.

Yet when the writer of Hebrews mentions Joseph among the list of heroes of faith, he mentioned none of these things. Instead, the writer of Hebrews mentions only what Joseph did in our text today, not that he lived by faith but that he died by faith. The faith that Joseph lived endured through death.

Joseph could have chosen the glories of the pyramids of Egypt as an eternal tribute to himself in his death. Joseph could have chosen something very practical like the burning of his body. Joseph could have chosen to have his body immediately returned to Canaan and be buried with his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather. But in his death Joseph chose to preach the faith that he lived. He chose to wait in Egypt until God came to visit his people and leave them back to the promised land.

Everything Joseph did, he did through faith. As we talked about last week, he grasped those promises of God. He believed the promises of God, even in death he was still grasping these promises.

There are three particular promises which Joseph grasped, which really helped Joseph to live and die by faith. The same three promises that the Apostle Paul singles out for us in 1 Cor 13, faith hope and love. The same three promises which can make such a big difference in our lives, if we learn to grasp them as Joseph did.

Faith - Joseph Believed that God was with Him

In our text he tells the Israelites. God will visit you. This implies that God is waiting and watching and is with them.

Earlier Joseph told his brothers, you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

With these words Joseph makes it clear that he knows that God is with him and his brothers, and no matter what happens he accepts that God is going to bring good out of it.

This was the promise that God gave to Jacob. "I will be with you." It's a promise that Jacob for a long time did not believe, but which it is clear that Joseph learned to trust at an early age. No doubt it is a promise that Joseph heard from his father Jacob.

This is the quintessential lesson we learn from the life of Joseph. We can trust that God is with us and working everything for good.

Jam 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

All the things we read about Joseph doing, his patience and hard work even in very difficult circumstances, he was able to do because he trusted that God was with him and would work everything for good. It is a lot easier to be patient when you know there is plan in place.

Sometimes the hardest thing about tribulation and difficulties is feeling alone, and thinking it will never end. Like Joseph we have confidence that neither of those things is true. We know that God is with us and will bring all tribulation to a glorious end.

Hope - Joseph Believed in the Lord's Advent

At the center of Joseph's choice in our text was the absolute belief that God was coming. Joseph would rather wait for God's coming than to enjoy the grandeur of Egypt.

His whole life Joseph waited for the Lord. He accepted slavery and waited for the Lord to release him. He accepted prison and waited for the Lord to set him free. He waited for the cup bearer to remember him to Pharaoh. He waited for his brothers to come down to Egypt. He waited to reveal himself until he

was confident that his brothers had repented from the heart. Joseph was one who was always waiting confident that the Lord would act in his own time.

Now one might think at the end of his life, now finally Joseph was done waiting. But no, Joseph learned to wait in life and in death by faith he continued to wait. He waited till the Lord came to visit his people and return them to the land Canaan.

He was willing to wait because by faith he trusted that God had a plan and it was better to wait for the Lord to fulfill His plan than to charge off making a plan of his own. He believed that God was coming.

It is easy to slip into that mindset that God is not coming. That we must make our own way in life.

Yet scripture reveals repeatedly that the victory belongs to those who wait on the Lord. We are reminded that those who wait on the Lord will "never be put to shame." We may have to wait 400 years but the Lord will come as promised.

Love - Joseph Believed in God's Love

So absolute was God's love for Joseph, that Joseph gave the same absolute love and forgiveness to his brothers. Notice that Joseph refuses to return to Canaan until all his brothers and his brothers' children also return.

Jeremiah 31:3 3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

Jeremiah 31:3 speaks of this eternal love. When we think of something that is eternal we think primarily of time but there is an endurance factor involved too. It is a love which cannot be broken.

Joseph understood this love God had for him and like we saw in the children's sermon that enduring love filled Joseph's life.

Joseph's brothers do not understand this kind of love. They only understood revenge. Joseph's brothers in anger sold him into slavery. When Shechem defiled their sister, Simeon and Levi went and slaughtered the entire city, killing all the men because of the sin of Shechem.

Joseph believed in God's love so much that even though they sold him into slavery, he would not leave Egypt until they all left together. He chose to have his body preserved and wait until they all went back together rather than have his body taken back now without them.

Living by faith means allowing God's love and forgiveness to fill our lives till we learn to share the same unbreakable love with each other.

On the one hand the life and death of Joseph reveals a hero of faith that we can never live up to. On the other hand his life is proof that those who wait on the Lord receive the fulfillment of His promises. Proof of the certainty of God's promise. His life is not a challenge set before you, live up to this standard. Rather it is a gracious promise from God, as I did for Joseph so will I do for you.

As I was with Joseph I will be with you.

As I came to visit Joseph in my own time, so I will come for you.

As I loved Joseph so I will love you.

The life of Joseph reveals the power of God in the lives of His people. What God did for Joseph He promises to do for you as well. Amen