

Hebrews 11:20-22, "Faith that Endures"

7.7.19

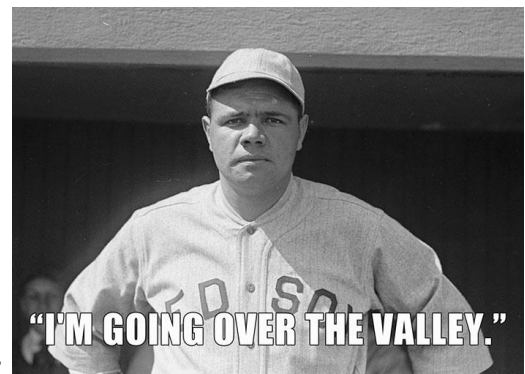
We continue in our study of the book of Hebrews and chapter 11, which is often noted as the "Hall of Faith." We've been looking at the lives of the "faithful." It's been a veritable "who's who" of Bible greats...Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham. We've seen the amazing faith of these men displayed in various ways...from Abel's acceptable offering, to Enoch's close walk with God, to Noah's courage to build a boat when it had never rained, and then last week: Abraham's gut-wrenching journey to Moriah with his son. These men showed faith in what God had told them to do. They trusted God and took Him at His word. Indeed, to have a proper relationship with God, we must take Him at His Word.

Today we'll see three more heroes of the faith: Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. If you have been with us and have been following along, you'll note that we've had to go back to the book of Genesis to see the faith of these "Heroes of the Faith." In fact, we've made it all the way to Genesis chapter 23 in our study. Today, we'll span from Genesis chapter 23 all the way to the end of the book...to Genesis 50, AND what we'll see will be the last words and the last acts of these three men: Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

You've heard the saying, "Famous last words." That's exactly what we'll see today...the famous last words of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. As I prepared this week, it got me thinking about famous last words. Here are a few you might find interesting. The great artist of the 1400's, Leonardo Da Vinci:



The baseball great, Babe Ruth said this:



John Jacob Astor IV and his wife were on the doomed voyage of the Titanic. Because he was rich and famous, he was given a seat on a lifeboat next to his wife, but he gave up and said these words.



He was later found floating on the ocean, dead. His last act was one of chivalry! On September 11, 2011, Todd Beamer...

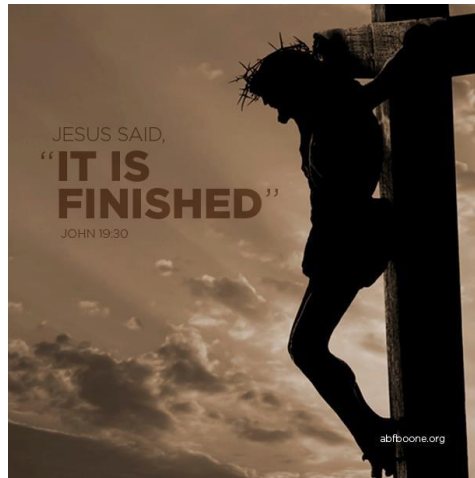


was a passenger on United Airlines Flight 93 (9/11). He and 11 others on that plane thwarted the attempt of Al Qaeda Hijackers to crash the plane into either the White House or the Capitol. His last words, according to a cell phone call, before rushing the hijackers and forcing the plan to crash into a field in Pennsylvania...these were his last words:



Todd Beamer was a believer in Jesus Christ...and that same cell phone call picked up the fact that he had just led those 11 other passengers and flight attendants who sacrificed their lives in reciting the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm. Famous last words.

My grandfather, CM Brown's last words were to my father: "You'll need to check on your mom every night!" My dad replied, "I'll take good care of her. You won't have to worry!" Famous last words... As insightful as each of these "last words" are...I want to share with you now the most famous last words of all...and they come by way of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who said:



For indeed, it was those words that guaranteed salvation and eternity in heaven for those who would heed those words and trust in Jesus so that soul...by faith, might come into the presence of God. And that, my dear church family, is the reason for Hebrews 11... to remind the people that God's plan, all along, is for us to know Him and enjoy His presence.

And this is what the Apostle Paul has been seeking to share with those first-century Jews, turned Christians... He was trying to help them to see that it's the PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with God that must be sought...not religion...not stuff that you do...but knowing God one on one. Today we come to Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and what we'll see for all three of these men of faith...are their last words, their acts on this earth...words and deeds of FAITH.

Hebrews 11:20-22

²⁰By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

Of all the events that the Holy Spirit could have chosen to chronicle the faith of these three men, He chose the last events of their lives, deathbed experiences. Famous last words...

As we look at the lives of these three patriarchs, I'm reminded that Isaac and Jacob lived in tents and Joseph ended up exiled in Egypt. None of these men ever really WERE ABLE to put down roots in the land of promise. You will remember verse 9 from a couple of weeks ago.

Hebrews 11:9

⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

What was that promise? It was the promise to Abraham that from him all nations would be blessed. How could that be? Simple. It was from the family line of Abraham that Jesus Christ would ultimately be born. That's how all nations would be blessed...we would have the opportunity to receive Jesus by faith and be saved from our sins.

Let's begin with Isaac. We saw him last week as a na'ar with his dad, Abraham, on Moriah.



Isaac showed tremendous faith as a lad...a teenager...in that he allowed his father to bind him, as he too, was tested on Moriah. Little is mentioned about Isaac during his lifetime except the fact that he moved around a lot in his tents, and everywhere he went he would build a well. Obviously, you need water to live...and every time Isaac pitched his tent, he would build a well. But, perhaps, outside of Moriah, what Isaac is best known for is being deceived by his son Jacob and his wife Rebekah.

Let's see this now...guess where I'm going to have you to turn? Yep, **Genesis. Please go to chpt 25**. As I mentioned Rebekah a moment ago, I am reminded of the fact that Isaac's wife had trouble getting pregnant, and so had Isaac's mom, Sarah. It's interesting the Jacob's wife Rachel had trouble getting pregnant too. All three of these ladies would have to wait patiently on the Lord. Abraham's wife, Isaac's wife and Jacob's wife. We arrive to verse 21 and Isaac prays for his wife.

Genesis 25:21-23

²¹ And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²² The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. ²³ And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."

So, there it is...the promise that the older would serve the younger. Jacob would be the one from whom the covenant promise of Abraham would be fulfilled...that promise would flow from Isaac through him...not his older brother Esau. Ultimately, as ordained by God, and told to Rebekah, the older WOULD serve the younger. But, Rebekah wanted to make sure. She heard what the Lord had said...but, she took matters into her own hands to make sure Jacob would receive the covenant blessing.

Remember what she did. She put animal skins on Jacob to make him hairy like Esau. Esau was a very hairy man...and he was also an excellent hunter and one day Isaac, who by now was very old and blind, asked Esau to go get him a steak...kill some wild game and fix it. Well, Rebekah heard this conversation and she realized Isaac was prepared to bestow the covenant blessing upon Esau, who was his favorite. So, in an act of cruel deceit she and Jacob plotted to deceive Isaac.

Folks...there's so much wrong with this story. First of all...parents shouldn't play favorites...that's always going to cause problems. And we're coming to the account of Joseph, one of Jacob's eventual 12 sons...and yet, Jacob played favorites with him too. Oh, playing favorites with anyone always causes problems. Are you playing favorites? How about at work? Do you have one set of rules for the people you like and another set for those who didn't make it in your inner circle? Are you playing favorites? How about with your family? Do you have one set of rules for your family

and another set rules for everyone else? That kind of stuff makes people mad and they see the unfairness, and MARK IT DOWN, it always leads to trouble.

What happened? Well, Rebekah and Jacob did deceive Isaac...



And Isaac blessed Jacob. But, here's the thing church family...the blessing was God's to give...not Isaac...so, the covenant blessing was already Jacob's. He didn't have to deceive to get something that was already his. Remember, Esau had already sold his birthright to Jacob for what?



a bowl of stew. How about that! Do you see these brothers...one is a deceiver and the other one can't control his appetites! Let's put it this way...Esau exchanged an inheritance worth millions of dollars for a \$2 bowl of Campbell's soup. Amazing to consider, isn't it! But, isn't that how Satan works today? Have it now! Don't wait! No sacrifice! No self-discipline or self-control! Just do it! What a disaster we make when we go outside of God's commands...His commands...like guard rails on highway...there to keep us safe!

Yet, in the end...at Isaac's death...he passed the covenant blessing to Jacob...but, he also blessed Esau and prophesied that a nation would come from him too.

Hebrews 11:20

²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

Yes, Esau became the head of a nation too... He married a daughter of Ishmael and this would become the Arab nations and they have been fighting Jacob (renamed Israel) ever since! Oh, it's a mess when we play favorites...it's a mess when we deceive and it's a mess when we can't control our appetites.

You're in Genesis chapter 25, turn with me **to Genesis 48**...now we go to the end of Jacob's life. Jacob is about to bless Joseph's sons and he's going to play favorites too. As you're turning...I'll remind you of the verse from Hebrews. Hear it:

Hebrews 11:21

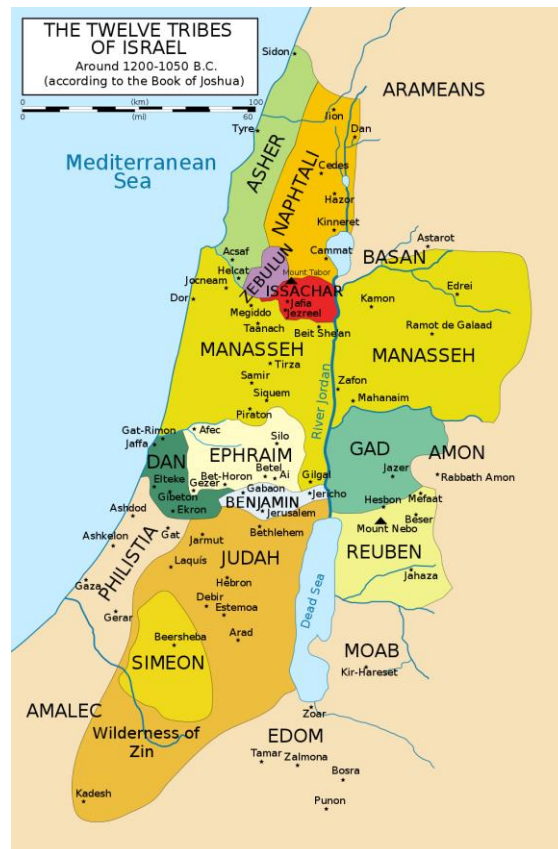
²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

As we come to Genesis 48, Jacob is now old and blind as well...he's preparing to bless Joseph's sons...guess what he would do. He would favor the younger over the older (just as had happened to him) and Joseph saw it and it's here that we pick up in **verse 17**.

Genesis 48:17-20

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.¹⁸ And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head."¹⁹ But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations."²⁰ So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

You know it's an interesting, repeating phenomenon we've seen in this family. Isaac was chosen over Ishmael; Jacob was chosen over Esau, and now Ephraim is chosen over Manasseh. All the younger ruling over the older. I want to show you a map of the eventual distribution of land to the 12 sons of Jacob.



If you know your Bible...you'll note that no land was given to Levi. You will not see Levi's name anywhere. Why? Very simple. He was the preacher of the family. They lived in around the Tabernacle compound, and were charged with the animal sacrifices and the priesthood. The other sons were commanded to tithe to make sure the Levites had enough money for food and were cared for as they performed their role of caring for the Tabernacle and later the Temple. In

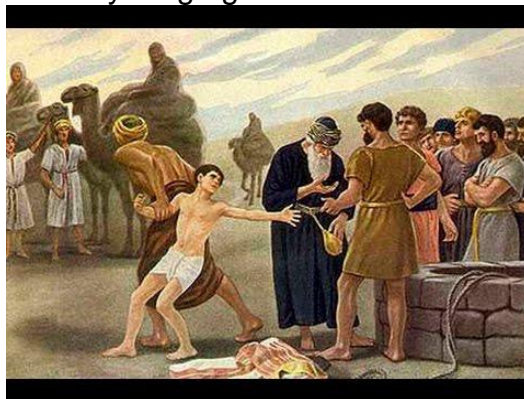
essence...I today, as a pastor...I am, to a degree, I'm like a Levite in that you give a portion of your money so that I can care for the church and still provide for my family as I teach you the Word of God.

So, here's the point regarding Jacob...IF it seems that he was playing favorites with Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Well, HE WAS! And that's what Jacob had been doing throughout his life and he had done it with Joseph when he was a boy. Jacob played favorites with Joseph and made him what?



Coat of many colors. And what did this do to the other 11 brothers? Made them jealous. And what did they do? They faked his death and sold him to a bunch of gypsies headed to Egypt and guess what...Joseph would never return to his homeland for the rest of his life. Oh, you and I might not even realize it's happening...but, if we're playing favorites, I guarantee someone is jealous! Think about it...I'll ask again...(I'm telling you...the Holy Spirit wouldn't let me get away from this...I didn't plan on talking about this...but He did.) Please...think about your relationships at home, at work, at school, with teams, you name it. James warned about playing favorites in the church...it's wrong in any area of life! We must NOT play favorites!

Well, we all know Joseph endured so many trials in his life in Egypt...all at no fault of his own. Yes, he was sold out by his brothers at the young age of 17:



SOLD OUT...it reminds me of Jesus being sold out for 30 pieces of silver and all of his "brothers," disciples...running out on him. He was then framed by a woman spurned:



Potiphar's wife, who tried to seduce him. But, unlike Esau, his Uncle, Joseph controlled his appetite...in this case to remain pure. Because of this...Potiphar's wife trumped up charges against Joseph and he was thrown into prison, where he was literally forgotten for 13 years, until he was 30 years old. But, finally, he was delivered from prison and through a set of God-ordained circumstances, became second in command to Pharaoh and literally saved his brothers lives...



The entire world would be struck by a severe famine and all of his brothers had to travel to Egypt to get grain. Guess who was in charge of the grain? Joseph! And he showed one of the greatest acts of forgiveness in all the Bible by not having his brothers killed for what they had done to him...but, instead...he acknowledged that God had allowed it for good.

Genesis 50:20-21

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

That too was like Jesus... "Father, forgive them...they don't know what they're doing." Joseph...what a man! But, none of these acts made it to the Hall of Faith in Hebrews. What did?

Hebrews 11:22

²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

Remember, I told you that Joseph never returned to the Promised Land, even though he was a 4th generation heir to the Promised Land. He never got to live in it as adult. How old was he when he was hauled off to Egypt? 17 and he would live in Egypt for the rest of his life. He would die at 110 years of age. Think of that...he never got to see his homeland again for 93 years. Yet, Joseph was not weakened in his faith in a pagan land. He remained strong and convinced of the Lord's goodness and he remained resolute and steadfast in his resolve not to be swayed by the culture of Egypt.

How about you? You say, "Me?? What do you mean, me?" Are you staying strong? Are you being swayed by the culture... You aren't home either? You're in Egypt too. You've not reached the Promised Land. Think about it...we're just pilgrims passing through and this isn't home...and because of the culture that we live in...**we can say that this is Egypt**. Are you being pulled and sucked in by the culture or are you remaining steadfast in your commitment to the Lord?

Do you want to know how you can tell? It's where you spend your time. Are you listening? Listen...if you aren't spending time with the Lord...if you seldom pray...and when you do if it's a lick and a promise 2 minute deal...you're being swayed...if you seldom read the Bible and when you do, it's not more than a few verses you see on a calendar...you're being swayed...if you seldom do anything for the kingdom of God...if you seldom help here or volunteer here in your church...because you say you're too busy...well then, I can tell you... MY DEAR FRIEND you are being swayed and sucked into the world's patterns and the world's system of thinking and if you're not very careful, you will begin to think like the world...like Egypt, on every matter of life.

Joseph made the Hall of Faith because he never stopped looking to the Promised Land. And the amazing thing is...he was able to look more than 400 years into the future, and see the Exodus. God revealed to Joseph that there would be a captivity, followed by Exodus. And there would be a period of 400 years of bondage...but, Moses would come...



and he would lead the people in a great Exodus from Egypt. So, knowing this, Joseph...on his deathbed, told his brothers...you boys better make sure that one of our descendants takes my bones...HOME! And you know what...they did. It's recorded all the way over in:

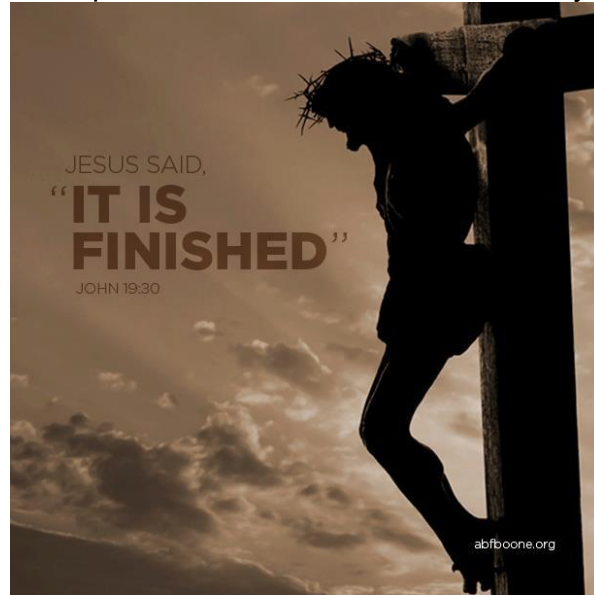
Joshua 24:32

³² As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

You see, for 400 years of captivity...Joseph's bones were a reminder to the people...one day...we're going home...we're going back to the Promised Land, and Joseph's bones guarantee it. And you know what church family, one day we're going home and the Empty Tomb is our reminder of that fact...that we too, are looking to the Promised Land of heaven!

What have we seen today? We've seen "Faith that Endures to the End." We've seen "famous last words...last acts..." We've seen three men...Isaac, Jacob and Joseph...all commended for what they said and did on their deathbeds. They had great faith! Not perfect faith...aren't you glad they

weren't perfect...(just like us), but God blessed their faithfulness. You know what...they never got to see the fulfillment of the promise...what was the promise...the Messiah, who would come...they never saw Jesus? They didn't know who He was. They didn't know who the Messiah would be...but, we do. Jesus would come from the line of Abraham...and 2000 years ago, He would say the most famous last words ever spoken, to a sinful, broken humanity...



Oh, may we look to Jesus in confidence, so that when we come to our deathbed...we may have FAITH, faith in Jesus who has secured for us the land of promise, heaven. May we be like Abraham, in that, we too, look for a city whose builder and maker is God. May we too, lay up for ourselves treasures in the Land of Promise, because we know that doing so anchors us to the glories of our future there and doing so frees us from being preoccupied with this "Egypt." May we live in such a way that our last words, our last deeds, reveal our love for Jesus and His kingdom and that our last words may inspire the next generation to do the same.
