

Entrusting Ourselves to God Genesis 50

Back in the year 2000, a new reality TV show came out. There had been other reality shows, but this one was different. 16 contestants were put somewhere in the wild outdoors to compete for a \$1 million dollar prize. They were divided into two “tribes,” forced to work together within their tribes and against the opposing tribe, yet with the understanding that in the end, only one person could win.

You may be a fan of the show. It’s called “Survivor.” The show is popular to this day, not only for the crazy competitions and colorful personalities, but also, for the unpredictable decisions that the players make. Part of the drama is that each week, one player is voted out of the game by their peers. The motto is “Outwit, Outplay, Outlast.” But one player early on said even within his own tribe, his motto was, “*Trust no one.*”

Often, alliances will be formed, only for someone to later stab someone else in the back. I think part of the show’s appeal is this: it’s in our nature to entrust ourselves to someone or something, and that part of our nature can be manipulated or played upon. The contestants on “Survivor” know this and they try to take advantage of it in order to win.

Entrusting ourselves is a major theme throughout the Scriptures of the OT and NT. We are urged to entrust ourselves fully to the one true God: to commit ourselves fully to Him, to rely completely on Him, committed to His way and relying on His trustworthiness.

But we also learn that because of sin, we naturally entrust ourselves to things other than God, or over and above God, or to God and other things. These “other things” are usually related to whatever is very important to you. So an addict entrusts him or herself to their vice; a greedy person to his or her money or possessions, a driven individual to his or her success.

Perhaps these and other examples are obvious. But the nature of sin is such that it has influence on every part of us, and so as a result, if, say, family is important to you, then you are prone to entrust yourself to family more than God. Or if your moral values are important to you, you’re prone to entrust yourself more to your own moral ability or record than to God. Even if what you value is the Christian life, sin stands to affect you and steer your heart and mind to trust in things from God more than in God Himself.

The first of the ten commandments says, “*You shall have no other gods before Me.*” The WLC gives an outstanding summary of what is forbidden in the commandment. The catechism says this includes, “*self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from God in whole or in part.*” Even the best things naturally become ultimate things in the hands of sinners.

But the gospel of Christ tells us that God has dealt even with these sins. Jesus is living proof of our total peace with God and our deliverance from the power of sin. And since Christ has set

free those He came to save, we are called to renew our efforts each day to entrust ourselves fully to God, undergirded by His grace.

But there will be challenges each day as well. This final chapter of Genesis tells us why. Notice the outline on pages 6 & 7 in the WG. Entrusting ourselves to God is difficult because: worldly alliances will appear secure and faith in God will appear foolish.

Here in this last chapter of Genesis, Jacob has died, and the torch of covenant leadership has passed. The first half of ch. 50 recounts with great detail the events after Jacob's death. It's not about Jacob's life or the things he did; rather, it's mostly about what the Egyptians did.

The family of Jacob, also called Israel, lived in Egypt at this point. They had a good relationship with the Egyptians. Notice that Jacob was embalmed after his death. This was not a Hebrew practice. The Egyptians did it, because they believed the body must be preserved in death for the afterlife. Embalming Jacob was at least helpful for the transport of his body back to Canaan, about 200 miles away, for his burial there. Joseph was a higher-up in Egypt, so his father's body was handled according to Egyptian custom.

But look at verse 3: *"the Egyptians wept for him for seventy days."* Jacob wasn't just another elderly man. He was the dear father of the great governor Joseph. Joseph worked for Pharaoh, and so he had to ask permission to take Jacob's body to Canaan. But Pharaoh, seemingly without hesitation, allows him to go. See verse [6], *And Pharaoh answered, "Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear."* [7] *So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt."* And then verse [9] *And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company."* There was this huge procession. Why? Because the family of Joseph and Jacob had great favor in Egypt.

Now on the way to Canaan, the procession stopped for a special service of lament, which lasted seven days! Notice verse [11] *When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a grievous mourning by the Egyptians."* Even the Canaanites realized this was a big deal to the Egyptian people. Then they perform the burial at the family plot, and they return to Egypt.

So what does this mean for the church today?

To answer that, we should always begin with considering what it meant to the original audience, to those who first heard or read this. That would be the Israelites in or near the Promised Land after having left Egypt after a long period of slavery at the hands of the Egyptians, after the Pharaoh would not let them go to Canaan.

Over the course of roughly 400 years since the covenant family first came to Egypt, they had grown to many 100s of 1000s of people. Wouldn't they hear about Egypt's response to Jacob's death and think something along the lines of, *"My, how things have changed!"*

You see, verses 1-14 here describe how it used to be. The family of Jacob got comfortable in Egypt. They seemed to have reason to feel secure.

Have you ever heard the old saying, *“There’s no such thing as job security.”* The meaning is that things can always change, even though you may feel secure. The landscape of the economy is always changing. The workplace is always changing. Technology is changing; people are changing. And every day, you’re growing older. This doesn’t mean your job is completely unsecure. But neither is it totally secure.

One message from this first part of Genesis 50 for the Israelites in or headed to Canaan and for the church today as we journey toward that eternal Promised Land is that it will be difficult to entrust ourselves fully to God alone because worldly alliances will appear secure.

We entrust ourselves to other things because by sight it seems safe. There’s a sense of certainty. That’s not to say that many things in life shouldn’t feel secure. It doesn’t mean we shouldn’t trust one another or feel safe in many things that God provides. But what feels good and secure today, can become your master tomorrow. These details about the Egyptians’ grief of Jacob made it clear for the Israelites: don’t entrust yourself to the nations. Don’t become reliant on them. Entrusting yourselves to the people and things of this world offers no lasting security.

Where in your life today are you failing to entrust yourself fully to God because of some worldly alliance that feels secure enough?

So much of the fear and depression and anxiety in our society is a result of the knowledge deep down inside of us that there is no absolutely certain worldly alliance. We’re scared to death of losing what we have in the world.

There must be a way to live in this world and not be so utterly dependent upon it. There must be a way to operate in the world that God has made without giving ourselves wholehearted to it.

And in fact, there is a way. The way is to have no other gods but the one true God. Therefore, worship no other, bow down to no other, treasure no other, devote yourself to no other above God. Obey only Him. Above all, trust in His law and His character.

This is why we have to hear and receive God’s Word, so we can know His will.

This is why we should worship and fellowship and serve in covenant community together, so that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus – grow in trusting God.

This is why we should walk with God daily, that we may determine His will in any matter.

And this is why we have to look always to Jesus, interpreting our feelings and experiences and circumstances in light of who Jesus is to us and what He has done for us. Worldly alliances will appear secure. But don't be fooled. This is difficult to see and do, especially in a world where faith in God will appear foolish. Let's look at this next section.

Take notice of two things here. First, after Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers fear that now he will get revenge for their evil deeds towards him all those years ago. And so they remind Joseph of their father's plea that he forgive them.

But look at Joseph's response in verse [19] *Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?"* Interesting reply. Of course, we know he isn't God. So what does he mean?

Joseph's restraint and his self-control was born out of his submission to God. He says that he won't take revenge exactly because he is not God. He's under God. And so even his own feelings yield to God's revealed will.

Notice verse [20], he says, *"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."* When we veer away from God's will revealed in His Word, we are attempting to step into the place of God, as if to say, *"No, not that way – this way."* Not God's way – my way.

Joseph shows mercy to his brothers not out of honor for Jacob's request, but out of obedience to the first commandment, though it was not yet written down. What Joseph does might appear foolish to some people, but faith in God will appear foolish. Obeying God's Word will seem ignorant or antiquated to some people. You can bank on that.

Now, notice a second thing. In verse 22, we move quickly to the end of Joseph's life. He's 110 years of age. He saw additional generations born in Egypt, and he adopted some of his grandchildren, much like his father Jacob did. And look at verse [24], *Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."* Joseph reiterates the covenant promise, just like Jacob did at his death.

And also, much like Jacob, verse [25] *Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."* They were to take Joseph's body or what was left of it to Canaan when God one day gave them the land. Hebrews 11 in the NT – that great chapter sometimes called the "Hall of Faith" – says this, *"By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones."*

You could say that Joseph's statement that God would take them from Egypt to Canaan "aged well." It happened. He foresaw that great event to come when God would one day lead His people out of Egypt, although the details of it were likely unclear to him. This was something far

away in the future. But holding on to that promise required the same thing in every generation: it required faith.

Some might hear Joseph and think, *“Ok, here’s another old man rambling on about his dead bones. What does he care about what we do with his dead body? He’ll be gone. What difference does it make to him?”* Well, to be sure, Joseph would be with God now in eternity. He very well may have had a belief in a future, bodily resurrection, wanting his body to be in Canaan and not Egypt. We understand that at that time, many things were not yet revealed to God’s people as they are now, since the coming of Christ into the world. But Joseph definitely had faith in the ways and the character of the one true God.

By faith he didn’t punish his brothers. And by faith he promoted faith in the covenant promises to the generations to come.

Faith is evidence of things not seen. And because they are unseen, faith in God will appear foolish. This is another reason why entrusting ourselves fully to God will be difficult. We all want certainty. And that’s why we exalt these other things to the place of God in our hearts and minds. We want the perceived certainty of something we can see or touch. We want a god we can see or touch. But more than that, we want a God we can control. We want a god we can predict. You cannot control or predict the one true God, but you can know Him.

Where are you struggling to walk by faith because it appears foolish, not just to the world, but to you? What is God’s Word calling you to do that you feel you cannot do because that would just be foolishness, because that would not work for you, because that is too difficult, too uncertain, because that would require you giving up control, it would require you entrusting yourself fully to God?

Some in the covenant family of Jacob might have thought, *“Why do we need to be concerned with God taking us back to Canaan? We have it good here in Egypt. The love and respect our family here!”* Yes they did, but things change.

Part of me would like to go on into Exodus with the preaching of the Word after this. We’re going to Romans 9-11 and then through Revelation. Maybe Exodus after that! But I do want to point out a few verses from Exodus chapter 1 as we wrap up Genesis. Exodus 1 says, *“Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. [7] But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. [9] And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. [10] Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” [11] Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.”*

Your seemingly-secure worldly ally today may be your brutal master tomorrow.

God will show you where you are failing to entrust yourself only to Him, as He shows you these other “gods” in your life, guilt will come to the forefront of your mind. Now, you cannot make it up to God; the past is the past. But going forward, if you’re in Christ, you can be secure in God’s grace toward you and you can renew your efforts to entrust yourself fully to Him. Where does that begin?

Well, it begins in the same place that it ends: looking to Jesus. During His earthly life, Christ saw through the false security of worldly alliances and He trusted God wholly in the place of His people. The apostle Peter wrote that Jesus, *“committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. [23] When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to Him who judges justly.*

Jesus entrusted Himself to God, and He imputes His righteous record to those who trust in Him. Peter says, *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”* Jesus appeared foolish to the world as He suffered unjustly for our sins. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the so-called wise of the world.

Do you have that righteousness from Christ imputed to you by grace through faith in Him? If so, you can rejoice and renew your efforts to trust God above all else. If not, believe in Jesus today. Entrust your soul to Him who entrusted Himself to God for you.

Let’s bow in prayer.