

## Growing Old . . . Growing Up

Genesis 33ff

### Introduction

In our last discussion, we discovered Jacob meeting with God and wrestling. Afterward, God revealed to Jacob a new name, “Israel,” meaning, “the prince of God”. Now Jacob is going to meet his brother Esau in the confrontation that he has been dreading, perhaps, for the twenty years that he has been away. So today, we will pick our story back up at Genesis, chapter 33, as we, in fact, conclude our study of the life of Jacob.

### The Reconciliation of Two Brothers

We will begin with the reconciliation of the two brothers, Jacob and Esau. I will point out a couple of things related to this reconciliation that are right and wrong – especially wrong. It seems, as we will notice in chapter 33, that Jacob, though he has met with God and though he has been given a new name which means, “no longer schemer, but God’s prince,” still acts as a little bit of a schemer.

First, however, notice Jacob’s attitude as he meets Esau. Look at chapter 33, verse 1a.

***Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. . . .***

The four hundred men were soldiers that Esau had brought with him. Continue to verses 1b and 2.

***. . . So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. He put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.***

This was the way Jacob left it, and he was going to be the last person that Esau met. But evidently, he had a little bit of courage after meeting with God, because now he goes in front of his wives and children. Look at verse 3.

***But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.***

The word “bowed” or “bowed down” could be translated “fell prostrate”. This is not really the character of Israel the prince, this is more of Jacob the trembling schemer.

It was the oriental custom to fall down seven times when you met a king. Undoubtedly, Jacob knew that Esau was the King of Edom, but he himself was now the prince of God and this was his brother. Yet he met Esau by falling prostrate seven times, giving, in a sense, honor to a man who was not deserving of the honor of God’s man.

Now note verse 4.

***Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, . . .***

Instead of plunging a knife into Jacob’s throat or chest, Esau embraced him. What a shock this must have been to Jacob! Then, he kissed him. The tense indicates that Esau repeatedly kissed him.

Jacob has not seen his brother for twenty years – he is expecting at least a fist fight. But Esau, that big burley man, runs up to Jacob and throws his arms around him and starts kissing him. Then, we will note in the last phrase of verse 4,

***. . . and they wept.***

Underline that word “they”. God had undoubtedly performed a miracle in the heart of Esau during the twenty years of Jacob’s absence. And He had brought these two brothers together in reconciliation.

Perhaps today, you are facing the difficulty of a feud or estrangement; some division. It is interesting that God is bigger than anything you and I might face. He is strong enough that it is possible to bring it all together.

I was reading, this past week, of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whose parents disapproved so strongly of her marriage to Robert that when she married him, they ostracized her and they, in a sense, kicked her out of the family. For the next ten years, almost weekly, Elizabeth Browning wrote to her parents a love letter to try to pursue reconciliation. After ten years, she received a box in the mail. When she opened it, her heart was broken, because inside was the collection of all the letters that she had sent her parents, and not one had been opened.

Perhaps that is what motivated Ray Stedman to write, “The ministry of reconciliation originates with God, not man.”

Reconciliation is owned and accredited by God, and achieves what is otherwise impossible.

I do not know how impossible the feuding, fighting, disagreeing, divisive situations you are facing may seem. But God could put Esau and Jacob together in the dusty sands outside of Luz. These men, surrounded by sheep, by armed men, by curious children, by strapping soldiers, embraced one another. And we see them there, weeping.

Notice Jacob’s insistence on giving Esau gifts. Look at verses 8 through 9a.

*And he [Esau] said, “What do you mean by all this company which I have met?” And he [Jacob] said, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.” But Esau said, “I have plenty . . .”*

The words, “I have enough,” are interesting. In verse 11, Jacob says the same thing, “I have enough.” These two men, who never had enough, finally came to a point where they could say to each other, “We, in fact, are satisfied.”

Yet Jacob, I think, is conniving. Verse 10a tells us that,

*Jacob said, “No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand . . .”*

You may remember from our last discussion, that Jacob put the rams in front, and then the ewes, and then the goats to try to butter Esau up, so that by the time Jacob met Esau, Esau would respond favorably. Esau did not even want them, but Jacob presses, “No, take them.”

“No,” Esau says, “I don’t want them.”

“No, take them.”

“Okay, I’ll take them.”

I think though, that there is an underlying motive in this. In that culture, it was improper for an enemy to receive a gift. If you had an enemy, he was not to receive anything from your hand. So Jacob is wanting legal assurance that the feud was over. He did not trust his brother, but he knew if Esau took the gifts, the division was settled. Esau, in fact, finally did take them.

## **The Rebellion and Revenge of Jacob’s Children**

I observed another problem in the next few verses. In verses 11 through 14a, we see Jacob’s insensitivity to Esau’s request for companionship.

*“Please take my gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have plenty.” Thus he urged him and he took it.*

*Then Esau said, “Let us take our journey [together] and go, and I will go before you.”*

*But he [Jacob] said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die.*

*Please let my lord pass on before his servant, and I will proceed at my leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children . . .”*

Esau, in the generosity of his heart, impulsively, emotionally, says, “Jacob, what do you say we get together and travel to Seir together? We can reestablish all that we’ve missed in the last twenty years.”

But Jacob says, “Uh-uh.”

Perhaps he is thinking, “This is too good to be true. I’m afraid that I might offend Esau and before this trip is over, he’ll be after my throat again. No way! I can’t trust God to continue what He did in bringing this reconciliation about.”

So Jacob makes a promise, but notice the insincerity of his promise. Look at the last part of verse 14. Jacob says, “You go ahead, . . .”

**“. . . until I come to my lord at Seir.”**

In other words, Jacob is saying, “Esau, you go ahead, and I’ll come along at a slower pace. Ultimately, we’ll meet together at Seir.”

However, the text will later reveal that as soon as the horsemen are out of sight; as soon as the soldiers of Esau are out of sight and the tips of their spears can no longer be seen, instead of traveling southeast to follow his brother, Jacob goes northwest. He lied to his brother.

I cannot help but imagine what Esau was thinking while waiting in Seir for his brother. Everything is patched up, and where is Jacob? He is settling in Shechem. So he lied to his brother.

I also cannot help but imagine what Jacob’s sons must have thought as they saw their father lying. I lean back in my chair and begin to imagine what it must have been like for the twelve sons of Jacob to see their patriarch father, the *Man of God*, give a boldface lie. They heard him say, “Esau, we’ll meet you later in Seir.” But as soon as Esau was gone, “(whew) Let’s go, we’re heading for Shechem.”

The seeds of dishonesty are often sewn in the home. Jacob will pay a bitter price, as the next chapter is nothing but a story of his son’s lies.

I can well remember, as a youth pastor, working with one teenager who continually lied. I discovered later, that his father was being investigated for lying to his company.

Now, do not misunderstand, I am not implying that every dishonest child has a dishonest parent. I know because I was a dishonest child and my parents were honest. So often, however, the seeds of honesty or dishonesty are sewn in the home, and are watered by what the child observes. The child hears us call in sick, knowing we are going golfing or fishing. The child is told to tell so-and-so on the phone that we are not home. The seeds of dishonesty are sewn.

I read recently, about a California homemaker who was observed going through a supermarket tapping various items. Behind her came her two little children, who would pocket the items she tapped.

I read, as well, of one woman who was apparently pregnant. As she walked out of the grocery store, the assistant manager was suspicious and stopped her. Later, in the security office, she gave birth to a chuck roast, two pounds of butter, and some syrup.

The events that will occur in Jacob’s family, I believe, are a result of the scheming and the dishonesty of Dad. This remains a stark lesson for those who are fathers and mothers. I will not elaborate on the incident as it would take too long, but I will at least tell what occurred.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 34.

***Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land.***

Dinah went out to see what Shechem was all about. It was a wicked city. It reminds me of Lot and the tragedy of pitching his tent near Sodom and Gomorra. Continue to verses 2 through 7.

***When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force.***

***He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her.***

***So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this young girl for a wife.”***

***Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in.***

***Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.***

***Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.***

Skip to verses 13 through 17. Notice that Jacob’s sons take the lead. Dad is silent, and will remain silent throughout this entire incident. Note that the sons will answer deceitfully – oh, they learned that well.

*But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.*

*They said to them, "We cannot do this thing [intermarry], to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us.*

*"Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised,*

*"then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people.*

*"But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."*

Hamor and Shechem agree. Look verses 24 through 26.

*All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.*

*Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male.*

*They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth.*

## **Two tragic elements**

Two things are really the tragic elements of this chapter. Obviously, what we have just read is sad. But, as we were observing the life of Jacob, let me give two tragic elements that have resulted.

### **Jacob's silence**

1. The first tragedy is Jacob's silence. Jacob hears of the incident and remains silent. No comment!
2. Finally, when he speaks, the second tragedy is found in his rebuke.

Jacob finally speaks, after the conniving and the murdering, and what does he say? Look at verse 30.

*Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household."*

In other words, "What really bothers me about this incident is the fact that you have caused grief to me."

He makes no comment about murder. He makes no comment about deceit. This is just a slap on the wrist. Why? I think it is because Jacob had lost all moral fortitude at this point with his sons. He could not say, "No"; he could not discipline.

## **The Return of Jacob to Bethel**

At this time, God intervenes. Look at chapter 35, verse 1.

*Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."*

What was it about Bethel? If you look it up on a map or do a little research in an atlas, you discover that it is just a barren region with slabs of rock on a stretch of broken hills. The pasture land is not very fertile. What was it about Bethel that would cause God to invite Jacob back?

God told Jacob to go to Bethel because it was the place of intimacy with God. Bethel was the place where God had visited Jacob. Bethel was the location where the altar of Abraham stood. God was, in effect, inviting Jacob back to Himself; He was inviting him home.

### **Two marks of Jacob's trip**

Notice, in the next few verses, that Jacob obeyed. This trip was marked by two things.

### **It began with repentance**

1. First, it began with repentance.

Look at verse 2 through 4. It is interesting to note that Jacob's household even had foreign gods.

*So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign*

*gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments;*

*“and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone.”*

*So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid [buried] them under the oak which was near Shechem.*

It began with repentance. The idols had to be buried and left behind.

This reminds me of the time in Ephesus that we are told about in Acts, chapter 19, verse 19. A revival is taking place and the believers gather all their books of witchcraft, make a bonfire, and burn them.

Repentance begins with a change; it is an about-face. There is no possibility that God would ever accept idols in Bethel. So the path back to God and intimacy with God began with repentance.

### **It included sorrow**

2. Secondly, the trip included great sorrow.

Several deaths occur during this trip. Look at verses 6 through 8. It is interesting that God would include this.

*So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him.*

*He built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel [God of the house of God], because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.*

*Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth [oak of tears].*

You may remember that Jacob had a very close relationship with his mother, Rebekah. He would never see her again after he left to go to the old country to find a wife. But perhaps out of concern for her son when he left, she said, “Here, take my trusted servant Deborah with you. She’ll watch over you. She’ll care for you.”

We have every reason to believe that, for twenty years, Deborah served Jacob. This verse tells us that

one of the last remembrances of his dear mother dies. I think it is included to let us know that sorrow has begun. Jacob buries her under the oak and names it “oak of tears”.

That is not all of the sorrows on this journey. Look at verses 16 through 19 of chapter 35.

*Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor.*

*When she was in severe labor the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for now you have another son.”*

*It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.*

*So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).*

The story of Jacob and Rachel is one of the greatest little love stories in the Bible. Jacob worked for fourteen years for this woman. He loved her, obviously, from all that we have read. She now dies while giving birth to their second son. Once again, the procession halts and they have another funeral. And sorrow increases.

That is still not the end of the sorrows, however. Look at verses 27 through 29. Note that it has been twenty years since Jacob and Isaac were reunited.

*Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.*

*Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years.*

*Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.*

Jacob returns home after decades. He finds that his mother is already dead, and then, soon after his return, his father dies as well.

Jacob and Esau are reunited at the funeral. They are probably still eyeing one another, but yet sorrow has always had a way of bringing people back together. They are, in a sense, reunited at the grave and afterward, they part. They will never see each other again.

Jacob's sorrow continues to increase. Look ahead to chapter 37. We will study this in detail later, but will include a brief discussion of it at this point.

Joseph is Jacob's dear son. It is his memory of his wife, Rachel. But the brothers, deceiving their father, said that Joseph had died. You probably know the story. Look at verses 31 and 32.

*So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood;*

*and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic."*

Notice, it is not "our brother's tunic," but "your son's tunic." Continue to verses 33 and 34.

*Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!"*

*So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.*

Joseph was his brightest hope. I would imagine that Jacob limped out to some secluded spot; some quiet, shady piece of land, and dug a hole. I would imagine that Jacob laid the tunic of his son in the hole, buried it, and wept. He mourned for many days.

## **Principles Learned From the School of Sorrow**

Studying the sorrow of Jacob has revealed several insights. Let me give them to you.

### **Obedience to God does not exempt us from sorrow**

1. Number one, obedience to God does not exempt us from sorrow.

I say this because Jacob was obeying God. God said, "Return to Bethel," and he did. He was following the voice of his God and it was during that time that he buried three of his dearest friends.

### **Sorrow is not always sent as God's punishment**

2. Secondly, sorrow is not always sent as God's punishment.

You may remember the story of Job, and that others told him of his sorrow, "It must be a result of sin, Job." – but it was not.

### **Sorrow is never sent without God's permission**

3. Thirdly, sorrow is never sent without God's permission.

Would you remember that? It is never sent without God's permission.

Even the words of Joseph, at the end of Genesis, ring true. Jacob has died and Joseph's brothers are afraid that he will retaliate for the wrong they have done to him. Joseph says, in chapter 50, verse 20,

*. . . God meant it for good . . .*

Though you and I cannot see the good in sorrow, we, like Joseph, have to believe that God is involved; that God is in control; that God is behind the scenes.

### **Sorrow is God's choicest tool in developing maturity**

4. Fourthly, and especially related to Jacob, sorrow is God's choicest tool in developing maturity.

I think of Hebrews, chapter 5, verse 8, that says, *Although He [Jesus Christ] was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*

Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 6, says,

*For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, . . .*

The Greek word for "discipline" is "paideia," which literally means, "son making". Sorrow is included in the larger scope of that discipline, and literally makes us mature. Sorrow is a part of the process of "son making". He does it to those He loves.

## **Evidences of Maturity in the Aging Patriarch**

Did Jacob grow up? Did he mature in the faith? Let me briefly tell why I believe he did. There are several marks of maturity in the aging patriarch.

### **Jacob's conviction regarding Egypt**

1. The first mark of maturity is Jacob's conviction regarding Egypt.

You know that the famine has come and Joseph has been serving in Egypt. Jacob is at his wit's end and does not know what to do.

Now the old Jacob would have packed his bags and headed for Egypt, as Egypt was the granary of the world. However, in evidence of his spiritual maturity, he no longer wanted to compromise his position; he wanted to stay in the land of blessing, even though it meant hunger. So the old Jacob is no longer visible, but the new Jacob, Israel, hesitates.

God comes to Jacob in chapter 46. Look at verses 1 through 4.

*So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.*

*God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."*

*He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.*

*"I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."*

I love that. There was the evidence of maturity, in that Jacob wanted to obey the word of God.

### **Jacob's contentment in meeting Joseph**

2. The second mark is Jacob's contentment in meeting Joseph.

Look at chapter 46, verse 28.

*Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out the way to Goshen . . .*

This is where they are all getting together in Egypt. We will study this in more detail later.

Continue to verses 29 and 30. I cannot imagine this meeting!

*Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time. Then Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive."*

The interesting thing is that, after weeping, Jacob did not bitterly complain, "God has robbed me of so many years with you."

There is no resentment! Instead, there is an element of peace and contentment, which has long been missing in Jacob's life. Contentment is one of maturity's greatest qualities.

### **Jacob's character in blessing the Pharaoh**

3. I notice a third mark of maturity, and that is Jacob's character as he blesses the Pharaoh.

Look at chapter 47, verses 5 and 6.

*Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land, let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know any capable men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock."*

In other words, "Give them work and I'll pay them."

Continue to verse 7.

*Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.*

Note this and do not miss it, and you will have to use your imagination. Joseph leads his aged father into the splendid courtroom of the Pharaoh. Jacob is uneducated; he has been a wanderer; he has lived in tents; he is probably dressed in rough clothing. He limps into the courtroom. I can imagine that scene, as Jacob is surrounded by wits and wisdom and splendor, gold finery, and the majesty of the great Pharaoh, the ruler of the known world. Yet, it is interesting that Jacob does not cower; he does not grovel. The text implies that this old man holds out his shaking hands and blesses the Pharaoh.

There is a moral splendor in one who walks with God. There is an inherent majesty that cannot be intimidated. I love this old man walking into the courtroom and *he*, with Pharaoh bowing his head, blesses that man. What strength.

## **Evidences of Faith in the Dying Patriarch**

One of the great delights in studying this man's life has been studying the last few days of his life. Not only is spiritual maturity evident; that is, he has grown up, but faith is evident as well. Let me give four evidences.

### Jacob's burial request

1. The first evidence of faith is seen in Jacob's burial request.

Look at chapter 47, verses 29 through 31.

*When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh [to make a vow or covenant] and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt,*

*"but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said."*

*He said, "Swear to me." So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed.*

Here is this man, unable to get out of the bed, knowing he is about to die, and he requests that he is buried, not in some splendid mausoleum in Egypt, but in that humble cave of Machpelah. Why? Because that is the place of God's choosing.

### Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons

2. The second thing that reveals faith is Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons.

Chapter 48 tells the story of Joseph bringing his two sons to Jacob. Jacob, who is now blind, holds out his trembling hands and then blesses them.

Now what is the interesting point in this blessing? Look at verse 19 of chapter 48, as Jacob speaks of one of the sons of Joseph.

*. . . he also will become a people and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.*

In other words, "I know that the promise of God is true. There will one day be a nation; there will be a seed. Although I am way over here in Egypt, I know one day, this land will be ours and it will be inhabited by our people." What faith.

### Jacob's prophecy content

3. Jacob's faith is also seen in the content of his prophecy, as he calls his twelve sons to his bedside.

Jacob is now about to say his last words. So one son at a time, twelve in all, come up to the bed. He then, with a trembling voice, gives them a final blessing. He prophesies as to what will happen.

We will not look at all of it, but notice verse 10 of chapter 49. Jacob is talking to Judah. You may remember that Judah will be the one from whom David will come. That will be the messianic line. Notice verse 10 and make note of the second half of the verse.

*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

"Shiloh" means, "the 'Rest-Giver'". In other words, "The line of Judah will reign until the 'Rest-Giver' comes."

Who is Shiloh? We know it is Jesus Christ, who one day said to the teeming masses, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 11, verse 28,

*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

In other words, "I am the 'Rest-Giver'."

The question is, how did Jacob learn that name? Where did he learn the name of Shiloh?

I would agree with one of the old commentators of yesteryear, F. B. Meyer. Meyer suggested that perhaps Jacob learned that name when he was wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, which is Jesus Christ.

You may remember that just before the angel left, Jacob said, "What is your name?" (Genesis 32:27)

The text does not tell us. All it says is that the Angel of the Lord turned and blessed him. Perhaps it was then that He whispered in Jacob's ear, "My name is Shiloh, the 'Rest-Giver'."

Perhaps that played on Jacob's mind and now, as he prophesied, he knew that one day that "Rest-Giver" would come back to rule! What faith.

### Jacob's final words to his sons

4. Finally, faith is seen in Jacob's last words to his sons.

Look at chapter 49, verses 28 through 33.

*All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him.*

*Then he charged them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,*

*"in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site.*

*"There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah –*

*"the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth."*

*When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.*

In other words, Jacob is saying, "Let me lie in the land of promise together with my fathers, holding, in a sense, this land in fee, surrounded by the emerging

nation. That's where I want to lie, because I look forward to the time when God will fulfill the promises to my father Abraham, and my father Isaac, and to me."

So what does God say of Jacob? Jacob is entered into the "hall of faith" in Hebrews, chapter 11, where God makes specific mention of his faith in his old age. In verse 21b, the text says,

***By faith Jacob, as he was dying, . . . leaning on the top of his staff.***

That was when Jacob evidenced faith.

God also chooses to mark the scriptures with a personal title that is used in relation to Jacob more than any other patriarch. God chooses for us to remember Him more often as "the God of Jacob" than as "the God of Abraham" or as "the God of Isaac". God would have us know Him as "the God of the stumbler," "the God of the failure," because the story of Jacob is really the story of God's grace – the God of the sinner who finally repented; who finally rested; who finally, in his old age, trusted in his God.

The question is, ladies and gentlemen, do you have a personal story of when God's grace invaded your life? He is "the God of Jacob". Is He your God as well?

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 2/19/1989 by Stephen Davey.

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