

Joseph's Dying Wish

Scripture: Hebrews 11

Code: BQ042514

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones. (11:22)

Joseph spent all of his adult life in Egypt. Though a fourth-generation heir of the promise, he could not claim even to have sojourned in the Promised Land, much less to have inherited it. It had been some two hundred years since God made the initial covenant with Abraham. Two hundred years of promise, and no fulfillment in sight. In fact, by the time of Joseph's death, *none* of Abraham's descendants (that is, the descendants of promise) lived in the Promised Land at all. Because of the famine in Canaan, Joseph had brought his father and his brothers to Egypt. Jacob was carried back to Canaan after he died, and Joseph would be satisfied if only **his bones** could be buried there. If he could not inherit the land, at least the land could "inherit" him. It was not until the Exodus that Joseph's bones were actually taken to Canaan (Ex. 13:19), but his heart and his hope had always been there.

He had to look ahead to see the promise, yet he saw it clearly and confidently. "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob" (Gen. 50:24). While he was making his brothers swear to take his bones back to Canaan, he repeated the assuring words of faith, "God will surely take care of you" (v. 25).

All three of these men believed God in the face of death. Their faith had sometimes wavered in life, but it was strong and confident in death. Death is the acid test of faith. For hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, courts of law have taken a dying man's word at face value. The need for lying and deception is over, and what is said on a deathbed is usually believed. So with our testimony of faith. Not only is the need for hypocrisy and pretense over, but it is extremely difficult to fake faith when you know you are facing eternity. A dying man's faith is believable because a sham cannot stand this test.

Christian who fears death has a serious weakness in his faith, for to die in Christ is simply to be ushered into the Lord's presence. "For to me, to live is Christ," Paul says, "and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). For those who believe, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54).

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