

I Want to Die Like This

Hebrews 11:21

“By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on his staff” (Hebrews 11:21).

“Faith has its greatest work in helping us to finish well ... to leave a witness of the truth of God’s word and the excellency of His ways to those who attend us in our dying moments” (Matthew Henry). A God-given and God-sustained faith is also able to give each of us a triumphant passage through death. Balaam cried, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my death be like Jacob’s” (Numbers 23:10).

I. Past mistakes do not have to negate a person of faith dying well.

Jacob was a patriarch of the Jews, a biblical character, and the father of the 12 tribes of Israel, but ...

- A. Jacob’s name meant “deceiver.”** Throughout his life he struggled with lying and deception.
- B. Jacob’s family was dysfunctional.** His own brother sought to kill him, his mother took his side over his father’s, and he was deceived into marrying the sister of the woman he truly loved.
- C. Jacob’s past was difficult.** He fought God (Genesis 32) and experienced a host of self-inflicted trauma. Yet, the greatest days of Jacob were those days toward the end of his life. There is a principle here: As long as there is a hunger for God in your heart, it is never too late for God to turn your life around.

II. Dying well as a person of faith involves leading, loving and leaning.

Three things Jacob did “as he was dying ...” (read of Jacob’s actions while dying in Genesis 48).

A. He led his grandsons to a blessing.

The sons of Joseph were Ephraim and Manasseh. Manasseh was the elder, and Ephraim the younger. Ephraim, Joseph’s younger son, was given preference over Manasseh the elder. The deeper meaning is much the same as in the story of Jacob and Esau and the lessons therein. *I want to show the blessings of God are by faith and not always seen in temporal prosperity.*

B. He loved God in personal worship.

Worship is an Old Saxon word *worthscipe*— meaning *worthy* or *worth-ship* (to give worth). In Hebrew, there are at least ten other words that are frequently translated worship. These ten words carry the following meaning: bowing down, falling down, service, labor, making inquiry, seeking, fearing, ministering, and supplicating. Every word has a physical (active) meaning. *I want to love God, the giver every good gift, more than any of His perfect gifts.*

C. He leaned on his staff and rested.

“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23). What is the staff? The staff was a long stick with a crook in one end (similar to a walking stick) was used as a walking aid or by shepherds to protect and tend their flocks. The staff is a metaphor for God’s protective hand over His people as He brings them back from their often dangerous ways, as well as a picture of the cross. *I want to lean on the grace of God and the cross of Christ, and nothing else, as I die.*

III. The person of faith who dies well has an incredibly bright future that is difficult to comprehend.

This is the entire theme of Hebrews 11. God is building for us a city with foundations. The architect and builder of this city is God (Hebrews 11:10). It descends from heaven and unites with earth (Revelation 20). In Mathew 5:5 Jesus said, “The meek inherit the earth,” and at the resurrection the Kingdom of God is ushered in. We will enjoy life, fellowship, relationship and the earth as it was meant to be enjoyed. Jesus Christ is King and He blesses us with every conceivable blessing imaginable, and all our enemies are gone. The reason we can die well is because we do not see this life as the end of life; it’s just the beginning.