

Dem Bones of Joseph

Hebrews 11:22

There are four consecutive verses in Hebrews 11 that deal with faith and death in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (vs. 19, 20, 21 and 22). The great purpose of Hebrews 11 is to encourage us to believe God, to remain faithful to the end, and to help overcome the fears which try all of God's people. Nothing inspires our faith and faithfulness more than a comprehension of God and His faithfulness to us. Here in our text, Joseph, one of the patriarchs of faith, is shown faithful until his death (Gen. 50:22-26).

I. Great faith trusts God when outward appearances betray God's goodness.

Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers. When famine came to Canaan years later, the brothers of Joseph went to Egypt and discovered Joseph was a powerful leader. They were afraid of him. "His brothers came and fell down before him and Joseph said, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive'" (Gen. 50:18-20). Think back through Joseph's trial. Next time you are tempted to doubt the God's faithfulness to you, remember *dem bones of Joseph*.

II. Great faith refuses to be identified with this world and looks for another country.

Joseph was not asked merely to be an Egyptian, but one of the nobles of the land. He was made the prime minister of the land, but refused even the place afforded him by Pharaoh. He was a loyal citizen in the land where God placed him. He served the land of Egypt better than any man in the history of that nation. *But, because his citizenship was in heaven, he refused* to allow himself to be ultimately identified with the Egyptians. In Sakkara (an ancient burial ground in Egypt), next to the tomb of Pharaoh Apophis, stands an empty tomb of an Egyptian prince, whose name and titles are in hieroglyphic writing. The name is *Eitsuph*. From among his many titles are two: *Director of the king's granaries*, and *Abrech* - which means *Bow the knee* (from *Moses Right and Bishop Colenso Wrong* by Joseph Cumming). This is Joseph's intended tomb, but Joseph instructed his family to carry his bones back to Canaan. "He was looking for the city with foundations" (Hebrews 11:10), and he was "seeking a better country" (Hebrews 11:16). Next time you are tempted to latch on to the things of this world, remember *dem bones of Joseph*.

III. Great faith never tires of speaking of God's redemption through His people.

"By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel" (Hebrews 11:22). This is a *type* for us. In the same manner the Lord saved Israel in the Exodus from Egypt, He saves me (see Exodus 14:30).

We are in bondage ... We love the world and what it represents; we are slaves to sin (John 8:34).

We need a deliverer ... God sent Moses to the Israelites and He sent His Son for His people.

We need a blood sacrifice ... Just as the Hebrews took the blood of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:3) and placed it on the doorposts of their homes, so we are redeemed by Christ's blood (I Peter 1:19). The Passover is celebrated to remember the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, with breaking of unleavened bread and shedding blood of the first born lamb. It is the Lord's Passover (Exodus 12:17) and is related to the last supper of Jesus where He relates the bread and wine to His.

We cross through water into a new kingdom ... Just as Israel crossed the Red Sea, our baptism pictures the enemy totally destroyed as we die to our old self and are raised to newness of life.

We will survive in the wilderness ... Just as the Israelites survived the wilderness with food, water and shelter from God, so too we find Jesus Christ provides for our every need (Philippians 4:19).

We sometimes fail miserably ... just as Israel built and worshipped the golden calf (Exodus 32).

But we will endure until the end ... through faith, which is the entire message of Hebrews.