

JOSEPH'S BONES

NO. 966

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*“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel.
 And gave commandment concerning his bones.”
 Hebrews 11:22.*

WE cannot readily tell which action in a gracious life God may set the most store by. The Holy Spirit in this chapter selects out of good men's lives the most brilliant instances of their faith. I should hardly have expected that He would have mentioned the dying scene of Joseph's life as the most illustrious proof of his faith in God. That eventful life, perhaps the most interesting in all sacred Scripture, with the exception of One, abounds with incidents of which the Holy Spirit might have said by His servant Paul, “By faith Joseph did this and that,” but none is mentioned save the closing scene. The triumph especially of his chastity under well-known and exceedingly severe temptation, might have been very properly traced to the power of his faith, but it is passed over, and the fact that he gave commandment concerning his bones is singled out as being the most illustrious proof of his faith.

Does not this tell us, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we are very poor judges of what God will most delight in? Very likely, when we least please ourselves, God is best pleased with us. That prayer over which we groaned, and thought it was not prayer, may have had more true supplication in it than another intercession of which we thought far more highly. That sermon which made us lament in the bitterness of our soul because we thought we had delivered it so feebly, may have been, in God's sight, more precious than many a fluent discourse concerning which we congratulated ourselves.

That trial which we thought we passed through with so much impatience, may have been before God an exhibition of true patience as He looked deep down into our souls. The tests by which we try ourselves are very inaccurate. It may be when we read our own biographies in the light of eternity we shall be surprised to notice that God has highly commended what we wept over—while much that we gloried in will be cast away among the reprobate silver.

The Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the *heart*, and His glance pierces to the core. The Lord weighs the spirits. He estimates not by color, form, and glitter, but by actual weight, and therefore when He weighed up the character of Joseph He gave the preponderance to an incident wherein faith is really present in much force, but not to the superficial observer.

It may seem surprising that the charge of Joseph concerning his body should be mentioned as a notable act of faith, and not the similar charge delivered by Jacob. For did not Jacob also give commandment concerning his bones? “And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto 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 with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife. And there I buried Leah.”

He bade them carry his body to that dear mausoleum of the family at Machpelah, where his fathers rested. Why was not that a case of faith in Jacob as much as in Joseph? We cannot always speak positively of these things, but we think that there is a very decided difference between the two. You will notice that Jacob's wish to lie in Machpelah was by himself described as resting mainly on the grounds of *natural* affection.

He speaks about his relationship to Abraham, to Isaac, to Leah, and so on, and with that natural feeling which is exceedingly commendable, but which is not a work of Grace. He desires to be buried with his own kith and kin. When his soul should be gathered to his people he would have his body lie side by side with his own relatives. This wish was probably as much an outgoing of nature as an expression of Divine Grace. Of course, natural affection would have led Joseph to desire the same thing, but he does not put it on that score.

Moreover, you notice that Jacob commands his sons to do with his bones what they could readily do—they were to take him to Machpelah and bury him at once. He knew his son Joseph to be in power in Egypt. And therefore anything that was wanted for his funeral would be provided—the Egyptian court, as it proved, were ready enough to give him the most sumptuous interment. They even spent forty days in mourning for him, denoting, thereby, that he was a person held in high honor. Jacob therefore commanded nothing to be done but what *could* be done. There was no very remarkable exhibition of faith in commanding an immediate funeral which the filial love of Joseph would readily secure.

He takes immediate possession of his sepulcher in Canaan, and for very excellent reasons, does not ask to remain unburied till Canaan is possessed by his descendants. Jacob seeks immediate sepulture, but Joseph postpones his interment till the Covenant promise is fulfilled. Joseph not only wished to be buried in Machpelah, which was natural, but he would not be buried there till the land was taken possession of, which was an exhibition of the Grace of faith. He wished his unburied body to share with the people of God in their captivity and their return.

He was so certain that they would come out of the captivity, that he postpones his burial till that glad event, and so makes what would have been but a natural wish, a means of expressing a holy and gracious confidence in the Divine promise. It was faith in Jacob, but it was *remarkable* faith in Joseph. And God who looks not simply at the *act*, but at the *motive* of the act, has been pleased not to put down Jacob as an instance of dying faith in this particular matter of his bones, but to award praise to Joseph as exhibiting in death a memorable degree of confidence in the promise.

Probably Jacob's dying faith, when exercised upon other matters, outshone his faith in connection with his burial, while in his favorite son that matter was his leading proof of faith. We shall now come to examine this incident with some little particularity, and we shall find in it valuable lessons. May the Holy Spirit write them on our hearts.

I think I see, first, in this word of Joseph on his deathbed, the *power* of faith. I see, secondly, the *workings* of faith, the forms in which this precious Grace embodies itself. And, thirdly, I see an *example* for our faith when we come to die.

I. I observe in the text an example OF THE POWER OF FAITH. The endurance of true faith under three remarkable modes of test. First, the power of faith over worldly prosperity. "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen"—true enough is that word. But it was never said, "Not *any* great men, not *any* mighty are chosen." God has selected a few in places of wealth, and power, and influence who have faith in their hearts, and that in an eminent degree.

Our Lord told us that it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven," but He added, "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Observe, then, the difficulty which surrounded Joseph's case. And then remark how great must have been the faith which triumphed over the difficulty! Joseph's position, after he had passed through his first trials in Egypt, was a very eminent one. He possessed unbounded riches. He was the viceroy of the entire country, and Pharaoh had said to him, "Only in the throne will I be greater than you."

He was, in all respects, except in name, the absolute lord of that great nation. He could do just as he willed. He was surrounded by all the state of royalty. And when he rode in his chariot through the streets the heralds cried before him, "Bow the knee." Yet all this did not prevent Joseph's possessing faith in God, and a faith which persevered even to the end!

My dear Brethren, the trials of faith are usually those of poverty, and right gloriously does faith behave herself when she trusts in the Lord, and does good, and is fed even in the land of famine. But it is possible the ordeal of prosperity is far more severe, and it is therefore a greater triumph of faith when the rich man sets not his heart upon uncertain riches, and does not suffer the thick clay of this world to encumber his pilgrimage to Heaven. It is hard to carry a full cup with a steady hand, some spilling will usually occur. But where Divine Grace makes rich men, and men in high position of power and authority to act becomingly and graciously, then Grace is greatly glorified.

You who are rich should see your danger. But let the case of Joseph be your encouragement. God will help you, if you seek His merciful aid. There is no need that you should be worldly, there is no need that you should sink the Israelite in the Egyptian. God can keep you, even as He kept Job, so that you shall be perfect and upright, and yet be exceedingly great in possessions. Like Joseph you may be at once richer and better than your brethren. It will be very difficult, and you will need very, very much Divine Grace, but the Lord your God will help you, and you shall learn, like Paul, how to abound. And, like Joseph of Arimathea, you shall be both a rich man and a devout disciple.

Be it remembered, too, that Joseph was not only tried by riches, but that the trial lasted throughout a long life, from almost his early days to the close of his career. I suppose that for sixty or seventy years, at least, he stood in the high position of lord-lieutenant of Egypt with all the wealth of that great people at his feet, and yet all that time he remained true in heart towards the God of his fathers. May God give you who are in elevated places the like fidelity. May you remain unshaken under the most protracted temptation.

Remember, moreover, that the society into which Joseph was cast by his position in Egypt was of the very worst kind as to spiritual religion, for the Egyptians were, to a man, idolaters. They were worshippers of all kinds of living animals and creeping things. A satirist said of them, "Oh, happy people who grow their gods in their own gardens," for they even worshipped leeks and onions—they were a most idolatrous people. And though far ahead of their neighbors in civilization, they were very low in the scale of religion. We think we see in Joseph, here and there, traces that he was damaged by Egyptian habits and customs, but still not so much as one might have expected—and in no degree so much as to make us suspect his fidelity to the one God.

There must have been a deep, sound, depth of holiness in the young man or he would never have been able to live at court, and at an idolatrous court, too, and yet preserve his integrity and his faith towards Jehovah, the God of Israel. Do not forget that during a very great part of that time Joseph had not one single person to associate with who was of his own faith. Think what a trial that must have been to him! I have known persons very warm-hearted in religion while living with zealous Christians, and very diligent while listening to a lively ministry, who, when removed from Christian society, or compelled to sit under a cold ministry, have made a spiritual failure.

Alas, I mourn over some who, when transplanted into sterner soil, have declined so that it were hard to say whether they are trees of the Lord's right hand planting or not. Joseph was removed to a place where there was no prayer in the household, no friends, no godly teacher to speak a word with, no one who knew of Jehovah or of the Covenant made with Israel. He was all alone, alone, alone in the midst of an idolatrous people—with all the temptations of Egypt before him. He was possessed of its riches and its treasures, and tempted to live as the people lived in all manner of heathenism.

And yet, for all that, he endured as seeing Him who is invisible, and at the last he died full of confident, joyous and godly belief in the God of his fathers. Ah, this is a great triumph of faith, and I would urge any of my dear Brethren here, who really love the Lord, to seek that the work of Grace in them may be so deep, so true, so thorough, that if God should make kings of them they would not grow proud of it. If God should send them right away from Christian associations they would not forget Him. And if they were exposed to all the temptations of the world at once they would resist them all. The power of Joseph's faith was, you see, abundantly evidenced in its triumph over his worldly circumstances.

Secondly, you see here the power of his faith exhibited in its triumph over death. He says, if you turn to the last chapter of Genesis, "I die, and God will surely visit you." Or, as the text puts it, he "made mention concerning the departing of the children of Israel." Death is a great tester of a man's sincerity and a great shaker down of bowing walls and tottering fences. Men have thought that it was all well with them—but when the swellings of Jordan have been about them, they have found matters quite otherwise.

Here we see Joseph so calm, so quiet, that he remembers the Covenant and falls back upon it, and rejoices in it. He speaks of dying as if it were only a part of living, and comparatively a small matter to him. He gives no evidence of trepidation whatever, no fear distracts him. He bears his last witness to his brothers, who gather about his bed, concerning the faithfulness of God and the Infallibility of His promise. Moreover, if I am to gather from the text that the Holy Spirit has singled out the brightest instance of faith in Joseph's whole life, it is beautiful to remark that the grand old man becomes most illustrious in his last hour.

Death did not dim, but rather brightened, the gold in his character. On his deathbed, beyond all the rest of his life, his faith, like the setting sun, gilds all around with glory. Now that heart and flesh fail him, God becomes more than ever the strength of his life, as He was soon to be his Portion forever! Is it not a grand thing for a Christian to do his very best action last, being strongest in Divine power when his own weakness is supreme? We should desire to serve God in youth, in health, in strength, with all the might we have. But it may happen to us that, like Samson, our last act may be the greatest.

Many a good man groans over his life, that having done all he can it is still unsatisfactory. But perhaps the Master may be intending to give him a crowning mercy, just at the last, and make the place of his departure to be the scene of his

most glorious victory! Then, by God's Grace, he may enter into Heaven wearing the laurels of faith—there to cast them at the Savior's feet. Joseph, at any rate, is a noble instance of faith's conquest over death.

Once more, here is a proof of the power of faith in laughing at improbabilities. If you will think of it, it seemed a very unlikely thing that the children of Israel should go up out of Egypt. Perhaps, at the time when Joseph died, there appeared to be no reason why they should do so. They were settled in Goshen, they had been favored with a part of the land. The wisdom of Joseph had selected the most fertile part of the Delta of the Nile as a pasture for their flocks. Why should they wish to go?

They had all the comforts earth could yield them, why should they wish to leave Egypt for the soil of Canaan, where the Canaanites would dispute every inch of the ground? Canaan was where there were few, if any, advantages over Egypt, and many disadvantages! Suppose Joseph to have seen, by prophetic foresight, as perhaps he did, that another dynasty would succeed that of the Pharaoh who had honored him, and that Israel would be oppressed? He must have felt, if he weighed probabilities, that it was unlikely to the last degree that the children of Israel, when reduced to slavery, would ever have been able to cut their way out of Egypt, to reach the promised land.

Any person qualified to judge, had he been asked as to the probable issue of a conflict between the twelve tribes and the armies of Egypt, would have replied, "Israel would be at once trod down like straw for the dunghill, and the people would remain in perpetual bondage." But Joseph's eye was fixed upon the mighty promise, "In the fourth generation, they shall come here again." He knew that when the four hundred years were passed, Abram's vision of the smoking furnace and the burning lamp would be fulfilled, and the Word would be established—"And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

Though as yet he could not know that Moses would say, "Thus says Jehovah, Let My people go," though he might not have foreseen the wonders at the Red Sea and how Pharaoh and his chariots would be swallowed up there, and, though he did not predict the wilderness and the fiery cloudy pillar, and the heavens dropping manna, yet his faith was firm that by some means the Covenant would be fulfilled. Improbabilities were nothing to him, nor impossibilities either. God has said it, and Joseph believes it.

On his dying bed, when fancy fades and strong delusion relaxes its iron grip, the true, sure faith of the man of God rose to its highest altitude, and like the evening star, shed a sweet glory over the scene. May we, my Brethren, possess the faith which will triumph over all circumstances, over the pains of death, and over every improbability that may apparently be connected with the Word of God.

II. Under our second head we are to endeavor to show YOU THE WORKINGS OF FAITH. In this case Joseph gives commandment concerning his bones. The first fruit of faith in Joseph was this—he would not be an Egyptian. He had not been asked to be an Egyptian under the yoke—anybody might have refused that. He had not been asked to be an Egyptian of the middle class—that might have been desirable from a worldly point of view. But he had the opportunity of being an Egyptian of the *highest* grade. He was actually exalted to almost royal rank, and he might have become a naturalized Egyptian, and his family, also.

In the Providence of God he was called upon to accept the honors and riches of a most dignified office, but still he would not be an Egyptian—even on the best of terms. His dying bed afforded him a turning point, an opportunity for testifying that he was an Israelite, and by no means an Egyptian. He did not hesitate, his choice had never wavered. No doubt he would have had a sumptuous tomb enough in Egypt. But no, he will not be buried there, for he is not an Egyptian. In Sakhara, hard by the great pyramid of Pharaoh Apophis, stands at this day the tomb of a prince, whose name and titles are in hieroglyphic writing.

The name is "Eitsuph," and from among his many titles we choose two—"Director of the king's granaries," and the other, an Egyptian title, "Abrech." Now this last word is found in the Scriptures, and is that which is translated, "Bow the knee." (*See a little book, "Stone Witnesses." Morgan & Chase*). It is more than probable that this monument was prepared for Joseph, but he declined the honor. Though his resting-place would have been side by side with the pyramid of one of Mizraim's greatest monarchs, yet he would not accept the dignity, he would not be an Egyptian. This is one of the sure workings of faith in a man of wealth and rank. When God places him in circumstances where he might be a worldling of the first order, if his faith is genuine, he says, "No. I will not, even at this rate, be numbered with the world."

He dreads above all things that he should be supposed to have his portion in this life. If you could put a Christian on the throne, the first fear he would have would be this—Am I to be put off with an earthly crown, and miss the heavenly diadem? Place him at court and his great question will be—How shall I show that I am not one of the citizens of this world? Surround him with broad acres, a noble mansion, and a large estate, yet he says, “I accept this thankfully from God, but oh, I would not have it if I had it on condition of being numbered with the followers of Mammon!

“Now I have obtained wealth, my daily prayer to God shall be, Lord, help me so to use my station that I may not serve this evil world with it, but may be a father to Your poor Israel. If it comes to the choice between the reproach of Christ and the treasures of Egypt, I will take Christ's reproach, and renounce the treasure. I cannot be an Egyptian.” O rich Men and Women, make this a main point of concern—prove that you are not worldlings! You have to frequent the exchange, to visit the bank, to handle large sums of money—but be not money-grubbers, rakers up of gold! Be not covetous or grasping. Prove that though in Egypt you are not Egyptians. May this be your prayer, “May God grant I may never so live as to be mistaken for a man of this world who has his portion in this life. My portion is above. Whatever I enjoy here, Heaven is my heritage.”

Notice, next, that his faith constrained him to have fellowship with the people of God. Not only does he refuse to be a worldling, but he avows himself an Israelite. You will tell me, perhaps, that he only had fellowship with them when he was dead. Yet think not too lightly of that. He gave up the funeral which Egypt would accord him that he might wait long years for his funeral to be celebrated by his own people. But I beg to remind you that it was not the first time that Joseph had shown fellowship with his Brethren. It was but the conclusion of a lifetime of communion with them. It is true he did not go down into their poverty, there was no need that he should, but he made them sharers of his wealth.

God had so ordained in Providence that Joseph should be a man of wealth, and rank, and station, and he showed his fellowship with Israel by bringing his father and brothers down into Goshen, and providing for them there, and being always ready to urge their case, and to do his best to promote their interests. Now one mark of faith in the Christian man is this—if he is poor he takes his lot with the poor people of God cheerfully—but if he is rich, he counts that he is placed in a commanding position that he may the better help his Brethren, and he has fellowship with them by his constant kindness towards them.

If it ever were necessary to prove his true fellowship that he should give up his position altogether, he would cheerfully do it that he might be numbered with the despised people of God. Joseph, it seems to me, never blushed to own his race, and never failed at all proper times to say to the Egyptians, “I am not one of you. There is my family down in Goshen.” As he knew that afterwards his family would become despised and persecuted, he said to them, “Keep my bones, so that when they degrade you they may degrade me—I am going to stay with you in all your future sorrows, for I am one of you.”

True faith will make the child of God say, “I am one of God's people, my soul is joined to them in all conditions.” Where they go, I will go. Where they lodge, I will lodge. Their people shall be my people, and their God my God. Where they die, will I die, and there will I be buried.”

In the case of Joseph his faith led to an open avowal of his confidence in God's promise. On his deathbed he said, “I die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land.” He also said, “He will bring you to the land which He promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Faith cannot be dumb. I have known her tongue to be silent through diffidence, but at last it has been obliged to speak. And, my Brethren, why should not *your* faith speak, for her voice is sweet and her countenance is comely? No tongue is more sweet to Christ's ear, nor more potent over the hearts of men, than the tongue of true faith.

If your faith is real, though you may, for awhile, hide your light under a bushel, you will not always be able to do so. Before long you will be compelled to say, “I believe the Gospel of Christ, I believe the promise of God. He will keep His Covenant, and I avow myself to be a Believer in His Truth.” Joseph, having thus declared his faith, practically showed that he meant it, that it was not a matter of form, but a matter of *heart*. I do not know in what better way he could have shown his practical belief in the fact that God would bring the people out of Egypt, than by saying, “Keep my bones here, never bury them till you go yourselves to Canaan, having left Egypt forever, and taken possession of your Covenant country.”

He who believes in God will find practical ways of proving his faith. He will avow it by an open confession, but he will also manifest it by choosing some form of service in which his faith shall be put to the test. Or if affliction is allotted to him by God, he will take it cheerfully, expecting that God will give him strength equal to the emergency. And so his faith, by God's Grace, will triumph under the trial. That faith which never proves itself by works is a faith to be dreaded. If your faith never makes you speak up for your God or serve Him, it is a bastard faith, a base-born presumption which will ruin your soul. It never came from God and will not carry you to God. But Joseph is very practical, as practical as the circumstances permitted him to be.

Moreover, notice, that having faith himself, he would encourage the faith of others. No man may be said to have real faith who is not concerned that faith may be found in the hearts of his fellow men. But, you say, "What did Joseph do to encourage the faith of others?" Why, he left his bones to be a standing sermon to the children of Israel. We read that they were embalmed and put into a coffin in Egypt, and thus they were ever in the keeping of the tribes. What did that say? Every time an Israelite thought of the bones of Joseph, he thought, "We are to go out of this country one day." Perhaps he was a man prospering in business, laying up store in Egypt.

But he would say to himself, "I shall have to part with this, Joseph's bones are to be carried up. I am not to be here forever." And then while it acted as a warning, his body would serve also as an encouragement, for when the task-masters began to afflict the people, and their tale of bricks was increased, the despondent Israelite would say, "I shall never come up out of Egypt." Oh, but others would say, "Joseph believed we should—there are his bones still unburied. He has left us the assurance of his confidence that God would, in due time, bring up His people out of this house of bondage."

It seems to me that Joseph had thought of this device as being the best thing on the whole he could do to keep the Israelites perpetually in remembrance that they were strangers and sojourners, and to encourage them in the belief that in due time they would be delivered from the house of bondage and settled in the land that flowed with milk and honey. True faith seeks to propagate herself in the hearts of others. She is earnest, eager, intense, if by any means she may scatter a handful of holy seed that may fall in good soil, and bring forth glory to God. It is a good proof of your own faith when you lay yourself out to promote the faith of others.

Note, too, that Joseph's faith made him have an eye to the spiritualities of the Covenant, Joseph had nothing earthly to gain in having his bones buried in Canaan rather than in Egypt. That can make small difference to a dying man. Naturally we like to think of being buried with our kin, but then we would choose to be buried soon after death. None of us would voluntarily desire to have his bones kept for some hundreds of years out of the ground in order that they might ultimately come into the family sepulcher.

I believe he had no eye to the mere secularities of the Covenant, but was looking to the spiritual blessings which are revealed in Jesus, the great Seed of Abraham. This made him say, "I am no Egyptian, I am one of the seed that the Lord has chosen. I look for the coming Messiah. I have a part and a lot among the chosen people of God. I will claim that, I will claim it not only for myself, but for my sons and for my household." He had in the Providence of God, without any fault of his own, been married to an Egyptian woman. Manasseh and Ephraim, therefore, were half of Egypt, and if the father had been buried in Egypt the sons might have clung to Egypt and separated from Israel.

He seems to say, "No, my Children, you are not Egyptians. You are like your father, Israelites! Never bury my bones in Egypt. I charge you never bury them at all till you can lay them down in the ancient sepulcher of our race. Be Israelites to the backbone, through and through, for the best possession is not what I can bequeath you in Egypt, which will pass away, but the heritage to which I point you—the spiritual heritage which I would gladly you should have. My bones shall charge you, Manasseh and Ephraim, not to make yourselves Egyptians, not to be conformed to the world nor to seek your rest here. Let your father's bones tempt you towards Canaan—never rest till you feel you have an interest in the spiritual blessings of the Covenant.

Once more, it seems to me that Joseph's faith in connection with his unburied bones showed itself in his willingness to wait God's time for the promised blessing. Says he, "I believe I shall be buried in Machpelah, and I believe that my people will come up out of Egypt. I believe, and I am willing to wait." Every man wants that when he dies he shall be decently buried soon. Who wants to have his bones hawked about? But this man will wait, wait for his funeral—wait on, however weary may be the time of Israel's captivity. It is a great thing to have *waiting* faith. "Stand still and see the salvation of God," is easier said than done.

“He that believes shall not make haste.” We are, for the most part, in a childish hurry. We would like to be in Heaven tomorrow. If we were wise, we should be glad to keep out till God lets us in. We would like to have the resurrection tomorrow, and many are pining because the coming of Christ is not by-and-by. Wait the Lord's appointment, O impatient Grumbler. Be quiet of spirit and calm of heart—the vision will not tarry. Be willing to wait. Be willing to let your bones sleep in the dust till the trump of the resurrection sound, and if you could have a choice about it, refer your choice back again to your Lord in Heaven, for He knows what is best and right for you.

I like the idea of a man who could not wait in life, for he must die, but who proves the waitingness of his spirit by letting his bones wait till they could be deposited in Canaan. You will notice that Joseph had his wish, for when Israel went up out of Egypt you will find, in the fifteenth of Exodus, that Moses took care to carry with them the bones of Joseph. And, what is rather singular, those bones were not buried as soon as they came into Canaan. Nor were they buried during the long wars of Joshua with the various tribes.

But in the last verses of the book of Joshua, when nearly all the land had been conquered, and the country had been divided to the different tribes, and they had taken possession, *then* we read that they buried the bones of Joseph in the field of Shechem, in the place which Abraham had bought for a sepulcher. As if Joseph's remains might not be buried till they had won the country, until it was settled, and the Covenant was fulfilled. Then he must be buried, but not till then. How blessed is waiting faith which can let God take His time, and wait, believe in Him, let Him wait as long as He wills.

III. I must close with the third point. I think we have in our text, beloved Friends, AN EXAMPLE FOR OUR FAITH TO ACT UPON WHEN WE ALSO COME TO THE TIME OF DEATH. We will imagine it to be very near, and the conception will be literally true to some, and true to us all in a degree. What shall I derive any comfort from when I come to die?

Come, let me prepare my last dying speech. Now think it over. First, I would imitate Joseph by deriving my comfort from the Covenant, for that he did. That commandment concerning his bones was only made because he believed God would keep His Covenant to His people and bring them up out of Egypt. May you and I be able to say with David, “Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” Ah, my Soul, this is not *dying*, but only passing from earth to Heaven. Jesus, who is Himself the Covenant, soothes most blessedly the dying beds of His saints.

A Negro was asked when he had been sitting up to nurse his master one night, “How is your master!” Said he, “He is dying full of life.” It is a grand thing when one has the Covenant to think on. You can then die full of life—you can pass away out of this lower life, being filled with the life eternal before the life temporal has quite gone out, so that you are never emptied out of life, but the life of Grace melts into the life of Glory, as the river into the ocean. Joseph may be an example to us, in that he drew his consolation from the future of his people. “God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land.”

Very often the dying thoughts of a Christian man are troubled about the condition of the Church of Christ. He fears that dark days are coming upon her. If a minister, he anxiously asks, “What will my people do, now that I can no longer lead and feed them? Will they not be like a flock without a shepherd?” But here will come in the consolation. There are better days for the Church of God. Though the fathers sleep—

*“All the promises do travail,
With a glorious day of Grace.”*

Though one after another we shall pass away, there are not dark days for our descendants, but days of brightness are on the way. “Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children.”

“He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.” The kings of the isles shall yet acknowledge Him, and the wanderers of the desert shall bow down before Him. Jesus, the Christ of God, must be King over all the earth, for God has sworn it, saying, “Surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” With such thoughts as these upon our minds, we may well close our eyes in death with a song upon our lips!

And then, my Brethren, we have another and brighter hope to die with—if die we must before it is fulfilled, and that is, Christ Jesus the Son of God will visit His people. Brethren, the glad hope of the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ may light up the chamber of death with hope. As Joseph said, “God will visit you.” The time comes when the Lord

shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God. Let our dying testimony be to the effect that surely He comes quickly and His reward is with Him. We have not to look forward as the Jew did. He expected the first advent, but we watch for the second coming. This shall cheer us even in our departure, for if we die before He comes we shall yet share in the splendor, for the dead in Christ shall rise.

We may add to all this a hope concerning our bones. We may tell our weeping kindred, as they gather round our bed, to give our bones a decent sepulcher. They need not blazon our names, or write our fancied virtues on stone. But we will tell them that we shall rise again, and that we commit ourselves to the bosom of our Father and our God, with the full conviction that our dust shall yet be quickened anew—

*“My eyes shall see Him in that day,
The God that died for me,
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to You?”*

I do not know when a witness to the resurrection sounds more sweetly than it does from the lips of a saint who is just about to quit this mortal body, to enter into the Presence of his God. It is well to say, as you take leave of these hands, and feet, and eyes, and all the members of this mortal frame, “Farewell, poor body, I shall return to you again. You shall be sown in weakness, but you shall rise in power! You have been the faithful friend and servant of my soul, but you shall be still more fit for my spirit when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised.” May we take care that our last act shall be a triumph of faith, the crowning deed of our lives. God help us that it may be so!

Beloved, there is one sad reflection, namely, that we cannot hope to die triumphantly unless we live *obediently*. We cannot expect to exhibit faith in dying moments if we have not faith now. God grant you faith, O Unbeliever. Seeker, rest not till you have it, and may the Spirit of God give you the faith of God's elect, that living you may serve God, and dying you may honor Him as Joseph did of old. The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for His sake. Amen.

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