

Text: Heb. 11:20-22

Title: "By faith the fathers blessed their sons"

Time: 5/15/2016 am

Place: NBBC

Intro – The song "Faith of Our Fathers" is a good song with a wonderful message that ought to challenge our hearts to faithfulness: "Faith of our Fathers, holy faith; we will be true to thee 'til death."

But that song assumes that we have in mind the right faith and the right fathers, right? If our fathers were the wrong fathers, and their faith the wrong kind of faith, then it is a bane and not a blessing to be true to that faith. I mention that because that very problem is a part of the story behind that hymn.

The hymn's author, Frederick W. Faber (1814-1863), began his ministry in the Anglican Church upon his graduation from Oxford and in agreement with his Calvinist protestant heritage. These were the days of the Tractarian Movement in England, however, which saw many Oxford graduates of Faber's generation apostatize into reunification with Roman Catholicism. Three years after entering the Anglican ministry, this pastor converted and became Father Wilfrid [Kenneth W. Osbeck, 101 Hymn Stories (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1982), 72].

Faber wrote "Faith of Our Fathers" after becoming a Roman Catholic priest. One of the verses for the song he wrote went this way:

"Faith of our fathers! Mary's prayers
Shall win our country back to thee;
And through the truth that comes from God,
England shall then indeed be free.

Faith of our fathers, holy faith!

We would be true to Thee till death" [Osbeck, 73].

When Faber wrote about his faith of his fathers, he did so as one who had adopted a new faith and some new fathers. He became a son lost to Roman Catholicism. He became someone who believed that Mary's prayers were necessary to the salvation of his countrymen.

Our passage this morning is about the faith of fathers who blessed their sons. But as we begin our study of the passage, I want you to imagine a scenario with me. What if any of these generations had converted to worship the gods of Egypt? What if they had adopted a new faith of new fathers? A question just as important for us this morning is, "What will become of our sons and daughters?" Will we be fathers who by faith bless our children? In order to answer yes, we need to learn from the example of the fathers of this passage. Note three things with me.

I. Isaac taught his sons the importance of things to come (v. 20).

Ill: We enjoy asking children what they want to be when they grow up. We encourage kids to dream big about the future and its possibilities. Young people have a natural optimism that is refreshing and encouraging even in difficult days like our own. As a society we anticipate the day our children's generation cures cancer and walks on Mars and perhaps even pays off the national debt, although that is going to be a tough one.

Appl: Well, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, and the content of that blessing is described here as promises about things to come. As we look back at those blessings in Gen. 27:27-29

and 27:39-40, two things become apparent about these things to come. First, some of those blessing would be temporal provisions that Jacob and Esau would experience in their lifetimes. But second, the climax of those blessings would be something that would happen to Jacob especially long after Jacob's lifetime here on earth. Gen. 27:29 says, "May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you." Abraham had been given that blessing. He had given it to Isaac. And now Isaac gave it to Jacob. It was a blessing they possessed, but that they would only experience in another lifetime.

This is what the author of Hebrews always refers to when he speaks of things to come. He tells us that there is an inheritance of salvation to come (1:14), that there is a world to come (2:5), that there is an age to come (6:5), that there are good things to come (10:1), and that there is a city to come (13:14). Isaac was a father who blessed his sons because he was a father who consistently taught them the importance of those things to come, the blessings not of this lifetime, but of the next.

Jesus put this same truth this way: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Have we blessed our children by teaching them to lay up treasures in heaven? Have we set that kind of example for them? Or have we taught them to live for the things and pleasures of this lifetime rather than the next? Where is their treasure? Where is their heart? Where has ours been?

II. Jacob taught his grandsons the importance of worship (v. 21).

Ill: Some of our brothers and sisters here this morning are looking forward to their retirement. I know that because I have heard you talk that way. Let me just say at the outset that I am all for it. My only request is that you not all move down to Sebring, Florida when you retire. That is where the Johnsons and the Kintners and Bonnie Bartelt have all retired to, so they have enough wonderful and godly retirees in their congregation down there.

Appl: But there is something wonderful about the retirement of those folks in that place that parallels the life of Jacob in this passage. They have retired from their careers, but they have not retired from worship. Our text tells us that Jacob was dying, but even as one who was dying, he was determined to show his sons and grandsons that worship was still important to him.

Ill: I am blessed by the commitment to worship that I see in the lives of our senior saints at New Boston Baptist Church. Each time I visit Maralyn Avery, she feels she has to tell me how bad she feels that she is not strong enough on Sunday to come to church.

Appl: If we who are able-bodied felt that way, we would worship more consistently. We would have our personal devotions as we should, spending time alone with God in reading His Word and in prayer. We would gather our families around us for worshiping our Savior together at home around a family altar. We would be at the assembly times of God's people, especially prioritizing the morning worship service each Sunday. And best of all, our children would see this and they would be blessed. They would be challenged to do the same for their own children, our grandchildren.

Are we teaching our children and grandchildren that worship is a priority in our lives?

III. Joseph taught his family that the exodus had something to do with his bones (v. 22).

Ill: Do you remember the account of Joseph's life? He was the favored son of Jacob, hated by his brothers over his preferred status and over the dreams God gave to him. The dreams indicated that Joseph's family members would bow down to him. This hatred hatched a murderous plan in the hearts of his brothers to kill Joseph. Joseph only narrowly escaped those intentions when his oldest brother sold him into slavery. Joseph found himself a trusted servant in Potipher's household in Egypt, but when he resisted the advances of Potipher's wife she had him arrested and thrown into prison. Soon Joseph was in charge of the prison, and God allowed him to interpret the dreams of two important prisoners, Pharaoh's baker and his cupbearer. Then came the day Pharaoh's dream needed to be interpreted, and Joseph came to be second in command over all of Egypt. He was given an Egyptian wife and the responsibility for preparing the land for the coming famine. When it struck his brothers journeyed to Egypt looking for food, and the dreams of Joseph's childhood were fulfilled when they had to bow before him with their request for help. Ultimately, Joseph welcomed his brothers and father to Egypt. Jacob died in Egypt, and when that happened Joseph offered assurances to his brothers of his love in spite of their past hatred (Gen. 50:19-21).

Appl: And then the pages of Genesis record for us what the author of Hebrews remembers in our passage (Gen. 50:22-26). I want us to understand two things about these prophetic words of Joseph regarding the exodus and his bones.

1. When Joseph spoke of the exodus, he spoke of redemption (v. 24). We understand this in a way that Joseph must not have fully understood it. His nation's need for redemption did not arise until after his passing on (Exod. 1:8-14). The enslavement of the nation meant that the nation had to be redeemed from slavery in order to experience the exodus that Joseph predicted. At the very moment of the nation's redemption from Egypt, the Passover lamb would be slain and its blood applied to the mantel and doorposts of Israel's homes. Only then would the nation be redeemed. What a picture that was, which forecasted to the generations that followed, how it is that men and women enslaved in the cruelty of their sin would be forgiven and made free. It would take the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). 1 Pet. 1:18-19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

2. When Joseph spoke of his bones, he spoke of bodily resurrection (vv. 24-25). Did you notice how he describes the land? "The land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." When he said those words, had Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob come to own that land? They had not. Were they still alive? They were not. So how could the promise God made to them, in which Joseph places his faith giving orders about his bones, still be true? They had to be resurrected. This was Jesus's answer to the Sadducees of His day who denied the resurrection Matt. 22:31-33, "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when

the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have to be resurrected to fulfill God's promised plan for them, that they would own the land of Canaan. So the next time someone tells you of their faith in reincarnation, tell them of your faith and Joseph's faith, and Christ's faith in bodily resurrection.

Conclusion: And so Joseph taught his family that the exodus had something to do with his bones. He taught his family saving faith in the hope of the gospel – that there is a way out of bondage to sin through the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, and that there is a promise of resurrection and eternal life to those who will believe that promise. Do you believe that promise? That this salvation cannot be earned is a wonderful undercurrent of truth in this passage. Jacob is mentioned before Esau because Jacob received the blessing although the younger. When Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons, Ephraim was put before Manasseh, again the younger before the older. That was done to teach us that the blessing of God's work of salvation is not something we earn or obtain a right to by our works. It is something we do not deserve, and it is available to us only as a free gift of God's grace. Have you received that gift? Can it be said in your family that the faith of the fathers is blessing the sons? Will our sons live for things to come? Will they worship? Will we have affirmed to them our faith in redemption and resurrection? Or will our sons be lost for want of this blessing?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching