

26. The faith that runs through generations

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19th century Swedish chemist and inventor Alfred Nobel made his fortune manufacturing explosives. When his father, also named Alfred, died, an obituary mistaking father for son stated that “he was a rich industrialist who made his fortune in war.”

“This is my legacy?” asked a horrified Nobel. And from that day on, he set apart a 31 million Swedish Krona at that time – \$265 million in today’s currency to fund prizes for peace, science, medicine, and literature.

According to Dictionary.com, it defines ‘legacy’ in this way: “anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor.” Men – husbands and fathers tend to think about their legacies at the later part of their life. Until then, they generally have been busy working and providing things for their families. Now that they have a little breathing room or are thinking about the future they have left, they often ask themselves, “What is my legacy to my family and others?”

Many of you might have thought about this. If you haven’t yet, you probably will. Listen, providing things for your family’s comfortable living is good, but it is not the most important thing as the head of the family. Because your children probably will not remember how big and fancy your home is when they grow up, but they will remember what happened in that home. Your children probably will not remember how fast your car can go when they grow up, but they will remember what kind of conversation they had with you in that car.

In my opinion, I believe that I am right on this one, the most important legacy you can hand down to your children and their children is not fame or riches, rather the faith in Jesus Christ that runs through your future generations.

For the last two Sundays, we’ve been studying the faith of Abraham. This morning we are going to learn about the faith in God that was passed down to his descendants – Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. What a gift Abraham gave to them! He couldn’t find a better treasure than that.

A. THE FAITH OF ISAAC

Hebrews 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

To understand this verse in the Book of Hebrews, we must go to Genesis 25:

Genesis 25:21-26 Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, “If all is well, why am I like this?” So she went to inquire of the Lord. 23 And the Lord said to her: “Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.” 24 So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. 25 And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. 26 Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

Whenever I try to imagine the appearances of these twins, I cannot help myself to think nobody else except these two people: totally sissy looking Leonardo DiCaprio and the man’s man Tom Selleck.

Regardless of their appearance, the Lord chose Jacob over Esau in His infinite wisdom. But as the boys grew and their mom and dad, Rebekah and Isaac played their own favorite over the other – Rebekah for Jacob, and Isaac for Esau.

Listen, mom and dad, grandpa and grandma, unless you want turmoil in your family in the future, please do not play favorites among your children and grandchildren.

Genesis 27:25-27 He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." 27 And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field Which the Lord has blessed.

Since the parents were playing their favorites, Isaac wanted to bless Esau over Jacob against the Lord's will by circumventing the Lord. But the Lord used the con job of Rebekah and Jacob to make sure that Jacob would receive the blessing from his father Isaac.

There are millions of people who know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and He is God. But they want their ways over Him. They think that they can do whatever they want to do by circumventing God's will. You cannot fight against God and think that you are going to win. Not happening.

Eventually, Isaac submitted himself to the will of God in the rest of chapter 27 of Genesis. Though his physical eyes were failing, Isaac spiritually could see that the Lord chose his younger son Jacob and through him a nation, a chosen nation by God, would come forth. All this Jacob learned from his father Isaac, who, in turn, had learned it from his father Abraham.

That's why Isaac was recorded here in the Hall of Faith with the others.

B. THE FAITH OF JACOB

Hebrews 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

Instead of trusting the Lord, Jacob's mama Rebekah chose to deceive her husband to give a blessing to her favorite son Jacob and her son agreed with her and went along with this scheme. In the majority portion of Jacob's life, it couldn't be considered a godly one. But from time to time, he displayed his faith in the Lord very well. What we just read was one of them.

The original story comes from Genesis 48:

Genesis 48:5 And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

Including Joseph, Jacob had 12 sons. Jacob gave the double portion of blessings to Joseph by adopting Ephraim and Manasseh as his own in dividing his inheritance to them. So if you want to be mathematically correct, Israel has 13 tribes instead of 12. But the most of times when 12 tribes were mentioned in the Bible, the tribe of Levi was left out, because their inheritance was the Lord Himself as the priestly tribe of Israel.

Jacob had to lean on the top of his staff because his hip socket was out of the joint when he fought against the Lord at Peniel many decades ago. As I mentioned, Jacob

was a carnal man. To make him a spiritual man, the Lord took away his self-reliant strength. After Jacob surrendered himself to the Lord, he became a changed man.

Please listen to me now. If you are a capable person, a well-to-do person like Jacob was, good for you. But don't you ever think that you came to where you are by your own strength. The Lord allowed you to be there. Acknowledge Him in your life. And don't be stubborn and continually fight against the Lord to get your ways. You are not going to win. If you continue to fight against Him, God will take away your self-reliant strength in order to bring you to your senses. If you feel convicted now and you are very uncomfortable, good for you. The Lord is speaking to you now. Please do not ignore Him and His invitation to surrender yourself to Him.

C. THE FAITH OF JOSEPH

Hebrews 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. Many of you already know the remarkable story of Joseph from Genesis 37. There are a handful of men who are mentioned in the Bible extensively who do not have a negative thing said about them, such as Daniel, Samuel, and Joseph.

After his 10 brothers bound him and sold him to the slave traders so that he ended in Egypt as a slave, he could be bitter against God and abandoned his faith. But instead, it only grew stronger where no one was watching him and he had no one to be accountable to. Additionally, he was living in the land that would make Las Vegas blush.

After Joseph helped his father and brothers' families come join him in Egypt and their families grew enormously big. By faith he believed that God would one day deliver His people out from Egypt to the land He promised.

Genesis 50:24-26 And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." 25 Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." 26 So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

By faith, Joseph believed the message he heard from his father Jacob, in turn, from his father Isaac, in turn, from Abraham. Though Joseph lived in Egypt, he was an Israelite by heritage and by his faith in God. When he died, he didn't want to end up in some pagan pyramid; he wanted his bones to be buried with the chosen people.

Some Bible scholars believe that Joseph's coffin was never buried in Egypt. If so, I am sure that it was a silent witness of Joseph's faith in God that the Lord would take His people out of Egypt to the Promised Land in Canaan someday. And it was fulfilled by Moses in Exodus 13:

Exodus 13:19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you."

Do you have a godly father or mother? If so, you have a rich heritage you should treasure. The memory you have of them may not be perfect, but you were influenced by them to carry the faith in Jesus Christ. You have something that the majority of people around the world do not have.

Are you like me who didn't have a Christian mom or dad? No reason to feel bad. You can be one for your children or grandchildren. Speak to them about Jesus with your love and actions. Tell them how Jesus changed your life for the better. Children know if we are pretending.

Many of you know this verse from the Book of Proverbs:

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

What does it mean to say, "Train up a child?" You cannot be a passive parent to train up a child, it requires your life and time to engage in the child's life. The word 'train' does not mean you toss a few words every once in a while. The original Hebrew word is 'chanak'. It means 'to dedicate'. You have to dedicate your life and time in your children's lives with guidance from the Holy Spirit. You need to stimulate your child's learning appetite with godliness and your godly examples.

Teaching your children how to read and write is important; teaching them to behave themselves in front of others and get along with others is important; but teaching them about your God and Savior Jesus Christ is far more important than anything else. Give them the eternal heritage that they can enjoy in heaven.

Whether your children are tiny or taller than you are, as long as you are their parents, you still have a chance to make godly influences. You may say, "What is the reason we bring our kids to the church Sunday School? They can learn about Jesus there." For that, here is my answer: How much time do they spend there? And tell me how much time do they spend in your home? Who has more influence on your children?

Here are some tips for you parents and grandparents:

- Let your children see you read God's Word and pray EVERY DAY.
- Tell your children how you are growing and learning new things from the Bible.
- Pray with your children every day, not just the meal time prayer and bedtime prayer. You don't need a long drawn out prayer. Begin today.
- If your children are no longer under your roof, pray for them daily for the Lord's will.

Our faith in Jesus Christ was never meant to remain theoretical. It was intended to be translated into reality. In the curriculum of the Christian life, faith is a required course, not an elective.

D. APPLICATION

1) Your home should be a launching pad for your children's faith in God.
Pray and read the Word of God daily.

2) We must develop a contagious confidence in God in our home.
Pray and read the Word of God daily.