

Faithful to the End Pt. 2

Genesis 50:22-26 CBC, Sunday AM, August 27, 2023

faithfulness? Steady, trustworthy, dependable, patterns, growth; characteristics most value, if not in yourself, at least in others, but last week, saw these identifiers/companions of faithfulness upended as society bombarded by independence and mobility—I alone determine reality, meaning, values AND I can and will go wherever need to in order to have livable, meaningful life; I have never before felt it so difficult to rally group of people together around God's Word and His specific mission for ALL Christians; distracted, tired, needs, yet VERY opinionated about relationships (who, appropriate interaction, how much) and meddling with time/priorities) ALL wary of too much media, yet all choosing media; some engaged in this discussion, other's want to shut it out—other than wanting others to be there/listen, what there for? What distracts/attracts us? that's why find articles like read last week helpful as think about roots required for faithfulness; summarize one of them to let points sink in; Brett McCracken in "The Longings Behind Pop Culture's Nostalgia Obsession" ^{5/5/23 Gospel Coalition} asked "Why are appetites for 'new culture' waning, while hunger for nostalgia and franchise familiarity is surging? Perhaps it's because our brains are so overstimulated, so overtaxed in the digital age's information glut, that we struggle to have the capacity or energy to process anything novel." "Another explanation for the growing hunger for nostalgic, familiar pop culture surely has to do with the dizzying, destabilizing effects of the digital age on our identity. A few generations ago, the frames of reference for how we understood ourselves were more limited. Our identities largely depended on the unchosen physical and proximate webs we entered at birth: family, place, local culture, religious tradition. But in the digital age, the tools for identity construction are limitless, unbound by the givenness of unchosen factors that previously defined us (eg, our biological sex). 'Who I am' is now as fluid and malleable a question as I want it to be, subject to the whirling array of arguments, influencers, pseudo-events, and microcommunities that come across my feed from any number of multiverses." "In a recent newsletter, Chris Martin shared a Marshall McLuhan quote from a 1977 television interview that speaks to this dynamic: 'One of the big marks of the loss of identity is nostalgia. And so revivals in every phase of life today—revivals of clothing, of dances, of music, of shows, of everything—we live by the revival. It tells us who we are, or were.' Martin goes on to ponder whether 'the light speed with which we consume content and information today has, in a sense, left us longing for the simplicity of the past. When we knew who we were.'" "The identity-longing we feel—of which nostalgia is a sort of 'signal of transcendence,' to quote Os Guinness's fantastic new book—also has a lot to do with longing for the sort of community of shared culture we once had." "This is a big purpose culture serves: community and connection." "In the end, constructing bespoke identities around hyperspecific personal tastes and eclectic curation of pop culture is lonely and unsatisfying. We long for culture that connects rather than isolates. And right now, the culture that does this most readily is heavy on nostalgia and familiar franchises." So many issues, thoughts to ponder; if he is right, we can't/won't even ponder what outside our familiarity b/c too drained; yet faithfulness marks people of God; farther, sign of Spirit's work/fruit; No Spirit, No Christian; apart from fellowship with God; Christians must examine God's definition of faithfulness; started probing this last week as came to summary of Joseph's life at end of book of beginnings—Genesis. Said **Faithfulness flourishes from a clear source of life leaving fruit extending beyond your life.**

I. Faithfulness flourishes. vv. 22-23

See right inside verses; ²² Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. See flourishing in **1. Permanence**—stayed in Egypt for Joseph, all movement forced, but flourished wherever was (under father in tent in Canaan--learning, obeying, creating, serving, working; God entrusted faithful one w dreams—faithfulness large part of jealousy, so at **17** sold/drog from Canaan; same behaviors flourishing everywhere planted; Potiphar, then forcefully uprooted, Prison, then when pled for remembrance/justice, no idea would end in palace when at **30** interpreted dream for Pharaoh; continued flourishing as began 80 years in palace/high society of Egypt, **37** when famine started, **39** when brothers came, given **17** years with father b/r died when Joseph 56; last account took place right after Jacob's death, means **54** years of putting down roots—93 total years in Egypt; what don't we know about Joseph's thoughts/pressures during these silent 54 years? But DO know lived faithful & flourishing every day of 110 years; you can advance God's kingdom from where you are & flourish—are you? faithfulness NOT stale, includes creativity/ideas, but known for consistency, steady, get it done; faithfulness includes what necessary to grow, have purpose, thrive in every circumstance INSIDE a box, even through some injustices that might not be righted in your lifetime; **2. Prominence** of all things could attribute to Joseph—favor of father for faithfulness, faithfulness to work and live in unjust situations, saving Egypt & giving Egypt honor through famine relief, earning respect and care of Pharaoh so accepted his nomadic family, honor capped by something little control over—died at 110, ideal age according to Egyptians; the gods have blessed you, Joseph—you are accepted as one of us; NO, testimony to them of blessing of God as Joseph faithfully represented true God ^{Baldwin p. 220} for 93 yrs in Egypt; **3. Progeny** he and his father's household ²³ Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. Flourished as life continued through him, a blessing from God **Ps. 127:3-5**; think what staying together meant for Joseph—93 years in society that looked down on family's livelihood and roots, 17 years upbringing under God to prepare for 22 years of working through feelings of betrayal and abandonment, then at least 17 more working through THEIR issues with forgiveness and accepting his forgiveness and building relationship; so easy for us to walk away from relationships/move away & NOT feel like have to deal with issues

again—he worked through/flourished w relationships—Egyptians, but then those from own roots; see blessing of God on Joseph as he is faithful and flourishes where planted **Applic. Are you faithful? Do you flourish where planted?** Faithfulness points beyond itself; **Faithfulness flourishes from a clear source of life leaving fruit extending beyond your life.**

II. Faithfulness shines a light on its source. vv. 24-25

faithful to what? Why faithful to that? What drives you—what reward, value, hope? come to last spoken words of genesis (beginning) ²⁴ **Joseph said to his brothers,** (or representatives of brother's families if dead) **"I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you**

A. God is at the center of life and death. v. 24

As facing death, attention not on himself, but on encouraging them; much I don't know, **but KNOW God will surely take care of you** visit you, word often implies need, He will intervene and change fortune, bring deliverance; God **WILL [and] bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob."**

1. Joseph trusted the Words and Works of God in History

you are going to leave Egypt--**how do you know, Joseph?** B/c I've been told—**by whom?** God, did He speak to you, No, but spoke to my fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; promised them—examined them last week; **they are dead!** What have YOU heard from God yourself so we should trust you? Not just brothers wonder, but think of all pressure as 2nd in command to assimilate Egypt's values regarding life and death; Boice comments, Egypt technologically advanced but spiritually depraved—rawest forms of polytheism—gods/goddesses took forms of animals, snakes, insects—worship of these gods often sexual in nature—probably occult or demonic activities as well—in time of Moses, magicians would seek to rival God's power with miraculous signs, **yet it was Word and works of God to father's that spoke louder;** Calvin

pushes point farther; **"But** whence had he this great certainty, that he should be a witness and a surety of future redemption, except from his having been so taught by his father?" p. 491 do not read that God appeared to him, or an angel from heaven delivering message, but he was persuaded that Jacob was "divinely appointed teacher and prophet, who should transmit to his sons the covenant of salvation deposited with him; Joseph relies upon his testimony not less securely than if some vision had been presented to him, or he had seen angels descending to him from heaven: for unless the hearing of the word is sufficient for our faith, we deserve not that God, whom we then defraud of his honour, should condescend to deal with us: not that faith relies on human authority, but because it hears God speaking through the mouth of men, and by their external voice is drawn upwards; for what God pronounces through men, he seals on our hearts by his Spirit. Thus faith is built on not other foundation than God himself; and yet the preaching of men is not wanting in its claim of authority and reverence. This restraint is put upon the rash curiosity of those men, who, eagerly desiring visions, despise the ordinary ministry of the Church; as if it were absurd that God, who formerly showed himself to the fathers out of heaven, should send forth his voice out of the earth. But if they would reflect how gloriously he once descended to us in the person of his only-begotten Son, they would not so importunately desire that heaven should daily be opened unto them. But, not to insist upon these things; when the brethren saw that Joseph,--who in this respect was inferior to his fathers, as having been partaker of no oracle,--had been imbued by them with the doctrine of piety, so that he contended with a faith similar to theirs; they would at once be most ungrateful and malignant, if they rejected the participation of his grace." Pp. 491-492

his confidence was based on God's word to those before him--didn't have to have OWN proof—could study, examine based on people/acts INSIDE history, eye/ear witnesses—we are a people not merely w story, but story inside history (time/space) **Do you trust God's words/works inside history? Must God speak only to you, fulfill your needs in order to exist and take His Word/Works seriously?**

Bush-Make God worse than liar when don't believe word AND when He gives an oath p. 432 should terrify us when He says that those who disobey won't enter His rest AND encourage when says troubled sinners should flee to Him for refuge—I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn and live; this recounting of God's Word today is an opportunity for you to examine source of your faithfulness—listen to Jesus and live by Word of God, Matt. 4:4 —speaks in ordinary means

2. Joseph acted based on God's words and works.

NOT new for Joseph—while I believe he cried to God for help in impossible, he saw and acted in view of God's providence—God's good sovereign hand watching over His creation and working toward His good purposes **Gen. 39:2-3, 9, 21-23, 40:7-8, 41:15-16, 25, 28, 32-33, 38-39, 51-52, 42:8-9, 18-19, 43:23, 29, 45:4-9, 48:3-4, 8-9, 15, 21, 50:5, 19-20**—MANY other options besides trusting God's words/works, **but faith in God only seen/strengthened when trusting God's words and works inside history;** some provision seen, some promises eventually understood,; **HAD to grow THROUGH adversity, living according to character/commands of God while waiting for fulfillment of His words;** meant resisting temptation to look for easier path/another word; (assimilating into Egypt's culture/gods like Israelites would do time and again including dazzled by Egypt's power to protect) **even easier way of bitterness, seeking death);** NO, lived in way that ready to die; Bush, "held fast in death that hope which had animated his soul amidst all the afflictions of life." p. 432 **Boice** these words of declaration of faith in God are only thing NT remembers and praises Joseph; 13 chapters and only 4 things about him—Jn. 4:5 incidental note about land Jacob gave Joseph, Stephen mentions name 5 times in Acts 7:9-18, Rev. 7:8 mentions 120000 persons from tribe of Joseph, **Heb. 11:22 cites this passage as evidence that Joseph lived by faith;** NOT amazing accomplishments, but trust in God's word; faith does not need to be destroyed by circumstances—Boice **"God grows faith in difficulty, and the faith thus grown is a hearty faith. If you want to grow mushrooms, you can grow them quickly in protected conditions. But if you want to grow an oak tree, it must be in the open where it will**

stand against the storms of summer and the snows of winter. Adversity makes the oak tree strong.” P. 1266 character comes as obstacles come, competing values, hardship, and forced to prioritize desires/values—listen to gospel hope Rom. 5:1-6; how precious is this to you? “The test of your character is what it takes to stop you” Bob Jones Sr. to have actions/feelings in line with God’s word, must trust God’s words and work inside history; takes effort, energy to study words and works; Keep them in front of you (meditate), then apply to life knowing character built through persevering allows you to see mature, sturdy faith; are you developing faith or repeating kindergarten over and over—look to God and continue whatever grade you are in; Those to whom God is faithful become faithful Sinclair Ferguson, Shepherd’s Conference 2019 Jm. 1:2-8; don’t waste everyday opportunities to fix gaze on God who saves—eternally, then in that light, temporally; Ross “Those who trust the Lord to bring about his promised blessings in his own inscrutable ways will demonstrate their faith through the adverse circumstances of life. If believers wholeheartedly trust in the sovereignty of God, death will lose its power over them, and persecution and antagonism will fade into his sovereign plan, providing a spirit of confidence and kindness.” pp. 716-717 Joseph faces death same way as lived life, trusting God’s words and works shown by actions & emotions lived in line with them

B. God is at the center of encouragement given to others v. 25

²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here.” Repeats his sure hope & calls them to live in line with it—what better gift of stability could he give! Pass the Promise! How? 1. Be Intentional Why swear/oath? Word valuable; reputation tied; think what would stand in way of them fulfilling promise 1. Comfortable in Egypt; place of blessing for Joseph—power, prosperity, wife/children—then for family, prospered in Goshen—Jer. 29, told exiles to build houses, plant gardens, multiply families, seek welfare of city—hard to do this and not get attached (children, their spouses know no other home); why go back to tents ie. exodus—longed for leeks/onions; same said for worldview of Joseph, Jacob; one thing to remember them, put flowers on grave, but lose their vision—easy to water down, mix traditions w/o even recognizing it 2. Persecution—feel never escape; be careful what promise at death, or what make people promise—BUT, will take work to pass on source of trust 2. Be Eternal Why swear? b/c more than just honor, just family—they were the children of promise; God made promises that involved Abraham’s descendants; they needed to know who they were to remember responsibility as part of God’s plan to be light to Gentiles (His glory through them), AND their obedience to Joseph’s wish would move them in line w God’s plan to crush serpent’s head, bring eternal redemption—no wonder, Joseph so insistent to rip their focus from present benefits to eternal; Ross “the prospect of dying w/o receiving the promises provides one of the greatest opportunities for demonstrating faith in the future deliverance” p. 716 What legacy will you leave? Make a will, provide for own as best can, but if center on temporal, it will be temporal/fleeting; Boice what keeps godly in comfortable world? 1. Invisible must be often in our thoughts—if don’t fill mind with spiritual realities, secular dreams will take true religion’s place and our horizons will shrink to what is now but will surely pass away. The sense of God’s presence will recede. Prayer will become unreal. Joseph’s heart in Canaan (where DIDN’T have name, but God’s promise worth more); do you long for eternal (His kingdom, will, eyes of heart enlightened to know hope of His calling?); tie any honor those closest to you give you with the eternal—if they share eternal source of hope, then they will hold your hand in death and pass the promise to sons/daughters 3. Be Faithful Genesis book of families--Joseph follows God’s intent for families to develop and pass on not merely life, but source of life; NOT results focused—couldn’t be as made them swear, couldn’t control what they did after die NOR see how/when God would fulfill His word; yes ACT w goal, but faithfulness more where looking so continue work based on that gaze The goal of faithfulness is not that we will do work for God, but that He will be free to do His work through us. God calls us to His service and places tremendous responsibilities on us. He expects no complaining on our part and offers no explanation on His part. God wants to use us as He used His own Son. Oswald Chambers Test of Faithfulness Dec. 18 do this, you are faithful—use gifts/abilities/circumstances in life for His kingdom, then faithful servant in eyes of God; don’t be discouraged if struggling self (received sloppy gospel, sloppy character, sloppy churches), you will best encourage others from where you have found encouragement II Cor. 1:3-4—grow in grace, II Pet. 1 looking to God for everything for life/godliness; more know of promises and privileges, more pass on to children, those in church, close to you & will inspire your work that they know God and His ways; this is how God’s glorious character, gospel spread! Boice quotes Donald Grey Barnhouse pp. 1260-1261 then says, believer has genuine concern for family, so tells them; other side is those unsaved have known person before—if no change, they will know that before most others, but if there IS change, will know that as well; members of our family “do not inherit salvation; salvation cannot be inherited. But they do inherit the benefit of a living, vital witness to the power of God in a converted person’s life. They inherit his or her witness to Scripture and often an exposure to gospel preaching, Christian books, spiritually directed conversations, and Christian friends.” P. 1261 pray, confess, praise—live looking to eternal God—powerful witness; Joseph says, take whatever left of me & point it in direction of God’s promises!

III. Faithfulness leaves fruit extending beyond your life v. 26

²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt. Dead—it’s over; Egypt did much to prepare passage through death; embalmed placed in coffin according to their custom; why not take to Canaan now? Don’t know—maybe Joseph knew would create unrest in Egypt; Canaanite’s hostile toward

losing land, in God's larger plan, iniquity of Amorite not yet complete; **Kidner** book ends pointing beyond its own story—man had travelled far from Eden to a coffin p. 224 chosen family far from Canaan to Egypt, but Joseph's command about his bones was gesture of faith Heb. 11:22; coffin sitting there constant reminder—he said we would leave—why? God is good, He cares—He promised—He will visit you (not left alone) some provision IN history according to His promises and will; when? Don't know All kinds of numbers based on all kinds of Bible facts, but couple hundred years—think of all those born/died until Moses born; **Baldwin**—passing their memory of Joseph to THEIR children's children “The continuity was important if the covenant promise and commitment were to be treasured and passed on as the most important family possession.” P. 220 then same word for visit Ex. 3:16-17, Ex. 4:31 God watching, concerned about; think in flurry of Exodus—how did they remember/get bones? Moses fulfills Ex. 13:18-19—buried at Shechem Josh. 24:32; **Baldwin** “Joseph's faith had not been misplaced, and God did not forget to be gracious or fail to keep his word” p. 221 but NOT just for Israelites, when faithfulness rooted in faith in eternal God—His word goes beyond and His word about death is sobering; Heb. 9:27—ALL die, then judgment—no matter how good our lives, still die; death shows God's word is true—you shall not surely die—Boice, Eve investigated herself—saw tree good for food (pragmatic test), pleasing to eye (aesthetic test), desirable for gaining wisdom (intellectual test) satisfied, she took and ate—“The fruit of the tree met her tests, yet her tests were not sufficiently comprehensive. They could not be, because she was finite and could not understand all that the Creator knew intuitively.” P. 1274 what God said would happen DID happen – Rom. 6:23 don't follow attractive, etc. follow God's Word—hope there; **Waltke** coffin—same word for ark in Deut. 10:5—Jewish tradition did not miss parallel b/n Joseph placed in aron and 2 tablets of Law placed in aron—two coffins w them—one bones of Joseph, other promises of covenant of Living God—“The wayfarers who saw the receptacles wondered, and they would ask, ‘How doth the ark of the dead come next to the ark of the Ever-living?’ The answer was, ‘The dead man enshrined in the one fulfilled the commandments enshrined in the other.’” Ginzberg in Waltke p. 628; not quite—had to wait longer; almost 2000 years until Lk. 1:68 Servant in Isaiah 53 identified as Jesus in Acts 8:30-35 as Philip preaches Jesus to eunuch—only Jesus could keep law fully, perfect sacrifice, pours soul out as a guilt offering, yet after atoning death, rises, ascends, is glorified prolongs his days and sees his seed; it is only those, like the eunuch who accept Christ as only way to reconciliation w God who need not fear death; Eph. 1:13-14 believers look ahead, await day when promised seed will be victorious over curse and reality of God's promised blessing experienced fully with Him—they KNOW God will visit/deliver His people, eagerly wait return b/c trust His word Rev. 22:12, 20 Are you ready?

Conclusion: so we close book on Joseph, book of beginnings ending w death; Many Christians dread the thought of leaving this world. Why? Because so many have stored up their treasures on earth, not in heaven. Each day brings us closer to death. If your treasures are on earth, that means each day brings you closer to losing your treasures. p. 40 He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he's moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain. He who spends his life moving toward his treasures has reason to rejoice. Are you despairing or rejoicing? Randy Alcorn, The Treasure Principle P. 43 **Much don't know about what went on in Joseph's mind to lead him to confidently exemplify faithfulness, but THESE words showed/cast light on source of his faithfulness—let his faithfulness drive you to look at Joseph's God—see God keeping promises to**

patriarchs, see them testify of His faithfulness; worship God and follow, and you will be rewarded eternally

Exodus 3:16–17 “Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷ “So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hitite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.”’

Exodus 4:31 So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.

Exodus 13:18–19 Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt. ¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, “God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones from here with you.”

Joshua 24:32 Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.

Psalms 127:3–5 Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. ⁵ How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Luke 1:68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

Romans 5:1–6 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. ⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

2 Corinthians 1:3–4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Ephesians 1:13–14 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Hebrews 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

James 1:2–8 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Revelation 22:12, 20 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.