

Reading: Genesis 47:7-31

Theme: The Progress of a Pilgrim.

We have seen the emotional **Welcome** Joseph gave to his father and also saw the **Wisdom** Joseph showed in introducing his brothers and father to Pharaoh. We'll continue to look at this chapter and see 4 main things from it:

1. Presentation. (v7)

"Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh" - Pharaoh would expect this. Joseph comes in with his frail old dad, so dependent upon others - even on Pharaoh himself. Yet Jacob did something that must have startled everyone used to court protocol! Instead of bowing low before Pharaoh, he takes the initiative and blesses Pharaoh - even doing this as he left Pharaoh's presence! In earthly terms Pharaoh was superior, but in spiritual terms Jacob was greater and he prayed for Pharaoh's well-being. This may not have been court protocol, but was an act of great godliness. Pharaoh was not offended at this, had been much conversation between Joseph and Pharaoh about his God? Pharaoh allowed the blessing pronounced by this old man of God - upon him and his kingdom. In terms of wealth and power Pharaoh was greater, but in terms of an interest in God, Jacob was greater and Pharaoh realised Jacob's blessing was not to be despised, not even by a great ruler like himself.

We are to pray for those in authority over us so the blessing of the gospel might reach more people as the land knows blessings and peace (1Timothy 2:1-7). Sadly, the rulers and those in authority may not acknowledge such, nor feel they need it, but nevertheless we are to pray for them. Pharaoh as he sees this old man asks him how old he was and this leads us on to consider:

2. Pilgrimage. (v9)

Jacob's answer seems strange to us *"The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers."* Literally as AV says *"The days of the years of my pilgrimage..."* His years were few compared to his father and grandfather - his father Isaac died at 180; grandfather Abraham died at 175 - so he was just a mere youngster of 130! He owns his days had been *"evil"* (AV), *"difficult"* (NIV)- here used in the sense of hard, difficult and testing; for he experienced many more troubles in his life than his father and grandfather, some of which were brought about by his own actions! Jacob was not complaining, he was just stating the truth. Let's briefly note 3 things:

A. Life is a pilgrimage. Jacob owned he and his ancestors had been pilgrims all their lives. God's people are travellers through and from this world and Jacob realised it - we read of their attitude in Hebrews 11:10, 13-16 and the writer of Hebrews encourages us to consider ourselves as pilgrims in 13:14 *"For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come."* We are just passing through this world and on into eternity. As Christians we have the certainty of a heavenly home. Some consider that this life in the world is all we have, that's it, then we rot! What about you?

B. Life is a short pilgrimage. Jacob, even though 130 years old, still spoke of the **days** of his years. Even his 130 years passed so quickly and seemed to him but a few days. In comparison with eternity our days on earth are as nothing, just a brief flash and they are gone now matter how long they are. In Psalm 90:12 we read *"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."* We need to recognise that no matter how long we live, our days i.e. our lives are really short and eternity is really long!

C. Life is a difficult pilgrimage. We all have our ups and downs; some have more troubles and tribulations than others. Being a

Christian does not remove us from the difficulties of life. In fact, we may have added tribulations as we go onwards to enter the glory of God's kingdom (Acts 14:22). Yet no matter what we go through, remember the great hope we have before us *"that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* (Romans 8:18). We are encouraged to keep on going on in our pilgrimage even if the days seem hard, evil or difficult for us - because we know that our end is the glory of heaven.

3. Provision. (v11-27)

In this section we will see how Joseph manages the care of both his family and Egypt - as he uses his God given wisdom. Like Esther, it would seem he had come to the kingdom for such a time as this! He provides for:

A. The Family (v11 & 12).

With Pharaoh's official sanction, Joseph settled the family in Egypt (v11) - Moses used the current name for the land of Goshen (Rameses) as he wrote Genesis. Joseph made provision of food for all the family, doing so in proportion to the size of their families. He found out their numbers and even included the little children - the Hebrew for *"according to the number of their children"* literally reads *"according to the number of their **little children**"*. This great ruler took time to notice even the most insignificant ones in the family.

Our Saviour is far greater than Joseph and, in His love, care and provision for all His people, He notices even His little ones and makes tender provision for us. The One who knows when sparrows fall to the ground and the number of the hairs on our head, will not overlook any one of His children; we are not to think we are the exception, a forgotten believer, the one who is not loved and cared for! Not at all, in those times when we feel weak, sick, helpless, useless and things seem too

much for us, then we are to realise He has a particularly tender care for us and the provision we need will be given readily - He does give more grace as the burdens grow greater.

B. The Nation (v13-26)

Joseph's was involved in the necessary business of governing and providing for the people of Egypt in the crisis. We see how he went about it - taking money from the Egyptians as payment for grain; when the money ran out Joseph exchanged food for their livestock; then finally at the end of the years of famine, an exchange for themselves and their land, Joseph gave them seed to plant – making a 20% land production tax law that was still in place in the days of Moses (v26). Some of his procedures might seem strange to us, but the Egyptians appreciated all that he did for them to keep them from starvation. Joseph was an honest ruler and he didn't line his own pockets - we read that he *"collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace."* From this passage we learn:

i. Wise management: When Joseph 1st announced a plan to deal with the famine, Pharaoh said (41:39) *"... there is no-one so discerning and wise as you."* We see Joseph's wisdom in governing Egypt and are to remember Proverbs 8:15-16 *"By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth."* Joseph had such wisdom from on high – imparted through the years of testing and learning.

It was said our Saviour Jesus - the long-prophesied Messiah, *"The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power,"* (Isaiah 11:2; 42:1-4). We have a just, fair, loving and wise Saviour who is in control of this world and of our little lives, even when it doesn't seem so at times.

ii. Recognised as the saviour: Joseph is owned as the saviour of Egypt as well as his own people. They feared that they would perish (v15 & 19) and later they confessed *"You have saved our lives"* (v25). Have we recognised we would perish eternally unless God had done something to rescue us? Many of us have recognised that and have gone to the only One who could do us good and rescue us, save us - the Saviour God has provided - the Lord Jesus Christ. We see He would be *"the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe"* (1 Timothy 4:10) and we believed in Him for ourselves.

In Joseph there is a partial fulfilment of the promise to Abraham that *"and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* (12:3), but it is through the Lord Jesus its complete fulfilment is brought about. The Samaritans declare about the Lord Jesus Christ when they had come to trust Him (John 4:42 AV) *"this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."* Can we say with them from personal experience - we know that Jesus is not only the Saviour of the world, but He is our Saviour?

iii. Source of blessing: Because of Joseph, Pharaoh treated the people of Israel well and both the Israelites and Egypt were blessed at this time with provisions through Joseph's wisdom. All were blessed and experienced something of God's promise to Abraham (12:3) *"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;"* Yet 4 centuries later, in the time just before Moses, the situation had changed dramatically – Exodus 1.

From v27 we learn of the prosperity of the people of Israel and we have the first mention of Israel (Israelites NIV) used collectively for the family of Jacob and spoken of in the plural - so does not just mean Jacob (Israel) himself. The Israelites were aliens in this foreign land and yet they knew great blessing and prosperity and it was all because of Joseph under God.

As Christians, we are in the world but not of it and are aliens and strangers as we go on our pilgrim journey to the Celestial City. Yet we know many blessings in our life's journey. Whether or not we have many blessings in this life, we are told that we have *"every spiritual blessing in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:3). We do well to count our many blessings, name them one by one - so that we will be surprised what the Lord has done and is doing for us and then to realise the best is still to come. Moving on we see:

4. Promise (v28-31)

Jacob was 147 years old, had lived for 17 years in Egypt and been cared for by Joseph's provision. Humanly speaking his days should have ended much sooner in the famine, but God made this gracious provision for him. There is a lovely picture of symmetry - Jacob had provided for Joseph for his first 17 years, then Joseph was sold into slavery; now Joseph provides for his dad with the best of Egypt for the final 17 years of his father's life. God can surprise us in our lives with expressions of His love and care through those who have received love and care from us at earlier times. Yet Jacob knew:

A. Pilgrim days were ending: this time reference moves us towards the end of Jacob's life and he knew his time to die was soon. Jacob was named Israel = *'had wrestled with God'* in human form and prevailed, yet the time came for him to die (see 49v29-33). He had plenty to eat, had the best of any medical attention available and yet his time to die still came. Matthew Henry says *"this did not secure him from dying by age or sickness. He died by degrees; his candle was not blown out, but gradually burnt down to the socket, so that he saw, at some distance, the time drawing nigh."*

One day our pilgrimage in this world will end too - we may, or may not have warning of it. We need to be prepared for that time - whether it comes suddenly or we see it creeping up on us. The

pilgrim journey must end for us all and we should live in such a way to be always prepared for it.

B. Promise obtained: Jacob seeing his day of departure nearby, had concerns about his burial - his funeral arrangements. He wasn't concerned about the pomp of it, but the place of it. He called Joseph and made him, in effect the executor of his will and of his funeral arrangements. He had him promise to bury him, not in Egypt but in Canaan, with his father and grandfather - in the land of his birth, the Promised Land. He made Joseph swear this would be done – strange instance of putting a hand under a thigh to make a promise (*as Abraham made his servant promise when he sent him to get a wife for Isaac [24:2]*). Jacob knew Joseph had the right connections to bring about his embalming - mummification by the Egyptians; not only that, Joseph had the finance, power and influence too and to make sure his body was taken back to Canaan and buried in line with his desires - Joseph did all this.

It might sound a morbid question, but are our funeral arrangements in place? Would our family and loved ones know what we wanted concerning our funeral? Some may have it down in great detail; others are afraid even to think about doing so just in case...! It is wise to have a will, have funeral arrangements planned and also our families know about them. Wherever we want our mortal remains to be placed, nothing will better help to make our dying easier than the certainty of a rest in the heavenly Canaan after death i.e. we have a home in heaven prepared and reserved for us because we have the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and He will take us home to be with Him. That can make our dying process and experience much easier. With that sorted we can, even as we think of our death, be like Jacob and give:

C. Praise and worship: having Joseph's promise, Jacob- here called Israel (*wrestles with God 32:28*) worshipped as he leaned on the top

of his staff or the head of his bed. He was too old to bow himself on the ground in worship to his God, he did the next best thing and bowed his head leaning against the head of his bed or the top of his staff (*difference in translation depends on the equivalent of a full stop above a letter in Hebrew*) and in Hebrews 11:21 we read “*By faith Jacob... worshipped as he leaned on the top of his staff.*” In extreme old age our priorities become clear; for Jacob nothing mattered so much as the calling of God to him, as Abraham's successor, to inherit the obligations and promises of the covenant and pass them onto his sons. Being buried in Canaan would keep the promises of God in the minds and hearts of his sons and who could pass them on to all who followed after them.

If we are a Christian this evening, then when our time to die arrives, wouldn't it be great for us to be able to worship and praise God for all that He **has done** for us - in the anticipation of all the greater things He **is going** to do for us. As we go into the dying process it would be brilliant to be able to encourage others to consider God's promises, so they too can enjoy such in and through the Lord Jesus. I know none of us will know when or how we will die; nor can we specify to God those details, so while we have life, we should try to influence people for good by pointing them to the eternal hope we have **now** within us, so they too can join with us worshipping and praising this God who has given us such a great hope and salvation in such a lovely Saviour. Whether living or dying we have every reason to declare the praises of our God and King.