

Genesis 47: 27-31; “Israel Drawing Near to Death”; Sermon # 114 in the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 26th, 2020 in the Morning Worship Service.

In the Bible we are told in Hebrews 9: 27 that “it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment”. The Scriptures are written for our instruction, and so the Bible is saying to us in this passage that there is a certain time which is chosen by God in which each of us will go through this experience of death. It says in verse 29 – “When the time drew near that Israel must die....” There is a time to be born, and there is a time to die. Israel, knowing that the time for him to die was nearing, he prepared himself for it. He had convictions about how to die, and what he wanted done for him at his death. He had come to these convictions based upon God’s revelation to him.

By faith, before he died, he would seek to declare those convictions to those who were closest to him in his life. In this passage of Scripture we find that there are principles of truth which will help us to prepare in the right way for our own death. So the question that I want to set before you at this time is this – What are the actions that Israel took, that enabled him to know that he was prepared to die? We can see from these verses that Israel prepared himself by remembering 3 important things in relation to his life and his death.

1st of all – Israel remembered the Lord’s goodness to him in giving him seventeen years in land of Egypt with Joseph and his family. (verses 27 and 28)

It was a time of great blessing in the family, those last seventeen years of Jacob’s life. It says that “they had possessions there, and they grew and multiplied exceedingly”. How good and gracious our God is to give such times to a family. But you should understand that these precious family times are numbered, as it says in Psalm 31: 14 – “But as for me, I trust in you, O Lord; I say ‘You are My God, my times are in Your hand....’” Do you know that your times are in God’s hand? This truth ought to bring comfort and joy to those of you who know the Lord. I am sure that many of you are people who store up the goodness and mercy of the Lord in Your mind, in relation to people in your family, and those you love.

But let me ask you – Do you express it to them? Do you remember the words of your dear loved ones and the times that you have had together? Do you take pictures of the people whom you love? Do you take pictures which you put in albums, or store them on your computer, or put them in boxes in your closet? All of this is valuable, both to you and to coming generations. You treasure those pictures and you want to pass them on to your children and grandchildren. But do you also take pictures with your mind and heart? Do you take pictures that you save in your mind, so that the impressions will remain there; of the words that were spoken together, as well as the places that you lived at, and the places that you traveled together?

These are the pictures that God looks at, as well as you. This is how He knows whether you are truly thankful to Him for His goodness to your family. This is how he knows that you are a person of faith and praise for all the goodness that He has shown you. “Oh that men would praise God for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of men, it says in Psalm 107. You should consider what I say, because all of these good times will someday come to an end, in terms of this life. Oh, we do look forward to the future and to all that it holds for us in Christ. We look forward to going to heaven, and entering into the very presence of God.

We look forward to the Day of the Resurrection of all the dead, when we as believers will receive our glorious bodies and come to live in the New Heavens and the New Earth. But there are also things of eternal significance which happen in this life, now, in relation to the people that you love. It is these things that you should be storing up. There was a time, it says here, which drew near, for Israel to die. The time will also eventually draw near for us to die. We will never pass this way again, and it is incumbent upon us to live believing that the things that we say and do are important in the sight of God. And, they are important in the sight of those whom we dearly love, when it comes our time to die. This is not a cause for pride. Rather it is a cause for humility.

These things do affect the eternal life, which you are called to, in Christ Jesus. So I would exhort you, to learn the lesson that Israel had learned, to remember the goodness of the Lord for all the good years and good fellowship you have had with those whom you love; the fellowship and interaction that He has given to you.

Let me remind you, brethren, that a person does not always know the time when they will die. They may die suddenly in some accident. They may die slowly being wasted by some disease. But whichever it is, you as a Christian, of all people, ought to prepare yourself for that time, knowing that it will come. You say to me – Well I am looking for the Rapture of the Church to take me out of this dark world. I am hoping that the Lord will come back, and I won't have to die. Well, my friend, even if the Rapture of the Church was to take place in your life time, you would still have to be changed on the way up.

You would still have to go through a sort of instantaneous death on the way up, because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.” When we read our Bibles carefully we find that the day of Christ's return will be the last day of the World as we know it. All of the dead will be raised on that same day. In John chapter 5, verse 28, Jesus says – “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

There you have it; two very different kinds of resurrection, in the same hour of the same day; the day when Christ returns. One is called the resurrection of life, to those who have done good, and in the other, the resurrection of condemnation to those who have done evil. No one will miss Christ's Second Coming. Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him it says in Revelation chapter 1, verse 7. All the tribes of the earth who do not know Christ will mourn, but you dear Christian, will rejoice with everlasting joy. Surely it is a Day to look forward to, for the Christian.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be there. You will be able to converse with them someday. And all of your saved relatives will be there. We shall meet the Lord in the air and we will forever be with the Lord. But you should remember that as joyful a Day as it will be for you, a Day of Judgment will follow the glorious appearing of our Savior. Following His return, at some point, your life as a Christian will be evaluated by Christ Himself. This is not something which you need to be afraid of, for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. But you will be evaluated to see if you will have a reward; to find out the reality of whether you lived your life for Him, and labored for Him.

Christ will establish for you, most definitely, whether you labored for His cause of righteousness and truth, and whether you loved others in the way that you should have. What is really important is that you are prepared to meet Christ; the Bridegroom of your soul, not only in the air, but at His judgment seat. 2nd Corinthians 5: 9 – “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.” “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Notice that we must all appear. So what I am trying to tell you is that preparation for death is very necessary, anyway that you look at it.

The names of Jacob and Israel are both used repeatedly here in these verses that I we are looking at. I believe that the reason for this is because both the physical life of Jacob and the spiritual life of Jacob are being considered very much together, by God, as he draws near to his time to die. Death is the separation of the soul and the body. Jacob was going to triumph over death through the Lord Jesus Christ, “the Angel who had redeemed him from all evil”. He was renamed by that Angel, “Israel, the Prince with God”. He was the person who actually wrestled with God and prevailed. And, if you will recall, during the time of his wrestling with the Angel, Jacob was given many precious and magnificent promises. But we see here now, as he approaches death, that still, he is just a man. He is Jacob, the man whose days of the years of his pilgrimage had been 147 years; and as he looked at it, they had been few and evil as he said to Pharaoh in

Chapter 47, verse 9. Really, God had been teaching him and working in his heart, and sanctifying him to make him more holy; to make him more like Christ, before He took him home to be with him. He will do the same for you, dear Christian.