

Dem Bones Dem Bones

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- [0 : 00] This is Hebrews chapter 11 and verse number 22. By faith, Joseph at the end of his life made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. Compared to previous generations, our pace of life is like a Formula One race car compared to a go-kart. Now, I suppose that that's true that each following generation would say of the previous generation, they're so slow, they're so old-fashioned, right? We all tend to think that previous generations move like a sloth, but the information age has birthed in us an incessant need for speed that is unlike anything history has ever known. Consider this, that our great-grandparents would find the question, why is the Wi-Fi so slow, utterly incomprehensible?
- [1 : 11] That wouldn't mean anything to our great-grandparents, and they didn't live all that long ago. We have instant potatoes, quick oats, minute rice, and ready-mixed concrete, because we like things to be quick. But I then suspect that most of us complain when we have to stop at, quote, every red light. And we get frustrated when the service at a very busy restaurant is, quote, too slow. Which of us can tolerate slow Wi-Fi? Come on. Come on. But few things that truly matter happen quickly. Few things with real value happen instantly. It takes a woman's body about nine months to develop a baby. And listen, every one of those days is worth it. You will spend between 12 and 20 years or so of your life learning. All the way from preschool, all the way up to getting a PhD.
- [2 : 27] And it's worth it. Learning to drive and learning to cook, worth it. But it takes time. Learning a musical instrument. Learning to play a sport really well, worth it. Learning a trade, worth it. Whether you are being sanctified by marriage or being sanctified by singleness, becoming more like Jesus doesn't happen in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. It takes time. Few things that truly matter happen instantly or even quickly. Like his ways and like his thoughts, God's timing is not like our timing. God is not rushed. He is never late. He is not hasty or hurried. You won't catch him being frantic or impatient. Noah worked on the ark for a hundred years. And then God calls Noah into the ark. And I'm not sure if you've noticed this before, but after going into the ark, God had Noah wait for an extra seven days. After a hundred years, you'd think God would have been ready to bring the flood.
- [3 : 53] God had Noah wait an extra seven days. His timing is not at all like our timing. Abraham waits for a hundred years to have a son with Sarah. Jacob works for 14 years for the privilege of having Rachel as his wife. And he would tell you every one of those years was worth it.

Jacob spent the last 17 years of his life in Egypt, away from the promised land, 17 years outside of the promised land.

God's timing is not like our timing. one morning when he was 17, Joseph woke up.

And I suspect that he put on his coat of many colors, the coat that marked him as his father's favorite, even though he was not the oldest son.

[4 : 57] And by that night, Joseph was on his way to Egypt because his brothers had sold him as a slave.

15 years pass. 15 years pass. And during those last two years, God brings a severe famine on the earth.

And through a series of sovereignly controlled events, God raises up Joseph to be the second ruler over all of Egypt.

And then Joe's bros find themselves standing before the second ruler of Egypt.

And it's Joseph. The one that they certainly thought by now was dead. And he's not at all dead. In fact, he's the boss.

[6 : 05] And you have to bow to him. Genesis 45 and verse 1. Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him.

And he cried, Make everyone go out from me. So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud so that the Egyptians heard it and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

And Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph. Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him for they were dismayed at his presence.

You think? The one that they thought was dead and gone that they had finally gotten rid of that they hadn't heard of for years. Now here they are standing before the second ruler of all Egypt and it's Joseph.

They had good reason to be dismayed. Look how Joseph responds. So Joseph said to his brothers, verse number 4, Come near to me please.

[7 : 19] And they came near and he said, I am your brother Joseph. It's almost as though they can't believe it, right? Whom you sold into Egypt. Notice Joseph's words.

And now, now, do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here for, notice, God sent me before you to preserve life.

For the famine has been in the land these two years and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors.

So it was not you who sent me here but God three times Joseph says it. He, God, has made me a father to Pharaoh and he, God, has made me lord of all his house and he, God, has made me ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, thus says your son Joseph, God, has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me.

[8 : 35] Do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have.

Verse 11, there I will provide for you for there are yet five years of famine to come so that you and your household and all you have do not come to poverty and now your eyes see and the eyes of my brother see that it is my mouth that speaks to you.

You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here. Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

Verse 15, and he kissed him kissed all of his brothers and wept upon them and after that his brothers talked with them.

Joseph's perspective Joseph's perspective is providence. This is Joseph's perspective on the events that have happened.

[9 : 50] Providence. God is always at work for his glory and the good of his people. Joseph's perspective is providence and his attitude is forgiveness.

Do you sense any hint of bitterness or anger or resentment or frustration on Joseph's part? No, no, no.

He calls them to him. He goes to them and hugs them, embraces them, kisses them, falls upon them, weeps with them.

Reminds me of the father of the prodigal son. Joseph's perspective is providence, Joseph's attitude is forgiveness and Joseph's desire is provision.

Come, come to Egypt and I will provide for all of your needs. And Joseph does just that for all of the 17 years that Jacob spends in Egypt.

[11 : 03] Chapter 47 and verse 5. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, Pharaoh, Pharaoh, the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt says to Joseph, your father and your brothers have come to you.

The land of Egypt is before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them settle in the land of Goshen. And if you know any able men among them, put them in charge of my livestock.

Verse 11. Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt in the best of the land in the land of Ramses as Pharaoh had commanded.

And Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food according to the number of their dependence.

Seventeen years passed with Joseph providing for all of their needs. Jacob dies. But not before making Joseph promise and then solemnly swear before God that he will not bury him in Egypt but instead will take him up and bury him in the promised land.

[12 : 25] Jacob asked to be buried next to Abraham and next to Isaac and somewhat ironically next to Leah.

You've heard I'm sure of a destination wedding right? That's where you have to travel to go to the wedding. This is a destination funeral.

they pack up from Egypt and they head off to the promised land and not just Jacob's family. A whole bunch of Egyptian officials from Pharaoh's court.

Enough officials that when the Canaanites in the land, in the promised land, see this entourage coming towards them, they say the Egyptians are really grieving this person.

It wasn't just like a token Egyptian came along. This was a destination funeral, a large lavish gathering. Here's what happens after this.

[13 : 35] They return to Egypt and Joseph's brothers send him a message. Look down in your Bible, chapter 50, chapter 50 and verse number 15.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, it may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.

So, they sent a message to Joseph saying, your father gave this command before he died. Say to Joseph, please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you.

And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

now, we need to remember the context for this message coming to Joseph. Since their arrival in Egypt 17 years ago, Joseph has provided for his brothers all that they need, his hand has provided.

[15 : 04] Joseph has only done good to them and yet their consciences are guilty. They could not believe that Joseph didn't hate them for what they did to him.

And now that their father Jacob is dead, the brothers are concerned that Joseph will get revenge. hearts like these are slow to recognize grace.

Hearts like these are hesitant to receive mercy. Hearts like these are apprehensive about real love.

It seems as though their statement originates from a falsehood. In other words, Jacob probably did not say these words.

And yet, embedded in this message to Joseph is a full confession, isn't there? They describe their behavior as evil and sin and transgression.

[16 : 34] They're honest about what they've done. There's no euphemisms here. They're not coloring and trying to sort of nuance their behavior. Transgression, sin, evil, those are pretty clear terms of confession.

And they are desperate for forgiveness or at least some kind of reassurance of Joseph's intentions. They seem contrite, repentant, even willing to make amends.

Did you notice that? We will be your servants. Make us your slaves. How would you respond?

how do you respond to those who wrong you, to those who hurt you, to those who sin against you?

Again, I can't believe you did that again. You always do that. You never listen. How dare you?

[17 : 46] Not Joseph. verse 19. But Joseph said to them, do not fear.

Do not fear. For am I in the place of God? It's a rhetorical question. The implied answer is no.

Right? Am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.

So do not fear. I will provide for you and your little ones. Joseph says, do not fear.

And he gives them three reasons why they don't need to fear. First, he says, I am not in the place of God. But listen, in the eyes of his brothers, he might as well be in the place of God.

[19 : 03] Do you see that? The power inequity between the brothers and Joseph could not be greater. Joseph is the savior of Egypt.

Frankly, he's the savior of the entire world physically. He might as well be God to his brothers. But there is no hint that Joseph is tempted to make his brothers pay.

No thought of bringing divine justice by human means even though it's within his power to do so. Instead, Joseph says, do not fear because I am not in the place of God.

But second, he says, do not fear. But before he gets to that, let me ask you, I should apply this before we move on.

Let me ask you this. Have you ever thought this? If I was God for a day, just one day, I would fix this.

[20 : 16] I would deal with him. I would make her pay. If I just had one hour to be God, I would make them see things my way.

I would right wrongs. I would correct injustices. Aren't we foolish? Aren't we so foolish in thinking that we know best? And that somehow we would make things better and not worse?

We are self-deceived folks, aren't we? To think that we would make it better and not worse. If only we took things into our own hands.

This is what Paul writes in Romans chapter 12 and verse 19. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for by so doing you will keep burning coals on his head.

[21 : 45] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Didn't Joseph practice these words from the apostle Paul?

Secondly, Joseph says, do not fear. What you meant for evil, God meant for good. Do you see that in verse 20? Joseph doesn't hold a grudge, but he also doesn't abandon his brothers to their guilt.

I am not God, Joseph says, but neither are you God. He doesn't abandon them to their guilt.

He doesn't linger in self-pity. He redirects their attention to the God who controls history. what they meant for evil to kill Joseph.

God meant for good to save many people. They meant for evil to kill one person. God takes it and means it for good to save the whole world.

[23 : 02] Joseph understands God's providence.

God is always at work for his glory and the good of his people. Yes, it's true. Occasionally God breaks into history.

He breaks into time and space with a miracle and we see it and we wonder and we worship. But our God is not less intimately involved in every moment of our ordinary life.

God doesn't always act miraculously but that doesn't make his common work any less powerful.

Do you believe this? Do you believe like Joseph that God purposes good for the evil that is done to you?

[24 : 21] do you believe that our God can use even sin to accomplish his purposes?

Do you believe that no lie no gossip no slander no deception no evil no injustice is wasted in the hands of our sovereign God.

All things Paul writes all things all things all things all things all things work together for good.

Do not fear Joseph says I am not in the place of God do not fear secondly God's purposes are accomplished and not thwarted by sin and finally do not fear because I will provide for you down in verse 21 and for the next 80 or so years unlike Cain Joseph acts as his brother's keeper he provides for them he meets all of their needs he comforts their consciences he speaks kindly to them reminding them of forgiveness I love how Joseph acts like

Jesus Jesus is God and yet he became man so that he could be betrayed and crucified by wicked sinners and yet what they meant for evil to kill one man God meant for good to save the world do you see that Joseph points us to Jesus and yet somehow somehow Joseph's gracious Christ likeness that we have just observed together is not the clearest expression of his faith look in your Bible in verse 22 so Joseph remained in Egypt he and his father's house

[27 : 12] Joseph lived a hundred and ten years and Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation the children also of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own and Joseph said to his brothers I am about to die but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob if you're taking notes this is the first time that Abraham Isaac and Jacob are mentioned this way and Joseph does it God will bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear saying God will surely visit you and you shall carry up my bones from here so

Joseph died being 110 years old and they embalmed him and he was put in a coffin in Egypt like his father Jacob Joseph wants his bones returned to the promised land but unlike Jacob Joseph is willing to wait he is willing to wait until God visits his people and brings all of them up out of Egypt and into the promised land he is willing to wait until God fulfills his promise to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob and so

Joseph's body is mummified he is put in a coffin and I suspect the Egyptians gave him a funeral fit for a king Joseph's faith in God's promise models the discipline of long distance waiting on God and for the next 400 years 400 years Joseph's faith encourages the people of Israel to endure his final words and the presence of his bones in a coffin remind them to endure to press on in faith to keep believing that God is going to come and visit us and bring us up out of here and when he does we're taking

Joseph's bones with us and we're going to bring him to the promised land the prophet Ezekiel picks up on this idea in Ezekiel 37 and he receives this vision from God of the dry bones I suspect most of us are familiar with it this valley of skeletons and he prophesies over them and God moves among them and these bones it's like reverse decomposition because it's a resurrection these bones come back to life and God breathes his spirit into them and raises up a mighty army God says this verse 11 of Ezekiel 37 then he said to me son of man these bones are the whole house of

Israel behold they say our bones are dried up and our hope is lost we are indeed cut off therefore prophesy and say to them thus says the Lord God behold I will open your graves and raise you from your graves oh my people and I will bring you into the land of Israel and you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and raise you from your graves oh my people and I will put my spirit within you and you shall live and I will place you in your own land then you shall know that I am the Lord I have spoken and I will do it declares the Lord and this is why the writer of Hebrews says by faith Joseph when dying made mention of the exodus of the

[32 : 29] Israelites God will visit you and bring you up and he gave directions concerning his bones why does the author of Hebrews document the stories of these faithful men and women why document these stories of faithful men and women the answer we looked at this together at the beginning of this series it's in chapter 10 this is why these stories of faithful men and women matter chapter 10 and verse 36 right here you have need of endurance you the author of Hebrews says every one of you who is going to read this letter to the

Hebrews you have need of endurance let me tell you the stories of the faithful men and women who learned the discipline of long distance waiting on God for yet a little while and the coming one will come the coming one he will come and he will not delay but my righteous one shall live by faith and if he shrinks back my soul has no pleasure in him verse 39 but we are not the shrink backers we are not those who shrink back and are destroyed but of those who have faith and preserve their souls if we hope to avoid being shrink backers then we must keep looking through faith binoculars so that we see at a long distance

God's promise and grab hold of his promise for the future and pull it right here into our present and then live like these men and women of faith as though God's promise has already come true that's faith we have need of endurance we have need of faith that is not hasty or hurried nor frantic nor impatient we need faith that keeps us from feeling like we are missing out on our best life now we need faith that prevents us from thinking we have squandered our chance or forfeited what could have been or that somehow God is finished with us because of our failure in the past we need faith that keeps us from acting like our God is a day late and a dollar short on his promises because he is not we need faith that learns this discipline of long distance waiting on

God this is not a lazy kind of faith don't hear waiting on God and think that this is somehow laziness this is active watchfulness this is working this is serving this is worshipping that's what it means isn't that what we have seen in these stories of men and women of faith ordinary lives the events that the author of Hebrews records are not the ones that we would have picked and yet here it is they testify of God's promises for the future!

they grab hold of those promises and they live in the present as though God's promises have already come true waiting on God means learning that your reality may be smaller and slower and more painful and less perfect and utterly ordinary and still God is with you and promises that he will never leave you and his promises to you are as sure as certain as the day that he made them because they are grounded in the unchangeable character of our God and secured by the life death and resurrection of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ friends we don't need to be in control because our God is in control do you know what we need we need endurance Isaac and Jacob and

[37 : 46] Joseph they all die without seeing God's promises fulfilled that may be God's plan for you and me as well will you like Isaac and Jacob and Joseph speak about God's future promises with faith because my dear brother my dear sister God's promise for you includes a glorious resurrection of your dry bones and a grand return of your Savior Jesus Christ until then until Jesus returns will you run with endurance the race that is set before us will you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus the author the perfecter the founder of our faith he endured the cross he despised the shame he is seated at the right hand of the throne of

God may God help us to give careful thoughtfulness to him and his promises so that our hope is nourished and our obedience is catalyzed for the glory of our God and for the spread of the gospel of Jesus let's pray Nab