

Word notes Sunday 24/11/13 Tony Hodge
Living for God - Joseph

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Texts: Heb 11:21 & 22

The writer of Hebrews uses just two short verses to remind early Jewish Christians of the journey of faith Joseph and his father Jacob endured. The account in Genesis of Joseph is 20 chapters long while these verses focus on their faith at the end of their lives. What are we to take from these two instances?

Heb 11:21 - Thighs, beds and staffs: Gen. 47:27-31

The incident of Jacob getting Joseph to promise his bones will be taken and buried back in Canaan is a powerful demonstration of his faith that God will deliver on his promise. Just as we might place our hands on the Bible and especially the New Testament (God's New Covenant) to swear in court so Joseph placing his hand under Jacob's thigh - the physical sign of the Old Covenant that is circumcision – is argued to have similar meaning.

Did Jacob bow down over his bed or lean on his staff to worship? The meaning we receive hinges on how the original Hebrew, with no written vowels, is translated for the Hebrews writer into the Greek Septuagint version – bow and worship are the same word, bed becomes staff depending on the vowel used in Hebrew and hence fixed into Greek. What we can say is that that faith in God and the reality of the Promised Land was with Jacob right through to the end of his days.

Heb 11:22 - Joseph's bones: Gen. 50:22- 26; Ex. 13:17-19

Joseph's words in Gen 50:25 that "God will surely come to your aid" – repeated in Exodus 13 when Moses leads the people to freedom – show that like his dad, Joseph retain his faith all through the trials of his early life and indeed even through the blessings, riches and power he attained to. A royal burial he may have had yet he would not be content till his remains rested in the land promised by God.

Faith carries us through even the most difficult of times and sustains us even at the end of our days. In the end, faith is all we have left and where we place that faith becomes a key matter.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

Read Hebrews 11:38-40 and 12:2

How does this passage strike you in relation to your own experience of living for God, are you daunted, encouraged, feel unworthy or rejoice in what they gained?

"Only together with us would they be made perfect" - What connection do you see between their experience and ours?

How does 12:2 bring all these things together – how is Jesus the "author" of our faith and it's "perfecter"?

When all is said and done in our own lives how do we hope our faith will be at the end? What comfort will it be to us and our loved ones, or what comfort has the faith of a loved one who has gone to be with Jesus been to us at their death?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

It's time to start thinking about who we can invite to our Christmas services!