

Honoring the Old, Blessing the New

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Genesis 48:1-16 (NKJV) “Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, ‘Indeed your father is sick’; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ² And Jacob was told, ‘Look, your son Joseph is coming to you’; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. ³ Then Jacob said to Joseph: ‘God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, “Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.” ⁵ And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. ⁶ Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. ⁷ But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).’ ⁸ Then Israel saw Joseph’s sons, and said, ‘Who are these?’ ⁹ Joseph said to his father, ‘They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.’ And he said, ‘Please bring them to me, and I will bless them.’ ¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹ And Israel said to Joseph, ‘I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!’ ¹² So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. ¹³ And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them near him. ¹⁴ Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵ And he blessed Joseph, and said: ‘God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, ¹⁶ The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.’”

It has been said that we are always one generation away from being a non-Christian family or generation. When the older generation fails to pass down their faith to the younger generation, the family’s faith will end with that generation. When the younger generation fails to connect with the older generation, the faith of their fathers is also lost. When the younger generation fails to honor the older generation, they forfeit the favor and inheritance that comes from the older generation. When the older generation fails to bless the younger generation, the younger generation is left to struggle without the favor and empowerment of that blessing.

As Christians, we must connect this generation and future generations with the faith of former generations: *“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, ³ which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. ⁴ We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.”*¹ This common faith once and for all delivered to the saints must be accurately passed down as a faithful stewardship to those who are coming after us.

Our common faith is not an independent faith but a corporate faith: *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;*

¹ Psalm 78:2-4 (NKJV)

⁵ *one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*² Because our faith is corporate, we also share in a community of believers called the church: *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.”*³

Our common faith is not a contemporary faith but an ancient faith. Our faith is not particular to any one generation. It is not “our” faith versus “their” faith.⁴ It is always relevant and never outdated. It is not subject to revision or innovation. Our common faith is exemplified over many generations in Hebrews chapter 11, often referred to as the “Hall of Faith”. We are a part of an ancient spiritual heritage. People today are chasing after some “new thing” that God is doing. Forget it. The “new thing” that this generation needs is a fresh revelation of the “old thing” possessed by former generations that walked with God. It is the old or ancient paths: *“Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”*⁵ The failure to continue on this ancient path is tragic: *“Because My people have forgotten Me, they have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways, from the ancient paths, to walk in pathways and not on a highway,”*⁶ People who reject the truth walk on pathways of human opinion rather than on the established highway of God’s truth and salvation: *“A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.”*⁷

Our common faith means that we share in a common spiritual race. We are connected in a common relay race of faith. Those who have run before us have entered the grandstands of heaven after passing the baton of faith to our generation: *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*⁸ If we fail to pass on the baton of faith to the next generation, then we betray those who ran their leg of the race before us. Faithful generations are still being inducted into the heavenly Hall of Faith. The work of the early church did not cease with the Book of Acts. The spiritual exploits of those in the pages of the Book of Acts continues in our generation because it is the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual terrain of each generation’s race is different. Each generation is faced with their own unique tests, trials, victories, and failures. Some generations experience peace and tranquility while others suffer trials and persecution.

Each generation must be faithful to keep the faith in their generation. Enoch walked with God in his generation. Noah was righteous in his generation. Abraham walked with God as the father of our faith. Isaac walked with God as the son of promise. Jacob walked with God as the elect of God. Moses walked with God as the deliverer of Israel. David served his own generation: *“for David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption.”*⁹ The first century generation was faithful in preaching the gospel and establishing the faith. The second and third century generation was faithful in defending the faith. The fourth and fifth century generation was faithful in defining and unifying the faith. Other generations after them included reformer generations, missionary generations, revival and spiritual awakening generations, and restoration generations.

² Ephesians 4:1-6 (NKJV)

³ 1 Corinthians 12:13–14 (NKJV)

⁴ Jude 3

⁵ Jeremiah 6:16 (NKJV)

⁶ Jeremiah 18:15 (NKJV)

⁷ Isaiah 35:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Hebrews 12:1–2 (NKJV)

⁹ Acts 13:36 (NKJV)

Our generation must learn to honor the foundations laid by former generations. Our generation is building upon the foundations laid by faithful spiritual fathers. When we dishonor former generations, we dishonor the foundations. When we dishonor the foundations, we dishonor the God of those foundations. When we dishonor former generations, we forfeit the benefit of their labors. When we dishonor former generations, we forfeit the wisdom that they gained in both triumphs and failures. When we dishonor former generations, we lose the inheritance of their faith. When we dishonor former generations, we lose the blessing of God needed for our generation.

When we honor the faith passed down from faithful generations, we are properly aligned for God's blessing in our generation. Jacob faithfully carried the torch of the faith in his generation. Joseph came to his father on his death bed so that he might bless his two sons. Jacob strengthened himself by leaning on the edge of his staff. His staff represented his journey of faith. It was time for him to commission a new generation to carry the torch. May we be diligent to embrace our common faith, run the race set before us, and then pass it faithfully into the hands of the next generation.