



# Faith in Future Grace

## Hebrews 11:17-22

1. Passing the Test (verse 17-19)
2. Passing the Baton (verses 20-22)

I remember the very first class that I ever took in college was called Freshman Preceptorial 101. It was a class required of all students at Knox College (a very secular, liberal arts college in Galesburg, Illinois). The class was even required of transfer students. It was taught by professors in all disciplines, Chemistry, Anthropology, Foreign Languages, Music, Art, Mathematics. We had a giant lecture every Tuesday, with some 200 students in the lecture. We had smaller discussion groups on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday with the various professors on campus. The result was quite interesting: in any class at the college, you could refer to the material covered in this class as common knowledge to all, because everyone took it, and many teachers taught it.

The first semester was entitled, "On Being Human." It sought to ask the question of what it means to be a human being. The idea of the class was to expose the students to many of the great thinkers of the world, that you might live your life intentionally. While I was in school, the required summer reading was a book entitled, "The Death of Ivan Ilych," written by Leo Tolstoy. The core point of the book comes at the beginning of chapter 2, which opens with these words, "Ivan Ilych's life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible." He lived the life of many - climbing the social ladder, neglecting his family, and being self-absorbed. He lived this way, because everyone lived this way, and he never questioned that this was the way. Thus, it made his life a terrible life.

Anyway, the idea of the class was to make sure that students who graduated from Knox College didn't live "simple and ordinary" lives, merely going through the motions of what their parents and teachers taught them. Rather, the aim is for all of us to examine our lives and our beliefs, and develop convictions that will help us to live intentional lives. On the one hand, it was a very good class, as it challenged all of the incoming freshmen to consider and examine their lives. What is it that they believe? What is it that they will live for? On the other hand, it was often devastating to many of the freshmen coming into college, as I saw many of them lose their faith in the process.

Essentially, the class was a philosophy class, where all sorts of ideologies were set forth. Throughout the course of the class, we read various philosophers of life. We read the ancient philosophers, like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. We read the existentialists, like Jean-Paul Sartre, and Søren Kierkegaard. We read the psychologists, like Sigmund Freud. We read the feminists, like Margaret Mead. We read Darwin and Marx and Friedman. We even read the Bible to see what it taught.

And when it came to the Bible, we looked at the story of Abraham offering up Isaac, his son, upon Mount Moriah. I believe we looked at this story because it so epitomizes the essence of faith - trusting God, even when you don't fully understand everything that He asks of you, even when God makes little sense. The life of faith will continue to obey.

Well, this morning, in our exposition of the book of Hebrews, we come to the story of Abraham offering up Isaac. It is a good opportunity for us to examine our lives. Do we believe like Abraham? Will we live like Abraham?

This account is found in Hebrews, chapter 11. It is right here that Abraham sets forth one of the greatest displays of faith that the world has ever known. And so, I invite you to take your Bibles and open them to Hebrews, chapter 11.

I trust by now that you all know that this chapter is filled with examples of faith. We have seen the faith of Abel and Enoch and Noah. For the past several weeks, we have been focusing upon the faith of Abraham and the patriarchs. Next week, we will begin our look at Moses and his parents (verses 23ff). Please allow me to read our text: Hebrews 11:17-22.

### Hebrews 11:17-22

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

As you can tell, there is a natural division in these verses. The first three verses (verses 17-19 address the faith of Abraham, when called to sacrifice his son. The last three verses (verse 20-22) address the faith of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, as they gave their blessing to the next generation and thought of the future that lay ahead, without themselves being in it.

As I thought of how to synthesize their faith, I found it in the phrase used by John Piper. When he wrote a book on faith, he entitled it, "Future Grace." That is, he entitled it by the substance of our faith, what it really is that we hope for and wait for. When we believe God, essentially, we are believing in Him to provide the grace that will come to us in the future and help us to accomplish whatever is needed. That's what faith

is. Piper writes, ...

At the heart of the book is the conviction that the promises of future grace are the keys to Christ-like Christian living. The hand that turns the key is faith, and the life that results is called living by faith in future grace. By future I do not merely mean the grace of heaven and the age to come. I mean the grace that begins now, this very second, and sustains your life to the end of this paragraph. By grace I do not merely mean the pardon of God in passing over your sins, but also the power and beauty of God to keep you from sinning. By faith I do not merely mean the confidence that Jesus died for your sins, but also the confidence that God will "also with him freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32). Faith is primarily a future-oriented "assurance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1). Its essence is the deep satisfaction with all that God promises to be for us in Jesus--beginning now!

As we dig into our text this morning, I want to borrow the title of this book as the title of my message: "Faith in Future Grace," because, that is what we will see in these verses. We will see men of faith who were looking to the future for God to provide grace in time of need.

Let's first look at Abraham. We see him, ...

#### 1. Passing the Test (verses 17-19)

Look at verse 17, ...

Hebrews 11:17

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

Now, this verse bothers some people, because of what James 1:13 says: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself does not tempt anyone." And yet, here, we see (in verse 17) God "tempting" Abraham. In the Greek text, these words are the same. In both instances (in Hebrews 11:17 and James 1:13), the Greek word means, "to tempt, test or try." Now, some would say, "Well, right there is a contradiction in the Bible." On the one hand, you see that God cannot be tempted. And on the other hand, you see that God is tempting Abraham.

The solution to this problem is to translate the word as our Bibles translate the words. In every major translation, the verse reads, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested." That is, God was "proving" Abraham's faith.

Albert Barnes said it well. The Greek word used in this instance "does not mean here, as it often does, to place inducements before one to lead him to do wrong, but to subject his faith to a 'trial' in order to test its genuineness and strength.

The meaning here is, that Abraham was placed in circumstances which showed what was the real strength of his confidence in God." God placed an opportunity before Abraham to show forth his faith.

Now, when you look at the test in verse 17, it often comes as a shocker. Abraham was called to offer up Isaac, his only begotten son, the son of the promises. Abraham was called to offer him up as a sacrifice before the Lord. The best place to understand these things is back in Genesis 22 (where the original events were recorded). So, turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis 22.

This is one of the most famous passages in all of the Bible. It's one of those chapters that epitomizes everything that faith is. It's trusting God. It's believing Him at all costs. Let's begin by looking at verse 1, ...

Genesis 22:1

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

In the previous chapter, we read of Isaac's birth. The son that was promised to Abraham and Sarah in their old age came. And they called him "laughter," because of the joy that he brought to his parents. And God promised Abraham (in verse 11), "through Isaac your descendants shall be named". All was looking up for Abraham, until that fateful day when the LORD approached Abraham, and said to him (in verse 2), ...

Genesis 22:2

Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.

Certainly, shock rippled through is body. Questions were filling his mind! "Here is the son that I love. Here is the son of the promise. And yet, you tell me to sacrifice him? You tell me to kill him and burn his body? How can that be? What about the promises of God? How can I destroy the one I love?"

Without doubt, God knew of Abraham's love for Isaac. You can see it right there in verse 2 with the overflowing descriptions of Abraham's love for this boy. He is first identified as "your son." Then, he is described as "your only son." Then, he is describes as "[the one] whom you love." Finally, he is identified by name, "Isaac." Every son is loved by his father. But, when there is only one son, I believe that this love is heightened.

Now, we don't know how old Isaac was when God told these things to Abraham. He is identified in verse 5 as a "lad," which might lead us to believe that he is a young boy. The word "lad" is used to describe anyone from an infant to a teenager. We know that he was strong enough

to take a several days' journey (verse 4). We also know that he was strong enough to take a load of wood upon his back (verse 5). Ishmael was at least 13 years old when identified as a "lad" (Gen. 21:12). So, perhaps Isaac was a similar age. We really don't know.

However, we do know that he was certainly old enough to be loved greatly by his father. I think about our son, David. He's only three years old. Not old enough to take such a journey. But, surely old enough to be loved greatly. I mean, who can't love a toddler like David? And as all of our children have increased in age, there has been more and more about them to love.

I believe that no son was ever loved more than Isaac was loved. I believe that every time Abraham and Sarah looked at him, they were reminded of the miracle that God did for them. I believe that every moment of every day was precious for them, as they marveled at the goodness of God toward them. And God asked Abraham to "offer him ,... as a burnt offering." This would mean killing your son. And then, burning your son on a pile of logs, leaving him in his ashes.

Can you imagine? The only way to come close is for you to think about sacrificing your own children. If you truly think about these things, your heart will shudder. Yet, amazingly, we read in verse 3, ...

Genesis 22:3

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Wow! This is obedience.

Now, we don't know what the night was like. He may have spent it sleeplessly, tossing and turning. He may have wrestled greatly with God in prayer over these things. But, from all outward appearances, we wouldn't be surprised if Abraham spent the night sleeping like a baby. Because he willingly obeyed everything that the LORD told him to do.

He left, "Early in the morning." This is when you leave when you really want to get someplace. My guess is that this morning was Abraham's first opportunity to go. And, with preparations all made, he leaves with two others to help him. Off they went. We read in verse 4, ...

Genesis 22:4

On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.

This describes three days of travel. What sort of conversations may have taken place on the road? Was Isaac excited to be taking this special trip with Daddy? This reminds me of our upcoming summer trip with fathers and sons to the boundary waters. I asked SR, "Want to go?" And he said "Yeah!" Here's how SR heard my question: "Do you want to take a trip with Dad and with your friends to a great place to explore where you don't need to shower for five days?" Of course he wants to go!

Did Abraham share in the joy? How much did Abraham say? Perhaps Abraham was silent the whole way. This is all mystery. But, we do know one thing that was said. Verse 5, ...

Genesis 22:5

Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."

There's a statement of faith. He believes that Isaac will return with him.

What's Abraham thinking at this point? The text of Hebrews makes it clear what he's thinking. Hebrews 11:19 says, "He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead." In other words, Abraham was expecting to see Isaac dead upon the altar and then raised to life again. This is Faith in Future Grace!

I believe that you can deduce the following from the text of Genesis. Abraham was a man of faith (Gen. 15). Abraham knew that Isaac held the key to the promises of God (Gen. 21:12, "Through Isaac your descendants shall be named.") Abraham had seen God do a miracle in giving life to Isaac the first time, giving him to Abraham and Sarah who were "beyond the proper time of life" (Heb. 11:11). Abraham knew that God's word could be trusted. He had seen this in predicting the birth of Isaac. Abraham reasoned in his heart that God was able to work a second miracle and bring Isaac back to life.

This is what he was thinking. Even though nobody had ever raised from the dead, Abraham believed that this is what God would do with Isaac. It was the only way for Abraham to do what God had told him to do, and for God to keep His promise.

Now, right here, I need to make a point. In my class as a freshman in college, I don't remember the teachers reasoning like this from the book of Genesis. Instead, they went with Søren Kierkegaard's explanation of the event (which was required reading for the class). Kierkegaard held that "God's demand that Abraham sacrifice his only son ... [was] completely immoral and unethical. ... [and ultimately] Abraham chooses to accept the absurdity of the ultimate reality by making a leap of faith that is not based on any rational, external criteria." In other words, you have God asking Abraham to do the immoral. And, you have Abraham believing the irrational. That's how my class of 200 freshmen was handled.

Now, it's not surprising that they would come to these conclusions, as the vast majority of teachers and students were unbelievers. But, I remember sitting there as a freshman in class, not very well trained in the Scriptures, listening to people describe my faith in irrational terms. I

didn't know enough about the Scriptures, nor was I grounded enough in my faith, to argue that Abraham's faith was completely rational, but it was. God never calls us to take a "leap of faith."

This is the point of Hebrews 11:19, which says, "He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead." "He considered" is the word from which we get the word, "logic." Abraham reasoned things in his heart. The sacrifice of Isaac was well-thought through! Abraham was being completely rational.

Now, to the unbelieving mind, it seems crazy. But, to the believing mind, all seems well. Because, we can trust God. Let's look at how things turn out, ...

Genesis 22:6

Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

Here we see the party splitting up. The young men remained with the donkey, while Abraham and Isaac continued the journey. Abraham was carrying the knife and the flint, while Isaac was burdened with the weight of the wood upon his shoulders. And then, Isaac begins to think about the arrangement. He hadn't been privy to the conversations between Abraham and God.

Genesis 22:7-8

Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

Oh, I wish at this point that we could know what Abraham was thinking. Was he just trying to calm Isaac down? Or, did he really think that he wouldn't have to go through with the sacrifice? We'll never know. But, it does illustrate the point of my message this morning. Abraham had faith in future grace. Abraham believed that God would do something in the future to provide what he needed. I've been greatly encouraged by those who have gone through great trials in their lives. I have seen others hope in future glory, and bear testimony to the fact that God's grace is sufficient.

Abraham says the same to Isaac here. "God will provide a lamb." God's grace is sufficient. And, as it turns out, this is exactly how the story ends. God provides a lamb, but not until Isaac was as good as dead. Verse 9, ...

Genesis 22:9-11

Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

I love the pictures that have been painted of this scene, and there have been scores of them. Isaac is bound upon the altar. Abraham has the knife in hand, ready to strike upon his son. The pictures always catch the moment just before the knife starts forward to slaughter his son. Abraham is startled by an angel (who is sometimes even preventing Abraham's arm from going forward). And then comes the good news, ...

Genesis 22:12

He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

Abraham Passed the Test (verses 17-19). He demonstrated that his fear of God was greater than his love for his son. That was his test. And God provided the grace that he needed. He provided a ram in the thicket. Isaac was able to live. In this sense, Isaac was raised from the dead, "figuratively". Verse 13, ...

Genesis 22:13-14

Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

Abraham's trial gave him an opportunity to trust, which led to his triumph! His triumph comes in verse 15, ...

Genesis 22:15-19

Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Oh, how easy is it to see the victory at the end of the trial and rejoice! But, the point that the writer to the Hebrews is making doesn't so much focus upon the end of the trial, as it does upon the trial itself. When going through the trial, Abraham didn't know the end. The point for us today is this: God wants for us to rejoice in the midst of the trial, trusting God to bring the grace when needed. James 1:2 urges, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." It's not after you encounter the trial. It's in the middle of the trial.

I know that some of you are going through a trial right now! Financially, there are many trials going on right now. Physically, there are trials going on right now. There are trials going on in the home, with marriage or kids. There are trials going on at work. My call to you this morning is be like Abraham, and have faith in future grace. Have faith that God will bring you exactly what you need, exactly when you need it.

Now, it may not look exactly like you think it ought to, but God is faithful. He will provide. 2 Corinthians 12 tells us of Paul's thorn in the flesh. Acts 16 describes Paul's missionary journey and how he was forbidden to speak the Word in Asia. The Spirit of Jesus would not permit him to go to Bithynia, so he went to Macedonia to preach. You may expect one thing - a great job - and get instead a small job with less pay. You may expect great health, and instead you must live with something that hurts you all your life. You may have high hopes for a great family, but find that you must be joyful in the sorrow.

Let's move on to my second point. So, let's turn back to Hebrews. First of all, we saw Abraham Passing the Test (verses 17-19). Secondly, we see Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. We read about them in verses 20-22, ...

Hebrews 11:20-22

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

As I came to these verses, here's the question that I asked myself. How are each of these men showing their faith by these actions? With Abraham, it was easy. His path of faith was clear. With these men, it wasn't so clear. The writer of Hebrews picks out a common practice among the Patriarchs: before they died, they pronounced a blessing upon their sons (or grandsons). Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau; Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh. Now, Joseph didn't do this (at least it isn't recorded for us in Genesis). But, the writer here points out that Joseph "gave orders concerning his bones" (verse 22) How is it that these are expressions of faith?

The best that I could figure is this: all of them are looking to the future. So, again, we return back to the point of my message. These men had faith in future grace. In this instance, it wasn't even so much the grace for their own lives, as it was the grace that God would bring to their children and to their grandchildren.

Or, as I have said it in my point, they were ...

2. Passing the Baton (verses 20-22)

I trust that you all know how a relay race works. The first runner begins with a baton in his hand. When he approaches the second runner, the baton is handed off. At this point, he has finished his task. He is done. He can stop running. But, his heart is still in the race. His heart is with the baton. He wants the second runner to succeed in getting the baton to the third runner, all with the hopes that the final runner crosses the finish-line before any other team (with the baton in hand). He knows that without the baton, you cannot win the race.

So it was with the Patriarchs. Their life was soon to be done. They were finishing with their portion of the race. They were handing the baton over to the next runner, to let him run the course. But, in handing off the baton, their hearts were still in the race. They had a heart to see their children press on!

So, what did the Patriarchs have? What was their baton? Nothing but promises. Nothing but the promises of God that had been given to Abraham and repeated to them. Remember the promise to Abraham? Let's turn back once again to Genesis. I want for you to see these for yourself.

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the LORD said to Abram,  
"Go forth from your country,  
And from your relatives  
And from your father's house,  
To the land which I will show you;  
And I will make you a great nation,  
And I will bless you,  
And make your name great;  
And so you shall be a blessing;  
And I will bless those who bless you,  
And the one who curses you I will curse  
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Isaac received a similar promise.

Genesis 26:3-5

Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I

will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."

Jacob received a similar promise.

Genesis 28:13-15

And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

In all of these pronouncements, there are similar elements. God promises to give them a land. God promises to multiply their descendants greatly. God promises a blessing.

As we have seen in previous weeks, come the end of their life, this is about all that these patriarchs had. All they had were the promises of God. But none of them fully experienced everything. To be sure, they were in the land, but they were still only sojourners, dwelling in tents. They weren't yet great in number; not enough time had elapsed. They experienced a measure of blessing, but the greatest blessing was yet to come. (Gen 12:3). "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3) - this was the promise of the coming Messiah, who would bring forth world-wide blessing.

All the patriarchs had were promises. But, everything that they had, they passed on to the next generation, trusting in God's future grace. Let's go back to Genesis 27. Here we see the story of Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau. The whole context is set up in the first four verses, ...

Genesis 27:1-4

Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

Now, we don't have time to dig into all of the details surrounding this story. But, suffice to say that Jacob (with the help of Rebekah) stole the blessing from Esau. Jacob came into his father's quarters wearing Esau's garments, with the skins of young goats on his hand and neck (verses 15-16). In so doing, he deceived his father and stole the blessing. But, as Isaac gave the blessing, he was demonstrating his faith in future grace. He was demonstrating that he trusted in the promises of God to prevail. We pick it up in verse 27, ...

Genesis 27:27-29

So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed; now may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine; may peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you."

You can see some of the same elements here in God's promise that had been given to Abraham and Isaac - multitudes and blessings. But, notice how it's all focused upon the future. "May God's grace prevail upon you in the future!"

In verses 39 and 40, we read the blessings given to Esau, ...

Genesis 27:39-40

... "Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, and away from the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve; but it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck."

This sounds more like a curse than a blessing. But, again the point of Hebrews governs us this morning. Hebrews 11:21 says, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, ... even regarding things to come." Truly that was taking place in these blessings.

Near the end of Jacob's life, he too gave blessings. Turn over to Genesis 48. Here we see Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph. Again, the context is established for us in the first part of the chapter. Jacob is dying, ...

Genesis 48:1-2

Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is sick." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. When it was told to Jacob, "Behold, your son Joseph has come to you," Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed.

Now, we don't have time for all the details, here. But, suffice to say that Jacob was eager to bless them. Verse 9 says, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." The blessing comes in verse 15, ...

Genesis 48:15-16

He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Again, you can see the future-oriented nature of this blessing. It includes many of the same elements of the Abrahamic covenant - blessings and multitudes. Chapter 49 includes many more blessings oriented toward the future.

Finally, we come to chapter 50. We pick it up in verse 24, ...

Genesis 50:24-25

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here."

Although we don't see the blessing to his children, we see the faith of Joseph. He knew of God's covenant to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. He believed that God would give the land to their descendants. And so, that's where he wanted to be buried. Because, that is where his heart was, even though he had been sold into slavery into Egypt. His heart was still in the land. Again, you see his faith in future grace. His faith was in the future prosperity of Israel in the land.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 27, 2011 by Steve Brandon.  
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