

LOOKING BACK

Genesis 47:9; 31:42; 35:3; 32:10; 33:11; 48:15-16

Introduction: The Bible is full of examples for us to follow and not to follow. The text is about a single man, Jacob who spent some time reflecting back through his life, summarizing the past, sort of looking back over his shoulder. Some of what he remembered was a bit dark and not all that good, some was when his life was full of affliction, labor, distress, but conceded that God has been helpful. Then as his life began to wind down, he reflected on how God had been with him all along and had gotten him out of evil and trouble. Let's take a look at each of the four areas Jacob reflected on and his conclusions.

I. THERE WAS A TIME THAT HE COMPLAINED ABOUT

1. *"...few and evil have been the days of the years of my life..."*
2. When asked about his age and past life by Pharaoh, Jacob gave the answer that not all had been well and he was actually complaining, although God had given him many years and blessings.
3. He was wanting to give the impression that he was a "nobody."
 - Jacob had family problems in raising his sons.
 - Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him, but sold him into slavery instead.
 - Jacob blamed himself for that had happened to Joseph.
 - Jacob remembered his own childhood how he and his brother Esau quarreled over the birthright benefits, his hatred of Esau, his lying to his father in disguising himself as Esau, with his mother's help in order to be blessed by his father.
 - Jacob had to flee to another place for years, then got into another dispute with his father in law.
 - All the mistakes his own parents had made, he had repeated in his own home, toward his own sons.
 - In reflecting back, it seemed that his life had been full of mistakes, failures and omissions.
4. Take a look over your shoulder at your past life. What do you see? Are there mistakes? Are there things you would like to do over? Has there been wrongs done by you in your past? If so, you won't be the only one.

II. THERE WAS A TIME HE HAD TO CONCEDE THAT GOD HAD HELPED HIM OUT

1. *"...God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands..." "...who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went..."*
2. Still speaking about his afflictions, distress and his labor, the way he had to live, Jacob had to concede that God had helped him out.
 - Although the affliction, distress and labor had been difficult and hard, Jacob had to concede that God had cared, though it had been hard, he had to finally concede that God had been there.
3. In looking back through your own life, even the difficult, almost impossible times, barely making it, you are here, right now and can say what you want to say, but you will have to admit, that maybe you didn't know it then, but God was there all the time.

- YOU, all of us, can say with Jacob that God kept His eye on you, (us), His ear was open to you (us), and walked every step with you (us.)
- After giving it some thought, doesn't it seem that God deserves more than just a grudging, weak concession?

III. THERE WAS A TIME OF THINKING ABOUT GOD

1. *"...I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant..."*
2. Jacob is beginning to understand about his own life when he finally realizes that in spite of all the evil in his days, God was there with His graciousness.
3. Looking back through life reveals just how often God's forgiving love met one's need, renewed one's faith, brought one back from wandering, thus generating for today humility and contrition.
 - *"...I am not worthy.....He has been gracious..."*

IV. THERE WAS A TIME OF COMPREHENSION, RECOGNITION, REALIZATION

1. *"...God hath dealt graciously with me..." "...God which fed me all my life unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads..."*
2. Jacob finally speaks of others.
 - Of God, of the "lads" (sons of Joseph brought for his blessing) and of the new generation coming along.
 - Jacob is realizing what life is all about - others.
3. As one looks back at his/her life as did Jacob, finally it will "soak" in, that life is about others beside one's self and that it hasn't been as bad as it seemed for God has been there all along and it's a shame that it took so long to realize the truth.

CONCLUSION:

1. Each of Jacob's areas of reflection, remembering, thoughts can be identified with by each of us for all of us have things of the past that were not good, and looking back we can see that we were really never alone for God was there all along, that God has been overly loving, kind and gracious when we certainly didn't deserve it and finally we realize that life is not all about ourselves, it's about others.
2. Why not do as Jacob did and go back through your life and find where God was there all along.
3. Give God thanks that He was there then and He is with you now and He will be with you throughout all eternity.