

Humble Faithful Service

“Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth.” – Genesis 35:8

Summary:

Deborah’s death reveals the lasting honour of humble and faithful service. Having cared for Rebekah, Jacob, and Jacob’s children, she became a beloved member of the household. We ought to treat aged, faithful servants as humble relations and remember that their example shapes those under their care. Scripture records Deborah’s burial, showing that God honours faithfulness regardless of social station, while the family’s deep mourning testifies to her worth. Her burial beneath the oak of weeping also reminds believers that the circumstances of death are unknown. They must remain ready and trust their heavenly Father, knowing that all who fall asleep in Jesus are safe.

Outline:

1. Faithful service creates enduring bonds

- Deborah served Rebekah, Jacob, and Jacob’s children across generations.

2. Household character flows from leadership

- Servants often reflect the example and treatment of their masters.

3. God honours faithfulness in every station

- Humble service may receive lasting remembrance regardless of rank.

4. Loving grief testifies to a useful life

- The family’s tears showed Deborah’s worth and their deep affection.

5. The uncertainty of death calls for readiness

- Those who fall asleep in Jesus remain safe in their Father’s care.

Text

Deborah served Jacob's mother, Rebekah. Deborah therefore cared for Jacob as an infant, and after his mother died, he seems to have sent for her; she came to live with him and help care for his children.

By then she must have been very old. In those days, servants often remained with their masters' families for life, unless they married—sometimes even after marriage. Now, such ties often last only a year or a month.

"Ah," it is said, "servants are not now what they were formerly." We believe it; perhaps because their masters and mistresses have changed. Corruption, like any stream, flows downward, not upward. Fashions and morals descend from high to low.

The state of the hall generally reveals the parlour's previous state. Faithful, longtime domestics should be treated as humble relations, not dismissed as spent hirelings: "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not."

Rebekah's death and burial are not mentioned, but we are told of the death and burial of her nurse. Since not everyone could be included in his word, we see God's pleasure in the special notice given to some individuals over others. Yet he has not acted arbitrarily in this matter. He freely bestows his favours, but honour is granted according to a rule he himself established: "Them that honour me, I will honour."

This may happen in any station or condition of life, for the Lord shows no partiality. He sees differently from man and often chooses what is not to nullify what is, so no one may boast before him. The family's great grief gave the place its name, revealing how deeply they valued and loved this elderly woman. Every tear declared, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Some draw no blessing in life or tears at death; a dry funeral is hateful. She was buried beneath "the oak of weeping." Burial places are a natural, not religious, matter: where a tree falls, it may lie. Yet we know little of where or how we may die—among strangers or grieving friends, at home or abroad, in bed or on the road.

Therefore Wisdom says, "Be ye always ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man may come." We know where life began, but only one Being knows where it will end. We may

leave our heavenly Father to choose where we rest; wherever that is, it will be safe and comfortable if we fall asleep in Jesus.

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, Morning and Evening Exercises
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