

# Faith in the Face of Death

## Part 2

Hebrews 11:20-22

*“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

*21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

*22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”*

### INTRODUCTION:

- **Hebrews 11**
  - **The theme—“*What true saving faith looks like*”**
  - **Paul is calling these unbelieving Hebrews who have been sitting on the wall of unbelief to embrace Christ by faith**
  - **They have been greatly exposed to the truth of Christ**
  - **And because they had set in unbelief for so long—Paul warns them that they were getting to a dangerous place of *falling away* and never returning again**

- **And thus their condemnation would be even greater—because they spurned what they knew was true**
  - **Paul’s pleading—is that they would not continue to sit in unbelief—but that they would enter into this new covenant—BY FAITH**
  - **And so Paul tells them through this chapter—that this is nothing new**
  - **That even their forefathers—stepped out by faith—embracing Christ whom they had never seen**
- **So Paul gives them the examples of people who demonstrated true saving faith**
    - **He pointed to Abel—who by faith offered a sacrifice that was acceptable to God**
    - **He pointed to Enoch—who walked with God by faith**
    - **He pointed to Noah—who built an Ark by faith—and saved his family from the wrath of God’s judgment**
    - **He pointed to Abraham—who left his home by faith—awaiting God’s promise of a seed and the inheritance of the land**
  - **But there is one thing that all of these patriarch’s and forefathers have in common—that the Hebrews of Paul’s day did not**
    - **They died not having received the fulfillment of these promises**

- They were all looking to the coming of Christ—who would redeem men from their sins

**Hebrews 11:13**—*“These all died in faith, **not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”*

**Hebrews 11:39**—*“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, **received not the promise**”*

- **In some way, we could honestly say—that the faith of Israel’s forefathers was greater faith than even what the faith of the Hebrews of Paul’s day could ever be**
  - They saw the fulfillment of these promises
  - They saw that Christ has come
  - That he has paid for their sins
  - He did what no high priest could ever do—make His people right with God
  - He did what no sacrifice could ever do—remove the sins of the people forever
- **And yet with all of that knowledge—these Hebrews were still sitting on the wall of unbelief—trying so desperately to hang on to their Judaism**
- **They were afraid of truly stepping and embracing Christ**
- **True Saving Faith**

- **One of the marks that Paul points out that SHOULD be evident in life of those who possess true saving faith—is DYING GRACE**
- **Every one of these people mentioned demonstrated their faith in the face of death**

*“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

*21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

*22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”*

- **Isaac demonstrated such faith**
- **Jacob demonstrated that faith**
- **And Joseph demonstrated that faith**

**NOTE:** What this passage seems to be indicating is that true saving faith—**continues all the way to the end.** As Paul previously said to the Hebrews...

**Hebrews 10:39**—*“we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe **to the saving of the soul.**”*

True saving faith endures to the very end.

**Matthew 10:22**—*“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but **he that endureth to the end shall be saved.**”*

**Psalm 37:37**—“*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*”

- **The upright (saved) will end the same way he started (strong in faith)**
- **And that’s what Paul shows us in this passage**

## **CIT: How Did Israel’s Patriarchal Forefathers Demonstrate Their Faith in the Face of Death?**

**I. Isaac’s Faith Foresaw the Future on an Individual Level (One Link in the Chain) (vs. 20)**—“*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*”

### **A. Abraham and the Blessing**

#### **1. The Promise God gave to Abraham**

**Genesis 12:1-3**—“*Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*”

**Genesis 12: 7**—“*And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land*”

#### **2. Isaac was that promised son**

- a. Isaac was not the promised Redeemer
- b. He was just the first link in the chain of God’s promise to Abraham coming to pass
- c. That promise wouldn’t find its fulfillment—until Christ came
- d. And even to this day—the fullness of that promise has not yet been seen

**B. The Blessing Passed Down (vs. 20)**—“*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*”

#### **1. The divided family of Isaac**

- a. The division started at the time of Rebekah’s pregnancy
  - i. At the time of Rebekah’s pregnancy—she began to be greatly pained with what was going on inside her womb

**Genesis 25:22**—“*And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord.*”

- So she inquired of the Lord about what she was going through
- This struggle in her womb

- So the Lord answered her

**Vs. 23—***“Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”*

- What was going on is that she was pregnant with twins
- And they were struggling within her womb (fighting)
- And then God reveals to her a prophecy about her children
  - Both of her children will be the heads of two different nations
  - One nation will be stronger than the other
  - And He said that the one that will be stronger—is the younger

*“the elder shall serve the younger”*

- Rebekah received that prophecy with joy
- But the indication of the text—when Isaac heard that prophecy—he rejected it

- He chose rather to love (Esau) their firstborn
- And Rebekah loved (Jacob) the second-born
- This became a major source of division in their family

- Isaac wanted Esau to get the blessing (the promise that God gave to Abraham)
- And Rebekah wanted Jacob to inherit the promise

**ii.** And it wasn't just the marriage that was divided (because of Isaac's carnality)—it passed down to the whole family

- Not only was Isaac and Rebekah divided
- So were Jacob and Esau

**iii.** The acts of their division

- The division between mom and dad—and son and son
  - This is the point in which Paul is referring to in our passage

- One day Isaac secretly calls Esau to his side—and tells him that he is about to die—and this would be the day that he would be passing down the blessing (the promise that God gave to his father Abraham)
- And so he tells his son—before he dies—he would like to eat one last meal of Esau’s venison
- But Isaac didn’t know that Rebekah was listening in to this private conversations

**Genesis 27:5**—“*And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son.*”

- So she immediately went into action—to make sure that Isaac’s plan wouldn’t work

**Genesis 27:6-10**—“*And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, 7 Bring me venison, and make me savoury*

*meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death. 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: 10 and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.*”

- Jacob’s response:

**Genesis 27:11-12**—“*And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: 12 my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.*”

- Mom is willing to take the heat...

**Genesis 27:13**—“*And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them*”

- The plan:

- Get some goats from the flock
- Cook them up—to taste like venison
- Use the fur to make skins that

- are hairy (so to feel like Esau)
  - Wear some of Esau's garments (so to smell like Esau)
  - And get the blessing for yourself
- The plan ends up working out
  - Jacob comes in
  - Deceives his father that he is Esau
  - Deceives him with the goat meat
  - Deceives him with the goat skin
  - Deceives him with Esau's clothes
  - So Isaac passes his blessing upon Jacob

**Genesis 27:28-29**—“*therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and*

*wine: 29 let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.”*

**NOTE:** Notice the carnal viewpoint that Isaac has about the blessing. It's not about the Messiah. It's not about salvation that will come to all people through his line. All it amounts to is material blessing

Fatness of the earth; plenty of corn and wine; people serve you; nations bow down to you; be lord over your brethren.

That doesn't sound like the promise that God gave to Abraham. That's how carnal Isaac had become.

**QUESTION:** Someone is going to ask, “*How in the world did Isaac, by faith, bless Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*”

**If we look at the rest of the text in Genesis—we can see how something changes Isaac's heart.**

**Genesis 27:30-32**—“*And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.*

*32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou?*

*And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.*

*33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who?*

*where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and **he shall be blessed.***”

- It’s beginning to dawn on Isaac—that his plan to resist God didn’t work
  - He wanted Esau to receive the blessing
  - But instead—Jacob got the blessing
  - And it was at that point—when he finally realized what had happened—that he accepted the will of God for Jacob

*“**he shall be blessed**”*

- Isaac wasn’t going to be able to resist God—even though Jacob and his mother got the blessing in a wrong way
- If Isaac had spoken those words over Esau rather than Jacob—it wouldn’t have changed God’s plan for Jacob to be

the link in the chain of God’s purpose

- Isaac couldn’t override God’s will
- And at the last—**he accepted God’s will**

And by faith Isaac *“blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”*

### **I. Isaac’s Faith Foresaw the Future on an Individual Level (One Link in the Chain)**

**II. Jacob’s Faith Foresaw the Future on a Tribal Level (A Strand in the Chain) (vs. 21)**—*“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”*

#### **A. Jacob’s Adult Life**

1. After Jacob had deceived his father—and “stole” the blessing from his father—he was forced to flee for his life
  - a. Esau wanted to kill him for what he had done
  - b. So Isaac, who now has changed his heart about the blessing, send Jacob off to Padan Aram
    - i. To escape his brother’s wrath
    - ii. To become a great family

**Genesis 28:1-5**—“*And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother’s father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother’s brother. 3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; 4 and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. 5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob’s and Esau’s mother.*”

## 2. Jacob’s life in Padan Aram

- a. It is there where he meets his uncle Laban, who puts him to work for a wife—which later turns into 4 wives
- b. And after 20 years of working, Jacob ends up with 4 wives (**Rachel and Leah [sister], Zilpah and Bilhah [their handmaids]**) and 13 children (**12 of them are sons—who later become the 12 heads of the tribes of Israel**)

**Genesis 35:22-26**—“*Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: 23 the sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun: 24 the sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin: 25 and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali: 26 and the*

*sons of Zilpah, Leah’s handmaid; Gad, and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padan-aram.”*

- c. Not only that, God allows him to gain much wealth through his working for Uncle Laban
- d. But after his 20 years of work, God makes it clear to him that it is time to leave and head back to Canaan

3. But when he gets back into the land, Jacob’s family goes through significant conflict—that affects the whole family’s future

- a. The conflict starts with Jacob’s favoritism toward his wives

- i. He loved Rachel, and he despised Leah and the 2 other handmaids—that had given him children

- It was Rachel that he had originally agreed with Laban to work for 7 years so that he could marry
- And because of Laban’s trickery—he gave his older daughter Leah to Jacob instead Rachel
- But Jacob wanted Rachel, not Leah

- And so he worked another 7 years for her
- And so, that's where that conflict started

**ii.** Yet Rachel, like Sarah, was not able to have children

- Leah, used Rachel's barrenness against her to mock her
- And to take advantage of time spent with Jacob
- This drove Rachel to pleading with God for a child

**iii.** And finally after much pleading—God finally opened her womb—and gave her 2 sons

- Which continued the division in this strange family
- Joseph and Benjamin were the two sons
- And when she was giving birth to Benjamin she died
- Which created a great hole in Jacob's heart

**iv.** Jacob still carried that favoritism on—this time favoring the children of Rachel—over the children of his other wives

- And the child that he favored the most was Joseph

**Genesis 37:3**—“*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours*”

- This coat was an outward symbol before all of Joseph's older brothers, that he was the most favored child by their father
- Not only that, Jacob was using Joseph to spy on his older brothers—to bring an evil report against them
- And as you can imagine, these things didn't go over well with his brothers
- And to add to it—Joseph kept speaking about having these dreams, where all his brothers would bow to him—and he would be their lord

- His brother's sheaves bowing down to his sheave
- The stars, sun and moon bowing down to him
- So Joseph's brothers hated and despised him
- And when the opportunity came—they sold him as a slave to Egypt
- And it's this event that God uses to bring about His purpose in saving Jacob and his family during a time of great famine that would soon come

**Genesis 50:20**—*“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive”*

## **B. Joseph's Rise to Power**

### **1. Joseph, a Slave to Potiphar**

- a.** When Joseph gets into Egypt, he is sold to a man named Potiphar
  - i.** An officer of Pharaoh
  - ii.** Captain of the guard

- b.** And over a process of time, Potiphar exalts him as the chief slave over his whole household
- c.** But then Potiphar's wife begins to notice him, and tries to get him to lie with her (sexual relationship)
- d.** Joseph refuses
- e.** So her response, was to accuse him of trying to rape her
- f.** So Joseph is thrown in jail, where he is left and forgotten

### **2. Joseph, a Prisoner on a False Charge**

- a.** While he is there, the Lord greatly blesses him—making him leader over all the other prisoners
- b.** And it was there, that he meet the butler and baker of Pharaoh—where he interprets both their dreams
- c.** And both the dreams come to pass
  - i.** The baker is executed for his crimes he had done
  - ii.** And the butler is restored back to his position of honor
  - iii.** But the butler forgets what Joseph had done for him
  - iv.** And Joseph is left in the jail for another 2 years

### **3. Joseph, the Savior of Egypt**

a. Pharaoh is plagued with a recurring dream—which none of his wisemen are able to interpret

- i. At that point the butler remembers Joseph—and tells the Pharaoh about him
- ii. The Pharaoh then sends for him
- iii. And because Joseph is able to interpret the dream (which was about the 7 years of plenty and the 7 years of famine—that Egypt and the region around would go through) Pharaoh exalts him to 2<sup>nd</sup> in command over all Egypt

b. When the famine finally hits—Joseph becomes the savior of all Egypt—and ultimately the Savior of his family—who comes in from Canaan, seeking bread

## B. Jacob's Reunion With Joseph

- 1. This is the point where we come to our text
- 2. Because Joseph's family comes into Egypt
  - a. Jacob finds out that his son Joseph is not dead, as his brothers who sold him into slavery had told him
  - b. And Jacob and his family then move into Egypt and are reunited with Joseph

- i. By that time, there were 70 people joined to Jacob's family
- ii. Through the marriages and grandchildren that his sons and daughter had
- iii. They all come into Egypt and settle down in an area called Goshen

3. Jacob passes the blessing of Abraham down to Joseph's Two Sons

a. Ephraim and Manasseh

**Genesis 48:1-22**—“*And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. 3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, 4 and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people (That's the Abrahamic Covenant); and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. 5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. (Joseph's 2 Sons are being adopted as Jacob's own sons—and even being elevated to the level of his oldest sons) (Jacob is going to pass the Abrahamic blessing directly to Joseph's two sons) 6 And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after*

the name of their brethren in their inheritance. 7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.

8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these?

9 And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place.

And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. 10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. 11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. 13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. 14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. **( the oldest was supposed to get the greater blessing—but that was not God's plan)**

15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; **and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.**

17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto

Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. 22 **Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, (The full Abrahamic blessing isn't being passed down to just one child (or one child's children), but it is being passed down to Joseph more than any of Jacob's other children) which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.**”

### **C. Paul's point in the Text—is that just like Isaac did to Jacob—passing the blessing down; so did Jacob do to Joseph's sons**

1. By faith that blessing was passed down
2. And that blessing would never be seen by Joseph, or by his two sons
3. But what Jacob was doing—was looking ahead by faith (believing the promise, not only of possessing the land—but ultimately of seeing the promised Redeemer come through his family)

## **I. Isaac's Faith Foresaw the Future on an Individual Level (One Link in the Chain)**

## **II. Jacob's Faith Foresaw the Future on a Tribal Level (A Strand in the Chain)**

**III. Joseph's Faith Foresaw the Future on a National Level (vs. 22)**—“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”

### **A. Joseph's Time to Die**

1. Several years later it was Joseph's time to die
2. And though he never saw the promises come to pass in his lifetime—he still believed they would come
3. And as he was on his deathbed (now 110 years old) he tells his brethren that Israel will not always be in Egypt
  - a. The Land that God promised—was the land of Canaan
  - b. And the place where the promised Seed would emerge was Canaan
  - c. And as he was dying—he told the children of Israel—that when they depart, take his bones back to Canaan
    - i. He may not inherit the land
    - ii. But the land can inherit him

4. Joseph's faith was strong—even in the face of death

### **CONCLUSION:**

**Philippians 1:21**—“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

### **THE MESSAGE:**

- **None of these men, though they were not perfect, abandoned their hope of the coming Savior—even in the face of death**
- **And they were so confident—that they continued to believe it—even when they had no evidence for it**
- **That's the kind of faith that Paul was calling these Hebrews to embrace**
  - **A faith placed in Christ, that is strong to the end**
  - **Even to the point, that there may be no evidence for it**