

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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Sermon title: By Faith, Isaac and Jacob, Hebrews 11:20-21

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**INTRODUCTION:** Last week, we talked about the faith of Abraham and how God told him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, the one who was supposed to be his offspring, which would produce a nation of God. And, we saw how Abraham believed God to the point he reasoned God could raise Isaac from the dead. And, then God provided a ram as a substitute offering right in time. Now, let's look at Isaac, his son.

There are three points to my message today:

1. By faith Isaac blessed his sons even though he was deceived.
2. By faith Isaac believed God would take the situation and use it to accomplish his will.
3. We have Jacob listed in the Hall of Faith.

Isaac's life does not have all the many chapters some of the other patriarchs have. We don't know nearly as much about Isaac as we know of some of the others, but what we do know could be a study in and of itself.

Here are some highlights of his life:

- **SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 11:20-21<sup>20</sup> *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.*<sup>21</sup> *By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.*

When Isaac was 40 years old, Abraham sent servants to find a wife for him from their clan because he did not want him to have a Canaanite wife. So Isaac married his cousin Rebekah.

- **SCRIPTURE:** [God renewed his covenant with Isaac] Genesis 26:3-6<sup>3</sup> *For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.*<sup>4</sup> *I will make your descendants as numerous*

*as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed,<sup>5</sup> because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.”<sup>6</sup> So Isaac stayed in Gerar.*

- Isaac had twin sons named Esau and Jacob. When Rebekah was pregnant with them, they were very lively in her womb. She asked the Lord what this was all about, and the Lord told her, *“Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”*
- Isaac became so wealthy that the king of the land asked him to move away. Sometime later, the king came to Isaac and asked for a treaty between Isaac’s people and the king’s kingdom, that they would not hurt each other. The king said after he sent Isaac away, he realized the Lord was with him.
- Esau was the oldest so the birthright went to him. But, while Jacob was cooking one day, Esau traded his birthright to Jacob for some stew.
- When Isaac was old and feeble, he asked Esau to go out and hunt for him and bring him some good food, and then he would bless him.
- Now, in this day, the birthright and the blessing were two different things. The birthright was an inheritance of a man’s belongings. I read about this, and what I learned was this: The blessing was a divine prophecy on a person’s future. It was a real prophecy from God through the father. As I have told you, it’s clear to me that God worked with people in different ways during different times in history.
- The Bible tells us Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob, and Rebekah loved Jacob more than Esau.
- Rebekah overheard her husband Isaac tell Esau that he would bless him, and while Esau was out, she and Jacob tricked Isaac into believing that Jacob was Esau. Are you completely confused?

- Remember Jacob was the younger one. Perhaps Rebekah was remembering the dream which told, the older would serve the younger.
- So, Isaac bought the lie and gave the divine, irrevocable promise to Jacob. Later, when Esau found out what happened, he begged his dad to bless him. Isaac blessed him but it was nowhere near the blessing he gave Jacob. You can read about this in Genesis 27.

Now, I've read a few interpretations of this verse in Hebrews 11. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau regarding their future.* I'm not really satisfied with what I read, so I want to tell you two things I get from this verse:

**First, BY FAITH ISAAC BLESSED HIS SONS EVEN THOUGH HE WAS DECEIVED.**

**EXPLANATION:** It seems there would be an exception when a person was deceived into giving a blessing to the wrong son. But, apparently not. Isaac died, knowing what his original intentions were, and he had to trust God to handle it.

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 11:1 *<sup>1</sup>Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Isaac did not know what would happen to his sons. You can read about Jacob's and Esau's reconciliation later on in Genesis 32 and 33.

**APPLICATION:** There is direct application for us here, I believe. Have you ever done something in good faith, only for it to be thrown back in your face? Have you ever done something in faith based on the information you had at the time, only to find out later you were deceived? During such times there is nothing to do but remind yourself you acted in good faith, with the knowledge you had at the time.

**Second, BY FAITH ISAAC BELIEVED GOD WOULD TAKE THE SITUATION AND USE IT TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL.**

I believe God can take the messes of man and accomplish his will. When Isaac had given his irrevocable blessing, there was nothing more he could do but trust the Lord with it all.

### **Third, WE HAVE JACOB LISTED IN THE HALL OF FAITH**

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 11:21 <sup>21</sup> *By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.*

**EXPLANATION:** Jacob was called Israel, and his sons and descendants were called the children of Israel. Joseph was one of those sons. He brought his sons to his father so his father could bless them. And, his father, Jacob, did just that and told them his grandsons would be just like his sons. Now, Jacob (also called Israel) had twelve sons, and if you go to the back of your Bible to your maps, you'll see a map showing the twelve tribes of Israel. You'll see all the tribes named for Israel's sons, but you won't see a tribe of Joseph. Instead, you'll see two tribes named after Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Interestingly enough, Jacob blessed Joseph's younger son ahead of his older son.

So, by faith Jacob, also known as Israel, blessed his grandsons as if they were his own sons. And, indeed, they became like his sons. They had tribes named after them just like Joseph's brothers.

Now, I am going to stop there because the next verse in Hebrews 11 about Joseph requires more time than I have this morning.

Let's review: We've been in Hebrews a long time. One of the scholars who spent much of his ministry studying the book of Hebrews said the book is written as if the people of the day had quit talking about faith and had quit talking of the people who were known for their faith. The book is written as if the Jews who were now Christians had forgotten their life long teaching about all of this.

I have to say, I agree, it does look like Hebrews serves this purpose. I say this because I am dumbfounded that today is just like the day when Hebrews was written. I know a man who has heard a thousand sermons and a thousand Sunday

school lessons about salvation by grace through faith. But, for some reason, he believes his works will save him. This is really sad.

Now, folks, I've been preaching the best way I know how through the Book of Hebrews. It is the most exhaustive work about salvation I know of. It is a review of the old covenant, the work of Christ, and faith.

I just wonder if the majority of you are tracking with the reality of it, or are you like the man who hears all of it, but still has the flawed, default thinking his works will hold some saving value at the end.

We talked about the faith of Abel, the faith of Enoch, the faith of Noah, the faith of Abraham, the faith of Isaac, and the faith of Joseph. Wow, how I hope all of these messages are communicating to you.

**APPLICATION:** The first step of faith you can take is to trust Jesus with your life now and in the future. You do this by coming to him in faith, asking him to forgive your sin by faith, and receiving him as your savior by faith.

I do believe that God's grace is what initiates faith. God's grace must touch you first, before you can even choose to follow him. Listen to what the Bible says, Ephesians, Chapter 2—

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 2:8 <sup>o</sup>*For by grace are you saved through faith through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God*

**APPLICATION:** The mere fact God has allowed you to be here today, as the Bible has been preached to you is proof that God's has extended his grace to you. Now, how will your respond?

You may be here today and you've resisted God's grace. I believe God's grace can be resisted. The Bible warns us not to quench the Holy Spirit. This means the Holy Spirit can be quenched. He can be resisted. It is God's Spirit that draws us to him. Yesterday I read something a prison chaplain wrote, and I will share it with you now.

God's Holy Spirit works with mankind in three distinct ways:

- First, he works ON us to bring us to salvation.
- Secondly, he works IN us to prepare us as fit vessels for his use.
- Thirdly, then and only then can he work THROUGH us in reaching out to those round about us.

So, is God's Spirit working ON you right now? Do you feel a tug at your heart that now is the time to repent and trust Jesus?

For the believer, is God working IN you to prepare you as a fit vessel for his use? Yesterday, I responded to a post about the Bible on Facebook. I said the Bible exhausts me. What I mean by this is the Bible points out my sins, my flaws, and my shortcomings. It would be easy for me just to read the inspirational scriptures over and over and ignore the ones which make me uncomfortable.

If God is working IN you to prepare you as a fits vessel for his use, you'll find periods of exhaustion as he prunes those parts which are not part of his plan for you.

If God is working THROUGH you to reach out to people around you, you'll never be able to shake the reality that you are Christ's ambassador as though God were making his appeal through you.

It's all "by faith." We do not totally see how God is working in the world. We do not see how he is preparing eternity for us. But, we live in the here-and-now by faith, and we look forward to the life after by faith.

Won't you join the family of faith today? If God's Spirit is tugging at you this moment, be thankful for his grace and surrender your will to his. Come during our altar call, and let us pray with you.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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