

Hebrews 11:14-22

Although we will be studying Hebrews 11 today, we will be spending a lot of time in the book of Genesis, beginning at Chapter 22, so it would be a good idea to just keep your finger there.

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Last week we began a study of the heroes of faith.

Did this new subject have anything to do with the previous study of the tabernacle and the priesthood?

Yes, there is a definite connection.

The Holy Spirit had been combatting the problem of apostasy by showing that the sacrifices only *pointed* to a better way.

These same sacrifices had now served their purpose and were ready to pass away, so to reject Christ and return to them was a grievous mistake.

But also this act of apostasy is in essence a lack of faith.

Unlike Abraham, the apostate "**--had been mindful of that country from whence they came out**" and had returned to the familiar but unprofitable old ways.

So, the writer of Hebrews brings these heroes of faith in their own Jewish history to the attention of those who might be teetering on the edge of apostasy.

They were an example and an admonition to step out by faith.

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Last week we read about Abel, Enoch, and Noah.

Abel showed us the way of faith; Enoch the
walk of faith; and Noah illustrated the
witness of faith.

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Abel's faith had led him to accept God's
instructions concerning a blood
sacrifice.

Also, by his obedience, he had accepted the
fact of his own sinfulness and his
unworthiness to come to God.

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By faith Enoch walked with God, and one day
he walked all the way to heaven!

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Noah's faith caused him to believe the
unbelievable.

In spite of the fact that it had never rained
before, Noah believed God's message of
judgment, and built an ark on dry land.

The ark in itself was a witness to his faith,
a witness that spoke louder than words,
but Noah also preached God's message
for 120 years.

Although he had no converts, nevertheless he
had given his generation a witness of
faith.

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And then Hebrews 11 gives testimony to a man
that was truly a giant in faith.

Father Abraham continued to believe God's
promises all his life.

And, in spite of the fact that he did not see
many of these promises fulfilled in his
lifetime, he left this world in total
confidence that what God had promised
He would also perform.

V 9-10 of Hebrews 11 says, "**By faith he
sojourned in the land of promise, as in**

a strange country, dwelling in
tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the
heirs with him of the same promise:

¹⁰ For he looked for a city which hath
foundations, whose builder and maker is
God."

The writer of Hebrews gives Abraham a larger
place in this chapter (even including
his wife Sarah) than to any of the
other heroes of faith.

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And today we will continue our study of this
amazing man, Father Abraham.

V 17 **"By faith Abraham, when he was tried,
offered up Isaac: and he that had
received the promises offered up his
only begotten son."**

Here we see the faith of Abraham again, but
in an entirely different connection.

We saw Abraham as the expectant believer,
waiting upon God to fulfill His promise
of a son.

Abraham waited in faith until the possibility
of a son being born by natural means
slowly faded away with the advancing
years.

But Abraham's implicit faith in God's promise
was finally rewarded.

At a very great age, he miraculously became
the father of the son of promise.

But now we see Abraham's faith being tested
under a new and even more trying
circumstance.

V 17-18 " **By faith Abraham, when he was
tried, offered up Isaac: and he that
had received the promises offered up
his only begotten son,**

18 **Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called."**

There were several reasons why this was the ultimate test.

We notice in Genesis 22:2 the words, "**Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.**"

So first of all there was the obvious test of parental love.

This in itself would have been an extreme test, but that was not the ultimate test of faith.

You see, Isaac was the *only* son of Sarah.

Oh, Abraham had Ishmael, but only Isaac was the son of promise.

And Abraham had waited all his life for God's promises to be fulfilled.

Remember the Abrahamic Covenant?

Genesis 22:17-18 **"That in blessing I will
bless thee, and in multiplying I will
multiply thy seed as the stars of the
heaven, and as the sand which is upon
the sea shore; and thy seed shall
possess the gate of his enemies;
18 And in thy seed shall all the
nations of the earth be blessed;
because thou hast obeyed my voice."**

None of these promises had been fulfilled as yet, except one. God had given him his promised son Isaac through whom all the rest of the promises were to be fulfilled.

Now, God commanded that Isaac was to be sacrificed--**"Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called."**

After he had received this one and only son, God gave him this extreme test of

faith--not to ruin him, but to lead him to greater heights of faith.

And Isaac was the one son through whom the Messiah would come to bless all nations: **"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."**

But did Abraham understand that? I think so.

Jesus said, **"--Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."**

So in offering up Isaac, he seemed to be called upon to cut off his own family, to cancel the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, to destroy the whole world, and to sacrifice his own soul and his hopes of salvation, and also to cut off the church of God----with one blow.

So, how did Abraham's faith resolve this critical situation?

Yes, Abraham did use logic, however, it was logic grounded upon faith.

First of all, I don't believe it ever occurred to Abraham that God would stop him from killing his son.

As far as Abraham was concerned, his son was as good as dead, for he never considered the possibility of disobeying the Lord.

So how did he figure it all out?

Well, to Abraham's faith it was quite logical:

1. God would keep His promises. There was no doubt about that in his mind.
2. There was no possibility of any other son but Isaac fulfilling God's promises.
3. He knew that he was going to kill his son.

So the only answer was that God would raise Isaac from the dead.

In fact, V 19 tells us exactly that--

"Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

Now if you had complete faith in God, that would be the only logical answer, wouldn't it?

But how strong was Abraham's faith?

Would he be able to put theory into practice?

After he had plunged his knife into his son and Isaac lay there before him dead, would he still have faith enough to believe that God would heal the wound and bring life back into his son's body?

And what if God didn't raise his son immediately?

Would he then have faith enough to take the
torch and light the wood and see his
son consumed to ashes?

Could God bring him back to life then?

And if God didn't, what would he say to his
wife Sarah when he got home, and she
asked, *Where's Isaac?*

Personally, I don't believe any of these
questions tortured his mind.

He simply believed that God would *do it, had*
to do it, for God's promises never
fail.

Such was the faith of Abraham.

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But we cannot leave this study of Abraham
until we see the type, the picture,
which Abraham and Isaac give us.

Back in Genesis 22 in Verse 6 and again in Verse 8, we read, **"They went both of them together."**

How strikingly this pictures another long journey of a Father and a Son . . . from the throne of glory to the cross of Calvary.

Genesis 22:6 **"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together."**

In this verse, we see pictured before us the Son of God carrying His cross, and the Father with **"the fire in his hand, and a knife."**

My friend, **"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that**

**whosoever believeth in him should not
perish, but have everlasting life."**

And even more than in Abraham's case it was--

**"thine only son Isaac, whom thou
lovest."**

F. W. Grant once said concerning Abraham, God
"spared that father's heart a pang that
He would not spare His own."

Maybe only Abraham knows in some small way
how painful that walk was for God.

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Hebrews 11:20 **"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob
and Esau concerning things to come."**

One can't help but notice that, after the
large place the Holy Spirit gave in
this chapter to Abraham, Isaac received
only one short verse.

And yet that one verse does give testimony to
his faith.

His life, for the most part, was quiet and uneventful.

Unlike his father who rescued the inhabitants of Sodom and saved his nephew Lot, Isaac had no real battles to fight.

But he was not spared trouble and animosity. Isaac was a digger of wells, not a fighter. He would dig a well in a certain place, and the enemy would take it away from him. He would then dig another well, and again it would be taken away from him.

But, finally, the Lord gave him peace.

Genesis 26:22 **"And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."**

However, Isaac's faith did not really shine forth until he was nearing the end of his days.

Isaac's faith blossomed in connection with his blessing on his sons.

This was an important blessing as their family was in the line of the Abrahamic Covenant given to his father.

Through most of his life, he seemed to have forgotten how God had determined the matter in regards to his sons at their birth.

Genesis 25:23 **"And the LORD said unto her, 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."**

This should have been the established rule for Isaac all along, but, in spite of God's proclamation, he favoured Esau over Jacob.

In the natural course of things, this would not have been surprising.

Esau was a man's man, he was a man of the field, and in that respect was probably much like his father.

Remember when Rebekah first saw Isaac, he was out in the field.

Genesis 24:63 **"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming."**

And, of course, the general custom of the day was to give the firstborn a double portion.

But God is not bound by custom, and Isaac knew clearly, at least in the back of his mind he knew, what God's will was. And so did his wife Rebekah, and, by the way, so did Jacob.

Now it is true that Rebekah and Jacob tricked Isaac, and by so doing were not only deceitful, but also were running ahead of God's will.

The consequences of their actions resulted in Jacob needing to leave home.

And his trickery returned upon him in double measure.

Having deceived his father and his brother, he also was deceived by his uncle Laban. His mother, who was chief in the deception, died of old age without ever seeing her boy again----all because of their devious means to

obtain what God would have surely
brought to pass in His own time.

Such are the sorrows we bring upon ourselves
by doing it our way.

However, the fault was not all theirs, as
Isaac had not determined to follow by
faith what he knew in his heart was
God's will concerning his sons.

However, once the deed was done and Isaac
realized that he had been deceived, his
faith recovered itself, and he ratified
the blessing as it stood.

His faith bowed to the fact that God had
overruled.

When Esau implored him to overturn his
actions, he would not consider it, but
simply said, **"Yea, and he shall be
blessed."**

So, even at this late date, Isaac's faith was sufficient to be honoured by God in this one verse.

Hebrews 11:20 **"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."**

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Jacob was a much different character than his Father Isaac.

He was the schemer, and I don't think he would have given up two wells to the enemy without some retaliation.

And his struggles began very early in his life, in fact, even before he was born. You might think your children gave you some problems, but Rebekah didn't even get to be a mother before her troubles started.

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 enquire of the LORD."**

Even before birth, Jacob was wrestling and
trying to get the upper hand!

And at birth, he only missed being the
firstborn by seconds, but he still came
into the world holding onto the heel of
his brother.

Yes, and he was a heel-grabber for much of
his life, and a deceiver!

As we have already noted, he deceived his
father.

God had promised Jacob the blessing, but he
and his mother just couldn't wait.

So, by running ahead of God, he incurred the
wrath of his brother, and had to leave
home.

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When he spent the night at Bethel and saw the vision of angels, we might have thought that he had a spiritual turning to God at that time.

Well, in a way he did, but it was still the old Jacob.

Yes, this homesick boy did *recognize* God, but he did not recognize God's unconditional favour.

He didn't seem to realize that the covenant blessing was his freely by inheritance, but instead tried to make a deal with God.

Genesis 28:20-21 **"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,**

²¹ **So that I come again to my father's**

**house in peace; then shall the LORD be
my God."**

No, you don't make deals with God.

What He gives us is by His infinite grace,
and we really have nothing to offer in
return.

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Then came the years of trickery.

His Uncle Laban was a pretty slippery
character, and Jacob had a few tricks
of his own up his sleeve.

So for years, Jacob survived by his wits.
However, God finally stopped him in his
tracks as he was returning home to
Canaan.

That night, when the Lord wrestled with him
at the brook Jabbok, Jacob was rendered
a partial cripple physically, but I

think that was the time when he really began his *spiritual* walk.

Now he was a wiser man, and yet he still had to reap what he had sown.

As he grew older, Jacob saw the very sin that he had committed against his aged father come home to him.

As he had deceived his father, so he himself was deceived by his own sons.

They convinced him that Joseph had been killed, and the news almost killed him.

And for years, he lived under the delusion that his beloved son Joseph was dead.

However, near the end of this man's life, Jacob's faith gained great heights, and he was allowed of God to see clearly the future of his people.

V 21 **"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and**

worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

By faith he adopted his grandchildren, Joseph's sons, into the number of his own sons, and into the congregation of Israel, even though they were born in Egypt.

By the way, that's what God has done for each one of us, hasn't He?

We were the sons of a fallen race, but now we have been adopted into the family of God.

Under ordinary circumstances, one of the tribes of Israel would have been the tribe of Joseph, but that is not what happened.

By faith, Jacob created two tribes out of Joseph's family, the tribe Ephraim, and the tribe of Manasseh.

These two boys became heads of tribes just like the rest of Jacob's sons.

True, they were called the half tribes, but for all practical purposes, these grandsons took their place with the sons of Jacob.

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And Jacob showed his God-directed faith in another way.

Jacob was virtually blind by reason of old age.

Because of this, Joseph positioned his eldest son Manasseh in front of Jacob's right hand to receive the elder blessing, and positioned the younger on the left.

But Jacob, although blind physically, at last had 20-20 vision spiritually.

He knew that God had ordained that the youngest son should be first.

So, in spite of Joseph's objections, he
crossed his arms and gave the eldest
blessing to Ephraim.

By faith, Jacob knew that was how God wanted
it.

Genesis 48:18-19 **"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."**

So Jacob died, leaning upon the top of his
staff, the staff he had needed ever
since that night in which he had held

on for the blessing by the brook
Jabbok.

And Jacob died a worshipper.

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

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

Here again we find only one verse devoted to
the faith of Joseph.

Like Isaac and Jacob, this chapter highlights
Joseph's faith at the end of his life,
but unlike the other two men, his life
had been one of continuous faith from
beginning to end.

Although Joseph is never specifically spoken of as a type of Christ in Scripture, there is probably no other person in the entire Old Testament who is more closely a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all, Joseph was the well beloved son of his father.

In his family, Joseph, with his coat of many colours and his dreams of supremacy, was hated by his brothers and dubbed a *dreamer*.

Jesus, in his earthly family, was unique from Joseph's sons, and they thought of Him as a dreamer.

John 7: 4-5 **"-- If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.**

⁵ For neither did his brethren believe in him."

Also, Jesus' national brethren did not accept Him.

John 1:11 **"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."**

Joseph was *sent* by his father to seek his brothers, and they at the first sought to kill him, but eventually sold him into slavery.

Jesus also came *seeking* His brethren, and they sold Him for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave, and then they crucified Him.

In the mind of his father, Joseph was dead, but he was raised up as ruler in Egypt, and thereby saved his people.

Our Lord was raised from the dead, and because He lives, we will live also.

Joseph had a Gentile bride, while Christ, although He is the Messiah of Israel,

has a bride who is both Jew and
Gentile.

While Joseph ruled in Egypt, he was the
sustainer of His people.

Christ will some day rule over His people
Israel and be their sustainer.

Likewise, while we His church linger *in*
Egypt, our Lord and King is our daily
sustainer.

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So this man Joseph, who walked in the
footsteps of faith all his life, and
who reminds us so much of our Lord, was
particularly noted in this chapter for
his faith upon his deathbed.

Here, by his dying request, Joseph shows
clearly that although he had attained
great honours in Egypt, nevertheless

his heart was still in the Promised Land.

His success never caused him to forget who he really was, and he remained a stranger and a pilgrim in Egypt.

Probably this was not the case with his brethren.

They lived in the best of the land.

They lived under a benevolent Pharaoh, for Joseph's sake.

I would imagine they were well settled in with no thought of returning to Canaan.

But on his deathbed, Joseph reminds them that Egypt was not their home.

Genesis 50:24-25 **"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.**

25 **And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."**

Yes, Joseph remembered God's covenant.

I am sure his brethren would take his last request to heart. After all, he was the head man in Egypt. But I wonder if they really had any serious thoughts about returning to the Promised Land?

But their attitude was to change.

When they became slaves in Egypt, their hope of Canaan revived.

How often Christians living in ease forget that the Lord is coming.

How often heaven fades in the excitement of earthly success.

But when trouble comes, the blessed hope
revives, and we look, as we should
always look, for the Promised Land.

So Joseph reminds us that we are strangers
and pilgrims on earth, and that--

**"God will surely visit you, and bring you out
of this land."**

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This series ends, and another begins.

Next week we will learn about the heroes of
faith who lived from the time of Moses
to the time of the latter prophets.