

HEBREWS 11:8-22

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Hebrews chapter 11 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

We are spending a few weeks here in Hebrews chapter 11 because this section deals with faith.

We have seen that Paul opens up in this chapter and he expounds on what faith is all about, which is so important for us to understand.

Faith is not some kind of force that we can control to get what we want. Faith is only possible because of who are faith is placed upon, and that is Jesus!

Paul tells us that faith is the “**substance**” or the supporting structure, like a foundation.

And the idea here is that our faith is what undergirds our hope in the things God has promised us.

Biblical faith is not a blind leap into darkness. It is a reasonable faith that is built upon many infallible proofs that will stand up as evidence in any court of law.

And after Paul gives to us the definition of faith, he moves on to show us examples of faith. And that is what Hebrews chapter 11 is all about, ***EXAMPLES OF FAITH***, as Paul shows us the ***SUPERIORITY OF JESUS OVER THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH!***

In our last study here in Hebrews chapter 11 we looked at three examples of faith.

We started out by looking at the faith of Abel. And we saw that Abel approached God by faith on God’s terms, in His prescribed way and God accepted his sacrifice, while rejecting Cain’s, who approached God the way he wanted and thus, with a wrong heart.

Then we looked at the faith of Enoch. And we see that Enoch, by faith, believed that he wouldn't be judged with the wicked. We saw that Enoch walked with God and it seems God made him this promise, and God kept His Word to him and **“translated him.”** And we said that this is a picture of the Rapture of the Church as Enoch was removed, taken up you might say, before the judgment of God fell upon the earth by a flood!

And then we looked at the faith of Noah. And we saw that Noah's faith teaches us that true faith produces obedience or works. For 120 years Noah built an ark as God had instructed him to do, and it was done in faith as there was no rain until this judgment came. It is as James tells us, **“But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”** James 2:18-20.

You see, they are examples of what true faith is all about.

Remember what Paul said, **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”** Hebrews 11:1.

And, as I have said, faith is the **“substance”** or the supporting structure of what you hope for. It believes in the promises of God even though you may not see it in the present situation.

You have the confidence or the **“evidence”** to act upon what you believe as these men did.

And that is why we are taking out time looking at what faith is and then these examples of faith so that we may grow, our faith may grow.

Thus, with that said, let's begin reading in Hebrews chapter 11, starting in verse 8, and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we look at examples of faith, the heroes of faith from the Old Testament!

And the first one we will be looking at is the faith of Abraham and there are 12 verses spoken of his faith, the only other one that comes close is Moses and there are 6 verses dealing with the faith of Moses and one verse with the faith of his parents.

HEBREWS 11

VERSE 8

Make no mistake about it, Abraham was one of the heroes of the Jewish faith; he was the father of the Jewish people.

But please understand that before God called Abraham from the Ur of the Chaldeans, living in the area of Mesopotamia, he was an idol-worshipping Gentile!

Chaldea was located in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, a spot some 140 miles from where the city of Babylon (in modern day Iraq) would someday be built.

Now, of this man Abraham, we are told in Joshua 24:2, "**And Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods."'"**"

Now the Jewish people would never see father Abraham as an idol worshipping Gentile, but he was and God called him out of that life.

And here is the call to this idol-worshipping Gentile by God in Genesis 12:1-5, “**Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.**”

Pretty straight forward. And when we read something like that we may be thinking, *“What a great man of faith. He was called by God, who he never saw, to go to a land he never lived in, he didn’t even own any property there, and by faith he stepped out!”*

Well, not exactly. In fact, there was this second calling of God to Abraham to leave his people, to leave his land and go to Canaan.

We find this out in the New Testament, Stephen makes it very clear in what Abraham did. In Acts 7:2-5 we see Stephen tell us, **“And he said, ‘Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, “Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.” Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.”**”

In fact, if you go back to Genesis 11:31 that is what we are told, but not as clear as Stephen tells us, **“And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram’s wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.”**

As you can clearly see, Abraham did not completely follow God’s command, but went as far as Haran and remained there until his father Terah died and then he obeyed the Lord.

Keep in mind that Haran was another city in Mesopotamia located north of Ur.

Also, in Acts chapter 7 we see that Stephen tells us that God gave this land to Abraham and his descendants even though he didn’t own any of it, nor did he have any children at that time. In fact, he would not have a child for another 25 years, when he was 100 years old!

But now, here in Hebrews God does not remember the delayed obedience, only the faith!

Abraham's life is the story of someone that God called to separate himself from his family, possessions and familiar surroundings to begin a walk of faith with the Lord not knowing where God was taking him but trusting the guidance, wisdom and faithfulness of God to lead his life and bring him to the destination He had for him.

The same was true when we first obeyed the call of God on our lives to separate ourselves from the world (our Ur) and cross over into a life of faith not knowing where God was going to ultimately lead our lives but putting our faith in His wisdom, guidance and faithfulness to bring us to His desired destination.

Most of you have heard the story of how God called me to Wisconsin from the Northwest suburbs of Chicago.

After I was saved the Lord spoke to my heart and told me that one day He would bring me to Wisconsin to be a pastor of a church.

I didn't own any property in Wisconsin, nor did I know a single person who lived there, but I knew the call of God and I waited and waited and waited.

All I could do was fall on the promises of God that He made to me.

It was some 10 to 12 years after God called that He brought me to Wisconsin and as a family we stepped out in faith, in a land we did not know much about, except that it was Illinois's biggest state park!

Just kidding.

Now, some 25 years later I look back and I see the faithfulness of God to His promise.

What is God calling you to do?

I would encourage you to take those steps of faith, trusting in His promises just as Abraham did.

VERSES 9-10

Think about this for a minute. Abraham never possessed any of the land that God had promised to him. Let me clarify that. The only piece of land that he did have was a small piece of land containing a cave where he buried Sarah.

Not only that, but neither did Isaac and neither did Jacob own any of that land.

You see, they all died in faith seeing the promise a long way down the road. And the same is true with us who are children of Abraham by faith.

I don't know about you, but I can say that for me, my prayer is, ***“Lord, give me patience and give it to me now!”***

That truly is not patience!

I believe a person who is patient is one who has faith in God and His promises. It is not something that happens instantaneously, as we would like. But it is trusting in the Lord and His promise to us!

Look at the examples of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They lived in a land that God gave them, but they lived in tents, not homes because the only land that Abraham owned was the burial plot for his wife Sarah.

Let me put this into perspective for you. From the time that God gave this promise to Abraham until Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promise Land to conquer and possess the land of Canaan, was over five hundred years!

Why does God wait so long?

First of all, it is His perfect timing.

But for us, it is the waiting where there is the growth, the fruit that is being born in our lives. I truly believe it is these times of waiting that are of the greatest benefit to our faith growing.

In fact, that word “**dwelt**” in verse 9 is the Greek word PAROIKEO, (par-oy-keh’-o) and it describes a “resident alien” or a person who lives in a place but doesn’t have permanent status there.

Now look at this once again. They saw this present experience as a pilgrimage, and thus, they “**... waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**” Hebrews 11:10.

Now let’s apply this to our own lives.

Why don’t we as Christians fit in?

We don’t fit in because this is not our home.

We are aliens and strangers just passing through.

Paul said in Philippians 3:20, “**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.**”

Thus, the way we talk, the way we dress, the things we do, how we work, what we watch is just evidence to show that we are not of this world, we are from above.

And because of that, the world comes against us, they try to put out our light, and many times we as Christians compromise our faith so we can fit in, blend in with the world!

That is a big mistake.

I have used this picture before, but it does drive home this point.

Think of it like this. A boat cannot function outside the water. But when you put a boat in the water it functions beautifully.

But if water gets in the boat, it is sunk.

We as Christians are to function in this world but if the world gets in us, we too will be sunk!

And today, we see that many in the church, and many churches, are becoming just like the world! The following is a list of things that are examples of secularization in the church, or how the church is becoming more like the world. There are probably more, but you will see what I mean.

Teaching that the Bible is not inspired and inerrant.

Using books instead of the Bible in Bible study.

Teaching that there is more than one way to God besides Jesus.

Being embarrassed to say that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

Teaching that there is no absolute right and wrong.

Being careful to not offend anyone at the expense of biblical truth.

Pastors preaching moralism instead of Christ centered messages.

Approving of homosexuality.

Approving of women elders.

Not condemning the sins of society.

Psychology as an authority on human nature.

Use of politically correct terms of the world from the pulpit where those terms replace biblical values and truths.

Going to church as a social habit.

Missionaries not sent out or supported.

Evolution.

And, of course the list can go on and on. But instead of taking on the characteristics of Christ, we are being conformed into the image of this world and that is never a good thing because it means our light is going out and there is no or little difference from what the world believes to what the church believes.

Make no mistake about it, we are in this world but not of this world!

Paul made that point very clear as he said in II Timothy 2:3-5, **“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”**

We must we fight the good fight of faith and not give in!

Think about these men of faith: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They did not worry about houses, buildings, the latest four-legged drive camel, the three-legged ones never really caught on, but they looked ahead to a future city built by God, which is eternal!

Notice what Paul said, **“for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”** Hebrews 11:10. What a lesson for us, not to let the things of this world entangle us.

Jesus made that point in Matthew 6:19-24 as He said, **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”**

Where is your treasure?

What kingdom are you building up?

Because wherever it is, whatever it is, that is where your heart will also be, your passion in life!

May it be the Lord.

VERSES 11-12

As we saw with Abraham, that his faith was not perfect and yet, as God speaks of the faith of Abraham here in Hebrews He does not focus on the failure of Abraham, but just his faith.

And that is what we also see here with Sarah, Abraham’s wife. And I have to say that when I look at the faith of Sarah, I am greatly encouraged. Just like my faith, her faith was not perfect!

Now that may seem strange when I just said that her faith was not perfect but let me show you what I mean by looking at the faith of Sarah.

In Genesis chapter 15 God tells Abraham that he will have a son.

In Genesis chapter 16 Sarah helps God out by giving her husband, Abraham, her maidservant named Hagar and she conceives and has a son named Ishmael.

But the Scriptures tell us that he is not the son of promise but a son of the flesh. (Galatians 4:21-31, Genesis 22:2).

Then, in Genesis chapter 17 God tells Abraham, at the age of 99, that he will have a son by his wife Sarah who was 89 years old and he laughed.

As we continue on, in Genesis chapter 18 God speaks again of a son by Sarah and she laughs.

And the laugh of Sarah was a laugh of unbelief but by the time she has a son, after Isaac is born to Sarah, we see her laugh in faith, **“And Sarah said, ‘God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me.’”** Genesis 21:6. That is what Isaac means, laughter! And I am sure every time she saw that young boy and then man, she just laughed with joy and faith!

There are times I look at situations in the church, all the stuff that is going on and I do laugh wondering how God is going to do it.

Sometimes it is a laugh of unbelief, but my prayer is those laughs of unbelief would grow more and more to laughs of belief in what God has promised, for in Him all things are possible.

Paul put it this way in Philippians chapter 4, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. . . . And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** Philippians 4:13,19.

And in Ephesians 3:20 Paul said, **“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.”**

So why not laugh in belief knowing that what God has promised He is more than able to bring to pass!

A missionary translator in the New Hebrides, John Paton was frustrated in his work for a long time because the people had no word for faith.

One day a man who was working for him came into the house and flopped down into a big chair.

The missionary asked him what the word would be for what he had just done.

The word the man gave in reply was the one Paton used for faith in his translation of the New Testament.

Without hesitation or reservation, the man had totally committed his body to the chair. He had felt his need for rest, he was convinced that the chair provided a place for rest, and he committed himself to the chair for rest.

A believer must, in the same way, totally commit his life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Only then is faith, saving faith. Only then is that truly obedient faith.

And please understand the situation that Abraham and Sarah were in. No children in their lives yet and no hope to have a child except the promise from God.

And please understand that this was totally impossible from a human perspective!

What do I mean by that?

Think about it. Abraham being 99 years old and Sarah 89 years old, well past the age of childbearing, and from a human perspective, totally impossible!

But God did bring to pass. They had a son named Isaac and from the descendants of Abraham their numbers became innumerable!

Their faith, maybe as big as a mustard seed, impacted millions upon millions of lives.

You see, it is not the size of your faith, it is that you have faith and it truly is the object of your faith, if it is not God, it is an empty faith! But with God all things are possible!

VERSES 13-16

Now you read this you may be thinking, *“These are the men and women of faith?”*

Really. It says that they all died! How can they be men and women of Faith?”

In fact, they not only died, but they died without receiving any of the promises! It sounds like their faith was an empty faith, but it was not, not at all!

What I want you to see here is that **“These all died in faith . . .”** not *“out of faith!”*

That is important for us to understand, especially in the days we are living in.

There are many faith teachers out there that will tell you that sickness, even death is a result of a lack of faith on your part, you need to have faith in your faith.

That is not what the Scriptures teach; we are to have faith in God, not our faith!

In fact, in these verses God says the exact opposite of what these faith teachers try to teach, and I will believe God rather than these men!

And think about it, these faith teachers get sick and they do even die and yet they lay some big guilt trip on people for their lack of faith because they are sick!

Why didn't these Old Testament saints blab it and grab that land?

Why didn't they name and claim those promises?

Why didn't they have the faith to obtain all those promises?

They did have faith, they saw them at a distance, believed it by faith, and lived their lives accordingly.

Now, since they did not have a place of their own, they could have gone back to their homeland, but they refused.

What a lesson for us as Christians.

What are we going to go back to?

What does the world have to offer us?

Absolutely nothing and thus, Peter's words should be ours when asked by Jesus if he was going to leave, to go back to the world, "**But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'**" John 6:68-69.

In other words, they saw these things through the eyes of faith, they believed that what God had promised them He was more than able to bring to pass.

Remember what we are told in Job 19:25-27, "**For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!**"

Job is speaking about resurrection life and that he would one day, after his body went back to the dust of this earth, he would see his redeemer. He believed it by faith!

We too are waiting by faith to be with the Lord, to be a part of His Kingdom, and one day, to enter that eternal state with a new heaven and a new earth. But this is still future, and we must wait and see these things with the eyes of faith!

Now think about all that Abraham and Sarah went through. All the difficulties they endured without having received the promise, but believing by faith, they looked forward to the coming Messiah.

In knowing that, then we, as Christians, having received the promise of the Messiah, should endure difficulty, discouragement. That was the point that Paul was making to these Jewish believers who were going through a lot of persecution for their faith!

And once again, this is not our home, heaven is!

Think about it, our life is not what we can see, or hold, or measure, but in the promise of God that one day we will be with the Lord and that will be eternal!

David said, **“One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.”** Psalm 27:4.

Our faith is in the promises of God to us and we rest in that!

VERSES 17-19

Think about what God is asking Abraham to do here. After all those years of waiting now God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son.

Remember, Abraham had two sons, one born from Hagar. His name was Ishmael and he was a son of the flesh. In fact, God did not even recognize him as a legitimate son of Abraham.

But Isaac was a son born to Abraham and Sarah and he was the son of the promise. And now God asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son!

How could God do that?

Before we get to that, I thought we should read through this story in Genesis, so we get the full impact of what was going on, what took place.

In Genesis 22:1-19 we are told, “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.’ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ Then he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ So he said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the

name of the place, The - LORD -Will - Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’ Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.”

In a test of faith, God called Abraham to take his only son, not the son of the flesh, Ishmael, but the son of the promise, Isaac, and offer him up as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah.

And notice, no arguing, no complaining, just faithful obedience to what God had said.

In fact, the verb tense of, “**offered up**” in Hebrews 11:17 indicates that as far as Abraham was concerned, this was a done deal. Isaac was already offered up the moment God spoke.

Thus, for three days of traveling to Mount Moriah, in Abraham’s mind, Isaac is dead!

Now here is the thing. Abraham did not know how, but he believed in the promises of God that through his seed the nations of the world would be blessed, that through his seed his descendants would be innumerable.

Thus, if God was going to do this, He would have to raise Isaac from the dead.

At this point in history, God had not done anything like that, Abraham never witnessed anyone being raised from the dead, but he believed it by faith.

In fact, Paul tells us in Hebrews 11:19, **“concluding that God was able to raise him up”**

That word **“concluding”** or **“accounting that God was able to raise him up”** is the Greek word, LOGIZOMAI, (log-id'-zom-ahee) and it was an arithmetic word expressing “a decisive and carefully reasoned act.” (Guthrie)

In other words, Abraham calculated God’s promise worthy of confidence and by faith he walked.

Now please understand that Isaac was not a little boy, as some were taught in their Sunday School stories. He was a man, I believe around 33 years of age, and he could have overtaken his dad if he wanted, but he freely submitted to do his father’s will!

Why did God allow this?

Not only to test the faith of Abraham but to give us a picture of what Father God would do some 2,000 years down the road on that same spot, only this time this 33 year old man named Jesus would die for the sins of the world. **“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . .”**

But this time the sacrifice would be complete.

Remember what we were told in Genesis 22:7-8, **“Then he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together.”**

God did provide Himself as that sacrifice!

In John 8:56 Jesus said, **“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”**

What was He speaking of?

I think He was speaking of the death and resurrection of the Messiah, of Jesus, as Abraham acted out what would take place on Mount Moriah some 2,000 years later!

Think about this for a minute. All that Abraham did, when he was confronted with a promise and a command from God which seemed to contradict the other promise of God, he did what we should do – he obeyed the command and let God take care of the promise – which God was and is more than able to do!

It is as Paul said in this section of faith looking at the faith of Enoch, **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”** Hebrews 11:6.

And in Romans 4:20-21 Paul said of Abraham, **“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.”**

May we have that kind of faith that is willing to walk as God instructs us, no matter how difficult that road may be, no matter what we may encounter down that path, we are willing to walk by faith and not by sight!

VERSE 20

Now if I was writing this letter, Isaac would not be in my hall of faith, he lived in the flesh for a good portion of his life.

You see, as you read this story in Genesis chapter 27 you will see that Isaac initially tried to defy the will of God, he tried to do what he wanted instead of what the Lord wanted him to do. And let’s face it, you can try to fight against God, but you won’t win and if you could, it would not be for good, not at all!

Let's take a look at what transpired in this story of Isaac. Remember when Isaac was going to give the blessing to Esau and when his wife Rebekah found out, she helped her son Jacob fool Isaac into thinking he was Esau.

Isaac, at this point in his life, could hardly see and he loved some venison stew and asked his manly son Esau to hunt and prepare it for him and then he would bless him.

Well, Rebekah made some for Jacob to take to his dad, and he wore the clothes of Esau, disguised himself even with the smell of the outdoors, and he received the blessing from Isaac.

When Esau came in for the blessing after Jacob left, Isaac told him that he already gave away the blessing to Esau he thought, but it was Jacob instead.

And we are told in Genesis 27:32-33, **“And his father Isaac said to him, ‘Who are you?’ So he said, ‘I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.’ Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, ‘Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him - and indeed he shall be blessed.’”**

Here is the problem. God said that even though Jacob was not the firstborn, he was to get the blessing of the firstborn.

And like I have said, Isaac tried to get around that because he loved Esau more.

Then where is the faith in Isaac?

When he saw that God had thwarted his plan, even though Jacob was acting in the flesh, not a man of faith here, he trembled and we are told, **“I have blessed him - and indeed he shall be blessed.”** Genesis 27:33.

Now it seems here that he is still upset even though he saw that God's plans could not be changed and he submitted to God's will by faith, but he was not happy about it, at least not yet.

But I think in Genesis 28 Isaac comes to terms with the will of God and calls Jacob to himself and repeats the blessing once again, this time with all his heart and by faith that Jacob would be stronger someday than Esau, not because it seemed possible at that moment, but because God promised it would be so.

Listen to what we are told of this blessing of Isaac upon Jacob as he sends Jacob to his mother's brothers house, Laban for safety, because Esau wants to kill him. We are told in Genesis 28:3-4, **"May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham."**

We are not going to be able to circumvent the will of God nor should we want to. And yes, here in this hall of faith section of the Bible we see God overlook the faithlessness of Isaac and see him as a man of faith as he surrenders to the will of God!

VERSE 21

Of all the examples of faith here in Hebrews chapter 11, Jacob is not one you would think could ever make it, but here he is!

You see, Jacob's life was pretty carnal, not a great man of faith but a schemer, a conniver. He did what he wanted to get what he wanted.

In a sense, he didn't believe in the promise of God, for the most part and when he acted in the flesh, he was Jacob but when he acted in the spirit, he was called Israel or governed by God.

In Genesis 48:14-20, as Jacob and his family are down in Egypt with his son Joseph, he is going to bless the sons of Joseph and we are told, **“Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said: ‘God, before whom my father’s Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.’ Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. And Joseph said to his father, ‘Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.’ But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.’ So he blessed them that day, saying, ‘By you Israel will bless, saying, “May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!”” And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.”**

The right hand was the place of honor, of strength.

Thus, since Manasseh was the firstborn, he should get the blessing of the firstborn and Ephraim was the second born, and he would also get a blessing, but not of the firstborn.

Now Jacob or Israel crosses his hand and places his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh. Just the opposite of how it should be.

Is this old man confused, making a mistake? Not at all!

Israel gave the blessing to both sons but Ephraim; the son of the right hand received the greater portion of the blessing. Both were blessed but Ephraim was the greater tribe, even to the point of having the name Ephraim represent the Northern Kingdom of Israel, all 10 of those tribes! (Isaiah 7:8, 17, 11:13)

Now Joseph thinks his dad is making a mistake, he is old, he can't see and thus, Joseph tries to help him out, but Israel knew exactly what he was doing.

He makes Ephraim receive the blessing of the firstborn as Jeremiah 31:9 tells us, **“They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn.”**

Jacob died a man of faith; he was obedient to the commands of God.

One writer put it like this,

Though his physical sight was dim, his spiritual sight was keen. The closing scene of Jacob's life finds him worshiping while leaning on the top of his staff.

- William MacDonald

And C. H. Mackintosh summarizes the life of Jacob like this. *“The close of Jacob’s career stands in most pleasing contrast with all the previous scenes of his eventful history. It reminds one of a serene evening after a tempestuous day: the sun, which during the day had been hidden from view by clouds, mists, and fogs, sets in majesty and brightness, gilding with his beams the western sky, and holding out the cheering prospect of a bright tomorrow. Thus it is with our aged patriarch. The supplanting, the bargain-making, the cunning, the management, the shifting, the shuffling, the unbelieving selfish fears, - all those dark clouds of nature and of earth seem to have passed away, and he comes forth, in all the calm elevation of faith, to bestow blessings, and impart dignities, in that holy skillfulness which communion with God can alone impart.”*

Look at how Jacob, or I should say Israel has grown.

In this we see the completed and wonderful work regarding Jacob’s recognition of God’s presence in his life, 147 years of God working in him and wow, has his faith grown!

- **I am with you** (Genesis 28:15): God gives the young believer every possible assurance of His presence and grace.

- **I will be with you** (Genesis 31:3): God expects the growing believer to trust He will be with us, even when we only have the promise of His presence.

- **God . . . has been with me** (Genesis 31:5): God gives a glorious testimony to the mature believer, able to say how God has been with us, even when we haven’t felt His presence in the way we wished.

- **God will be with you** (Genesis 48:21): God gives the mature believer the opportunity to encourage others with the promise of God's presence.

Lord, help our faith to grow each and every day of our life!

VERSE 22

Of all the men of faith in this chapter, Joseph is the one that comes to my mind as a man of faith. All he endured and he saw the hand of God upon his life. He knew his brothers meant evil upon him, but God took that and turned it out for good. That truly is faith in the most difficult of situations.

Let me show you what God used to show the faith of Joseph.

In Genesis 50:24-26 we are told, **“And Joseph said to his brethren, ‘I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.’ Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.’ So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”**

Look at the faith of Joseph here. Joseph knew God's promise would come to pass and even though he wouldn't see it in his lifetime, he believed it by faith.

And because of that, his instructions to future generations, the ones who would enter the land of Canaan, was that they were to carry his bones into the Promise Land and bury him there and that is exactly what they did!

We are told in Exodus 13:19, **“And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.’”**

So Moses took the bones of Joseph and carried them for those forty years of wandering in the wilderness after they left Egypt.

And then, in Joshua 24:32 we see this take place as we are told, **“The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.”**

Joseph believed this all by faith and his faith was in the God who is more than able to bring what He has promised to pass!

I like the way Spurgeon picked up on this. He wrote,

The Holy Spirit in this chapter selects out of good men’s lives the most brilliant instances of their faith. I should hardly have expected that he would have mentioned the dying scene of Joseph’s life as the most illustrious proof of his faith in God . . . Does not this tell us, dear brethren and sisters, that we are very poor judges of what God will most delight in?

- Charles Spurgeon

Now we are not going to finish Hebrews chapter 11 tonight, we probably have a few more studies to go. But again, this is so important as we see the faith of these men and women, and we can learn from them and grow in the Lord. We can learn to walk by faith and not by sight!

And as we looked at Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, their faith, we saw that they faced death with full confidence that all that God had promised would come to pass even though they did not see it with their physical eyes, but they did see it through the eyes of faith!

And they passed on that faith to future generations.

May we do the same, pass on the faith that God has given to us to the next generation that they too may carry on the work of God!

And our faith will never be perfect, but may we have the faith to walk and understand that our God is gracious and merciful to us, probably more than we will ever know!

May we wait for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God because this is not our home!