

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:

“1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible...

6 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.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. ...

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. ”

“Isaac Blesses Jacob”

I had asked several of you this week to remember me in prayer as I prepared this message because it has been quite a struggle! A struggle shared by many of my trusted commentators on this Book of Beginnings so I did not feel alone.

- **We are going to be dealing with a long narrative here in Chapter 27 of Genesis in this message and so I chose to read those passages from Hebrews 11 from which I will draw my major conclusions as our morning text.**

I believe that this is our inspired commentary on these portions of the early Scriptures and while there are other truths to glean and lessons to learn it is far too easy to wonder off into speculations in such an account. We have been introduced to the major characters and we know the ending right from the beginning when God told Rebekah that the younger would serve the elder:

- **Jacob was to be the Son of Promise!**

The blessing of Jacob is now laid out for us as a drama or stage play that would rival anything written but the great masters of our language like Chaucer or Shakespeare.

And this is what leads to the danger in my opinion with some of the speculations or lessons that folks want to draw from these verses.

For example Rebekah is seen by some as the chief villain in the account leading her son into a deceptive plot that ends with his exile.

And by others she is seen as a picture of Jesus as someone willing to lay down her own life to obtain the proper blessing for her son.

The problem with both is that there is not one word in the text that comments on her motives, nor any further commentary on her actions, like what we read in Hebrews regarding Isaac.

- So I believe that the proper bottom line is that we see how God accomplished His plans in the midst of much human frailty
- To help us understand this I will lean more heavily than I usually do on some of those Bible commentators!

Robert Candlish, who was Charles Spurgeon's favorite, saw this chapter as the struggle between sense and faith and could be as much a trial to us as readers as it was for the players!

Pastor Candlish rightly begins by saying, "In general, it may be observed that the sacred history, especially in the Old Testament, often makes a strong demand upon the faith of readers; at least it makes a demand on that peculiar exercise of faith which consists in obedience to the peremptory injunction, "Be still and know that I am God!" The sovereignty of God, as the direct and immediate cause of whatsoever comes to pass – together with the absolute vanity of all subordinate agents, -- fills the mind with awe; -- while the open and undisguised, nay, as it would seem, minute and elaborate exposure of human weakness and sin, would almost make one echo in sad earnest what the Psalmist said in his haste, "All men are liars" [Ps. 116:11] It happens too, here, as in other instances in which the divine and human elements are combined, that the balance, in the comparison of character and conduct, is often felt to be in favor rather of those who are opposing, than of those who are carrying out, the divine will. The blessing reaches him for whom it is intended, in a way that is apt to connect it, in our esteem, with the idea of ill-gotten gain; and sympathy is enlisted on the side of the real usurper."

- That is certainly the conclusion that can be drawn from the summary I read from the Book of Hebrews!

So with that in mind, let us move through this text so I can give you a few of my 'speculations' but more importantly to help us see the central point that Hebrews drives home and finally to simply just enjoy a great story as God continues to unfold the story of His salvation to His people:

We know the players from the previous chapters and we have been told the Isaac favors his worldly son Esau and that Rebekah loves the chosen son Jacob and we will see this parental favoritism in this account. After the servants of Isaac find water at the end of Chapter 26 we are quickly told in verse 34 that "When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. 35 And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah."

Esau will take more wives at the end of this account which gives us some pretty clear bookends and keep us from having too much sympathy for Esau today.

- We will see him in Genesis for some time and will deal with the question of his eternal state in later messages.

Our drama then begins in chapter 27:

"Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." And he answered him, "Here I am." 2 Then he said, "Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. 3 Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. 4 And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.""

Well Isaac gets two things very wrong right out the gate:

- 1) He was NOT about to die! Isaac will live on about another forty years, but for now he simply fades from the story.
- 2) He wanted to bless the wrong son. Esau was clearly his favored son and yet it was Jacob that was chosen and so rather than call his sons, as would have been normal he wants ONLY Esau!

5 “Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. 6 So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, 7 Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of Jehovah before my death.' 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. 9 Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. 10 Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death."”

Rebekah also gets two things very wrong:

- 1) She too thinks Isaac is dying and thus she fears the wrong blessing.
- 2) She thinks God needs her help!

While some certainly see her as one willing to do whatever was needed to accomplish what God had clearly said should happen, I would rather think this is a repeat of the efforts by Sarah to have a son of promise by having of her servant Hagar marry Abraham.

It is interesting to note that the schemes of both mothers, which of course were driven by a desire to see the line of promise continue through their husbands & sons, ended with exiles for one of their sons!

Our story continues in verse 11: “And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. 12 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing."”

- Jacob is at least hesitant, but only fears the harm that might come him!

13 “But his mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, & go, get them for me.”

Considering that we have no further mention of Rebekah anywhere in the Scriptures after this account, perhaps she did bring shame on herself...

14 “And [Jacob] went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.”

- This is certainly the mother’s scheme & she sees to all the details including those skins & cloths.
[mention type of goats]
- Her motive was to see the proper son, who also happened to be her favorite, receive the blessings...
- But I fear she was NOT doing the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way!
- But Jacob is certainly a willing participant and quickly warms to the role of a grand deceiver.

18 “So he went to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" *[some doubt?]* 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me."”

- Here we have the wrong man with the wrong food at the wrong time, but he wants the blessing!

20 “But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And [Jacob] said, "Because Jehovah your God brought it to me."”

- I doubt that involving God in yours lies is a good idea...

21 "Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not."

- Isaac continues to doubt & it shows the importance of Rebekah's attention to the details!

22 "So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." [Does Isaac quietly want to be deceived?]23 "And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him."

- The text seems to say Isaac was deceived but he is going to make sure that the blame in this event will squarely fall on Jacob!
- And so Isaac again asks...

24 "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am." 25 He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.

- Is Isaac celebrating a great day, or drowning his sorrow over not being able to bless his oldest?

26 "Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." 27 And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which Jehovah has blessed. 28 Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. 29 Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, & blessed be those who bless you!"

- God means for good what ALL the players in this account meant for evil!
- We see here the blessing given in a way that both Abraham and Isaac had received it by the mouth of the Lord!

This will be confirmed next week when we see Isaac blessing Jacob, in his right mind and without any deception:

Genesis 28:1 "And Isaac called Jacob and blessed him... 3 "May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; 4 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."

- I believe the writer of Hebrews is referring to all of these blessings when he speaks of the faith of Isaac, but we are getting ahead of our story...

30 "Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

- Like a thrilling drama!

31 "He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me." 32 And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." 33 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."

- Isaac certainly understood that it was he who would pass down the blessing!
- I think Isaac was truly upset that he could not do what he had wanted to do with Esau, but notice he does not attempt to reverse what was done under the color of deception!

34 “When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me--me also, O my father!"”

- Lots of emotion in this part of the story.

35 “But [Isaac] said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing."

36 And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!"”

- What God had said would happen has come true!

“And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"” 37 Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?"”

38 And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me--me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.”

- Esau here is pleading with his father in the same way the Abraham pleaded with God regarding Ismael...

39 “Then Isaac his father answered & said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above.

40 By your sword you shall live,

And you shall serve your brother;

And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck."”

All this is certainly born out in the history of Israel and Edom! We will see many details about this as we continue on in Genesis, but from here on out the major topic in the Book of Beginnings will be the story of Jacob and His twelve sons!

The story of God’s salvation that He will bring about in due time as THE Son of Promise, THE Seed of Abraham comes as Jesus our Lord to give Himself as the sacrifice for sin in the land of promise there in Jerusalem.

- As I mentioned briefly, next week we will see the summary of Hebrews brought fully to bear as Isaac again blesses the Son of Promise, Jacob and how Rebekah in the end loses both of her boys.

In conclusion this morning I want to return to the comments from the classic Keil and Delitzsch commentary on the Pentateuch:

“Thus the words of Isaac to his two sons were fulfilled, -- words which are justly said to have been spoken “in faith concerning things to come.” [as we read in Hebrews 11 as our text]

“For the blessing was a prophecy, and that not merely in the case of Esau, but in that of Jacob also; although Isaac was deceived with regard to the person of the latter, Jacob remained blessed, therefore, because, according to the predetermination of God, the elder was to serve the younger; but the deceit by which his mother prompted him to secure the blessing was never approved.

On the contrary, the sin was followed by immediate punishment. Rebekah was obliged to send her pet son in to a foreign land, away from his father’s house, and in an utterly destitute condition. She did not see him for twenty years, even if she lived till his return, and possibly never saw him again. Jacob had to atone for his sin against both brother and father by a long and painful exile, in the midst of privation, anxiety, fraud, and want.

Isaac was punished for retaining his preference for Esau, in opposition to the revealed will of Jehovah, by the success of Jacob's stratagem; and Esau for his contempt of the birthright, by the loss of blessing of the first-born.

In this way a higher hand prevailed above the acts of sinful men, bringing the counsel and will of Jehovah to eventual triumph, in opposition to the human thought and will."

➤ **And thus Saints, may we always be those who strive to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way!**

Communion Meditation: Genesis 27

"26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son."

27 And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son Is like the smell of a field Which the Lord has blessed. 28 Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. 29 Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"