



## Hebrews 11:20-22

<sup>20</sup> By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. <sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. <sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

### **SUMMARY**

Faith is “the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Sometimes, what is “not seen” is how God is working in our present circumstances. Other times, what’s unseen is future realities.

It’s this forward-looking dimension to faith the author highlights when he mentions Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These three, all facing death, by faith looked beyond their own lives to events they were certain God would one day accomplish. This certainty led each of them to act in the way these verses describe.

Isaac’s faith was demonstrated in blessing his sons Jacob and Esau. Just as God’s promises and blessings to Abraham had been passed on to Isaac (Genesis 26:3-5), so now it was time for Isaac to pass them on to his own child (27:28-29). Only by faith could a landless wanderer trust that nations would one day bow down to his descendants. Like his father, Abraham, Isaac believed God would one day accomplish what presently seemed impossible.

Jacob too demonstrated his faith at the end of life by blessing children. The focus here is specifically on the blessing he gave to his grandchildren, Manasseh and Ephraim. In faith, Jacob gave the birthright that normally would have been

reserved for his firstborn, Reuben, and instead gave it to Joseph's sons (1 Chronicles 5:1). In doing so, they were counted as being Jacob's own sons (Genesis 48:5). And in faith, he spoke of them "growin[ing] into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (48:16).

And Joseph, nearing the end of his life, looked to the future. Joseph had spent all but 17 of his 110 years of life in Egypt. Yet even still, Egypt wasn't home. As death approached, he reminded his people that God would one day bring them out of Egypt into the land of Canaan that he had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In full confidence of this, Joseph instructed them to bring his bones to that land when the time came to leave Egypt (Genesis 50:24-26; Joshua 24:32).

## **DISCUSS**

Read Revelation 21:1-8. What future awaits us as God's people?

Trust in God's future actions practically shaped the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. How should confidence in the future that awaits us shape our own lives now? To what extent do you make choices in view of what's coming?

In Genesis, God's promises to Abraham and his descendants often appeared to be in jeopardy. In Romans 8:28, what promise does God make to Christians? When in your life does this promise seem to be in jeopardy? How can remembering God's sovereignty help you to endure in those moments?