

*20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, as 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 exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.*

This morning, certainly, we are more aware than usual of the sovereignty of God over our lives. He it is that grants the first rush of oxygen after birth, He sustains us as we live, and He is sovereign over the final breath that we will take as we leave this world and go on to the next, unseen one.

We have taken some time out this summer to do a topical study on the idea of faith. What is it? We need to know, because we learn and understand that faith is the dividing line between those that God receives unto Himself, and those who perish to eternal separation and perdition.

That makes faith the most important single thing we can try to study and understand in this life.

With it we are pleasing to God and He will welcome us ultimately into His heaven and we will enjoy Him forever.

Without faith, the separation of the fall, the sin we are born into, will after this life condemn us to eternity, separated from God, in a place of terror and torment.

Faith is the fulcrum. The intersection where we choose to believe God and be separated from this lost sinful world . . . or not. Later on, for those of us who pursue this book we find out, it wasn't us who chose Him, it was Him who chose us.

Therefore, there is no boasting, because all of the glory of our position in Christ, by faith, even the very faith that was the beginning, it all originates with God.

We were dead in trespasses and sins. He quickened our spirits from the dead and made us alive, together with Christ. We learn that even the faith that was the beginning of our eternal life together with Him, was a gift given to us by our Saviour.

I have enjoyed this time in the Hall of Faith chapter, the Hero's of Faith, looking at different facets of this un-explainable thing we call faith.

Faith is shown to us, a little bit at a time in the lives of the ones, who like us, were called out of this world to be seperated from this world and belong to God.

Something about each one shows us a different angle, a different view of how belief in a God who makes promises to chosen men who will never see Him in this life, caused them to live apart from this world, by faith.

As the author keeps saying, "by faith, by faith, by faith, by faith, each person shows us something about faith that helps us ultimately try to understand.

We spoke earlier of Paul and James, two apostolic new testament authors who teach us something unique about this faith that pleases God.

The author of Hebrews is addressing a problem that was prominent during this 1st century period in Israel.

He begins this discussion of faith, actually at the end of Hebrews

chapter 10 at the end of a discussion about the sufficiency and finality of the sacrifice of Jesus.

The Hebrew Christians were suffering persecution at the hands of their countrymen, they were under duress to leave the once for all sufficiency of Christ, and return to a system of works righteousness. And the author of this book tells them;

*38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;  
AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO  
PLEASURE IN HIM.*

*39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*

Salvation and acceptance with God do not come by working to please God somehow in this fallen flesh. Righteousness, without which no one will see God, comes by faith. And that faith doesn't shrink back to the old works righteousness system.

This author tells his readers, if you shrink back to the old system of law keeping, you shrink back to destruction. Faith is what brings an accounting, a reckoning of the books where next to our name, it says; Righteous! A righteousness, not our own, but the very righteousness of Jesus, accounted to us. Given to us.

*38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;*

Works by our flesh; destruction. Righteousness given to us by faith in the Son of God who died for us; life. *38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;*

And then the author launches into the hallmark chapter we have been looking at.

Faith is like electricity. Mostly we can't see it. But we can see the work it accomplishes. We can't see faith. But we can see what faith accomplishes.

And Paul says to the Jews and the gentiles, Salvation is by faith alone, not of works.

And James says, that's true, but if the faith is real, like electricity, if it's there, I'll be able to see what it accomplishes.

And the author of Hebrews says, here's a whole list of people who were saved by that faith, and this is what God did through them. He is bringing about His plan of redemption miraculously and sovereignly, by accomplishing things through people of faith, that could never have happened without His hand in their lives through faith.

By faith, God is taking back this world, one redemptive act at a time by the means of people who believe His words. Our hearts desire is for you to be one of those people. Owned by God, taken out of this world, and accomplishing things, for His glory, by faith.

We look at those people and we say they did that but then we say, no God did that, and then like the author of this book we say, by faith, such and such happened, and it happened because of some person, but it couldn't have happened except God made it happen through them. That's the formula he uses.

God does things, but it pleases Him to use people to accomplish His good pleasure. Oh, how we want to be those people. And if you belong to Him, you are one of those people.

This is a most interesting little section this morning. There are 4

so-called Patriarchs of the nation of Israel, and we have looked first at Abraham. He is our faith model.

And the other 3 are Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

*20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, as 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 exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.*

Isaac is an interesting character. We won't spend too much time here, but he's interesting in the way he shows us how God works with His chosen ones who are so imperfect.

God uses the obedient and the dis-obedient to accomplish His purposes and achieve His ends.

We read the story of Isaac and we say this doesn't look like a hero of faith to me. Indeed, in this case, Faith is the hero in spite of Isaac. He did everything he knew how to do to work against God's revealed truth.

Our author says, by faith, Isaac blessed Jacob. No. Our author says by faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau.

And we learn that there is a difference of opinion between God and Isaac about Jacob and Esau over some information revealed by God. Fascinating.

In Genesis 25, as a result of faith, if you read the account; Rebekah has been barren for 20 years of marriage to Isaac. And we learn that Isaac approaches God and prays on behalf of his wife, who we are told, he immediately loved his wife, Isaac loves

Rebecca, and so he prays in her behalf. She is barren. The promises require sons.

And in Genesis 25, the plans of God almighty are already at work in Rachel's womb, and she's miserable. vs 22 *But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So Rebekah went to inquire of the LORD,*

*23 and He declared to 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."*

That is prophetic revelation somehow directly from God. God has made His choice before the babies are born. The older will be subservient to the younger.

God says something remarkable to the prophet Malachi. Hard for us to understand. Malachi 1:2 *"I have loved you," says the LORD. But you ask, "How have You loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved, 3 but Esau I have hated, and I have made his mountains a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals." ...*

God owns everything. He makes His choices. We don't get to ask why. He is a sovereign King. A great King who owns everything and who chooses to suit His own pleasure.

In the womb, before they were born, God makes His choice. He loves Jacob. He hates Esau.

Paul uses this story in Romans chapter 9 to declare that God is a God who sovereignly elects. And we don't get to ask the potter, *why did you make me thus?* He is God. You are not.

That's a topic too big for us this morning, and perhaps any morning. It pleased God to make our brains small enough that some things we are not meant to understand, but to honor God by accepting His sovereignty by faith and believing that every act of His is Righteous and perfect.

Never-the-less, here is the conundrum. A revelation of God has been given, a prophecy, His word; the younger will serve the older. Isaac was aware of that.

But Isaac has made his choice and it's different from the God of heaven. Isaac loves Esau best. He loves that hairy man. He loves the taste of the fresh game that Esau goes out and kills. And Isaac has purposed in his heart to bless the older, in defiance of what God directly told Rebekkah.

You say, where is faith in all of this tug of war between who God loves and who Isaac loves. It sounds like the opposite of faith. *20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.*

You can read the story in Genesis 27. How Isaac is blind. How he tells Esau to go get him some savory game and prepare it how he loves it and how he will bless him, not Jacob.

And how Rebekkah goes rogue on her husband and hatches a plan to have her favorite, Jacob, be the son of blessing. Intrigue. Deception. Lies galore. It's all there. Un-necessary. Since God Almighty had already declared the younger mightier.

God doesn't need us to lie and cheat and steal in order to accomplish His stated purposes. But the remarkable thing to the author of Hebrews is that in this case, the "by faith" is that God will accomplish His purposes in spite of everybody doing the

wrong thing.

Isaac is trying to supplant God's choice. Rebecca and Jacob are trying to accomplish God's choice by deception and lies. Works of the flesh. And I think everything comes to a head in vs. 33 of Genesis 27.

Let me read directly from the account;

*18 Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me.*

(you shall not lie)

*Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me." 20 Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God caused it to happen to me."*

(you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain)

*21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. 24 And he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he said, "I am." (another lie) 25 So he said, "Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you." And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come close and kiss me, my son."*



*27 So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said,  
“See, the smell of my son  
Is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed;*

*28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,  
And of the fatness of the earth,  
And an abundance of grain and new wine;*

*29 May peoples serve you,  
And nations bow down to you;  
Be master of your brothers,  
And may your mother’s sons bow down to you.  
Cursed be those who curse you,  
And blessed be those who bless you.”* (every bit of this,

directed by Isaac toward Esau, is a direct confrontation and denial of God's stated choice. God's words to Rebecca. Let nations serve Esau. Let Esau be master of his brother and his brother's nation. Let the nation of Jacob bow down to the nation of Esau.

Cursed be those who curse you. In other words let God be cursed for cursing Esau. This gets pretty violent when you think about it. Cursed be God's plan and God's choice. Blessed be Isaac's choice of Esau.

*30 Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, “Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that you may bless me.” 32 Isaac his father said to him, “Who are you?” And he said, “I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.” 33 Then Isaac trembled violently,*

I think this is the turning point in Isaac's rebellion against God's choice. The older will serve the younger. Just as God said. By faith. God will have his way, sometimes because we work with Him, and sometimes, by faith He will have His good pleasure, in spite of us.

*and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, (it wasn't game, it was domestic goat. Rebecca probably crushed some sage to get the oil and rubbed domestic goat to make it gamey) so that I ate of all of it before you came, **and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.**"*

Here, Isaac admits his defeat in his rebellion against God's pre-stated choice. Perhaps this is why the author of Hebrews includes Isaac and Isaac's repentance when he trembles at what he had tried to do and failed because God is more powerful.

We'll see that Isaac is faithful in his blessing of Esau, at this point, in his defeat against God who is more powerful to accomplish His will. Isaac's blessing of Esau is faithful now and is aligned with God's purposes and choice. By faith, God will have His way.

*34When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" 35And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing." 36Then he said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" 37But Isaac replied to Esau, "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?" 38Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me*

*also, O my father.” So Esau lifted his voice and wept.*

*39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him,  
“Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,  
And away from the dew of heaven from above.*

*40 “By your sword you shall live,  
And your brother you shall serve;  
But it shall come about when you become restless,  
That you will break his yoke from your neck.”*

I believe the author of Hebrews included this story of Isaac the Patriarch to teach us that God will have his way, and that Isaac repented of trying to overturn God's choice and then faithfully pronounced the truth concerning Esau. Faith wins. *20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.*

This author is very selective. He chooses a man who is a failure, in direct defiance with God's stated revelation, and yet, God through faith ultimately has His way with Isaac. Isaac aligns with God, ultimately.

That is a component of faith. God chooses. God wins. His chosen ones, will ultimately be faithful, even if they are momentarily unfaithful. Isaac repented. It was the strength of faith that pronounced that Esau would be relegated to deserts and wildernesses and that he would bow down to Jacob. Isaac stated that by faith. Remarkable! Isaac finished . . . in faith.

Again this author is selective. He wants us to learn about how God accomplishes His perfect will, through very imperfect people, by faith. Next is Jacob;

*21 By faith Jacob, as 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 exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.*

One of the things our writer and teacher of the Hebrews wants us to learn by the selections of the 3 patriarchs this morning is that faith endures.

These three pictures of imperfect patriarchs have in common that at the end of their lives, their belief in God and in His promises to Israel are solid.

Real faith is finishing faith. I was at a conference the first time I heard John Piper speaking and he was talking about a group and he called them a room full of "finishers."

And it dawned on me, what he was referring to was that the room was full of folks with gray hair. Finishers. People who have been christians over the long haul. Mike Farris finished. Untimely to us, but right on schedule for His Father.

Real faith, the kind that God uses to accomplish His purposes in this fallen world, is a faith that is still active and present at the end of life.

That's part of what this author is showing us about real faith. It doesn't fail. We see people come and then after a while, we never see them again. Why?

Well, John tells us "*they went out from us because they were not of us*" in 1 Jn 2:19. And Jesus compares them to soils that stop short of producing fruit. Some seed the birds ate by the wayside, and some failed because the soil was shallow, and some failed because

of weeds choking out the fruit.

We see people come, and we embrace them and love them . . . and then they're gone. Too often.

Jesus said on multiple occasions; Matthew 10:22 & 24:13  
*You will be hated by everyone on account of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.*

Beginning the race matters little. Finishing is what matters. We began this morning's thoughts with Hebrews 10, the immediate preface and introduction to the "faith" chapter and I would remind you again;

*38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;  
AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO  
PLEASURE IN HIM.*

*39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*

Real faith doesn't fail. It doesn't shrink back to destruction. Real faith is a faith still present at the end. Finishing faith.

Jacob recounts his life to Pharaoh in few words. He says *my days have been few and unpleasant*. But this author gives us a glimpse of Jacob right at the end, about to die.

*21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*

How very interesting that this author for his purposes, showing us what real faith looks like, bypassed all of the recorded events of Jacobs life and not only Jacob but also the long history of his 4

wives and 12 sons.

He doesn't care about any of that. Some good material there. A lot of bad, sprinkled with some good; passed over.

At the very end of Jacob's life, Israel's life, Joseph who is basically running Egypt, he's top man under the Pharaoh, and Joseph hears that his father is sick and it's the end and he takes his two boys, Ephraim and Manasseh with him to visit Jacob.

And the Spirit of God accomplishes something remarkable in Jacob's final moments. Probably better just read than me telling the story second hand. This is from Genesis 48.

*1 Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is sick." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. 2 When it was told to Jacob, "Behold, your son Joseph has come to you," Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed. 3 Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 4 and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.' 5 "Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. 6 "But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance. 7 "Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."*

*8 When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"*

*9Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." 10Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. 11Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well." 12Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground. 13Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him. 14But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.*

*15He blessed Joseph, and said,*

*"The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,*

*The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,*

*16The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,*

*Bless the lads;*

*And may my name live on in them,*

*And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;*

*And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."*

*17When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.*

*18Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head." 19But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother*

*shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”*

*20He blessed them that day, saying,*

*“By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying,  
‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!’”  
Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.*

*21Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.*

*22“I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.”*

By faith Jacob claimed Ephraim and Manasseh as his own and they had inheritance equivalent to all of the direct sons. Therefore Joseph got a double portion.

You say, that makes 13, then instead of 12. No, because later God chose the tribe of Levi to not have an inheritance in real estate, but to be a tribe of priests.

So Ephraim and Manasseh get a double portion belonging to Joseph.

And then the part about Jacob who is blind by now, crossing his hands over and blessing the two lads in reverse of how Joseph had set them up, with the older at his father's right hand where he thought they should be.

And Jacob says prophetically, I know, I know when Joseph takes issue with the younger getting the older's position, but Jacob prophecies that Ephraim will be the greater nation, and they were. Joshua who leads Israel into the land is an Ephraimite.



Indeed, in the future Ephraim's name will become synonymous some times with ALL of the children of Israel.

At his deathbed, Jacob states;

*“The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,  
The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,*

*16The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,  
Bless the lads;*

Those are words that any one of us would want to repeat at the final moments of our lives. Robert Grant, in 1833 wrote these words in the 4<sup>th</sup> stanza of his hymn; **O Worship the King;**

*4 Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
in thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail.  
Thy mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,  
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!*

It sounds as if it could very well have been based in this worship of Israel's at the very last. A living faith caused Jacob to finish well.

And we're out of time so we'll just touch on Joseph. vs. 22 *By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.*

At the end of his life, Joseph doesn't care about all of importance of his executive role that he has performed faithfully in his time in Egypt. None of that. In his last breath he makes the Israelites promise that they will transport his bones out of Egypt and bury them in the promised land.

By the world's standards he is so successful at everything he

touches, (because God is continually with him, blessing him) that he is in charge of everything. Pharaoh doesn't worry about anything at all. Joseph has the golden touch.

But Joseph doesn't want anything this world can offer. He doesn't want his name immortalized in a pyramid that will last 40 centuries. Perhaps the greatest legacy possible in human terms.

Joseph says I want one thing. Get me out of here. Carry my bones to the land God promised us and bury me with my fathers.

By faith he sees the future. Listen to his final words in Genesis 50. Don't worry this is very short; *24 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." 25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here."*

God will fulfil His promises to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob. God will take care of you. God will bring you up from this land to the land that He promised you. And carry me out of here. Get me out of here. Don't leave me behind.

3 men who had a real and vibrant faith, and who ultimately finished well, believing the promises, though never seeing them in their life times.