

Isaac's faith

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[0 : 00] We turn this morning to Hebrews chapter 11, the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And verse 20, where it says, By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

And this morning we are going to think for a little on Isaac and the implications of faith in his life. Now Isaac is a man of whom we know little. The events of his life are scanty, but they are significant.

We notice, for example, how his birth was nothing short of miraculous. It was indeed a miraculous birth.

His father was an old man when he was born, and so too was his mother, an old woman. And then another thing about his life, and that is this, his obedience to his father's will, to Abraham's will, no matter what it was going to cost him, here was a lad who was ready to submit to the will of his father Abraham.

[1 : 28] And then later on, if you read through the story of his life, he will come across his marriage. And in the same way, when you look at that man entering into marriage, you will see how he is in perfect harmony with the will of God, as far as his future partner in life is concerned.

And the same too, with regard to the family that God gave him, you will see and notice how God blesses this man's family, and how the man himself is so faithful with regard to these sons that have been given to him, that before his own death, he points them upwards to God, and he points them forward to heaven.

That's the kind of man Isaac was. And although little is said about him, there is this to his everlasting credit, that he is described in the Bible as a man of God, and a man with whom God had made a covenant, a man with whom God had made promises, and made an agreement.

And when the children of Israel eventually were in Egypt as slaves, and when they cried to God for deliverance, you recall how it is said there that God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

And repeatedly you'll find God speaking to Moses and saying to Moses by way of encouragement for the tasks of life. He says this to Moses, Moses he says, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

[3 : 33] Always in life, you keep this in memory. What I did with regard to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Never forget that. I was their God.

I'll be your God too. And you remember when our blessed Lord was discussing with the Jews the doctrine of the resurrection.

There they were, entering into a great argument with Jesus about resurrection from the dead. And Jesus says to them, you know, he said, do you believe in God? Do you know who God is? God, says Jesus, is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. It's as if Jesus were saying, you know, there is Abraham, and he is alive.

[4 : 35] And Isaac is alive. And Jacob is alive. And God is their God. He's not the God of the dead, but of the living.

And so we see now how important a person Isaac is in the Bible. And he is important simply because of this.

He was a man of faith. A man who believed in God. A man who graciously submitted to the will of God.

God is the Lord. And his faith. And his faith shines out in those early years, the early years of his life. His faith also shines out in the midst of life's responsibilities.

And his faith shines out in the twilight of his life. When the shadows of death. When the shadows of death are gathering around him.

[5 : 35] And when he is piercing through the gloom. And when he is seeing onwards into heaven. Abraham, it's faith that is dominant in his life.

Abraham, it's not the only way. So for a little while let's think of the faith of Isaac in his early years. As we've said, his entrance into life was from the human side dependent upon the faith of his father. Abraham, Abraham was now an old man. But all throughout his life, God had made him this great promise. Abraham, I will give you a son.

Have no doubt at all about that. But it will be at my time. When I think it's the right and appropriate moment, I will give you the son.

The son that I promised to you. And the years pass. And from a human point of view, it would seem to be as if there's no son who is going to come on the scene, who is going to succeed Abraham.

[6 : 43] But suddenly, the son comes. The God promised son is given to Abraham. And through that son, God has made the promise, your seed will be as extensive as the stars in the heavens and as numberless as the sand grains on the seashore.

And so you can understand this boy growing into a world where his father believes in God, believes implicitly in God. And he has surrounded this child, this baby boy, is surrounded by godly influences.

And it makes a tremendous impression upon his early years. He is never allowed to forget God. He is never allowed to forget the greatness of God, the power of God, the truth of God, and how God, when he makes a promise, keeps it.

And then when he was a comparatively young man, as we read this morning in that story, God said to his father, look, I want you to sacrifice this son that I've given to you.

Sacrifice him to me. And he accompanies his father on that very solemn and very foreboding walk that's going to take him up to the mountaintop of Moriah.

[8 : 22] And this is the place, you see, that God has said to Abraham, it's at this place you will now sacrifice your son. Isaac, to begin with, is a bit bewildered.

He says to his father, you've come here to sacrifice to God, but where is the sacrifice? Or says his father, God will provide the sacrifice, you come with me.

And then the altar is made, and the wood is placed there, and the son is taken, and he is tied by his own father, and placed there on the altar, and the knife is raised, until the voice of God says, stop, Abraham, stop.

I know that I have the prior claim in your life. But you see, it's to the credit of Isaac that he submits. He knows that what his father is doing is right. He knows that he has to be submissive to his father's will, and ultimately he is really being submissive to the will of his godly father, his father who is God in heaven.

[9 : 40] And so he believes. That's included in the concept in his faith, he believes.

And from these incidents, as we have said, this concept of faith would have been implanted in the young man from his earliest days. Can you not see it? This godly father of his, Abraham, taking him aside, and saying to him, Isaac, look, I want to tell you certain things that you must know.

I'm your father. And one of the things that I want you to know is this, I want you to know God. I'm going to instruct you in the things of God as I know them.

So that all through your life you will walk in the ways of God. And you see, Abraham would point this dear son of his onwards to another world.

And he would say to his son Isaac, Isaac, I'm looking for a city that has foundations. I'm not placing my confidence in this world at all.

[10 : 57] One day, Isaac, I'm going to die and I'll leave you. But when I die, I'm going into a better life and I want you to follow me there.

And the only way that you can do that is by following my God and believing in him. How like Timothy, of whom Paul says that he owed Timothy, owed so much to his mother.

And so much to his grandmother, Lois. Paul says, Oh Timothy, you've been a fortunate young lad. Think of what you owe to that mother of yours and that grandmother.

And now here I break off. I want to speak to you parents, your son, your daughter. Oh, they mean much to you, don't you?

You find satisfaction in them. You will say to me when you meet me, I've got a good family. I've got sons, I've got daughters.

[12:04] And I thank God every day for them, you will say to me. You'll go further and you say, You know, I care for them. Yes, I believe you.

And you will also say to me, I do everything I can to protect them. Yes, I believe you. And you will go further and you will say this to me, And you know, I do more than that.

I'm providing for them. And I'm also trying to provide for them as far as their future is concerned. Yes, I believe you.

I believe you're doing the best for them. But I'm going to ask you this question. Are you anxious about their eternal well-being?

Are you anxious about where they are going to spend eternity? That's the important question. I'll tell you this.

[13:11] When the day of judgment comes and you stand before the throne of Almighty God along with your children, just as I will have to do with mine, your children will not thank you for the good start that you gave them in this life if that's the only thing you've done for them.

If you have neglected their spiritual well-being and their souls, they will curse you. They will say, you listen to the preaching in the Free North Church.

You heard the minister placing responsibilities upon you at my baptism. Why didn't you introduce me to God? Why didn't you introduce me to a son, Jesus Christ, through whom I could be saved? You see, Jesus says, what will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

I've said this before and I say it again. I'm not terribly interested in how well my family do in this world. If they do well, so be it.

[14:29] I'm thankful for it. But that's not my great concern for them. My concern for them is that they should be saved. I would rather my family scavenge for their food in the waste bins of the world and get to heaven than see them sitting in fine houses with fitted carpets and running about in flashy cars only to be lost in hell.

And I say this to you. Be like Abraham as he was with Isaac.

Teach your boy. Teach your girl. Not just the rudiments of this world. But teach them about God. Teach them about the way of salvation. Teach them about heaven. Tell them about hell. And they will bless you for it.

They will bless you for it. Father, pray for your child. Mother, you pray for your child.

[15:49] That's what Abraham did. And that's what Sarah did. And is it any wonder that we find Isaac turning out to be the boy that he was? And then we notice this too about Isaac.

The faith that he showed in the midst of the responsibilities of life. What were the responsibilities that fell upon the son of Abraham's? Of Abraham's? Abraham's?

This man Isaac. Well, you see, he married. And following on from his marriage, there was a family. And of course, he had to make provision for them. Now, how did he go about these affairs? Well, he put his trust in God. And he believed in God's ordering of things.

And that God's ordering was the best. In the story of his marriage, you recall how his father was anxious about the son of his. Just as all fathers are about their sons and their daughters when they choose partners for themselves.

[17:04] And so this father was very anxious. And he was very anxious about this in particular. And what was his anxiety? His anxiety was that Isaac should not marry a pagan woman.

He didn't want his son to become mixed up in the religions of the land, the idolatries of the land. He wanted his son to be thoroughly grounded in God and in the word of God and in the ways of God.

And so he wanted for his son someone from a similar background to his own. And the story is well known, isn't it?

Abram sent away his faithful servant to find this suitable person for Isaac. And oh, that godly servant of Abraham's, you recall how he prayed that his choice might be right.

And at last he returned with Rebecca. And there was Isaac waiting, you see, for this bride that was coming to him. And what we must remember, and that is this, you might say, well, what a way to make a choice.

[18:21] But you see, here was this man, Isaac, a godly man, and he himself was praying. Praying that the choice might be right.

Praying that the person that would come would be the one whom God had chosen for him. And so, Rebecca came, and they were married.

20 years passed before his twin sons were born to him, Jacob and Liso. He didn't make the mistake of his own parent, his own father Abraham, by going before God in the matter of a family.

When Sarah asked Abraham to have a child by her servant, Isaac didn't do that. He wouldn't. What Isaac did was, he prayed about a family.

And the sons were born. And he had to make provision for this home that he had set up and for this family that now belonged to him. And when matters became difficult for him because of famine, he obeyed God's instructions and he dwelt at Gerah when God said, Isaac, you will stay here in Gerah. [19 : 42] You won't go to Egypt. You will stay here. He did so. When the Philistines stopped the wells that had been dug by Abraham, here he opened them.

He did, you see, all that pleased God. And is it any wonder that we read that this man's life was blessed and there were no difficulties?

at least, at least, comparatively, if you, you have problems. Young folks, I'm speaking to you just now.

Your marriage, are you praying about it? Children, are you praying about them?

Sustenance for your life and for your home and for your children, are you praying about it? And the many other problems that may develop, how are you going to face them?

[20 : 50] Are you going to do it on your own? Are you going to make all your own decisions? Are you going to please yourself by your choices and so on and so forth? Isaac never did that.

Isaac faced all these things on the side of God. And what I'm asking you, all people, and young people, face every problem, every decision that you make, every responsibility that lies upon you, face it with God on your side, with Christ by you.

And then we come towards the end of the service. What about faith in the twilight of life? And that's what we find here in the life of this great man of God.

By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Lisa concerning things to come. You see, when this man came to the end of his days, he knew that these sons of his must have his blessing.

He was acting, you see, as a priest in his own house. The priesthood hadn't been developed. It didn't develop until the days of Moses when Aaron became the high priest, the brother of Moses.

[22 : 26] And so, before the priesthood was ever established, every father was the priest in his own house. And as the priest in his own house, these boys needed the blessing.

And particularly, the oldest son needed the blessing who was now going to take over the priesthood in the house. and instructions were given to the oldest boy what he was to do.

And although the younger boy tricked his older brother out of that inheritance, yet nonetheless, Isaac was doing what had to be done.

And Jacob received the blessing of the eldest, although the other son received the father's blessing too. But what was the old man doing? He was pointing these sons of his upwards to the God from whom all blessings flow.

He was saying to them, you know, I want you to put your trust in God as I did and as your grandfather did. And if you do that, God will be with you all throughout the days of your life.

[23 : 49] And not only was he pointing these boys of his upwards to the God from whom all blessings flow, but he was also pointing them in the direction of heaven, in the way that Abraham had done with himself.

You see, like Abraham, Isaac looked forward to a permanent resting place and that is what he is now doing with regard to these sons of his.

By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. Where is Isaac today along with Jacob?

How well he's in heaven, isn't he? Jesus assures us of that. after he had healed the centurion slave, it tells us that Jesus marveled at the centurion at the extent of his faith, the soldier's faith, was to be commended.

And Jesus turning to the Jews, he said this to them, you know, he said to these Jews, many shall come from the east and from the west and they shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

[25 : 21] That is where faith brings you to ultimately. The kingdom of heaven where you sit down and you are at rest rest and at peace.

Do you have that faith? In the course of my work I have to visit elderly folks who are coming to the end and it's a great relief to the minister.

A great relief too it must be to the office bearers who do their duty like that when they visit. And when you are with some elderly person you have this confidence that in the twilight as the shadows of death and gatherings they are piercing through the darkness and they are seeing before them the land that is fairer than day.

And I only pray that when my day is over if it's not death by violence if it's a calm sort of death that I'll be able to pierce through the gloom and see the house of many mansions.

And I hope that you too are praying for that you older folks and you younger folks too. But what am I trying to say to you?

[27 : 05] Faith. Faith in God. Faith in Christ and in the redeeming work of Christ. That's important. See that you are exercising that kind of faith.

For your responsibilities whether you are a parent, for your responsibilities whether you are midway in life, for your responsibilities as you come to the end of life.

Let us pray. Our gracious God, we give thee thanks for thy word. We pray that as we read of these incidents of long ago, which are illustrations to us of the wonder of faith, faith in thyself, faith to believe in thee, to believe in thee in spite of all the difficulties and the darkness, faith to believe that thou art and that thou art there to bless.

May we have faith in Jesus Christ, thy son, who came to seek and to save the lost, trust, and may our trust be in him as our saviour and Lord.

These things we ask with the pardon of our sins in Jesus' name. Amen.