

FAITH LESSONS FROM ISAAC AND JACOB

April 29, 2018

Isaac and Jacob took action, showing their faith in God's promise.

Heb11:20-21 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.

Background to the faith of Isaac:

Isaac lived the longest of the four great patriarchs, yet less is recorded about him.

Abraham Gen 11-25; Isaac Gen 26-27; Jacob Gen 28-36; Joseph Gen 37-50.

Isaac's physical and spiritual condition

He favored Esau over Jacob because of his natural appetite.

Gen 25:28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

His vision was bad.

Gen 27:1 Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see,

The contrast of Isaac's defective vision with another servant of God at the same advanced age; "And Moses was 120 years old when he died: his eye was not dim" (Dt.34:7).

Genesis 27 shows us the low state into which a child of God may get. Isaac presents unto us a solemn warning of the evil consequences which follow failure to judge and refuse our natural appetites. If we do not mortify our members which are upon the earth, if we do not abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, then the fine edge of our spiritual life will be blunted, and the fine gold will become dim. If we live to eat, instead of eating to live, our spiritual vision is bound to be defective. Discernment is a by-product, the fruit and result of the denying of self, and following of Christ (Jn 8:12). It was this self-denial which was clearly visible in Moses: he learned to refuse that which appealed to the flesh a position of honor as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; that is why his "eye was not dim." - He saw that the brick-making Hebrews were the people of God, the objects of His sovereign favor, and following his spiritual promptings, threw in his lot with them. (from Hebrews Exposition; by Pink)

He was attempting to pass the blessing to Esau.

Gen 27:1-4 ... that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." 2 Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. 3 "Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; 4 and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

He fails to embrace the word given to his praying wife.

Gen 25:21-23 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23 The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger."

He was deceived by Rebecca and Jacob (Gen 27:5-29).

He trusted his senses, which failed him.

Sight - he couldn't see.

Hearing - Jacob didn't sound like Esau.

Smell - Jacob smelled like Esau.

Touch - Jacob felt like Esau.

Taste - the food tasted like Esau's.

It is this which should speak loudly to our hearts: he who yields to the lusts of the flesh injures his spiritual instincts and opens wide the door for the Devil to impose upon him and deceive him with his lies! (from Hebrews Exposition; by Pink)

Isaac responds in faith to the deception

Gen 27:33 Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." (Gen 27:33-40).

Blessed indeed is it to behold how the spirit triumphed over the flesh. Instead of bursting out with an angry curse upon the head of Jacob, Isaac said, "I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed." That was the language of faith overcoming his natural partiality for Esau. It was the recognizing and acknowledging of the immutability and invincibility of the Divine decrees. He realized that God is in one mind, and none can turn Him: that though there are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand (Prov. 19:21). Nor could the tears of Esau move the patriarch. Now that the entrance of God's words had given him light, now that the over-ruling hand of God had secured His own appointment, Isaac was firm as a rock. The righteous may fall, but they cannot be utterly cast down. (from Hebrews Exposition)

Isaac is willing

Phil 2:12-13 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

He allowed Abraham to offer him on the altar.

What can we say concerning Isaac? He represents the willingness of faith. Isaac was a grown man, probably around thirty-three years of age, when his father Abraham offered him on the altar. That certainly demonstrates his willingness!

Isaac was a well digger.

He would dig a well in a certain place, and the enemy would take it away from him. He would then dig another well, and again it would be taken away from him.

He was willing to bless Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

There was nothing in the present that would cause him to bless them.

Attributes of Jacob's faith

Jacob walked by faith; he encountered many struggles and had to fight hard for each victory. The carnal nature was strong in him, he had many faults and failings, but He also has some attributes.

Jacob valued the birthright.

Though his weakness led Jacob to be manipulative in getting it, yet his heart valued it, which immoral Esau despised (Gen 25:27-34 Heb 12:16).

Jacob greatly desired God's blessings.

Though he yielded to the foolish advice of his mother to deceive Isaac, yet he greatly desired the promise of God's blessings (Gen 27:1-29).

Jacob wanted the Lord to be his God

Though there may have been carnal desire for blessing in making the vow to God when he woke from his dream (Gen 28:10-22), yet Jacob was anxious for the Lord to be his God (Gen 28:21).

Jacob gave praise to God for his prosperity

Though he secretly left his father-in-law in fear, when Laban overtook him, Jacob gave glory to God in the tribute he paid Him (Gen 31:4-9, 53).

Jacob wrestled with God and man and prevails

Though he was terrified of Esau, nevertheless he sought the Lord, pleaded His promises and obtained an answer (Gen 32:9-12).

Though he later cowers at the feet of his brother, in wrestling with the angel of the Lord, we find him prevailing (Gen 32:28).

Jacob followed the example of Abraham and Isaac

Like Abraham and Isaac, "By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents" (Heb 11:9).

Jacob overcomes fear as he uses the name "God Almighty"

When giving permission for Benjamin to go with his brothers to Egypt, he said "God Almighty (or "God the Sufficient One") give you mercy before the man" (Gen 43:14).

This was the title under which the Lord had blessed Abraham (Gen 17:1). It was also the one Isaac employed when he blessed Jacob (Gen 28:3). By using it here, we see how Jacob rested on the covenant promise. When he arrived in Egypt, he was presented before Pharaoh, instead of cringing before the ruler of the world, "Jacob blessed Pharaoh" (Gen 47:7).

Heb 11:21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

Jacob gives a double blessing to Joseph in taking Ephraim and Manasseh as his own

In Deuteronomy 21:17 we read, "But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his." It was the right of the firstborn to have a double portion, and this is exactly what we find Jacob bestowing upon Joseph, for both Ephraim and Manasseh were allotted a distinct tribal part and place in the promised inheritance. This, by right, belonged unto Joseph, though the Devil had tried to cheat him out of it, using Laban to deceive Jacob by substituting Leah in Rebekah's place, and Joseph was her firstborn; and now by the providence of God the primogeniture is restored to him. So too God permitted Reuben to sin so that the way might be open for this: "Now the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn) but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph" (1Chr 5:1).

Earlier in this interview, Jacob had said, "And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine" (Gen 48:5). Those two sons of Joseph had been borne to him by an Egyptian wife, and in a foreign land, but now they were to be adopted and incorporated into the body of the holy seed. For note, when Jacob blessed them he said, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac" (Gen 48:16). By that blessing he sought to draw their hearts away from Egypt and their kinsfolk there, that they might share with the people of God [from Hebrews Exposition].

Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph.

When Joseph brought his two sons before their grandfather to receive his patriarchal blessing, he placed Manasseh the elder, to his right hand, and Ephraim the younger to his left. His object in this was that Manasseh might receive the first and superior portion. Right there it was that the faith of Jacob was most tested. At this time Joseph was governor over all Egypt, and second only to Pharaoh himself in authority and power; moreover, he was Jacob's favorite son, yet the dying patriarch had now to withstand him.

But 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 (literally, consciously directing) his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn [from Hebrews Exposition].

Jacob worshipped

Gen 47:29-30 When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said."

It was not the pomp and pageantry of his burial which concerned Jacob, but the place that he was so concerned about. Not in Egypt among idolaters would his bones be laid to rest, but it was in the burying-place of his fathers he wished to be laid.

Why did he make this request?

To exhibit his union with Abraham and Isaac in the covenant.

To express his faith in the promises of God, which concerned Canaan, and not Egypt. Third

To help his descendants resist from being content to stay in Egypt.

He was setting before them an example, that they should also think of returning to the promised land at the appropriate time.

To symbolically go before them and, as it were, take possession of the land on their behalf.

Jacob as he was dying

Jacob was in bed at the time, but gathering together his little remaining strength, he raised himself to sit upright, and then bowing his body, and so that it might be supported, he leaned upon his staff, worshipping God.

References used:

An Exposition of Hebrews; by A. W. Pink