



The Book of Hebrews 11:20_ When Faith Says Amen to God!

Learning from the Faith of Isaac and of the Providence of God

October 4, 2026

Holy Text: Hebrews 11:20

Review of Chapter 11 So Far...

1. We have been exhorted concerning biblical faith. (v.1)
 - *Biblical Faith is a living channel of trust from the creature to the Creator, the God of the Bible. It is based upon God's own attributes (love, sovereignty, unchangeableness, grace, authority, power, etc.) and grows throughout the believer's life. Biblical faith moves the believer to obedience, sustains peace and joy regardless of circumstances, and defeats the devil!*
 - Such Faith:
 1. Comes from God!
 2. Is rooted in Scripture!
 3. Rightly understands the Gospel!
 4. Is God-centered, not man-centered!
 5. Produces heartfelt obedience!
 6. Is confirmed and strengthened during hard times!
 7. Asks like a child to their Father!
 8. Believes in spite of seemingly impossible situations!
 9. Trusts in the goodness and mercy of God regardless of His answer!
 10. Is hated by the world, the flesh, and devil!
 11. Has as its highest expression, "Not my will, but Thy will be done!"
 12. Expresses itself through praise!
 13. Thankfully, will be rewarded!¹
2. And this faith moves us towards a "good report" (v.2) like those before us...a life that bears witness to the glory of God, and of His Holy Son, Jesus Christ.
3. Through such faith we also understand that God framed the worlds by His Word! (v.3)
Indeed, "If the universe was framed by the Word of God, why not your life? If God can speak the vast universe into existence, how powerful might His spoken Word be in your life and living? How vigorously do you think the world, the flesh, and the devil want you to resist the power of the Word of God in your life?"
4. We learned...
 - Of the faith of Abel despite his circumstances... (v.4)
 - Of the faith of Enoch and how he pleased and walked with God in the midst of much wickedness (v.5)
 - That without such faith it is impossible to please God! (v.6)
 - Of the Faith of Noah, who, despite his flaws, obeyed God for decades in the building of the Ark (v.7)
5. Then we began to study Abraham, the friend of God, who heard and obeyed God's call, and left all to look for a city with eternal foundations whose builder and maker is God! (vv.8-10)
6. We read of Sarah, and marveled at the LORD's faithfulness towards her in giving her "laughter" or Isaac as the son of promise. (vv.11-12)

¹ <https://calvaryreformationchurch.org/sermons/now-faith-the-definition-and-characteristics-of-biblical-faith/>

7. Then, by His Providence, our LORD gave us a wonderful “Motivation Exhortation.” He reminded us that “all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” The Holy Spirit urged us to live with an eternal perspective with a view towards “a better *country*, that is, an heavenly.” CRC, Hallelujah! “For he hath prepared for them (*and us*) a city!” (vv.13-16)
8. When the author returned to Abraham, we paused on the first phrase (v.17a) and learned much of the testing nature of our God. Indeed, we learned that He does test us and why...
9. And then we learned what to do when God tests or proves our faith!
10. Then we were encouraged in our faith when we read how Abraham “put the promise (Isaac) on the altar,” “accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead.” Glory!

Notable Events from the Life of Isaac

Understanding our Text requires that we know something of the life of Isaac. His story arc runs from Genesis 21 to Genesis 27, with his death recorded in Genesis 35. So for time's sake we must summarize, but context is important:

Isaac's Birth

- God promised Abraham a son by Sarah and named him beforehand: Isaac (Gen 17:19).
- Sarah laughed! The LORD asked, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (Gen 18:12-14).
- In due time the child was born, and they called him Isaac, because God had made them laugh (Gen 21:1-7).
- God uttered this decree concerning Isaac, over and against Ishmael: “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen 21:12; Heb 11:18).

Isaac at Moriah: the Promise on the Altar

- God tested Abraham: “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest... and offer him” (Gen 22:2).
- Isaac carried the wood and asked, “Where is the lamb?” Abraham answered, “God will provide himself a lamb” (Gen 22:6-8).
- He was bound and laid on the altar; the knife was lifted; the angel spoke; a ram was provided (Gen 22:9-14).
- Strong enough to resist, he yet submitted himself!
- Abraham accounted God able to raise him from the dead, “from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb 11:17-19).
- The promised son learned early: God may ask for all, and God will provide.

Isaac in Manhood: the quiet Heir

- After Sarah's death, Rebekah was given; Isaac loved her and was comforted (Gen 24:67).
- He lived in tents, heir of the same promise, looking for a city (Heb 11:9).
- In the midst of famine the LORD said, “Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee... and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 26:2-4).
- Isaac stayed. He re-dug Abraham's wells, named them, moved when men strove, built an altar, and called on the name of the LORD (Gen 26:18-25).
- He sinned as his father had: he lied about Rebekah in Gerar (Gen 26:7-11). The LORD still protected and multiplied him.
- His faith was real, but he was, like us, still being sanctified.

His Children: Jacob and Esau

- Isaac was sixty when Rebekah conceived; the children struggled within her (Gen 25:21-22).
- The LORD said, “Two nations are in thy womb... and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:23).
- This stood before they had done good or evil, “that the purpose of God according to election might stand” (Rom 9:11-13).
- “Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob” (Gen 25:28).
- Esau sold the birthright for one morsel and is called profane (Gen 25:29-34; Heb 12:16).
- The conflict that would mark his later years was already in the house.

Isaac’s Senior Years

- When Isaac was old and his eyes dim, he meant to bless Esau before he died (Gen 27:1-4).
- Rebekah and Jacob deceived him (Gen 27:5-24).
- Yet the blessing he spoke was the covenant: the dew of heaven, fatness of the earth, nations bowing, blessing and curse after the pattern of Abraham (Gen 12:3, 27:27-29).
- When Esau came, Isaac trembled very exceedingly, then said, “I have blessed him... yea, and he shall be blessed” (Gen 27:33).
- That sentence is the faith of Hebrews 11:20.
- He later blessed Jacob knowingly with “the blessing of Abraham” (Gen 28:1-4).
- Esau received a real but lesser word: sword, service, a later breaking of the yoke (Gen 27:39-40).
- He spoke a future he would not see (Heb 11:13, 20).

Isaac’s Death

- Isaac lived 180 years, died full of days, and was gathered unto his people. Esau and Jacob buried him (Gen 35:28-29).
- But the promise did not die with him; it continued on through Jacob, and toward the Seed!

Who he was, in one look

- Laughter given by God, encouraging the faith of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 21:6).
- The son who was sacrificed and received back (Gen 22; Heb 11:19).
- The sojourner who stayed and dug the old wells again (Gen 26).
- A weak man and a believing man in the same person (Gen 26:7).
- A father who, at last, blessed according to the word of the LORD (Gen 25:28, 27:33, 28:4).
- A dying saint who treated things to come with certainty by faith (Heb 11:20).

Exposition of our Text (and reading Gen 27:1-8)

Hebrews 11:20 (KJV) *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

1. Despite his flaws, the author comments Isaac’s faith. But we have to dig in to see it.
2. Recall:

Genesis 25:20-23 (KJV) *And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. 21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. 23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.*

3. It may be lost on us what a scandal this was. The older serving the younger? Firstborn rights were assumed, visible, and culturally weighty. Esau came out first. Isaac loved him. The house could see the hunter, smell the field, and taste the venison. What they could not see was the purpose of God.
4. So as we noted, Rebekah hatched a plot.
 - Rebekah overheard Isaac send Esau to hunt so he might bless him before he died (Gen 27:1-5).
 - She already knew the LORD's Word: the elder would serve the younger (Gen 25:23). Instead of waiting on God, she took the matter into her own hands.
 - She dressed Jacob in Esau's garments, covered his hands and neck with goatskins, and put savory meat in his hands (Gen 27:14-17).
 - She sent him in to impersonate his brother. Jacob feared a curse; she said, "Upon me be thy curse, my son" (Gen 27:13).
 - He went, lied to his father's face, and even used the LORD's name to cover the lie (Gen 27:19-20).
 - Isaac, dim-eyed, was deceived by the smell of the clothes and the feel of the skins, and he spoke the covenant blessing over Jacob (Gen 27:21-29).
 - When Esau returned, the deceit was uncovered, the house broke open, and Rebekah had to send Jacob away for his life (Gen 27:41-45).
5. Her dishonesty (and Jacob's) was sinful. But here is a good question: "Did Isaac know the older would serve the younger?" Many commentators say "yes." And it was this knowledge that caused his reaction after blessing Esau, trembling exceedingly after his own rebellion to God's Word. (Gen 27:33) But the Text clearly says that God told Rebekah this, not Isaac. (Gen 25:23). And given her deviousness concerning Jacob, why would she tell him?
6. **So the meaning of Hebrews 11:20 seems to be centered on the phrase, "Yea, and he shall be blessed." (Gen 27:33) The surety of future blessings upon his sons is where the author of Hebrews hangs Isaac's faith.**
7. Until that sentence, Isaac is still a confused old man in his own house. After it, he is a prophet submitting to God, and speaking inspired Words. He does not say, "I was tricked; the blessing is void." He does not say, "Let me split it so both sons are equal." He says the blessing stands, and the man who received it shall be blessed.
8. When he later sends Jacob away, he makes the same faith very clear: "God Almighty bless thee... and give thee the blessing of Abraham" (Gen 28:3-4).
9. Although Isaac still gives Esau a true word about his future (Gen 27:39-40), it IS a different word than Jacob's. The older really would serve the younger.
10. As much as he may have wanted to bless Esau, he understood that God, providently, had spoken.

The Prophetic Power of the Patriarchs

When the patriarchs spoke, they often did so with *unique unction*:

1. They spoke as stewards of God's Promise to Abraham.
 - Abraham received the Word: land, seed, blessing to the nations (Gen 12:1-3, 15, 17, 22:16-18). Isaac inherited that trust (Gen 26:2-5). So did Jacob (Gen 28:13-15, 48-49). They do not create the future. They announced what God has pledged.

2. Their blessing is prophetic speech.
 - Hebrews 11:20-22 unfolds three deathbed acts: Isaac blesses concerning things to come; Jacob blesses the sons of Joseph and worships on his staff; Joseph speaks of the departing of Israel. The Spirit groups them because the same kind of faith is at work: men near the grave believing God's Word would come to pass.
3. Once rightly spoken, the word is treated as binding.
 - Isaac could not reroute the blessing to Esau "though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb 12:17) just as Jacob could not swap Ephraim and Manasseh when Joseph objects: "I know it, my son, I know it" (Gen 48:19).
 - That is not stubbornness. It is the conviction that God had spoken.
4. God may overrule the speaker's intention without emptying the speech.
 - Isaac thought he was blessing Esau. God was blessing Jacob.
 - **Again, the faith Hebrews records is not Isaac's aim in verses 1–4. It is Isaac's Amen in verse 33. Isaac's "yea" is the faith-filled sound of a man letting go of the son he preferred and believing the Word God.**
5. Their power is messianic; they ultimately pointed to Christ.
 - Genesis 21:12 says, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Paul interpreted that Seed as Christ (Gal 3:16).
 - The patriarchal blessing is about God's redemptive covenant with the Elect...God putting His Promise on a man's tongue so that the line, the land, and at last the Seed are named in history. '
 - That is why these scenes belong in the hall of faith. The men are dying; the Promise is not!

Some Careful Applications

1. Treat God's word as binding, even when it conflicts with your plan!

- Isaac had a favorite and a script, God had a decree. Faith was shown the moment Isaac would not attempt to unsay what God had said. When Scripture has spoken...about Christ, holiness, marriage, worship, or any other subject, "Yea LORD" should be our reply!
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV)** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2. Bless your house with covenant words!

- Isaac's blessing was not "I hope you do well;" it was the blessing of Abraham.
- Tell your children who God is, whose they are in Christ, what the church is for, and where history is going!
- **Psalms 78:2-7 (KJV)** *I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. 5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: 6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: 7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:*

3. Do not use spiritual sounding words to fight God!

- Isaac could have tried to reroute the blessing to Esau. He did not. As we'll see, Jacob later refused to uncross his hands over Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 48:17-19).
- Be careful with vows, counsel, and "I just feel led." Once you have read or spoken God's truth, do not revise it to keep peace!
- **Proverbs 30:6 (KJV)** *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*
- **Deuteronomy 4:2 (KJV)** *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

4. Tell the truth about different people in the same house.

- Isaac blessed both sons concerning things to come, but he blessed them differently.
- Love every soul under your roof, but do not pretend every path is the covenant path. As hard as it is, warn the disobedient and confirm the promise to those who cling to Christ.
- **Hebrews 12:16-17 (KJV)** *Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

5. Accept that weakness sits beside faith.

- Isaac lied in Gerar, loved Esau for venison, and is still enshrined in the faith hall of fame (Gen 26:7, 25:28).
- This is us! We have faith and yet we sin daily!
- Beloved, confess and mortify our sins. But let us still speak of the promises! The God who used a trembling father can keep His Word through weak people like you and me!
- **1 John 1:9-10 (KJV)** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

6. Praise God for His Providence!

- The LORD had already spoken: "the elder shall serve the younger." That Word did not need Rebekah's plot or Jacob's lie. Thankfully, our weakness and sin cannot cancel God's providential power!
- God executed His plans in the midst of this very tangled situation! Aren't you glad He can?
- Beloved, do not despair when the household is a mess! If our God can command His blessing through a deceived father and still bring that father to faith's "yea...", He can still bless your house!
- **Romans 8:28 (KJV)** *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

7. Trace every blessing to Christ, the true Seed!

- Again, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and that Seed "is Christ."
- Remember from last week what our LORD has done: He chose us, called us, made us alive, granted us repentance, gave us faith, declared us righteous, took us as sons, set us apart, keeps us by His power, and will raise us in glory...in Christ!
- **2 Corinthians 1:20 (KJV)** *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

Closing thoughts:

CRC, we no longer have the unique office of patriarch as Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and Jacob's Twelve did. (Acts 7:8) But we do have their God!

We therefore believe fathers still joyfully owe their houses a word concerning things to come! Not forced prophecies or random spiritual clichés, but prayerfully applied Words that have already been spoken about Christ, the church, the family, holiness, the Resurrection, and the city that hath eternal foundations! And, as given by the Holy Spirit, humble words of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor 12:8)!

In keeping with today's Text, in moments when the LORD writes a different story than the one we preferred, our fathers (and mothers) must learn of Isaac's faith, "I have blessed him... yea, and he shall be blessed," humbly accepting God decrees and moving the family forward.

May we all speak much of Christ, that our families may be blessed, and say "Amen" when God changes things!

Amen.