

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
May 22, 2022

Title: Dying Faith

Subject: Death, Blessing, Promises of God, Faith, Dying, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Salvation, Righteousness, Endurance, Sanctification, Perseverance, Grace, Patriarchs, Jesus Christ, Savior

Theme Text: Hebrews 11:20-22 (ESV) ²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

Theme Illustration: We have been examining the impact of faith in the lives of Old Testament believers. Even though faith in this chapter is largely studied in the lives of saints, today, we examine our great need for faith when we come to die. Faith has not finished its great work until we breathe our last. Dying Faith's work is to help us finish well, to die in the Lord to honor Him in death as we honored Him in life. This faith can be our strongest witness of the truth of God's word and expectation of His promises.

God is greatly glorified when we leave this world with our flag of faith flying not at half-mast, but a full mast. In the death of a believer, the spirit triumphs over the flesh and the world as we consciously leave these things behind for heaven. For this to be the case, faith must be exercised.

Read: Hebrews 11:20-22

Introduction: In this chapter, the Holy Spirit has given us many examples of a life of faith. In these three verses today, He has given us three examples of faith action during the final moments of life. The Lord is reassuring us,

His week doubting the children, that He who began a good work in us will most assuredly sustain and complete the work of grace in our hearts. He will not withdraw His gracious power during the weakness of death.

Satan is not inactive in seeking to strike terror into the hearts of God's people. Knowing this, it is our duty, through the word, to expose Satan's lies. God-given, God-sustained faith is sufficient for the feeblest of saints to overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil, to also give us a triumphant passage through life into death.

Transition: In Isaac, we see a dying faith triumph over the flesh. In Jacob, we see dying faith overcome men's devices. And in Joseph's faith, we see a refusal to embrace the legacy of the world, while affirming God's promise. Let us now examine the dying faith:

1. Of Isaac: Hebrews 11:20 (ESV) ²⁰ By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

Although Isaac lived the longest among the patriarchs, less is recorded than any of the others. His life is condensed in Genesis 26 and 27. What is mentioned here is what Isaac uttered in faith at the end of his life. Taken on the whole, Isaac's life, which began brightly ends having failed its early promise. That promise was uttered by God and told to his father, **Genesis 21:12 (ESV) ¹² But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.**

Genesis 27 opens by informing us that **Genesis 27:1 (ESV) ¹ When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see...** Reference to his eyesight was not concerning his physical eyesight that reflected his spiritual eyesight. Everything in Holy Scripture has a deeper significance than the literal. As often as I have repeated this truth is often met with raised eyebrows. It is helpful for us to contrast Isaac's eyesight and that of Moses, **Deuteronomy 34:7 (ESV) ⁷ Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.**

Practically, all we need to know is that after Rebekah conceived through Isaac's prayer, experiencing the struggle within her, would be informed by the Lord of the priority of the two between Jacob and Esau. Isaac was not informed, Genesis 25:22-23 (ESV) ²² The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." We must note that Isaac never inquired of the Lord concerning the two children. He had to learn it from his wife.

So Isaac said his hopes on Esau, not Jacob. Esau was his favorite because he provided Isaac with fleshly delights. Thus, when it came near to dying, Isaac was determined to bless Esau, against the decree of God.

Rebecca, knowing this, hatched the ruse for which she and Jacob are well known. The ruse worked. Or I might say, that God used their dishonesty to correct Isaac. Despite his initial misgivings, Isaac ended up blessing Jacob. We need to take careful note of what is recorded in the Scriptures when Esau came in with the stew, Genesis 27:32-33 (ESV) ³² **His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau."** ³³ **Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed."**

Isaac trembled violently, not out of anger but the terrifying thought that he had wanted to defy God's decree and God's choice. Realizing his error, when Esau sought a blessing Isaac refused to change his blessing of Jacob. The patriarchal blessing is a prophecy. So Isaac, in his function as a prophet, blessed both but with different blessings and outcomes.

What was Isaac's active faith, it was his complying with God's will in these two final blessings?

Transition: We now move to:

2. Of Jacob: Hebrews 11:21 (ESV) ²¹ By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

We must be immediately reminded of the meaning of Jacob's name, the deceiver. To die by faith, we must have lived by faith. In Jacob, we are confronted with Jacob's struggles in living by faith. We remember his struggle with the angel of the Lord who struck Jacob's hip to subdue his stubborn resistance. What a picture of God's sovereign workings in the effectual calling of His elect. Jacob was the heir of the divine decree. Despite Isaac's preference. God, through the deception of both Rebecca and Jacob, overruled Isaac's carnal desires.

Jacob's struggles closely reflect our own. The old nature was very strong in him. Yet he truly prized the covenant blessings of his father and the incredible promises that accompanied that blessing. Jacob valued his birthright while Esau despised it. Jacob was very desirous of the Lord being his God, **Genesis 28:21 (ESV) ²¹ so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God,**

Though Jacob was terrified of his brother, Esau, and even groveled before him, he sought the Lord's protection and thus obtained the peace of the Lord. It was in the closing days of his life that distinguished him. When getting permission for Benjamin to accompany his other sons back to Egypt, he spoke, **Genesis 43:14 (ESV) ¹⁴ May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."**

We also see Jacob's faith in his refusal to bow before Pharaoh while he even blessed Pharaoh instead, **Genesis 47:7 (ESV) ⁷ Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.**

By faith, Jacob bestowed upon Joseph. The right of the firstborn to have a double portion of the blessing and thus Ephraim and Manasseh were allotted a tribal part in Israel's inheritance. When Joseph brought the two sons to Jacob, to bless, Jacob did not place his right hand upon a fry am but upon Manasseh, Genesis 48:14. Once more the younger by God's decree was chosen over the elder. Here in this verse, we see Jacob recognizing and asserting the covenant, the Lord made with his fathers. Jacob walked in the light of God's covenant. Jacob better heard from God and he submitted. Thus, it was by faith dying Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph.

Transition: We now close with the dying faith:

3. Of Joseph: Hebrews 11:22 (ESV) ²² By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

There are very few more remarkable accounts of faith that can top the account of Joseph. Of all of the acts of faith that chronicle his life, it was his dying wishes that are made prominent and remembered. As a prophet, Joseph believed and prophesied the exodus and, this was before Moses. The whole of his remarkable life is passed over in favor of his last actions.

Faith is a grace that honors God in their as well as life. We are all aware of the heights of power and respect Joseph receive in the world, from Egypt, which in his dying actions gave back to God. Joseph's impact was gigantic. The active faith presented here is Joseph's legacy.

Joseph, at the end of his life, did not request a pyramid, statute, or a grave in Egypt to be remembered with veneration by the Egyptians. By faith, Joseph identified with God and God's people issuing the glory of Egypt. Just think of how a pyramid to Joseph would be treated by archaeologists and historians. Instead, Joseph's legacy is captured in the book of Genesis.

By believing God's promises concerning Israel, he chose the Lord and His people over the glory of Egypt. He requested an ordinary grave with his

father's, believing that he and they would possess the land. This was his way of choosing God's plan and not his own. Joseph identified with God's promises.

Conclusion: Each of these three men honored God in their dying moments in their circumstances. Our death is the last time we can honor God by our faith and witness. We should review the faithfulness and goodness of God towards us. We should rest upon God's promises, not our failures. We should remember that God's grace is greater than our sin. We should remember that we have been justified by faith and not by works. We should remember that we die with Christ's righteousness as our clothing. We should remember that all of this is God's work. Our last moments in this world are precious. We should have it in our minds. The amazing grace of our triune God, thanking the Father for having chosen us, praising the Son for His work to redeem us, and the Holy Spirit who gave us our new heart by God's decree of election. Let praise and thanksgiving fill our souls and our mouths. In this God will be greatly honored and we would've died in faith.