

## **Isaac: Weak Faith Made Strong**

### **Heb. 11:16; Genesis 26-27**

#### **Ps. 11:3 "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"**

Intro. Our nation right now is in a weakened state and we want to see God do a work of grace!-- Maybe, today, you would say that your faith is in a weakened state...**YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** This Series on True Faith from Hebrews 11 is about men and women with extraordinary faith. We often call this the Hall of Faith or our Heroes of Faith. The truth is, there are no heroes of faith. There is only **ONE** hero of faith and His name is Jesus Christ. All of us have weak faith that needs to be strengthened and the only way for that to happen is look to the One who is always **FAITHFUL!**

The story of Isaac starts out very good for Isaac. His dad takes him on a journey and eventually tells him that he has to sacrifice him on an altar before the Lord (maybe not the start Isaac was looking for), but in the end, Abraham, Isaac's dad, discovers that this is a test of his faith and Abraham passes the test (as does Isaac who willingly lays down on the altar in complete trust in his dad's faith in God). It's a beautiful and powerful start to Isaac's faith journey with God. However, in the course of time, Isaac's faith will deteriorate into perhaps the weakest of all the Patriarchs in Israel. Isaac's life will be characterized by passivity and the ordinary. In fact, writer, Griffith Thomas said of Isaac: "He was the ordinary son of a great father and the ordinary father of a great son."

Isaac's life plays like a **LIFETIME Made for TV DRAMA** of Dysfunction, Deception and Division. (Quarantine and No Sports have been rough). If you couldn't make it into a movie you could at least make it into a cheesy, predictable **COUNTRY MUSIC Song**.

Isaac lived 180 years. Passive in his leadership. Pitiful in his parenting. We know little about him and for most of his life he lived out of the spotlight of patriarchal influence. Yet, God used Isaac to continue His line of Messiah through which salvation would come to the world. To Isaac's credit, he did not make some the major mistakes his father Abraham made in trying to force the hand of God for a child. Isaac married at 40 but did not have a child until he was 60 years old. Through those 20 years, Isaac did not try to make things happen but faithfully waited on the Lord, praying for his wife to conceive!

Rebekah did conceive and bore twin boys: Esau, the firstborn and then Jacob. It was a tough pregnancy for Rebekah with the two struggling within her. As she prayed about the struggle, the Lord said, "Two nations are in your womb, and the two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." At the birth, Esau was born, hairy, red in color, and holding onto his heel was his brother, Jacob. They couldn't have been more different...

Esau became the favorite son of Isaac and Jacob the favorite son of Rebekah.

What unfolds after the birth of Jacob and Esau is as one writer calls it, "a pathetic episode", and another calls it, "a life in the shadows with a man of mix character."

In spite of all this, we see a man whom God used despite his weak faith to give him true faith that would ultimately see the Messiah redeem the world from their sin!

Therefore, we can confidently say that

## **True Faith Works through the Lives of Imperfect People to Bless Generations by the Transforming Power of God's Grace.**

### **I. True Faith Works through the Lives of Imperfect People**

#### **A. Isaac Lacked...**

1. He lacked **CONFIDENCE** in the provision and protection of God (**26:1-6**)
2. He lacked **CARE** for the wife of his youth (**26:7-11**)
3. He lacked **LEADERSHIP** in his home: Passive as parent - (allowing Esau to marry two Hittite wives - **26:34-35** **"and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah**)

#### **B. Isaac Loved...**

1. **He loved the physical over the spiritual.** Isaac loved his **stuff** (writer calls Isaac: "materialistic. He lived mostly by sight and taste." and his **stomach** (loved the 'wild' game Esau brought). Isaac "thought more of his stomach than the promises of God." -- His appetite overruled his appreciation for the will of God.

**C.S. Lewis** said in **The Screwtape Letters**: "Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him." When we love the physical over the spiritual, when our appetite overrules our appreciation for the will of God, our loves get distorted.

2. **He loved one son over the other** - Esau over Jacob (favoritism - **25:28**); When it came time to Bless his sons, Isaac decided to dispense his blessing secretly. As Boice pointed out: "What should have been a joyful and public occasion was turned into a despicable incident." Why? The blessing was for both sons and Isaac was only going to include Esau (his favorite).

### **2. True Faith Works to Bless Generations (Leaving a Legacy of Hope/Redemption)**

We see this in the blessing Isaac leaves and the Covenant he receives (26:2-4; 27)

#### **A. What it was** - The Firstborn rights...What was this all about?

1. *Double Portion of the Inheritance*
2. *Priest for the family, i.e, the Spiritual Leader of the Family*
3. *Line through which the Messiah would come.*

#### **B. What it was meant to be.** The Result of the Blessing was the fulfillment of the Covenant God made with Abraham and then, Isaac (**26:4**)

1. **Land** - Land to them was the evidence of their **FAITH** in the provision, promise and protection of God. ***But, it was not in Gerar!***
  2. **Longevity** - Their longevity was to **INFLUENCE** generations to serve the Lord and influence others to do the same.
  3. **Legacy** - The legacy was for generations to **IMPACT** and bless nations!
- C. **What it became.** - For Esau, the blessings of God were discarded for momentary pleasure. Esau's birthright had been sold to Jacob by Esau for a pot of stew. God, obviously did not approve. Heb. 12:16-17 says, "that no one should be sexually immoral or unholy like Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal." For Jacob, the Blessing was a Moment of Great Deception (caused him distress for years). For Isaac, the Blessing was distorted as a means to Favor one son over the other

The blessing was more than a prayer for the future; it was a PROPHECY that was certain to be fulfilled and a demonstration of FAITH in the promises of God, yet unseen!

There was so much at stake...You had the blessings of the promise of God - leaving his sons a legacy of God's faithfulness.

**The blessing we pass on** to our children are not promises that are yet unseen but promises that have been fulfilled in Christ and being visibly and authentically lived out in our daily lives at home and in our community. **The blessing we leave is a legacy of God's faithfulness and belief that Jesus is Lord of all!**

**What if you feel and know that you have blown it? Your Faith is Too Weak?**

### **3. True Faith Works by the Transforming Power of God's Grace**

It was not the magnanimous faith of Isaac that turned the tide, but it was the faithfulness of God working through Isaac to give him faith to believe in promises he had yet seen with his own eyes. Four ways God's grace transformed Isaac and will transform you:

- A. **REST**: (26:23-24) **God gave Isaac rest in his later years leading him to Beersheba (the Promised Land)**
- B. **INFLUENCE**: (26:28-29) **God gave Isaac influence with the leaders around him!**
- C. **FORWARD-LOOKING FAITH**: **God's grace gives us Forward-Looking Faith** - Isaac never saw the promises realized from **Genesis 26:2-4**, but he believed enough to give that blessing to his son. He believed that the God who made the promise would fulfill the promise. Isaac did not have perfect faith, neither did Isaac have the perspective of God's promises fulfilled in his lifetime, but his faith was not in himself, but in the God who always kept His promises!

**@ But what about us?** We who follow Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord look back to the faithfulness of God THAT has CHANGED us! We have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us and changing how we live! That is our HOPE! That is the HOPE our world/nation needs today, and has always needed! We want to see those promises realized in the hearts of every single person! @ *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought to his death for civil rights in our nation and would be heartbroken over the state of affairs in our nation today, it was his dream that the promises of liberty would be realized. Even though he had not yet seen much progress, he famously said, "I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day."* - **We, as a nation, are still looking** for that day and grieving the pockets of perversion that still plague us, but as MLK knew as a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and as every follower of Jesus Christ should know and live, the freedom every person craves and the freedom every person needs and the freedom that will transform hatred to love, racism to brotherhood, injustice to justice, inequality to equality, greed to generosity, division to unity and selfishness to self-sacrifice **is the Grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!**

**I will want to finish today with this: The Grace that God gave Isaac He offers to you today! God gave Isaac freedom from...**

- D. **FREEDOM: God's grace gives us freedom from the shame and guilt of past failures - (27:33)** Here is Isaac's moment of **conversion**. He gives in to the will of God. Even though his faith had been weak and his will had to be broken, Isaac placed his faith in the Lord and kept the blessing on the son in whom he knew God had purposed for the blessing. That step of faith is why God put his name in the Hall of Faith (**Heb. 11:20** - ONE VERSE!) - AND, Nowhere do we see God holding Isaac's failures and weak faith against him by disqualifying him. God doesn't hold your past against you! @ James Boice wrote: "We fail and disappoint God many times, in large ways and small. But God is not one to hold past sins against us. He remembers the victories and tells us this so we might press on joyously to serve Him!" **He took your past to Calvary and nailed it to an old rugged cross through His own flesh and blood. And, through His blood you are set free!**

In the end, we have to realize that Isaac's story is like our story. "Before any great work of grace, there must be the internal earthquake that Isaac experienced." Has that happened in your life?