

Passing Along the Promise

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] In our study of the 11th chapter of Hebrews, down to and including those in the church age, we saw Enoch, who became a pattern for those who walked in faith.

And we studied Noah, who had a faith that was obedient. And we looked at Abraham, who lived a life of faith. Today we're going to look at some other Old Testament saints who lived a faith that defeated, even transcended their own deaths.

They died 4,000 years ago, and we're talking about them tonight, half a world away. Hebrews 11, verse 20-22, By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

It is by faith that we run the race of the Christian life. I don't know how this came in here.

[1 : 59] I think I did this one time many years ago. It says, I'll read it verbatim, I'm often asking my present position as police chief. Well, that's not true.

How did I put up with all the stuff hurled at me? Best answer I can give is I've read the end of the book and now I know how it ends. It is by faith that we live our lives and make it to the end of the race.

It is by faith that we should be able to give a testimony even when we are staring death in the face.

It is by faith that we have the opportunity to not only live well, but the opportunity to finish well.

It is by our very faith that we shall leave behind a testimony for our children and grandchildren. And now I can add in their great-grandchildren and those yet to be born.

God is glorified when a saint of God is called home through death and leaves behind a triumphant life that glorifies our Lord to the very end.

[3 : 20] Indeed, the Lord Himself declares this in Psalm 116.15, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

So in this study this evening, we're going to take a look at three great patriarchs, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. And like us, they experienced failures.

Like us, they trusted God but imperfectly. It's easy to think of them as great role models, although they would deny any self-worth to fulfill such a role.

I'm especially drawn to Joseph, who though he was a sinner, nevertheless lived an exemplary life of faith under extremely trying circumstances.

And while we know that he's a sinner because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, there is nevertheless not a single sin of His recorded in Holy Scripture.

[4 : 29] It doesn't mean he wasn't a sinner. It just means none of them were written down. And while it can be said that these men lived a life of faith, it is especially true that they lived a death of faith.

Death is the enemy that is most feared in every culture. Yet for the true believer, the closing hours of life can be the sweetest time of our earthly sojourn.

And it was so in the lives of these three men, and it should be so in our lives as well. These three men, along with Abraham, died never having received the fulfillment of God's promises made to them.

But they did something even greater. They passed on to their children and to generations yet unborn the promises that God had made to them.

And how did they pass them on by their faith in the promises made? They knew, as we, that God keeps His Word.

[5 : 55] God always keeps His Word. What were the promises given by God to Abraham? Consider these. Possession of the land of Canaan, creation of a great nation populated with their descendants, blessings of the world through their descendants.

And indeed, Christians are grafted in to Abraham. He's our father. Abraham never saw these fulfilled in his life, but he was very faithful to pass them along to Isaac.

Isaac died and passed them along to Jacob, who died passing along to Joseph. But they all died in faith, never having seen the promises fulfilled.

fulfilled. But the promises that had been given sustained them all the way into glory. And the promises were enough.

Now, it's important to understand that these men did not die in despair just because they never saw the promises fulfilled. Instead, they died in peace, confident that one day God would keep His promises to them.

[7 : 22] They knew this would happen because they knew that God was and is a covenant keeping God. He keeps His promises.

And though they died, they knew God's promises would not die. And that's the kind of faith that God honors. There's a tendency to believe that the Jews in their day earned their salvation by keeping the law that is by works.

And that we in the church age do so by faith. But that's simply not true. A relationship with God has always been through faith.

Always. works saved none of the men that we have studied or will study. Not Abel, not Enoch, not Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph.

All were saved by faith. Indeed, without faith, it has always been impossible to please God. well, what can we say of Isaac's faith?

[8 : 38] We'll start with him. He may be one of the greatest examples. In Hebrews 11, 20, it says this, by faith, Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

He reached out to his two sons and invoked blessings on them. and Esau was a problem child, wasn't he? Isaac is a very interesting figure in the Old Testament story of faith.

He lived longer than the other patriarchs and yet less is said of him than the others. Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph had about 12 chapters devoted to their lives.

Isaac had two. He was certainly less dynamic and less colorful. He displayed a weaker faith than the others and actually, if we were keeping score, the Bible records more of his failures than it does of his successes.

When a great famine broke out in the land, Isaac moved his family, picked up and moved to a place called Gerar and while there God spoke to Isaac giving him a wonderful vision for the future.

[10 : 04] Genesis 26 verses 3-4 let me read it. Sojourn in this land God is speaking and I will be with you and I will bless you for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands and in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

These were the promises given to Abraham and now God passes them along to his son Isaac and they cannot be fulfilled unless God is with Isaac and protecting him from harm yet at the first sign of danger Isaac proved to be faithless.

The men of Gerar came to Isaac and asked about the beautiful Rebecca fearing that they might kill him so they could have her Isaac tells these men oh by the way she's my sister she's not my wife does that sound familiar?

That's learned behavior. Isaac learned this trick through his father Abraham who had actually done that twice during his sojourn.

Now it was apparent that the Philistines wanted Rebecca and this caused great fear for Isaac instead of taking his problem to the Lord he panicked and he lied about his relationship to her and the net effect of that it placed his wife in great danger.

[12 : 09] Isaac was willing to sacrifice his own wife so he could enjoy the protection from the Philistines and God stepped in paid a little visit to the king of Philistine Abimelech and the king was petrified he immediately placed both Isaac and Rebecca under the protection of the crown so that no man would violate her sexually and here we have a pagan king behaving more ethically than God's own chosen vessel Isaac and God even used Abimelech to chasten Isaac in verse 10 of

Genesis 26 Abimelech said what is this you have done to us one of the people might easily have lain with your wife and you would have brought guilt upon us this is a pagan not even a believer he's speaking with great wisdom that's a devastating testimony concerning

Isaac that pagan king had more honor than God's own chosen vessel God exercised a prevailing grace not through Isaac but through Abimelech the pagan king now God wanted Isaac to move from these people but we find that he delayed the Philistines kept filling up the wells that Isaac dug until finally he got the message he says I think it's time for us to move on I've been in that arid land and you got to have water the Lord was moving him back to the promised land Isaac settled in Beersheba and built an altar to the Lord and worship him and God uses different ways to bring back his prodigal children that's how grace operates like many in our generation

Isaac was basically materialistic! food and for that he said I will give you a blessing Isaac knew that Jacob was to receive that blessing but he was willing to disobey God in order to fill his stomach Isaac was willing to give his blessing to one not chosen by God and to ignore the one specifically chosen by God and there's plenty of room in this story of these three men to criticize all three of them

Isaac ignored the clear direction of God Esau didn't care a whit about the blessing he just wanted a meal I've been hungry before but I don't think I've been that hungry and Jacob whose name by the way means deceiver Jacob deceived his father into blessing him but the old man thought he was blessing his brother Esau but what a family a lot of twists and turns in this family God honors faith this family acted outside of faith but still we see them being blessed how is that possible the only explanation we have is that God is faithful to his promises and mark this down even when we are not

God going to keep his promises to us well Isaac finally saw the light he came to understand that Jacob was the promised son who would carry on the covenant blessing to the descendant of God's family on earth death in many respects Isaac was a blot on the Old Testament record but he went to his grave as God's man because he finally submitted and was obedient to what God asked him to do and we see this lack of faith in Isaac well what about the faith of Jacob in the 21st verse of Hebrews 11 we read this by faith

[17 : 54] Jacob when dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph bowing in worship over the head of his staff Jacob like his father before him had an up and down kind of life sometimes he walked by faith other times he just basically stumbled around his life was filled with times of faith it was filled with fear anxiety once he was so intent on receiving a blessing from God that he engaged in a wrestling match with the almighty that lasted all night I wrestled in high school I want to tell you that's hard eight minutes of wrestling is equivalent to one 60 minute game of football I played I did both excruciating and whereas

Isaac tried to circumvent the plan of God by establishing Esau as his heir Jacob didn't do that his chosen blessing was Joseph the youngest son until Benjamin arrived under the Hebrew culture Joseph became doubly blessed because Jacob gave his blessing to both Ephraim and Manasseh these were the sons of Joseph that were born in Egypt of an Egyptian girl that the pharaoh gave him to marry and I know she was a pretty girl because I saw a movie on it and she was real pretty in the movie it should be noted however that Manasseh the younger of the two boys receive the greater blessing you remember how Joseph tried to stop and said no you're blessing the wrong one you got your hand on the youngest he said

I know what I'm doing and he blessed the younger and because of this blessing Joseph actually had two Hebrew tribes descend from him in the Pentateuch they are sometimes referred to as half tribes Pentateuch the first five books of the Bible Jacob even was renamed by God God renamed him Israel that's where we get the name Israel that's on the headlines today I was watching Fox News this morning and it's all about Israel when Jacob renamed Israel by God himself was dying he blessed the two grandsons and then he spoke these words to Joseph you can read about those in Genesis 48 verses 21 to 22 then

Israel said to Joseph behold I'm about to die but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers moreover I've given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow and we again see that which was never possessed being passed on in faith to the next generation so Jacob died a man of faith and then we have the faith of Joseph Joseph lived out most of his life in Egypt land of the pharaohs you remember the story and he was sold into slavery and brothers wanted to kill him but one

brother protected him and they showed him to some descendants of Ishmael and he ended up in pharaoh's court he was the fourth generation heir of the promise given by God that's interesting because Joseph had not even sojourned in the promised land how could he inherit it well God's ways are not our ways the promise made to Abraham was now 200 years old still there was no fulfillment by the time of Joseph's death none of the descendants destined to inherit the promise even lived in the promised land Joseph had been taken there against his will to Egypt and then because of the great famine had moved the entire household of

[23 : 12] Israel to that land when Jacob died Joseph took the bones of his father back to Canaan and desired only that one day his bones would rest there as well if he could not inherit the land then the land could inherit him it would not be until the exodus of the Hebrew people that the bones of Joseph would journey to Canaan and as Joseph lay dying he told his brothers this in Genesis 50 verse 24 and Joseph said to his brothers I'm about to die but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob and he made his brothers swear that they or their descendants would one day take his bones back to

Canaan and he gave his extended family these words of faith in verse 25 of Genesis 50 then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear saying God will surely visit you and you shall carry up my bones from here and they did Isaac Jacob and Joseph believed God's promise even in the face of death and though their faith wavered at times during their lives there was never any waiver when it was time for them to die death is the final test of faith when we get to the death bed there's no need for lying or deceit we learn of a man's true faith when he comes to the end of his life

I've told you this before the actual act of dying bothers me a little bit I have no fear of death but dying bugs me a little bit will it be painful well I know that I'm dying but the eye of death and being ushered in the presence of the Lord Jesus and worshipping him face to face gives me nothing to fear nothing like Paul we can all say that to live is Christ and to die is gain and actually it's great gain Paul writing in 1st Corinthians 15th chapter says death is swallowed up in victory that's that's a beautiful picture how it's actually swallowed up death for the believer is really when life really begins that's when life begins and we can only imagine what that must be like when we see him and are like him because we see him as he is

Thank you.