



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Study 07:

## THE PROPHETIC LANGUAGE OF FAITH Hebrews 11:20-22

Today's text refers to the faith of three men: Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These three men are frequently and favourably mentioned in Scripture. Their faith, especially at the hour of death, is presented to us as a model. They had believed God, the God of Abraham, from childhood, they walked with God, through many tests, troubles and trials by faith and they all exhibited strong faith in God at the end of their earthly pilgrimage. At the end of the life of each of them, the greatest thing each one passed on to the children was the promise of God, not material things.

The record in Genesis reveals much on the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Of these four men, Isaac lived the longest. Yet, less is recorded about him than any of the others. Chapters 12 to 25 are devoted to the life of Abraham, chapters 25-27 devoted to the life of Isaac, chapters 28-35 devoted to the life of Jacob while chapters 37-50 are devoted to the biography of Joseph. 13½ chapters for Abraham, 2½ for Isaac, 8 for Jacob and 14 for Joseph. Yet, one common thing with them is their faith in God – faith at the beginning, faith during their long fruitful lives, faith at the end of their lives, permitting them to enter into eternal fellowship with their God.

The presence of God was real with each of the men whose faith we are studying today. To Isaac, God said, **"I will be with thee, and will bless thee"** (Genesis 26:3,4). To Jacob, God said, **"Behold, I am with thee... I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of"** (Genesis 28:15). Concerning Joseph, we read, **"And the LORD was with Joseph"** (Genesis 39:2). Their faith held on firmly to the Word and promise of God.

### DOMINION THROUGH FAITH

Hebrews 11:20; Genesis 25:20,21,28; 27:21,22,26-29, 30-40; 28:1,3,4,13-15; Proverbs 19:21; Psalm 33:10-15; Jeremiah 18:9,10.

Jacob the younger was blessed above Esau the elder. Jacob had dominion through faith. Isaac actually thought of pronouncing the blessing of Abraham on Esau. When he learnt of what Jacob had done, how he had received the blessing instead of Esau. **"Isaac trembled very exceedingly"** (Genesis 27:33). Then he said, **"I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed"** (Genesis 27:33). The spirit had dominion over the flesh. Isaac allowed God's will (Genesis 25:22,23) to have dominion over his natural desires and affection for Esau. Isaac had dominion through faith.

The Lord had spoken to Rebekah and she believed. However, when she learnt that "the blessing" was to be mistakenly given to Esau, she planned a scheme of deception to accomplish God's purpose! God does not need our deception to fulfil His purpose. He could easily have put the right word in Isaac's mouth (Exodus 4:12; Numbers 22:28; Deuteronomy 23:5; John 11:49-52; Acts 5:34-39). Their sin and deception did not go unpunished, but God intervened to confirm the birthright on 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. Though **"there are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand"** (Proverbs 19:21). Even

the tears of Esau could not move or change the mind of Isaac. Now that Isaac remembered the Word and the plan of God, he was as firm as a rock. The blessing of Abraham was given to Jacob. God was to be known as **“the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”** (Exodus 3:15; Matthew 22:32).

## DECREE OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:21; Genesis 48:5,13-21; Proverbs 16:9,10; 1 Chronicles 5:1; Deuteronomy 21:17; Psalm 75:6,7; Job 22:27,28; Lamentations 3:37.

While the three verses, (Hebrews 11:20,21,22) have faith, dynamic faith, in common, the case of Isaac shows dying faith triumphing over the affections of the flesh; that of Jacob teaches dying faith overcoming the interference of man; while that of Joseph reveals dying faith exalting the promised land above Egypt and the world. **“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying...”** (Hebrews 11:21). To manifest faith at the point of death, we must have been exercising faith continually, while we are still alive. The leading feature of the faith of dying Jacob is seen in the blessing of Joseph's two sons. When Joseph brought his two sons before Jacob to receive his final blessing, he placed Manasseh the elder, to his right hand, and Ephraim the younger to his left. His reason was that Manasseh would receive the greater blessing. Crossing his hands, he gave the greater blessing to Ephraim the younger. When Joseph desired a change, Jacob maintained what he had done. **“And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it”** (Genesis 48:19). By faith, he refused the desire or demand of a loved one. What a great lesson for us. There are times that our faith has to cross or refuse the wish and will of a loved one. The final word concerning Jacob in Scripture shows him full of faith and dedicated in worship. **“By faith Jacob... blessed... and worshipped”** (Hebrews 11:21). What a happy ending on earth!

## DEPARTING IN FAITH

Hebrews 11:22; Genesis 50:24,25; 15:13,14,16; 39:2-4,9,23; Psalm 105:17-22; Genesis 50:19-25; Habakkuk 2:3; Psalm 16:8.

At the early age of seventeen, Joseph was sold in a foreign country into a heathen land. For many years, he was surrounded by idol-worshippers. There was no contact with a single true believer. There was no fellowship for spiritual encouragement. Yet, he kept the faith! He believed the Word from the Lord which he had received as a teenager. He was faithful to God, he resisted temptation, he was patient under affliction, he witnessed to others concerning the love and power of God, he overcame evil with good – all because of his faith in God. The initial loneliness in Egypt, the prosperity in Potiphar's house, the exalted position in the prison, the honour from Pharaoh did not destroy his faith. His heart was fixed on higher things than the perishing babblings of Egypt.

Joseph was looking forward to the time when God would visit Israel and take the nation to the Promised Land (Genesis 50:24). There was no doubt in his heart. He was fully assured that God cannot lie and that He would surely fulfil His Word. Canaan, not Egypt, was on Joseph's heart while dying. True faith in his heart was engaged, not only with the safety of his soul, but with the future happiness of God's people. Faith not only believes the promises which God has given to His children individually, but also lays hold of those given to the church collectively.

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