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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 11 (Continued)



Part 19/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

In our studies in Hebrews we have arrived somewhere in chapter 11. Just to give a word of explanation about the symbols in the outline you'll see we're using two abbreviations. E for an example of faith and P for a principle that's illustrated by the example. We'll look very quickly at the five examples of faith that we have already studied.

E.1: Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice. That's the first example of faith.

E.2: Enoch walked with God. You'll see principles are drawn and pointed out by the P followed by a number. We'll not go into those right now.

E.3: Noah built an ark. Then we have

E.4 Which is Abraham obeyed God's call to leave Ur of the Chaldees and also he sojourned in Canaan with Isaac and Jacob as in an alien land. I've taken that as one example, you could take it as two.

E.5: Sarah conceived Isaac when past age. That also was by faith.

Then we see some principles that are derived from those examples and then we go on to

E.6 which is the first example we'll be studying in this session. E.6, Hebrews 11:17–19. This particular example is extraordinarily rich in its implications and lessons. It's quite possible that we'll spend a considerable period of this session looking at this example. There's quite a lot about it in your printed outline. I'll also offer you some additional comments which are not in the outline. For that reason you may find it expedient to have a pencil in your hand and jot down some additional references.

First of all, I'll translate from the Greek and then we'll look in our outline and try to take in the lessons. Hebrews 11:17:

> "By faith Abraham, offered in sacrifice, Isaac ..."

The word translated "offered" is specifically a word that means to offer a sacrifice.

... when he was tested; and he was willing to offer ...

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Or he was in the process of offering. That's really how it should be translated.

> "... his only begotten son ..."

That's a very key word, "only begotten" because elsewhere in the New Testament it's used only of Jesus. It's the same word that's used of Jesus describing Him as the only begotten Son of the Father. It has two possible meanings. One is "only begotten"; the other is "unique, one of a kind, there's no other like Him." Of course, both those meanings apply to Jesus. We're going on with the translation:

> "... he [Abraham] the one who had received the promises, to whom it had been said, In Isaac your seed will be called. [Verse 19] Reckoning that even from the dead God is able to raise people up ..."

Or God was able to raise him [Isaac] up. You could take it either way.

> "... from whence also in a figure [parable] he received him."

That's the passage. I think we need to turn and read the passage in Genesis on which it's based, which is, first of all, Genesis 21:12, which we'll look at for a moment. We will not go into the background, this is where God is instructing Abraham to do what Sarah required which was to get rid of Hagar the bondslave and her son Ishmael. Abraham didn't want to do it because he'd obviously come to love Ishmael as his own son. It's very interesting because in this verse God tells Abraham to do what Sarah told him to do. Previously, through doing what Sarah told him to do he'd got into trouble because if he hadn't listened to Sarah, Ishmael would never have been born. So just a word to husbands only: sometimes it pays to listen to your wife and sometimes it doesn't!

Here was a time when it was right for Abraham to listen to his wife. Genesis 21:12:

> "But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the lad [that's Ishmael] and your maid [that's Hagar]; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.'"

That's the New American Standard but literally it's "your seed will be called." We have a problem in translating into contemporary English which they didn't have in the time of the King James. In the time of the King James they understood "seed" to be a man's descendant born of his body. Today that sounds rather antiquated to contemporary people so most of the modern translation change "seed" [singular] into "descendants" [plural] which makes good sense, but it obscures certain things that are very important in Scripture, one of which we'll see in a little while.

Notice, God told Abraham specifically "through Isaac your seed shall be called." In other words, all the promises of the inheritance are to come to you only through Isaac. Ishmael is not included in those promises. God gave other promises for Ishmael but not the promises of the inheritance which was the great objective of Abraham's faith.

So, you understand why the writer to the Hebrews emphasizes that Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac, which was the supreme test of his faith. Not only did he love him but also his whole hope of obtaining the inheritance depended upon Isaac. And yet, here he was willing to slay Isaac. That was his faith. Why was he willing to slay Isaac? Because he had faith that even if he killed him, God would bring him back to life.

Now we'll look at the other passage, Genesis 22, which describes the actual event and I'm going to read about a dozen verses or so but I want to give you a test of discernment. I want to see as I read through if you can discern why the writer of Hebrews knew for sure that Abraham believed that God could raise his son from the dead. It's there in the text. But, in a certain sense, it's concealed. It's one of those passages where you have to look very closely at Scripture to find out exactly its implications. We'll read Genesis 22, beginning at verse 1.

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham ... One of the principles of Scripture is that if you belong to the people of God, you are going to be subjected to God's tests. It's one of the conditions of belonging to God's people. God always tests those who are to be His people.

> "... God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Take now your son, your only son ...'"

And you notice how God always is so honest with us. He presents us with all the relevant facts. You understand the son I mean? Your only son.

> "... whom you love..."

And He just told Abraham "I know exactly how you feel about that son Isaac."

> "... and go to the land of Moriah..."

Moriah means "the LORD is the teacher" or "the LORD is the one who shows the way."

> "... and offer him there as a burnt offering ..."

Think of that. Not only was he to be killed, but he was to be burned. And yet, Abraham believed that God could restore him.

> "... on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

Let me say right now all this is a beautiful picture of Calvary. I'm going to expound the details in due course, but it's very possible that the very mountain was the mountain on which Jesus was crucified. No one can prove that, I think—but it's a possibility. Notice God had to show him the mountain and only God can show you Calvary.

So Abraham rose early in the morning ... And this is characteristic of Abraham, it's prompt obedience. You can study his career, that was one of the marks of his character. When God said do something, he did it promptly.

> "... and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder [up the mountain]; and we will worship and return to you.' And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son!' And he said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?'"

It's very clear that all Abraham's household understood the principles of sacrifice.

> "And Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.'"

That's the translation literally, "God will see the lamb for the burnt offering." And that's usually quoted in the English language as "Jehovah Jireh." Jehovah: "the Lord," Jireh: "will see." That's how English people say it.

We were on one of our tours in Israel with a coachload of people singing Jehovah Jireh. The Jewish guide, who is a close friend of ours, looked puzzled and she said, "What is it that they're singing? What is that?" I said, "It's meant to be Hebrew." She said, "How would we say it?" I said, "Adoni ? year-ray?." So, Jehovah Jireh is Adoni ?year-ray?. Adoni: "the Lord," ?year-ray?: "will see."

Verse 8 at the end:

> "So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there..."

You remember what Abraham did? He pitched his tent but he built his altar.

> "... and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me. Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his

> horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide [adoni ?year-ray?], as it is said to this day; 'In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.'"

But more literally, "it will be seen." Let me tell you, there are some things that cannot be seen anywhere but in the mountain of the Lord.

Now, how many of you picked out the sure evidence that Abraham believed? Glen. That's right. "We will worship and we will return." In the Hebrew, both forms are manifestly plural. We will worship, we will return. I think that's a little lesson on how carefully you need to read the Bible. There are some things that are, as it were, hidden in the wording. Abraham was confident no matter what he did to Isaac that they would both come down the mountain alive.

I'm suggesting to you that the passage we've read prefigures Golgotha. We in the English language usually say Calvary; I prefer to say Golgotha. Whichever you say, it means "the place of the skull." But Golgotha is the Hebrew–Aramaic name, Calvary is a Latin name derived from the Latin word ?calva?, which means a skull. I slightly dislike taking the good original Hebrew and putting it into Latin which is taking it about two steps away from where it was. However, we all understand Calvary but remember, Calvary and Golgotha are two words for the same place and each of them means "the place of the skull."

Those of you that have been on a tour to Israel and been in Jerusalem have doubtless seen what's called Gordon's Calvary, a hill just north of the Old City which, because of the configuration of the land and the stones which show out of it, looks very much like a skull. Many Christians believe that probably was the actual place. However, it's not really supported by most of the historical traditions so we don't get involved in that.

What I've pointed out is that this story prefigures Golgotha. There are certain clear correspondences. It's a parable enacted in history. In my radio teaching I've just been explaining to people what a parable is, so it's very fresh in my mind. A parable uses things which are familiar and which we can apprehend with our senses to illustrate things which are unfamiliar and which cannot be apprehended by the senses but only by faith. One of the basic principles in teaching is: Proceed from the known to the unknown. So a parable proceeds from what people know. Like, for instance, the parable of the vine and the branches, which was something familiar to everybody in Israel in those days. And takes that familiar thing and uses it to illustrate something unseen, spiritual, eternal and unfamiliar. It's like a reflection in a mirror. The mirror is the familiar, but in it, as you look, you see other things reflected. Each main element in the parable corresponds to something in the spiritual and there's nearly always a very exact correspondence. It may or it may not be.

For instance, in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said the seed is the Word of God. He said the field is the world. In the parable of the tares, He said the tares are the children of the wicked one, the wheat is the children of the kingdom. And in the parable of the vine and the branches—which is so close to me because I just made the tape yesterday—the vine is Jesus, the branches are the true disciples, the sap is what? The Holy Spirit. And the owner of the vineyard is God the Father, the one who does the pruning.

So, let's look at this story in that light as an enacted historical parable. It's very, very beautiful. It gives such tremendous insight. I recommend you to meditate on it afterwards. One of the great honors bestowed upon Abraham is that in two stories in Genesis he has the honor of representing God the Father. I'm not sure that I can think of any other person to whom that honor was given in the Bible. But in this one and also in Genesis 24—which we'll just refer to in a few moments. Abraham typifies God the Father. When we know that, we know whom Isaac typifies. Who's that? Jesus the only begotten Son. Bear in mind the same word is used.

Now, the fire—that might not be so obvious. It's very obvious to me, it typifies the Holy Spirit. Just to illustrate that, keep your finger in Genesis 22 and turn back to Hebrews but turn to Hebrews 9:14.

> "... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Notice that middle phrase "Christ, through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." The Holy Spirit was the fire that consumed the sacrifice. Jesus was the great, final, whole burnt offering. It's very interesting if you look in Leviticus—we won't look there—which lists all the main offerings. The sin offering, the trespass offering, the fellowship offering, the votive offerings, and so on. The first

offering that's listed is the burnt offering because Leviticus never begins with man, it always begins with God. Just as in the furniture of the tabernacle in Exodus, the first item described is the ark, which represents God. Both Exodus and Leviticus move from God down to man. If you try to move the other way, from man to God, you very seldom ever get there. The only order that works is to start with God and move down to man.

So, in the offerings in Leviticus, the first offering is the whole burnt offering which represents primarily who? Jesus, that's right. Jesus is the great whole burnt offering. He gave Himself totally for our salvation. In the typology He was consumed with the fire of the Holy Spirit in His total surrender to God. See, if Jesus hadn't been a whole burnt offering, there wouldn't have been any other offerings. It doesn't begin with man, it begins with God. If God hadn't made that offering, we wouldn't have offerings to make. That's why the order is so important.

I'm suggesting to you in Genesis 22 (we'll turn back there now), the fire represents the Holy Spirit. In line with this picture it's not difficult to see what the wood represents. Isaac carried the wood on his shoulders up the mountain. That represents what? The cross. In one of these Bibles there's actually a cross reference to the fact that Jesus went out carrying His cross.

Then we have another element which I'm interpreting my way. The young men left behind typify natural, carnal strength and understanding. They could not go up the mountain. You see, really, if you see what happened at Golgotha and the sacrifice of Jesus, it was the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. No human being really had a part in it and I question whether any human being who witnessed it had any conception of what was taking place. I doubt whether any human mind can ever fully fathom all that happened. So, the young men—that's natural strength and natural understanding—stay at the bottom of the mountain. It's the father and the son alone who go through this transaction up at the top of the mountain. Let's look at two statements. You might want to keep your finger in Genesis 22, look at two statements in 1 Corinthians 1:25. Paul is here talking about the cross and the message of the cross. He says it's foolishness to the Greeks and the stumbling block to the Jews. Then he goes on to say in verse 25:

> "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

The ultimate of weakness is the cross. The ultimate of foolishness is to let the Son of God be crucified. That foolishness is wiser than all the wisdom of men, and that weakness is stronger than all the strength of men. But, natural strength and natural understanding have no place in this scene.

Then even more, I think, in a reference that's not in your outline, 1 Corinthians 2:14:

> "But a natural man [The Greek says a soulish man—a man in his own soulish understanding] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."

The young men and the donkey stay at the foot of the hill.

Then, going on with the comparison, we see that God's provision came through the substituted ram which was caught by its horns in the thicket. In the sacrificial animals: the lamb, the sheep, the goat, the ram, the bullock; each has a specific connotation. The ram is the prince's offering. So the ram speaks of the prince. Horns in the Scripture are the place of strength. Horns are nearly always used as a type of strength. So, the ram was caught by its strength in the thicket. The ram typifies Jesus—the substitute caught by His strength which was what? His obedience to the Father. It was His obedience that would not let Him go. So you have a really beautiful picture of that whole spiritual transaction that took place on Golgotha.

Personally, I find meditating on it makes it extremely rich. You see, we are so carnally minded that unless God gives us some kind of parabolic approach, we really find it difficult to apprehend the truth. There are so many such parables. The whole of the tabernacle of Moses is a parable of material things illustrating spiritual things. When I get into the tabernacle it's hard for me to get out again because I just get lost in its beauty and its wonder. And yet, for a person whose eyes have not been opened by the Holy Spirit it's just a dreary list of measurements and materials and colors and so on.

Now, while we're on it and before we go any further, we could also just mention without turning there the other chapter of Genesis in which, again, we have a beautiful parable. That is, Genesis 24, the theme of which is Abraham finding a bride for his son Isaac. This is a slightly simpler correspondence. Again, I believe Abraham

represents God the Father. We know that Isaac the son represents Jesus Christ and the bride we all understand—if we have any knowledge of Scripture—the chosen bride represents the church. We've got the fourth main character, the unnamed servant who was the steward and administrator of the entire wealth of Abraham. It represents the Holy Spirit. The beautiful thing is it's the Holy Spirit's self-portrait and He never names Himself. That's so typical of the Holy Spirit; He never attracts attention to Himself.

So, in those two chapters, 22 and 24, we have the most wonderful enacted parables of the profoundest spiritual truths of the Bible. You need to think about the role played by the servant in Genesis 24. I get thrilled every time I think ... He arrived with ten camels laden with gifts. That's the Holy Spirit. He doesn't come empty handed and He is not stingy. He's more willing to give than we are to receive. What marked Rebekah out as the chosen bride was that she received and wore the gift conspicuously. I've often said, "I cannot believe that a church that rejects the gifts of the Spirit can ever become the bride of Christ. It's contrary to all logic and all experience."

Now, we'll go on and we'll look at the result. Blessing on Abraham; limitless multiplication and blessing of the son he offered. Let's turn back to Genesis 22 and look at that as described there. Genesis 22:15–18.

> "Then the angel of the LORD ..."

And this is a very special angel, it's no ordinary angel. He speaks in the first person as the Lord, an angel that's revealed in a number of different places in the Old Testament. The angel that wrestled with Jacob and Jacob said the next day, "I've seen God face to face." The angel that came to Gideon and to Manoah and when Manoah said, "What is Your name?" He said, "My name is Wonderful." That's a mysterious word in Hebrew. It means "supernatural," difficult to understand. But when we come to Isaiah 9 it says His name shall be called Wonderful. It's the same word.

> "Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By Myself I have sworn,' declares the LORD..."

You'll remember the writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 6 that God swears by Himself because He can find nothing greater to swear by. And God swears because an oath is a confirmation of the word He's already given. The writer of Hebrews says that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie we might have strong confidence.

> "'By Myself I have sworn,' declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son..."

Now I'm going to translate it literally. Literally the verb is repeated which is the most emphatic way you can say it in Hebrew.

> "By Myself I have sworn ... that blessing I will bless you, and I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies."

But literally, as you see if you have the same edition that I have with marginal references and notes, "your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." It's singular, not plural. Singular all the way through.

So, what was the outcome of this act of sacrifice and obedience? The greatest imaginable blessings. I want to dwell on this because sooner or later every one of us, if we walk with God, come to a place like this where God asks from us something that He gave us. See, God gave Isaac to Abraham. It's the most precious thing we have and God says, "Now I want it back." How you respond to that will determine the rest of your life. People who hold onto it lose it. People who give it up get it blessed and multiplied more than they could ever imagine.

See, Abraham is the father of all who believe and we are His children if we walk in the steps of His faith. This is one of the steps of His faith is giving up Isaac.

The Lord said, "I will bless you blessing, and multiply I will multiply your seed." Notice the very thing he gave up was the thing that came back to him multiplied.

Then He gave this extra promise:

> "Your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies."

"Possessing the gate" means to control them. You can stop them from coming in or going out. You're the one who has the last word on their activities.

I'd like you to turn for a moment to Galatians 3:16 and I'm reading again the New American Standard.

> "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ."

Again, you see how important it is to read the Bible carefully. "Your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." What Paul is saying is God wasn't talking primarily about a lot of descendants. He was talking about the one promised seed, which he says is Christ. You see why it's so important to have access to the literal language? Because, if you translate that "descendants," you really miss the whole point. It's the one seed, which is Christ, who shall possess the gate of his enemies. Then, in that seed all become inheritors. But the seed is Christ.

I think we need to turn also to John 12 to see the principle of giving up. I have no doubt that there's someone here tonight whom God is asking to give something up. I say that not so much by revelation but simply as a matter of probability. With a group of people this size there's certain to be someone here who's in the very throes of God's dealings right now. What you keep you lose; what you give up you'll get back.

John 12:24, Jesus is speaking.

> "Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

This is so vivid to me. You have this little grain of wheat in your hand. The Lord says, "Hold onto it if you like. Keep it for yourself. But remember, as long as it remains in your hand it remains alone. It'll never bring forth. Or, you can let it go, let it drop, drop into the ground and go below the surface, be lost to your sight. But in due course it'll come back multiplied." That's the choice.

Then Jesus applies it to our lives in verse 25.

> "He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal."

You know, I've seen so many individuals in the valley of decision over the years in my ministry. I've seen people who've held on and lost. I've seen people who've gave up and gained. Let me say that once more. What you keep, you lose; what you give up, you'll gain, multiplied.

See, for every vision I believe there has to be a death. God has dealt with me along this line more than once. I'm thinking of very specific events in my own life where God gave me clear vision; I knew what He wanted. And the next thing was it died. Thank God I had enough knowledge of Scripture to know that it had to happen that way. My faith did not fail; it was tested, but it did not fail. When I let it go, it dropped into the ground, was lost for a time and came back multiplied and blessed.

Let's just look at our outline for a moment. We've looked at the example E.6, now we look at the result. This is our principle, we look at every example of faith in action and then we see what resulted from it. The result: blessing on Abraham; limitless multiplication and blessing on the son he offered.

Hebrews 11:20:

> "By faith also Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come [or 'things in the future']. Let's look at our outline, the historical event is described in Genesis 27:1–40. We will not take the time to read the entire passage but one of the things that always impressed me about this incident is Isaac did not know what he was doing. He was blessing Jacob and he thought he was blessing Esau and he pronounced this blessing and then later he discovered his mistake. But, what has always impressed me is he knew he could not recall his blessing, it was settled forever. He was a spiritual man although he'd had some, I think, rather unwise attitudes."

Years back I was looking through some outlines of messages that I preached in the early 1950s; I still had a few of those outlines. I was absolutely fascinated by the title of one of my outlines which said: How a Wrong Attitude to Food Corrupted the Family Life of Isaac. And for the life of me I couldn't preach that message now, but it is there, I

mean it was all centered on his fondness for the venison which Esau could produce. But he was willing to go against the revealed purposes of God and bless the wrong person. Between them, Rebekah and Jacob and the Lord, fixed it and got themselves into a lot of trouble—the first two, not the Lord—because of the way they fixed it. Let's just look for a moment—I assume you have some familiarity with the nature of the blessing. Turn to Genesis 27 and let's read verses 33 and 37. Isaac has discovered he blessed the son he didn't mean to bless and he's so shaken that he actually trembles with amazement. This is what it says in verse 33:

> "Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, 'Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.'"

See what he's saying? There's no way to revoke it. He knew that he'd pronounced those words by divine inspiration. He'd been aware, I suppose, of the anointing of God upon him as he spoke those words and he knew that though he made a mistake the Holy Spirit didn't.

Then even more emphatic, I think, in verse 37 he's talking to Esau, the one who didn't get the blessing.

> "But Isaac answered and said to Esau, 'Behold, I have made him [Jacob] your master, and all his relatives [or brothers] I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?'"

Notice it's the perfect tense. "I've made him [Jacob] your master, all his relatives I've given to him as servants, with grain and new wine I have sustained him." The whole thing was entirely set. The course of history was determined by that blessing that he pronounced not aware of whom he was blessing.

Going back to our outline, Page 11/3, the result of that was that their future was irrevocably determined. Incidentally, notice that he did it by faith, not knowing what he was doing. He still did it by faith. He blessed Jacob thinking he was blessing Esau, but because he did it by faith it stood.

Then principle number 10, P.10 there: Faith can make decrees with divine authority. That's very, very important. It's very important in your spiritual life, it's very important in your prayer life. You can pray a thing which is irrevocable; nothing can change it if you pray it in the Holy Spirit. You can settle your destiny or maybe you can settle the destiny of the person for whom you prayed. If you grasp this fact that by faith and under the anointing of the Holy Spirit you can make a decree which determines the course of history.

Let's look at the two examples there that I give. Job 22:28. We'll read from verse 26. You need to look into the background because there's a lot of lead up to this. Let's just take from verse 26.

> "For then you will delight in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God. You will pray to Him, and He will hear you; and you will pay your vows. You will also decree a thing, and it will be established for you; and light will shine on your ways."

Notice, "you will decree a thing and it will be established for you." I've done that in various situations. I really believe that I had an impact on the course of history by some of the decrees that God permitted me to make by the Holy Spirit and in faith.

Then in the New Testament Jesus says something along the same line in Mark 11 after He'd cursed the fig tree and it had withered from the roots. Note, all Jesus did was speak to the fig tree. Some people might think that it's rather strange to speak to a fig tree, but if you can speak to a fig tree and get those results it's not so strange. We'll read from verse 21.

> "Being reminded [about what had been said to the fig tree], Peter said to Him, 'Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.'"

Don't tell me curses have no effect. They can wither fig trees in 24 hours. For good or evil, curses are fearfully powerful.

And Jesus answered, saying to them, "Have faith in God."

But the Greek literally is "have the faith of God," which I believe is the key. When God's faith moves in and takes over through the Holy Spirit, then what you're saying is as effective as if God Himself had said it because it's God's faith. I have experienced that in my own ministry. One of the things is praying for people with unequal legs. The Lord has given me faith. I tell tall ladies, "You have an option. Do you

want to be taller or shorter?" If they say shorter, the long leg grows in. I've seen that happen scores of times. I have that faith; I just know it's going to happen. I don't have the faintest doubt. It's not my faith, it's God's faith. I just decree the left leg will grow in.

I did it once to a lady who had had polio as a child and had one leg that was substantially shorter and slightly withered. I said to her, "Do you want to be taller or shorter?" She said, "Shorter." And, her good leg grew in. Ultimately, both her legs were adjusted and became sound. The strange thing was, she really didn't understand the implications of it. About a year and a half later she went to a doctor for a check up. He took her height and she was one and a half inches shorter than she'd ever been! She argued with the doctor and said, "I know that's not my height." In the middle of the argument she suddenly remembered, "I asked Brother Prince to make me shorter." So, I'm just using that as an illustration. These are not just abstract theories, these are spiritual realities.

Then Jesus takes this incident of the fig tree and goes on, verse 23:

> "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, [and I suppose that must have been the Mount of Olives because of where they were] ... whoever says to this mountain [and that's a substantial mountain, let me point out], 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted to him."

Whoever says shall have whatever he says. Really, it's extraordinarily broad in its scope. If you can say it with God-given faith by the Holy Spirit, it's going to happen. Without the Holy Spirit nothing will happen.

One thing is to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. I've been praying at times when I've prayed things, I've thought, I didn't intend to say that. The Holy Spirit gave me that, therefore it will happen.

Now we go on to the next example which is again just one verse and rather similar. Hebrews 11:21. You see, this kind of thing went in the family line, it went from Isaac to Jacob and then from Jacob we'll see it went to Joseph. Verse 21:

> "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped upon the head of his staff."

He blessed and he worshiped. We won't turn there because if we get into it it's difficult to get out. You find the record there in Genesis 47 beginning at verse 29 and reading through verse 48:22. We'll just look at the one verse which is important, that's Genesis 47:31. This is the scene: Jacob is talking to Joseph, he knows his time has come to die. He said:

> "'Swear to me' [that you'll do what I ask. And] he [Joseph] swore to him. Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed."

The same sounding word in Hebrew is both a bed and a staff. So, according to the vowels which are put in later, it could be either the head of the bed or the head of the staff. ?Me-tar? is a bed, ?ma-tay? is a staff, but only the vowels are different. You can take your choice, whichever you want, it doesn't make any difference. He worshiped.

Why did he worship? Because he knew it was going to happen. What was the expression of his faith?

Worshiping.

Let's just describe the incident for a moment. Joseph has two sons, Manasseh the older and Ephraim the younger. He wants his father's blessing on his sons; Jacob wants to bless his grandsons. He's very moved because he thought he'd lost Joseph, that Joseph was dead and he says now to Joseph, "I thought I'd never see you again. Not only do I see you, but I see your sons." Joseph very respectfully brought his sons out from his garments and he put his left hand on the head of Manasseh and pushed him towards Jacob's right hand because Manasseh was the older. His right hand on the head of Ephraim propelled him towards the left hand of Jacob because the right hand gives the senior blessing. Jacob, whose eyes were so dim he couldn't see what he was doing, crossed his arms. So, he put his right hand on the son opposite his left hand, which was Ephraim. His left hand was on the son opposite his right hand which was Manasseh. Joseph wanted to correct his father and he said, "No, father, you've got it wrong. You're putting your right hand on the head of the younger." Jacob said, "I know, my son. They'll both be blessed but the younger will be blessed above the elder." What a lesson there is in that.

What a lesson there is in that, isn't there? Even that it matters which hand you put on. Again, that determined the destiny not just of two men but of two of the tribes of Israel, two of the main tribes of Israel. That was all settled where? At the side of Jacob's bed as he was preparing for death—and he worshiped. He worshiped because he knew it was settled.

See, one of the ways we demonstrate faith is by worshiping. I think it's important that you see that. I want to give you two examples. First of all, Exodus 4:31. Moses has come back to the children of Israel in Egypt with the news that God has seen their plight and is going to deliver them. We read in verse 31:

> "So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, they bowed low and worshiped."

What was the significance of the worship? "We believe. For us, the LORD has said it, it's as good as done." Many, many times worship is the response of faith to the Lord's promise and for the Lord's mercy. Then again in 2 Chronicles 20:18. This records how a great hostile army had come against Jehoshaphat and Judah and they knew they didn't have sufficient resources to meet the army. But when they prayed, a prophetic message was given by one of the Levites that God would fight for them and they wouldn't even have to fight in the battle. So when this prophetic message came, the last part of it is there in verse 17.

"Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is with you." And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD.

Worship was the response of faith to the Lord's promise of intervention. See, when God gives you a promise, faith has to appropriate it before it's fulfilled. When Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, he worshiped. He didn't wait to see if history was going to prove it true. When the prophetic utterance came that God would fight against this army, they didn't wait to see how the battle went, they worshiped. It's so important to see that worship is one main expression of faith.

Let's look at the result. The result of example 8 which is: Jacob on his deathbed blessing Joseph's sons, the result is precisely the same as for the previous example. Their future was irrevocably determined. The principle is the same again as for the previous example. Faith can make decrees with divine authority.

Now we go on to the next example, chapter 11:22. I'll translate it, then we'll look at it.

> "By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel..."

It's actually the word exodus which is a Greek word. It means "the going out."

> "... and gave commandments concerning his bones."

So, we will not look at the passage but again, Joseph, like Jacob before him, knew that his time had come to die. He wanted to make the final arrangements and the last thing he did was to make his brothers and his descendants promise that when God delivered them out of Egypt they would take his bones with them. He did not want to be permanently in the soil of Egypt. Having spent two years in Egypt myself lying on its soil many, many nights, I think I can identify with his feelings in that matter. The result was he shared in Israel's deliverance and inheritance. We'll read just two passages there from the Old Testament that speak about the fate of Joseph's bones. Exodus 13:19, speaking about the moment when Israel began their journey out of Egypt.

> "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, 'God shall surely take care of you [I prefer the original translation, 'shall visit you']; and you shall carry my bones from here with you.'"

And then when Israel entered their inheritance, this is described in Joshua 24:32.

> "Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons."

Shechem is modern Nablus, where Jacob's well was. Jacob had bought that property from the sons of Hamor and he bequeathed it when he was dying to Joseph. I think it's something we need to ponder on: how much the Israelites prized the land that God gave them. Where they were buried was extremely important to them. This is something that's characteristic of the Jewish people today. It matters a great deal to them where they're buried. For Jewish people, burial places are completely sacred. There are periodic uproars in Israel because the archaeologists go in and in digging up an old city they dig up graves. And all the Orthodox Jews march out, protest and even protest, I would have to say, violently. So, it's something that's interesting to me because it's stayed with Jacob and his descendants for more than three thousand years. It's still that way today.

Now, the principles. We reiterate principle number 6 and principle 8. Principle 6 says faith inspires hope beyond this life. Principle 8 says faith continues to look forward and upward, not back. This is characteristic of the patriarchs, they were always looking forward to their inheritance. They never turned around and looked backwards. And they had faith beyond this life. It's very important to emphasize, especially for Jewish people, because many Jewish people today—even rabbis—deny that there's any evidence of life beyond the grave. But they're going right against their own Scriptures. We go on to the next example, Hebrews 11:23. Now we are in the life of Moses.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

We could read the account in Exodus 2:1–2.

> "Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months."

You understand, at that time Pharaoh had made a decree that all the male children were to be put out to die. So, they were going directly against the commandment of Pharaoh.

But, they saw something in Moses which indicated that he was special and they would not submit to Pharaoh's decree. I suppose the ladies here would agree that babies can be special. I have to admit in my carnal mind, most newborn babies look alike, but I realize that's not the way it appears to their mothers. You have the Scripture with you, because Moses was so distinctive at birth that they couldn't treat them as they might have treated another child.

What was the result? A very important result. Israel's deliverer was preserved because God was going to depend on Moses. He had no one else who could do what Moses did.

The principle, P.11: Faith delivers from fear of ungodly rulers. That is a very important principle. It's very, very necessary for God's people to lay hold of that because behind the Iron Curtain, and in many other places, God's people need the kind of faith that delivers them from the fear of ungodly rulers. And many, many times God's people today are in a situation where they have to refuse to obey the edict of Pharaoh. We need to bear that in mind. It's not always the right thing to submit to governmental ordinances. If they're contrary to God we have to have the guts to disobey—and it takes fortitude.

The next example is again from the life of Moses in Hebrews 11:24–26. I will translate and then we'll look at the outline.

> "By faith Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called a son of the daughter of Pharaoh; choosing rather to endure hardship, to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the temporary pleasure of sin ..."

Some Christians want to deny that sin has any pleasure. Well, I lived long enough in the world to know that sin has some pleasure. And if you tell people there's no pleasure in sin, they're going to laugh at you because they'll find out differently. But, the pleasures of sin are short lived, that's the objective truth.

Going on in verse 26:

> "... he considered the reproach of the Christ [but we need to say 'Messiah' or 'the anointed'] ... he considered the reproach of the Anointed greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt ..."

Those of you that have ever been in Egypt and seen its archaeological remains would agree that its treasures were tremendous. I doubt whether people could calculate the worth of some of the absolutely gold tombs that there are

still in Egypt today. With the modern value of gold, it would run into, I suppose, a billion dollars.

Going on in verse 26:

> "... for he looked away to the reward which was to be given."

The word means literally "to look away." So he looked away from the pleasures offered him in Egypt to the reward which lay ahead in the future. That's enough for this passage.

Let's look now at the outline. Moses renounced his position as an heir to Pharaoh's throne. Being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he would have been in line for the throne of Egypt. Instead, he identified himself with God's people in their affliction. We read about this when he went out to see his brothers, realizing that he was himself an Israelite, he saw an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew and he took vengeance on the Egyptian, killed him and buried him in the sand. So, although he realized that this could cost him the favor of Pharaoh he chose to take sides with his afflicted brothers.

Now, the reproach of the Christ, verse 26:

> "... considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt ..."

Have you ever wondered about that? Because, Moses lived about fourteen centuries before Jesus so what does it mean that "he considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"? We need to bear in mind that the Greek word Cristos corresponds to the Hebrew word mashiach, "Messiah," which means "the anointed one." So, it was the reproach for God's anointed one that he considered to be greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

It's not very obvious, but the writer of Hebrews is referring to a psalm and we'll turn to the psalm and look at it. You'll find both the words "the reproach" and "the anointed" in Psalm 89:50–51. The psalmist is, I would say, complaining to the Lord about the mistreatment that the Lord's people are receiving and how they're despised and reviled.

> "Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples..."

This is a kind of prophetic preview of Jewish history, isn't it?

> "... with which Thine enemies have reproached, O LORD, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Thine anointed."

So you have there the two key words: reproached and anointed.

Now, let me suggest to you how I see this. I've put it there in the outline. The great historical purpose of Israel was to give to the world the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ. And, all through their history, identification with them always provoked the opposition of Satan who was the enemy of the Messiah. And so, at any point in their history, to be identified with them was in some way to take on the reproach of the Messiah.

I've commented here probably a similar choice confronts us today. I believe that's true in the current situation in the world. We are confronted with the choice of whether we will still identify with Israel or we will turn away from them. I believe, really, it's the same kind of choice that confronted Moses. Moses looked forward, we look back. But, the people are the same and the issue is the same.

You see, the most controversial single issue in contemporary world politics is Israel. There's very little neutrality concerning Israel. Personally, I believe that as committed Christians, committed to God, His purposes and His people, we have an obligation to be identified with Israel. I want to suggest to you that it's not going to be any easier for us than it was for Moses. It is not really popular today to take the cause of the Jewish people. So, I would suggest to you, you don't see this merely as a historical incident in the life of Moses because I think exactly the same issue confronts us today. And ultimately, if you take on identification with Israel, you're going to take on all that opposes Israel.

I hear people pray and testify about their love for Israel. I praise God for it, but I have to tell you that sooner or later there will be a price to pay. I think I've had sufficient involvement with the Jewish people to be able to speak out of experience. To identify with them, some of what they suffer will come your way. It won't always be popular and it won't always be easy.

But here we have the example of Moses. He could have been heir to the throne of Pharaoh but he esteemed the reproach of the Messiah greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

I wonder if you really esteem the reproach of Jesus' wealth? It wasn't just the inheritance but it was the

reproach. Peter said, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, the spirit of grace and of glory rests on you." A lot of us will be identified with Jesus when it's a question of His power and His miracles but I don't believe you can have that either without the reproach. Sooner or later they meet. So here is a real current issue for us, the same issue that faced Moses.

Going back to the outline, the result. This is my interpretation. Moses passed his first test to become Israel's deliverer. I want to emphasize, Moses probably didn't realize he was being tested. See, the subtle thing about God's tests is usually they come when we don't even know we're being tested. If God would say, "Now this week you're going to have a real test and if you come through, you'll be promoted." Well, that would be easy, but sometimes it's just the opposite. We feel powerless. "Where is God? He's not on the scene. He's left us. We're alone. Things are going wrong. What's the use? I might as well give in." We don't know that there's a recording angel watching every move we make and every word that we speak.

The next verse, still in the career of Moses. Verse 27:

> "And again by faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

That's one of my favorite Scriptures. He endured, as seeing him who is invisible. You remember that he had the king against him and instead of trying to placate the king or make his position secure, he left Egypt and he went to what the King James graphically describes as "the backside of the desert" and spent the next forty years looking after a few sheep. He made a real sacrifice—when you think he could have been on the throne of Egypt.

But, my comment is the result. He passed his second test. Reiteration of principle number 11 which is faith delivers from fear of ungodly rulers. Notice this is a principle that runs through this chapter.

And then principle 12: Seeing the invisible is the key to endurance. Look for a moment at 2 Corinthians 4:17–18.

> "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Notice affliction does us good. It's producing something that's of eternal value—but only on one condition. What's that? While we continue looking at the things which are not seen. Once you take your eyes off the unseen, you'll become cynical, your faith will dissipate, and you'll be ready to compromise. The secret of Moses was that for forty years he kept his eyes on the unseen. That's how he endured. And when you're in a test of endurance, believe me, the only way to go through is to keep your eyes on the unseen.

I don't suppose most of you spent much time studying the book of Ecclesiastes. Written by Solomon when, in a certain sense, he was backslidden. I don't know whether you'd accept that. The man had had tremendous blessing and revelation, tremendous wisdom, but the book of Ecclesiastes is a very cynical book in many ways. It's very true, but very cynical. Do you know it's possible to be cynical and yet right? Did you know that? I don't say it pays, but it's possible.

What was the essence of the change in Solomon? You'll find it in the key phrase in the book "things under the sun." He had taken his gaze off the eternal and the invisible and he was preoccupied with the things of time and of this world. He lost his faith and became a cynic.

Sermon

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