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Faith Through Betrayal | Hebrews 11:20

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Rev. James Bady

So, I'm always thankful for the opportunity to come before you and speak, and share what God has shared with me. And hopefully, you can come along on the journey with me of trying to study the Word in a different way. That may be a little different from the traditions you've grown up under and how that has been interpreted at that point in time. So, we want to dive a little bit into that. We're still on our heroes of faith series, exploring all the different ways we utilize and exercise faith in our lives. And I hope, throughout all of this time, one of the things that has become clear in each of the speakers presenting to you is how necessary faith is to make it through this life. You're going to need some faith.

Because life be life-ing. And I don't care who you are, live the life. It'll take its pound of flesh from you. And you're going to need something to sustain you. So, I tried to look at this scripture and thought, "Well, who is this for?" You can always get something out of a text; you can always find a nugget here. Who is that at the core of this message? And I think it's for that person who is almost at the verge of giving up completely. You've had enough.

Life has been life and if life gone life, a mess would do it by myself. Mess we'll do it. What if it lets people around? Right? Because if you're honest with yourself, where does the majority of your problems come from? People maybe, I know that. Right?

And so it's when you're on this journey of life, and people do what they do, and you already have your own problems, what is your solution to this? I aim to present an individual who faced significant challenges and accomplished something that most would find difficult. In doing so, this person created a new future and a new reality—a reality we now accept as normal, but

what was done was far from ordinary. This is the story of Isaac and his two sons, Jacob and Esau.

Traditionally, if you know the story of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau, it's told through Jacob's perspective, casting him as the hero. However, I want to take a step back and view the story from a broader perspective, as if from 30,000 feet. I wish to offer a different viewpoint from that of Jacob. Please bear with me as I change how you might view texts within the Bible.

The scripture in question is Hebrews 11:20. I'll read it twice—once in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and once in the King James Version (KJV). Why both? Because I grew up in the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), an African American denomination that has been influential since the early 1920s, founded by Bishop Charles Mason in Memphis, Tennessee. That's my heritage. The NRSV states, "By faith, Isaac invoked blessings for the future on Jacob and Esau." Meanwhile, the KJV says, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." It's about a future. It's about a father looking towards his children and wanting something better for them.

So, let's take a look back. This story comes from just a short verse, and that's all the author in Hebrews gives you. He assumes you know the rest of the story and what it signifies. Let's explore that further. So that goes back to Genesis 27. And it is a story about Isaac when he's coming to the point of about to die. And he's gathering himself and thinking through, okay, it's time to pass along the blessings that God has given me to my oldest son. It is in that story that then Isaac tells his oldest son, Esau, "Hey, go out to the field, kill an animal, bring it back, clean it, make a savory meal for me to eat, and then I will bless you. I will give you the blessings of God that God has put upon my life, and I will transfer them to you, my son."

And in that communication to Esau, his wife, Rebecca, is overheard the conversation and then goes and tells Jacob, "Hey, I'm paraphrasing. So, you know, your father is about to give out the blessing. What I want you to do is to go in the back and just get one of the animals, bring it here, I'm going to make it and you give it to your father and you take the blessing." There're all kinds of family dynamic issues that are going on at that point in time. I won't go into those today. But there's a very big danger when parents play favorites. And that's not the topic of today.

All right, so But Jacob goes and does as his mother asked him to do and they go through this whole exercise. And Jacob receives the blessing. And right after Jacob receives the blessing, Esau comes in after following the direction of his father and presents a meal and says, "Father, here's your meal, bless me." And in that moment, both Esau and Isaac realize they have been betrayed. They have been tricked, deceived, and they both are extremely, extremely upset. Because in the basic tradition, it is a transfer from the father to the oldest son for a couple of

reasons. I'll name some that seem almost obvious, right? So, the oldest child or the children has always known that the oldest child. And they so you've always had a position. You've always had authority within the family. Right. And also, the oldest son is supposed to be the epitome of the Father. The oldest son is supposed to be everything the Father is in would like to be the oldest son is supposed to be you. 2.0. So, this is why he's trying to bless the best of him. Right? And in that tradition, and in that culture, also the mantle of leadership always fell on the male. Right, so that's why it's not the oldest child is the oldest son. And then the son, being the new version of the Father has authority within the family and they're supposed to be loyal, yet independent, strong but sensitive to the needs. You know, all the things that make this go forward all the things that will make us prosperous, as a family and as a nation. That is what they're supposed to be. That is the tradition, but that is not what's happening. That is not what happened then in Genesis 27 There's treachery, there's deceit. So, Isaac gives the blessing to Jacob, Esau finds out about it. Then there's this dialogue between Isaac and Esau. And they're both saying, "Hey, what is going on here?" They say Isaac trembled, and said, "Well, who then did I bless? Everything that I am, I just gave it to someone. And it wasn't my intent to give it where it went. It's gone somewhere, the best of me, has gone somewhere, I didn't intend it. The best of me, is now outside of my control. The best of me, has been deceived."

And so, Esau is also sitting there said, "Father, what have I done wrong?" And to me, this is a turning point in the whole thing that leads to Hebrews 11:20. And it says, "Father, have you not reserved a blessing for me? Do you only have one blessing? Is there only one way? And have we all now damaged and destroyed our family?" Is there only one way? By tradition? The answer is yes. It's almost like if you and I, we have a will, and we pass on and then they read the will and the will goes to your wife, right? And then someone else comes up and say, "Hey, I want the totality of that will as well." It's impossible, right? You have what you have and that is gone. And it is in this moment. Because of the anguish of Esau, and his crying out and saying, "Father, you mean to tell me you only have one? What am I to do now? I have tried throughout my life to be the epitome of you. I've tried throughout my life to represent this family. Why have I been betrayed?"

So, you have two men in a story both feeling desperate. And Isaac knows what would likely happen next. And that is in that time. I don't know if you've seen or read a lot of stories within the Old Testament, but brothers kill brothers. This is nothing new. So, Isaac gathers himself and say, "Okay, okay, okay, I've given my son Jacob the land. I've given my son Jacob wine, I've given them this, this, this, this, essentially farmland here. But Esau, you're a warrior. Let me bless you that way. Let me bless you that you one day, in your being a warrior will one day throw off the yoke that I have helped Jacob put on your neck. Because I gotta be creative. I got to think out of the box, my traditions are failing me. And if I don't do something, my older son is going to kill my younger son and everything within our family is going to be destroyed. What do

I do then I've been betrayed, I don't know what to do. My tradition tells me what to do. And if I do that, my family's done. I need to now call on God to find a new way out. Because in the middle of this, this moment of despair, I want you to think about the totality of the life of Isaac. Right? So, this isn't new, and I'm gonna get somebody to help me out. I need somebody to play Isaac for a second. Who wants to stand up and be the senior gentleman? Isaac, in this story. David, Dave, come on. And I need somebody to be father Abraham. Yeah, huh come on. Come on. I need somebody to be Sarah. I need an Ishmael. Come on. Don't be oh man. Come on. I had to start grabbing people. All right, sir. Come on up. Sarah. Costs there. All right. All right. Because we gotta move a little bit. Oh, you want to be Sara, okay, you can be Rebecca. Alright, stay right there all right, so who am I'm so again, Abraham, I got Isaac, I need an Esau with Brandon come on up here going up because I want you to keep these characters straight in your mind. That's the only reason I'm moving these people because this has been going on a long time. Alright so Brandon, you're Ishmael. Okay. Esau and Ishmael. Abraham, Isaac.

See, that's why I did all the people. It's hard, isn't it? You are. Isaac, Isaac, you are. Alright, stand over here because I'm keeping my age. I was gonna say, all right, Ishmael. Who's Ishmael. All right. Sarah. Yeah. Come on, Sarah. Sarah, you go over here. You're the oldest son. Right. So now Jacob. You are Esau. See? Even I'm confused. Esau, Esau. We need a Jacob see we're running out. We need more people. Come on, Kevin. All right. Stop. See, you get Okay, Sara, Abraham, Ishmael. We're gonna leave Hagar out today. Okay. Yeah. Isaac, Esau. Jacob, Rebecca. So, Rebecca, you can go and sit next to Isaac. That is true. That is true. So, imagine the life of Isaac and what he's saying. So, after he's born, he has an older brother Ishmael. And his brother Ishmael, is a teenager. About the time of the story we hear about Ishmael. Is it teenager? And that does any of you have an older sibling? Maybe 10 years or older? Right? You do? You do? Is it so it's an older sister?

Brothers all brothers. This may or may not work for you. Alright. Older sister, older brother. Anyone else? Sister. So, sister, the sister. Same here, brother, the brother. I had an older brother. Tell me the kick. How did you feel about your older brother? That was 10 years plus older. And different. He was older. He was gone. Why? But he was he ever in the house with you.

When you were little. I never want anything. Okay, no, no. So, you're trying to mess up my story. This is a message here. Go with me for a second. All right, I'm had to regain control of this. In so I have an older brother. That is probably 15 years older than me. He's my second dad. Eugene, I love you, brother. And he treated me in such a way that he was totally my second dad. This is the relationship that's happening between Ishmael and Isaac. Because in that time, as Ishmael is a teenager, he can now engage with adult men. He can now go and come as he pleases. While Isaac at that point in time is only two to three years old. He's under

the care of his mother and the women. So here is Isaac. Looking ahead, his respected older brother, that one day disappears. You can go ahead and sit down. So, there's this abandonment that Isaac feels because his older brother is now gone. He modeled himself after the respected, older brother. Right authority within the family. And then after my older, respected brother goes away, I found out it was my mama who sent him away. How would you feel about that? Oh, I've got to take control of this story. In my story, I remember the day my older brother left the house. I stared out the window, watched him pack the car and drive away. I turned to my parents and looked at them like, what have you done? What did you do to my brother? Remember, these are people.

This is Isaac's view of his brother, Ishmael, Mother Sarah. And then I have this father, who takes me up on a mountain, saying, we're going to sacrifice something, but the thing that I know that we're going to sacrifice is me. This is Isaac's life. So, he has a father that sacrifices a mother that sent his best friend away, the best friend that didn't fight to stay. And now I get to my family. I get to my mother, who is helping to overthrow my older brother in his rightful place in this family. This is the life of Isaac. Does anybody feel betrayed? Yet? Does anybody understand how Isaac may view this moment, at the end of his life, when his only goal now is to do the best thing possible, and take all of God's blessing and do the right thing? And even then, I'm surrounded by betrayal. Even then, we can't get this right. So, do you sense the desperation from both Isaac and Esau yet, because betrayal is not an easy thing. It destroys your trust in a system. It destroys your trust in people. It destroys your trust in life. It destroys your trust in faith, it destroys your trust in God.

And people closest to him created that. So now, when we talk about the faith of Isaac, it is in the middle of all of this, thank you all. Give him a hand. And these are all very good people. They do you get the story in the moment of Isaac. And so, Isaac creates a new blessing and says, "Son, you, you will be a warrior. God will bless you there. And then one day, the yoke that has been put on your neck, it will be broken and you will be free." But in that very moment and to in chapter 27. I'm not sure. Esau believed them. Because the next part of the story you hear is Esau wanted to kill Jacob. Right? That's how chapter 27 ends. But the story doesn't end there.

The next time you see the two brothers come together as in chapter 33 of Genesis. Jacob has gone off, he has become prosperous, he has a family. But now he's returning home to his homeland. And he knows he has to cross the path of his brother Esau. And Esau is everything Isaac prayed he would be. He is a warrior and has warriors with him. Meaning this farmer Jacob is now about to come up against his warrior brother, Esau, and other warriors, and he has his family and children. That's all he has is some servants. What's interesting about when they tell the story about them coming together, it is the response of Esau. Jacob remembers what he's done to his family. And so, he goes through all of these different actions to try to

buffer himself against the anger of Esau. But Esau and chapter 33 sees Jacob, runs to him, kisses him on the neck. He says they wept. They wept. Esau has forgotten all the anger. He's forgotten all the deceit. And in this moment, once again, there is just brothers, just brothers. So, I submit to you what happened to the anger of Esau? Where did it go? Is it possible that the prayers of Isaac, have come to be a realization?

Is it possible that the character of Esau has leaned into being the oldest son? And what do I mean by that? The epitome of the Father is the father, Isaac was able to forgive the epitome of Isaac, his father, was able to overcome and bless, even though he had been done wrong. Isaac has forgiven his father, his mother, his brother, his son, and his wife. And here's the son to 2.0. Giving the brother who stole his birthright. So, this in the blessing in the prayer, is Esau becoming what Isaac had wanted him to be? He blessed them both. One you will be a blessing of the ground, the other you'll be blessing of the warrior. But the other part I need you to be as the epitome of me, and even give blessings after betrayal. Blessings after betrayal.

Faith after betrayal? Are there moments in your life that you're going to have to give forgiveness and have faith after the betrayal? Yes, why? People? People, we do a lot of different things and have a lot of different things in our life that are external that helps us to define who we are. Right? We our careers, money, our status, our titles, our race, where we live, the nation that we are in the political party, were a part of all these things, give us status, and confer to us certain blessings. But the problem is what happens when those external things let you down? And they betray you. And they shift.

For example, there was a point in time in the early 1900s, I think is they said about the 1920s because there was right after the Great Crash, right? So, if you were a little chubby around the middle, that was a good day. So, no more. Right? Because that was a sign that you still have resources, and you could feed yourself and your family. Right? But that was the status if I was little Porky, right, if you had a little bit meat on you. There was a point in time and 1950s and 60s where if you are a man and you had calluses on your hand, that was a good thing. When it why they said you were you were working, you're resourceful. You could do things you can make things.

That's changing, isn't it? So, what happens when you put your identity in these things and they let you down? You're lost. You're adrift. And the challenges will come for you then do you have the faith in your Creator who was truly meant to define who you are? When those things that betray you that you can still go forward? Will you earn the title of Christian? What do I mean by that? Will you become the epitome of your Father in heaven? Will you become Jesus to point out everything Jesus was in his time you are supposed to represent because you call yourself Christian. Right? Remember that wasn't the name Jesus gave us. That wasn't a name Paul gave us. That wasn't a name Peter gave us. That wasn't a name John gave us. That wasn't a

name Steven gave us. That was none of the names given to us by the disciples, we would call saints by the disciples. Where did the name Christian come from? Because the people saw how we acted. And it was so different from every other religion, it was only worthy to create a new name for you. Because you are the epitome of everything Jesus the Christ supposed to be and you did it, even though they were hanging you. You did it. Even after you people were being killed by that name. You did it. After family members sold you out to the leaders and rulers of the time. You did it. So, will you have the ability today in your life, to overcome the challenges of your life? And do the things that God has for you anyway?

Because it changes the future. I don't think Esau's anger goes away without Isaac's prayer. I don't think we have the story of Jacob, without Isaac's prayer. This is about faith after people have done you wrong. Hebrews 11:20 is about faith, while people are doing you wrong, the story of faith and Hebrews a lot less than 20 is about faith. When the world under you is shaking. Do you still have the power to do right and find new traditions and new ways to be a blessing to others? This is about faith that others would not even attempt to do. Can you do that?

In this point in time in your life, I'll close with this is Psalm 73. It talks about trusting in God even though you're at a point of giving up. It says they start at verse 21. So, Psalm 73, starting at verse 21. When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in the heart, I was stupid and arrogant. I was like a beast towards you, God. Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand, you guide me with your counsel, and afterward, you will receive me with honor who have high in heaven but you and there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail but God, you are the strength of my heart, and my portion, whatever. It is that kind of faith that you are looking for, in Hebrews 11 Amen.