

# Hebrews 11:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

## Analysis

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**By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.** Despite being old and blind, Isaac blessed his sons by faith, speaking prophetically about their futures. The Greek *peri mellontōn* (περὶ μελλόντων, 'concerning things to come') indicates Isaac's blessings weren't mere wishes but prophetic declarations about God's sovereign purposes for his descendants. Though Isaac initially intended to bless Esau, God's elective purposes ensured Jacob received the covenant blessing (Genesis 27).

Isaac's faith appears in his acceptance of God's sovereign choice after discovering Jacob's deception. Rather than cursing Jacob or revoking the blessing, Isaac confirmed it: 'Yea, and he shall be blessed' (Genesis 27:33). This demonstrates faith's submission to divine sovereignty even when it contradicts personal preference. Isaac recognized God's hand overruling his own plans, surrendering to purposes higher than his own will.

This illustrates the Reformed doctrine of unconditional election—God's choice of Jacob over Esau 'not of works, but of him that calleth' (Romans 9:11-13). Isaac's patriarchal blessing carried covenantal authority, transmitting promises from Abraham through the chosen line. His faith believed God's purposes would prevail through his descendants, trusting divine promises regarding future realities he would never see fulfilled in his lifetime.

## Historical Context

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Isaac lived approximately 1850 BC. Ancient Near Eastern culture invested profound significance in paternal blessings, which conveyed inheritance rights, family leadership, and covenant promises. The firstborn typically received the primary blessing, making Isaac's intended blessing of Esau culturally normative. However, God had revealed to Rebekah before the twins' birth that 'the elder shall serve the younger' (Genesis 25:23), overruling cultural custom through sovereign election. Isaac's confirmation of Jacob's blessing, despite the deception, acknowledged God's predetermined purposes.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does Isaac's submission to God's sovereign purposes challenge your own response when God's will contradicts your preferences?
2. What does this passage teach about God's electing grace working through imperfect human instruments?
3. In what ways should faith in God's future promises shape how you invest in the next generation?

## Interlinear Text

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Πίστει	περὶ	μελλόντων	εὐλόγησεν	Ἰσαὰκ	τὸν	Ἰακώβ
<b>By faith</b>	<b>concerning</b>	<b>things to come</b>	<b>blessed</b>	<b>Isaac</b>	G3588	<b>Jacob</b>
G4102	G4012	G3195	G2127	G2464		G2384
καὶ	τὸν	Ἡσαῦ				
<b>and</b>	G3588	<b>Esau</b>				
G2532		G2269				

