

Hebrews

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Date: 12 December 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Well, it wasn't too long ago that we engaged the 11th chapter of Hebrews, and it is commonly referred to as the faith chapter. It contains a number of examples of individuals who became justified before God on the basis of their simply believing Him.

And we're going to explore that a little bit in some detail this morning because it's the kind of subject that is so critical to what Christianity is all about, it behooves every one of us to have a really good, clear fix on what this subject called faith is.

It's a word that everyone is familiar with, whether they are in Christianity or not. Most people connect it with some kind of religion.

Some connect it with some type of wish fulfillment. If there is anything that faith is not, it is not what the little boy in the first grade Sunday school class told his teacher when she asked him how he would explain faith.

And he says, faith is believing something that you know ain't so. Well, that is not faith. That is incredulity. Faith is the kind of subject that is bandied about and very little understood.

[1 : 3 1] It's very vague to a lot of people, and yet it should not be because it is such a critical subject. You better have a good, firm understanding of it because if you don't, there is always that possibility that, as Paul said, examine yourselves and see whether you be in the faith.

Because there are some who know something about faith and they talk about faith, but they are not in the faith. So how do you get there, and what does that involve? The subject is expressed in Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, and many of you are familiar with that passage.

I'm sure you've committed to memory where Paul talks about that salvation is by grace through faith.

And both of those prepositions are important. By it being by grace means that that is the platform.

That is the basis for faith's function. That grace is that unmerited favor of God that is extended to us on the basis of his character and his nature, not ours.

[2 : 4 7] And that's a very important concept to understand. And then faith is the vehicle through which God's grace gets to us. God's grace has been demonstrated in a mighty way through his provision of the Lord Jesus Christ as a substitutionary death for our sins.

And that is the essence of the gospel. That is presented to us. Christ died for our sins. That's the essence of the gospel, 1 Corinthians 15.

Where faith comes in is when the question then is asked, Okay, what have you done about that? What is your response to that? Christ died for our sins.

So what? What have you done about that? Your faith, your belief, your trust, your confidence, your reliance is your answer to that question.

And all of those words are synonyms for the subject of faith. Belief. In fact, the word belief and faith come from the very same Greek word. And it conveys the idea of exercising confidence, trust, reliance, dependence upon.

[4 : 02] And the thing, of course, that makes the Christian faith so different from all other faiths is the object of our faith.

We are not saved by faith in faith. We are saved by faith in Christ. He is the object of our faith.

So when we express our belief or our trust in what God has done through Christ, that results in what is called justification by faith or justification on the basis of faith.

And to be justified, to be justified means to be declared righteous. It doesn't mean you are.

Big difference. Big difference. We exercise faith in Jesus Christ and he declares us, he pronounces us justified.

[5 : 11] This does not mean you are perfect in your behavior or anything else. And here is where a lot of people have misunderstandings regarding Christianity. Because they think a Christian, they think a Christian, if you are a true Christian, then I never expect you to do anything wrong or say anything wrong.

Because that's what a Christian is. You are perfect, right? Of course not. Not even close. But we are declared to be righteous on the basis of our faith.

And yet, we are sinful beings. We are still able to do sinful, stupid things. That does not affect our justification, but it certainly does affect the way the world sees us and they don't understand.

So, as a believer in Christ, you have every right to say, although you need to be very careful where you say it and how you say it, you have every right to say, I know my sins are forgiven.

I know I'm going to heaven when I die. Now, for other believers in Christ, that's not a terribly odd statement. In fact, you ought to be able to make that.

[6 : 24] Because your assurance and your confidence is in Christ. But if the world hears you make a statement like that, to show you how different it is and how much they misunderstand that.

If the world hears you make a statement like that, I know I'm going to heaven when I die. Their immediate thought is, oh, wow, you must think you're really something. You must think you're really good.

No, no, no, no. That's where they missed the point entirely. We think, we know we are not what we ought to be. We know we have been made something in Christ that allows God to accept us, despite the fact that we've got all this baggage and everything else that goes with it.

So, that's the important distinction. And, fellas, the world doesn't really have a clue as to what true faith is. So, what I'd like to do this morning is just kind of open this up for a freewheeling discussion.

And if anybody has questions or comments or something you would like to inject regarding the subject of faith or maybe how it's distinguished from grace, we'll certainly be willing to entertain that.

[7 : 36] So, I want you to give that some thought. Any thoughts or comments? Anybody? Right off the bat? Yeah, Dan. What? Because our sins are forgiven, and we know we're sinners, but that doesn't give us carte blanche.

That's right. You're right. And so, there has to be some kind of a guidance and discretion as to how our behavior is. Absolutely. And so, I guess one of the sources would be the Bible for that.

That's certainly the main source, yes. Yes. Yeah. And you are so right. We are justified on the basis of God's grace and Christ's work for us.

And when He saves you, He gives you that official status, that official position. You are in Christ.

You are declared to be righteous. Just as righteous as Jesus Christ is. That's your official position. And we've talked about this sometime in the past, and it's very, very important to make a distinction between your official position, which cannot even be improved upon.

[8 : 52] Because it is rooted and based in who Jesus Christ is and what He did. And when He died on that cross, He fully satisfied the demands of a righteous God.

And Christ's righteousness was imputed to you when you believed on Him. And He gave you a status, a standing before God that is the same as Christ's status Himself.

And that is incredible. That is your official position. Your practice is an entirely different manner.

You do not grow in your position. You grow in your practice. Once we have received Christ as our Savior, we have a perfect position in Him.

That then gives us the basis to move out in our practice. And that's called growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

[10 : 02] And in your behavior, you are to become more and more Christ-like in your daily living. That's all spiritual maturity is.

That's what growing in grace really means. You are becoming more and more conformed to the image of Christ. Don. If I walked into my church on Sunday and I asked people, are you going to heaven?

Probably most of the answers I get, well, I hope so. Yeah. I can have a look like that. Yeah. Well, unfortunately, most would say, I hope so. And the reason they do is because there is, unfortunately, there is real confusion regarding what the grace of God is all about.

If you understand what grace is, you understand what salvation is, you are going to be able to say with great confidence, I know I'm going to heaven.

And you also know it has nothing to do with you being a good person. It has nothing to do with you being a nice guy. It has everything to do with the fact that Christ died for your sins.

[11 : 17] And your trust is in Him. It isn't in you. It's in Him. That enables you to say, I know I'm going to heaven. And, fellas, that is not cockiness.

That is confidence. And we are supposed to live confident lives. Our confidence is rooted in the fact that God loves us and Christ died for our sins.

And our trust and our faith is in Him. And the world doesn't understand that because they cannot get away from the behavior mode. That salvation is for those who earned it.

You'd be surprised how many people in our churches today, tons of people in our churches today, think that heaven is God's reward for people who live a good enough life and deserve it.

That's pretty much the party line. And it's terribly wrong. Joe? Joe? But hope in the Bible means a sure thing, though. Like, I have hope in Christ.

[12 : 20] There's nothing wrong with saying that. I mean, I'm not sure. No, absolutely not. It's because the hope that's used in the Bible is a sure thing. Absolutely. It's not like the secular world thinks of hope. Hope is a sure thing.

They are mistaken regarding a subject of hope as they are with grace and faith. And when most people say, I hope I'm going to heaven, what they mean is they're not sure they've been quite good enough.

And the problem with that is, like Andy Stanley said in his little book, since nobody's perfect, how good is good enough? And the world does not understand.

The distinction isn't a quantity thing. How good do you have to be? How righteous do you have to be? That's the way the world sees it.

And that's all they know. And fellas, listen. This gospel has been around for 2,000 years. And it's still misunderstood in its basic component. That is amazing. That is amazing.

[13 : 25] Salvation is not on the basis of the quantity of righteousness you have. It's on the basis of the quality of righteousness you have.

This is what Paul meant when he said that I might be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, which is by the law, but the righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ.

And then in 2 Corinthians 5, he talks about God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing the trespasses unto them.

He's committed unto us the gospel of reconciliation. And then later, in a couple of verses later, he talks about we are in Christ.

And that in, well, let's look at 2 Corinthians. This is such a critical, critical passage. I'm just amazed at how many, how many have not really picked up on this.

[14 : 26] But it's just one of the most blessed truths in the scriptures. Verse 21, last verse, 2 Corinthians 5. He, this is God the Father, made him, that is Christ the Son, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that, or so that.

This is a purpose clause. So that we might become, and this might, that's another word that throws a lot of people.

Might is kind of like maybe. Are you going to the game tomorrow? Well, I might. What does that mean? It means maybe you will, maybe you won't.

And it's kind of like the word, kind of like the word hope in the Bible and how it is completely different from the way people approach the word in our everyday language.

And here, this might doesn't convey some idea or some concept that maybe it will come to pass and maybe it won't. It is a reality that he's talking about.

[15 : 35] That we might, that we will definitely become the righteousness of God in Him. So, everyone who stands before God is going to stand before Him clothed in their own righteousness which the Scriptures define as filthy rags or clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

And I fully agree, it is a concept that is difficult to buy into because we know what we are. And we know what Christ is.

And for me to say, well, my position is one that is just as good as the position of Christ. That sounds really scary, boastful, whatever.

But it's true, guys. It's true. If you stand before God with one smidgen less than the perfection of Christ, you're doomed.

You are absolutely doomed. We are in Christ. And that means we are in amalgamation with Him. We are bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh.

[16 : 50] We are united with Him. And Paul talked to the Colossians and said, Christ is in you, the hope, the confidence, the absolute assurance of future glory.

And that future glory involves trading in this body for a body fashion like unto the body of Jesus Christ. This is what positional truth is all about.

And I cannot tell you how it upsets me that this truth has been around for 2,000 years. And I'll put it as bluntly as I can.

The Christian church, as a rule, has done a really crummy job communicating this message. And there's nothing else you can call it. As long as this message and this truth has been around and as many vehicles as there are for proclaiming it, the world ought to be fully familiar with what it means to be in Christ even if they aren't and don't want to be.

They ought to know what that's about because we should have made it clear for the last 2,000 years. Kevin? Yeah. You said this is, you've been in Hebrews 11 chapter, right?

[18 : 09] Yes. Yeah. But my favorite verse in that Hebrew, you get a nerve after you see where it was and it says, but without faith it is impossible.

Now we all know what impossible means. Impossible means it ain't gonna happen. It says, impossible to please him. He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek.

Now when you get to talking about our hope, our might, maybe, talking about going to heaven, what you have done is saying that his ultimate sacrifice don't have no power.

Mm-hmm. At all. And then it becomes just like what Mark's saying, you know what I'm saying? If it's impossible to please him without faith, that's lack of faith for you to be saying, might, maybe, I don't know, that's not gonna please God.

But if you know for a fact, like he was saying that you are going to heaven, you've got that within your heart and in your mind, can't nobody tell you no difference because salvation wasn't something that you earned.

[19 : 28] Something you worked for. Amen. Amen, brother. Am I right? Amen. I've often said, I've often said, anybody who thinks they've been good enough and that they deserve to go to heaven is not gone.

Not gonna be anybody in heaven who thinks they deserve to be there. Because there isn't anybody that deserves to be there. We're all there on the basis of grace. It's the finished work of Christ. Dana? I have a question.

It's going back to Joe brought up that Joe can't change the subject to talk about hope and how the Christian word hope doesn't mean what the modern definition of hope is in this language.

And if that's the case, then it, yeah, I believe that's the case. But why do we still use the word hope in translation today in the Bible? If it's not, do we use the story of those?

I would just say it's just a poor choice. Just a poor choice of words. Translators don't have it together any better than anybody else. And, you know, the sheets that I give you each week taken from the 26th translation New Testament with the King James being the lead translation, these are all, all of these variations that you see there, they're all based upon the translator's preference or understanding of a particular word that they use as opposed to another word.

[21 : 00] And these are almost all just judgment calls on the part of the individual. And some are a lot better at it and some are a lot worse at it. And that result is some make very good translations, some make very bad translations.

And all the translations are questionable. And they're all man-made. The only one that isn't man-made is the original document. That is the actual content, call it pen and ink if you want, that God inspired the writer to write that original document.

But we don't have any of those. We have no idea that any of them even exist or where they are. They probably do not exist, but we don't know that for sure. They are the original autographs. Other thoughts or comments?

Can I ask you something like this a little? Now, when we talk about how it's impossible to please him without faith, now when God told Abraham to take the child's promise and take him and put him on a pit and bury him, but when Abraham left, a lot of people forget this part, when Abraham left, he didn't say I'll be back.

What did he say, Mark? He said, we will return. Me and the child have promised that the Lord has asked me to take a bit through faith. And then that happened to him.

[22 : 20] Amen. It's all like you said, Mark. It's all based on your faith. That's what it's all based on. It's your faith. And I want to pursue that a little bit because there again, like I said, there is so much room for misunderstanding.

The reason that God has established faith as the coin of the realm is that he wants to be, and how many times have I said this over the years, more than anything else, God wants to be believed.

He wants to be trusted. In fact, that's what this whole 11th chapter is all about. It's just our willingness and belief and confidence in God being able and willing to deliver on what he has promised.

And one of the illustrations that I've used in the past, when one stands before the Lord, I can't even think of the guy's name now, but if you think of it, sound it out.

And he was asked, when you, if you are wrong, Bertrand Russell, Bertrand Russell was a very well-known, very brilliant intellectual type guy in the 19th century.

[23 : 42] And he was a pronounced atheist of some reputation. And one day a reporter was asking him and said, Mr. Russell, if, if you should be wrong about there not being a God, and that one day you stand before your maker and he asked you, Bertrand Russell, why did you not believe?

What would you tell him? Without hesitation, Russell said, I would tell him, you didn't give me enough evidence. well, that might be the best answer he can come up with.

But when you read Romans chapter 1, it's very clear there that the evidence that God has given through creation is sufficient. And the conclusion that is reached is that man is therefore without excuse.

It is not going to fly to stand before God and say, you did not give me enough evidence. And that brings us to the subject of what faith is all about and how it works with evidence.

Some are of the opinion, and this again is a tremendous category of errors, some are of the opinion that faith means that you believe something when all of the evidence about it is contrary to it.

[25 : 13] But yet, you muster up your ability to believe despite the evidence and despite the facts that are there. That is not biblical faith.

Biblical faith is that God has provided sufficient evidence that will allow anyone who is looking for truth to be able to come to a conclusion based on the evidence that's given.

Has God given complete inconclusive evidence? No, of course not. And he did not do so deliberately. He is withholding evidence because that provides room for faith.

If evidence were not withheld, if everything were open and clear, faith would not be necessary. And this is precisely why Paul says what he does in 1 Corinthians 13, that now there abides these three, faith, hope, love.

And of these three, love is the greatest. Why is it the greatest? Because it's the only one that's going to endure. The time is coming when faith is going to be out of business.

[26 : 31] There won't be any need for it anymore. And hope is going to be out of business. There won't be any need for that anymore either. Because as the writer says, why does anyone hope for what he already has? When your hopes have been realized and fulfilled, you don't go on hoping for that thing.

If a guy is going to give his girl an engagement ring and he says, boy, I hope, I hope, I hope, I hope she accepts it and will have my hand in marriage, and he gives her the ring and she's thrilled and she's accepted and you set the date and everything, he's not going to go home and continue to hope, he's got a response.

The hope has been realized. And so it is with faith. It will have been realized, it will have been fulfilled, and the only thing that will be left, the coin of the realm in eternity or in time, is love.

That's never going out of style. But in the meanwhile, God has provided sufficient evidence that will allow anyone who is looking for truth to come to a conclusion.

Someone has said that the average person that cannot find God is for the same reason that thieves cannot find a policeman. Scott? You said earlier when you closed the blinds, you had faith that the sun was going to come up today?

[27 : 50] Yeah. That was based on what? Past faithfulness and past practice? Right. That helps your faith grow. Right. What's the basis for that? Well, God has been faithful all these other times like the heaven, the water from the rock, the red sea.

Absolutely. God has an impressive track record for anybody who is looking for truth. Joe? God wants us to believe, to trust.

That's the key. The coin of the realm. Well, in your books, what does a man want from a wife and a wife want from a man? You've got books you've passed out over there.

And they did a survey of a man, and he's of course in God's image. If you had to choose whether you wanted your wife to love you or trust you, which would you pick?

And they said, well, I want her to have both of them. Well, you can't. You've got to have one or the other. And 75% of those husbands said, I'd rather have her trust me than love me.

[28 : 55] I'd rather trust me than love you. And that means accept my decisions, you know, basically what I say is good for the family, good for you and everything. I want you to trust me. He wanted that more than he did for her to love.

Now, it was the opposite the other way. Women want men to love them. They want men to love them and show love and show care. But men did not want the woman, they preferred that she would trust them rather than love them.

Amen. Amen. Good point.

Thank you. Thank you. Other thoughts? Anybody? Kevin? I forgot one more. A person asked me one time, like, how can you believe something that you can't see, what, you know, I don't know about the spiritual thing, but what natural, what natural thing with your natural eyes that you can see that you know that there is a God?

and I'll never forget it in that day, very same day, he was converted because the Lord gave me something this is just for those who, I don't know if their faith is a little weak.

[30 : 07] What keeps me going is, right now, when you go outside, don't go to the street. Now, April, April, May, June, which is the birth. July, August, and September is God is in his clinic.

October, November, and December is the weather. January, February, and March is the death. Then, when April comes again, he shows you every year.

Now, from the beginning, right, right now, this is like the resurrection piece. Now, when you say like, right now, you see the buds on the trees, how they begin to bud, stuff like that.

Then, July, August, and September, you see how pretty, how the fruit is all on the trees, and how beautiful the leaves, and stuff. This is Christ and his splendor, and his ministry.

October, November, December, do you notice how the withering of the leaves, they turn colors, and the grapes, and stuff, this is Christ being beaten. Then, January, February, February, and March is the death.

[31 : 20] When you look at these trees, and look at these things, you would never believe for one minute that anything else, if you didn't have any life, that anything else is going to grow on them trees, right?

When you look at it, how bare and everything is, Christ's on the cross. Then, when April comes again, every year, they ransom man. Don't they?

Yeah. They ransom man. And Christ shows you His life every single year. Amen. That's what made me believe. Made me have faith.

Is that right? The seasons of the year reflect the character and the faithfulness of God. Amen. Morning by morning, this faithfulness is marvelous.

Book of Lamentations. Other thoughts anyway? Amen. The idea of evidence is one that looms very large.

[32 : 21] Josh McDowell, I can't believe that it's been over 50 years since he authored that book, but they recently had the 50th anniversary of the publication of that book, Evidence That Demands a Verdict.

I well remember, this just goes to show you how long ago it was, my own kids were in high school and Tim is coming up on 60 now and he was in high school with a bunch of other kids from Grace and I taught Josh McDowell's book on Evidence That Demands a Verdict for a Sunday school class and this would have been back in the early 70s.

and I heartily recommend the book for anybody who is really looking for excellent apologetics that is written on a layman's level, easily understood, easily grasped, and contains just outstanding evidences like the title suggests.

It's evidence that demands a verdict and I don't know it was a runaway bestseller and it's Josh McDowell Josh McDowell and Evidence That Demands a Verdict.

I don't think there's a better publication out there from the standpoint of layman than that and he goes into the original manuscripts and the original autographs and the subject of the copying of the scriptures and the translations that are available and everything.

[34 : 00] It's just outstanding work that I would heartily recommend anyone to obtain. You can find it at your local Christian bookstore. Any other thoughts? Anyone? Are we pretty well squared away on the subject of faith now?

We can return to Hebrews next week. We're in chapter 11 and we'll have scripture sheets for you with the various translations there. Yes, Dana?

Yesterday I heard an interview of Jimmy Carter on the radio and he written a book about faith. And he said last week, or two weeks ago I guess it was, faith is not a religious term.

And he was commenting about it. I guess the interview was much of a political for the way our society is. A little bit of it was religious.

And the reporter asked Jimmy, well other reporters that I know are very skeptical of the future.

[35 : 10] And he said, well you're so positive. You have such a positive outlook. And Jimmy's response was my faith in religion that gives me that positive outlook.

Yeah. Well, even people who say they have no faith do.

They just don't realize it. Even the most pronounced atheists, you're talking Richard Dawkins or somebody of that nature, they talk about those people who have faith.

Well, he has faith too. Because you see, what it always comes down to is what is the object of your faith. Richard Dawkins, highly published, well respected, atheist internationally, and what is it that he has his faith in?

It's his own intellect. It's his own intellect. He has faith, confidence, trust, reliability, in his own mind and the conclusions that he is able to reach.

[36 : 26] So, all of his trust and his faith is in himself. He is the object of his faith. For the Christian, the object of our faith is Jesus Christ.

It isn't ourselves, it's him. So, everyone has faith. Because, fellas, whether we realize it or not, faith is not essentially a religious word.

Did you hear me? Faith is not essentially a religious word. It is a general term that may have religious connotations.

Everybody has faith in something. For many, it's themselves. For others, it's their church, or it's the rabbi, or it's the priest, or whatever.

But for the believer in Jesus Christ, it's the person of Christ. He is the object of our faith. Scott? I heard it said the difference between the believer and the unbeliever.

[37 : 31] One says, when I see it, then I'll believe it. The other says, when you believe it, then you'll see it. Yeah, well, the time is coming when, as I mentioned, because God has not revealed himself conclusively.

And what do I mean by that? I mean, God has seen fit to not reveal himself so as to leave no doubt. He hasn't done that.

He has deliberately not done that. Because in that realm where there is room for doubt, that's where faith exists.

That's where faith operates. The time is coming when Jesus Christ will be revealed, Matthew 24, and the scriptures make it very clear, and every eye shall see him.

Then there will be no doubt. That's called conclusive evidence. There won't be any atheist then. There won't be anyone then saying, I don't believe that stuff.

[38 : 42] It's a bunch of religious nonsense. No, no. Because the evidence will be incontrovertible. It will be overwhelming. It will be there. And there will be no need for faith then.

Because the reality will be there front and center. Nobody's going to be denying it. But for now, there is room for doubt. And in that room for doubt, God expects and wants our face to operate.

That's a very important concept. Yes? I believe that, yes, in the future, God will make himself visible and all will recognize him.

That being said, though, even if there was enough evidence today, there's still some that, with all the evidence in front of them proving it, they still are struggling.

Sure. There is an element committed to unbelief, no matter the evidence. And you find these kind of people, and I know this is a hard sell, some of you aren't going to believe this, but there really, honestly, truly are some people who still believe this is a flat earth.

[39 : 57] And you may be thinking, oh, come on, Marv, nobody's going to buy that in this day. Oh, yes, they are. There are people who believe things that you would not believe, and they are committed to it.

So, that's just human nature. Someone has put, I think it was, I think it was, who was it who wrote Penn C's, well, said, there is sufficient evidence for those who are willing to believe.

But for those who are not willing to believe, you cannot marshal enough evidence to satisfy them. There's never enough evidence. And that's where, many, some have, some are in unbelief because they have honest, honest intellectual doubts.

And they're honest about it. And they have honest doubts. And then some will not believe because they have a moral impediment. They don't want to believe because they know what that will lead to and they don't want to go there.

[illegible]