## Hebrews

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[0:00] Seeing as how it is that time of year again, I guess we need to pay a little homage to the Irish. So at the expense of repeating these, for those who heard them last night at the prayer meeting, we'll just ask them to indulge us once again.

But I thought they were rather typical of the Irish and full of some good wisdom. Doesn't matter how big your house is, how much money you have, or that you wear expensive clothes.

Our graves will be the same size. Stay humble. The brain is the most amazing organ.

It works 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from birth, until you fall in love. And here's one that the ladies will appreciate.

In every woman's dream, her ideal man takes her in his arms, throws her on the bed, and cleans the whole house while she sleeps.

[1:07] You guys remember, that's the way it's supposed to go. True. And this is one of my favorites. What did our parents do when they were bored with no internet and no television?

It says, I asked my 18 brothers and sisters, and they didn't know either. Friendship is when people know all about you, but like you anyway.

And this is one with which you all identify. During a visit to the mental asylum, I asked the director, how do you determine whether or not a patient should be institutionalized?

Well, said the director, we fill up a bathtub, and then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup, and a bucket to the patient, and ask him or her to empty the bathtub.

Oh, I understand. So a normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup. No, said the director, a normal person would pull the plug.

[2:24] Do you want a bed near the window? Wow. So, be advised, okay, as to which implement you're going to use to empty that bathtub.

If you look at your scripture sheet, we are in chapter 11 of Hebrews, commonly referred to as the Hall of Faith. And it is replete with all kinds of illustrations of men and women who, against what we would call conventional wisdom, believe God, simply because they believe He was the source of all wisdom rather than man.

We have made the point in the past that more than anything else, God wants to be believed. He wants to be trusted. A refusal to do so is an insult or a slap in the face of the Almighty.

Matter of fact, I think it is incumbent upon humanity to exercise faith as a responsibility toward God. And what I base that on is the fact that we have an authoritative record as to why there is something rather than nothing.

And that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and He simply wants us to believe Him and take Him at His word. And He has provided the information to that end.

[3:54] And when Paul, the apostle, opened his letter to the Romans, which is probably the most thorough and the most in-depth treatment of Christian doctrine in any one book in the whole Bible, he opens it by declaring the reason that God called him to this ministry.

And he says in chapter 1, that it is in order to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith.

That tells me that it is disobedient to not exercise faith. In other words, it is incumbent upon us as a human responsibility to believe God, to exercise faith.

And then, as if to reinforce what he says in chapter 1, he repeats it at the end of Romans, again reminding us that God called him to the ministry in order to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith.

Now, the Jews, that other segment of human population, the Jews already had a sufficient record provided in the Old Testament to cause them to put their faith and trust in the Lord.

[5:17] The Gentiles didn't have such a record. But one is being provided, and we call that commonly referred to as the New Testament, which I have some questions about even naming it that, but that's another issue.

So, a gospel is provided, or good news is provided, and it is to be communicated through the Apostle Paul, not only to Jews, but to Gentiles. And the striking thing about Paul's apostleship is that he was a singular apostle raised up to encompass the entirety of the world's population, if you will.

That was not Jewish, although he ministered to the Jews as well. But here was one apostle whom God raised up to minister to all the rest, while Israel had twelve. And there are reasons for that, because it all ties in with the number of tribes that Israel had, and with the position that they're going to have during the kingdom of God when it is established on the earth.

But this concept of faith, we ordinarily don't think of as a human responsibility. But it is. And I think the scriptures make that quite clear.

And I want to emphasize something that is probably misunderstood, but needs to be tucked away in our minds for future reference, and that is this. Everyone functions and operates on a daily basis with the principle of faith.

[6:47] Whether they believe it or not, whether they realize it or not, they do. You exercise faith all the time without even thinking of it. When you came in here and sat down in the chair, you didn't examine the chair beforehand and test its structural strength to make sure that it would hold you up.

You actually sat down on that chair by faith. You just made an assumption, automatically, that that chair was going to hold you up. So you had a certain amount of faith in the ability of that chair to do that.

Now if someone were to play a trick on you and saw off one of those legs so that you couldn't see that it was gone, you came in and sat down on that chair and it immediately tipped over and you landed on your duff, that doesn't mean that there was something wrong with your faith.

It means there was something wrong with the chair. Now there's a big difference there. Big difference. You exercise without even thinking about it.

Faith. And when we use that word faith, I want you to think in terms of confidence, reliability, and trust. Those are all synonyms for faith.

[8:07] And it means that you are placing confidence in someone or something else often without thinking. When you get on a plane, you haven't researched the credentials of the pilot, the safety record of the airline, you haven't gone through all of that.

What do you do? You buy your ticket, you stand in line, you get on the plane, you sit down, you get comfortable, you wait for the takeoff. All the while you're doing that, you are exercising confidence, trust, reliability in that airline and in the pilot without hardly even thinking about it.

Yet, that is faith. Now, the big mistake is so many people think that faith has something to do only with religion of some sorts.

That is not true at all. Faith is across the board. You cannot live without it. Everybody exercises it all day long even though they don't think about it. What makes the Christian faith the critical issue, the outstanding issue, is that faith for the Christian Christian has an object.

And the object is Jesus Christ. And the question is, the only question is, is he worthy of your confidence, of your trust?

[9:28] Is he reliable? That's the issue. And the point has been made, although many people deny it because they don't understand the nature of faith or what it is, but the point has been made, every atheist, a man who is absolutely convinced there is no God, he's operating on the basis of faith.

And his faith is in his own intellect. He's put his trust and his confidence and his reliance in his own mental abilities to reason and reach the conclusion that there is no God.

So, even an atheist has faith. You cannot escape it. Everybody has faith in something. Most people have faith in themselves. That we call these self-righteous people.

Their faith is such that they say, I think I am a good enough person. My confidence is in myself, my goodness, my generosity, my membership in the church, blah, blah.

And that's the thing that separates. So, this faith chapter that is given here is all designed to show us that the only really reliable source that is worthy of your faith is the God of the universe and what he has done through Jesus Christ.

[10:58] So, if you have opportunity to discuss this subject of faith with someone, I hope you will keep these items in mind because the world almost exclusively thinks in terms of religion in connection with faith.

But it's much, much bigger than that. It covers every aspect of our being. So, in Hebrews chapter 11, he begins this chapter of faith and I'm going to skip the first part because I think we've covered those first few verses well enough.

Certainly not anything exhaustive, but we'll get into the examples that are given here. And this is what it's designed to do. The examples that the writer is providing as to why we should have faith is designed to illustrate God's track record and the fact that these people who are going to be cited, who lived in the past, had good and sufficient reason to trust God.

Therefore, you should too. All of these are presented as illustrations as to why God is worthy of our trust. Why He can be believed and how He came through for the individuals involved.

And by the way, each time you read these words by faith, by faith, by faith, I'm not saying that it's inaccurate because it is accurate, but I have a suggestion for a few words to replace that phrase by faith with.

[12:34] And if you begin each of these illustrations instead of with the words by faith, if you begin it this way, because He believed God, He did thus and so.

He did thus and so. Because that is what is behind all of these. And at least for me, and I hope for you, it helps to understand the dynamic that is involved a little better than simply using the two words by faith.

So, what we're saying then is in verse 4, Because he believed God, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Now, all I can insert into this, and we've got a lot of questions as to why God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice, and not pleased with Cain's. That enters into the animal sacrifice, and the blood issue, and all of the rest of it.

But I want to just cut through all of that, and simply say that I think what is behind all of this is that God had made clear clear to both Cain and Abel, and I think probably to Adam and Eve too, what was required for an acceptable sacrifice.

[14:10] It wasn't simply enough that you give something of your substance, but that you give in accordance with what God required.

And we've got a parallel here in the person of Christ, because what God requires is faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus, as a substitutionary sacrifice.

What so many people want to provide in place of that is something else. Is their own righteousness, their own generosity, their own good intentions, their own being a nice person, their own being as good as anybody else, all of these things people want to use as a substitute for putting their faith in Christ.

They want to put it in something else. And I think we've got the origin of that here with Cain and Abel. They had been informed as to what was required, and Cain's attitude must have been, and I'm reading into this because it doesn't say this.

It must have been, well, I am going to provide the fruit of the ground from what I have reaped, from what I have harvested. I'm going to provide that. That ought to be sufficient.

[15:35] But God has already made it clear what was required. And when you go against what God requires and want to replace it with your own reasoning and your own thinking, you're not on the own shaky ground, and you're on a slippery slope, and you just cannot do that.

Because God is in charge of this thing called life and living, and His requirements are not petty. They are to be taken seriously.

And I think the simple truth of the matter is, Cain must have reasoned, and I say must have because we don't know this, but he must have reasoned, well, what I am offering is just as good as what Abel is offering, and God ought to accept it.

But, that of course was not the case. So, yes? So, earlier in Genesis it states what God required of a sacrifice? Well, He had already said in the Bible.

Yeah, I think that is somewhat established by the fact that in connection with Adam and Eve's rebellion, God clothed them and their ridiculous fig leaves with animal skin.

[16:53] And in order to do that, the implication is that He slew an animal to do that. Well, what did the animal do? The animal didn't do anything.

The animal was innocent. And that establishes right from the very get-go the principle of sacrifice and the principle of the righteousness of God.

The justice of God. And the principle is this, is that disobedience to the Maker is a sin. And it is rebellion against the One who made them.

And that makes you guilty. And justice requires a payment for sin, for guilt. And that's where this innocent animal came in.

sin. And when God accepted the death of that innocent animal and clothed them with the animal skins, He was simply saying that His love for mankind transcended His demand for pure justice.

[17:59] Otherwise, He would have smitten them dead as well. But He provided a substitute, and that established the whole concept of the innocent dying for the guilty. guilty.

And you can look in vain to find justice in that, and you won't find any. There is no justice in the innocent dying for the guilty.

That is not just. That is grace. And that's a whole different ballgame. That is grace. Justice says the guilty dies for the guilty.

That's justice. Justice. But God's grace, commingled with His love in a way that we cannot understand, and it surely has to do with the type of self-love, and God is not selfish in self-love.

There is no place better that He could put His love than in Himself. And that is exactly what He did when He put His own image and likeness into human beings.

[19:02] And that's what makes it a capital crime to destroy a human being. It's because you are destroying the image of God. And all of these things are connected. And it's a beautiful thing.

And you find it all in Genesis, where the human race is just getting underway. So, by faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

It doesn't mean that Cain's sacrifice wasn't worth anything. I mean, Cain gave of his produce. And he gave it.

probably out of desire, probably out of thinking that it would please God, but it was not what God had required. And you cannot replace what God requires with something that you think ought to be just as good or ought to be acceptable.

And if you want to say God is demanding, in a sense He is, but the grace part comes in in that God also has fulfilled the need for what He Himself demands.

[20:08] So, that's an amazing thing. This grace picture is just incredible. God demands something from you that you cannot provide. You cannot provide.

And we may look at that and say, well, that's not fair. Why should God require something from me that He knows I cannot provide?

That doesn't sound fair. Yeah, I know that. But, what He has also done is He has turned right around and in Himself, He has provided the thing for you that you cannot provide and all He asks you to do is embrace it.

So, He has provided salvation through Jesus Christ something that we cannot provide ourselves something He demands. God demands absolute righteousness.

We don't have that to give. But when you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, He gives you His righteousness. So, the beauty of the Christian faith, and by the way, I trust you are aware of the fact that it is only, exclusively, totally, with biblical Christianity that this principle is found.

[21:19] That God Himself provides what God Himself requires from you that you cannot provide and He provides it for you and gives it to you as a gift and says, will you accept it? And when you say, no thanks, then you have just sealed your own doom.

And when you accept Jesus Christ as God's gracious gift you do not deserve, but He provided through His love, we become justified by faith.

It's an amazing thing. Absolutely amazing. John Newton wrote a hymn about it, didn't he? Okay. By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

Some translated a fuller sacrifice, more acceptable sacrifice. It didn't mean that God wasn't appreciative of what Cain gave, but it wasn't what was required.

And by which he obtained witnessed that he was righteous, that is, he demonstrated his righteousness by his obedience, God testifying of his gifts, and by it being dead, Abel yet speaks.

[22:31] By faith, because he believed God, Enoch was translated. Weymouth translates it, he was taken from the earth.

20th century New Testament says, faith led to Enoch's removal from earth. He went a different way than everybody else, and he still remains an enigma to this day as to why or how it is that God took him.

And the phrase, the expression that is used for Enoch is different. Walked with God and he was not for God took him. And I suppose most people would just say, well, that just means he died.

Well, the text seems to be rather definite in that if you read chapter 5 of Genesis, that is the big death chapter.

Every verse, just about every verse in Genesis chapter 5 ends with, and he died, and he died, and he died. And it would have been very easy to say that regarding Enoch.

[23:37] But it says that he walked with God and he was not. For God took him. Completely different expression. And it would have been so easy to just say he walked with God and he died.

He doesn't say that. So, fellas, what I'm saying is, from a hermeneutical standpoint, words mean things. And we ought to pay attention to the usage of words.

By faith, he was translated that he should not see death. that seems to say that his translation was into the presence of the Lord, and he didn't go through the normal avenue, which was to lay down and die, and then have the spirit translated.

And I do not profess at all to understand the mechanics of what was involved here. All I know is this text is simply demanding that Enoch's leaving this earth was different than everybody else's.

And beyond that, I simply cannot say, if that just says he was not found, I think that implies that his body wasn't found.

[24:45] Can't bury him. There's no corpse. He's gone. His body was not found because God had translated him for before his translation, he had this testimony.

Let's flip the page here. That he pleased God. And I want to tell you right up front here that this is a rather important concept.

To think that we mere mortals, we fallen human beings, even in our fallenness, have the ability, think of this now, we have the ability to be well-pleasing to God.

That's a pretty big order. We also have the ability to displease God. Think of that.

That's a kind of power, if you will, that perhaps we never thought we had. we tend to think that being a mere mortal, there's no way in the world that I could have any effect on the Almighty.

[26:04] I mean, the Almighty is, after all, the Almighty, and I'm just a minute, minuscule, little dink of a human being. Yet, you have the ability to please God.

You have the ability to gladden the heart of God, or, to sadden the heart of God.

That's an incredible thought. You know something? It is a really serious thing to be a human being, and to be endowed with the capacity and the abilities that we have, despite the fact, that we are weak.

We still have this ability. When the text says, Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says, grieve not the Spirit of God.

You mean to tell me that I have the ability to cause God to grieve?

## [27:12] grieve? Yeah. Yeah. How many of us would think twice before we cause our mate to grieve?

Or our parents to grieve because of what we do or how we treat them? God but the idea of being able to bring grief to the heart of God, we tend to think that God is impregnable.

God is unable to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. No, He isn't. And I know that God does not possess human emotions like we do, but I am bound to believe that God has whatever that equivalent would be only belonging to deity because we have a capacity for joy and for grief and so does God.

The heart of God rejoices. Now, God doesn't have a heart with valves in it that pumps like ours but He's got some kind of an equivalent to the human heart in His makeup and in His character and we have the ability to gladden or sadden the heart of God.

And how do we do that? What this text is saying here and what it's implying is it all begins with our willingness to believe Him. Because, fellas, and this is why it's so important, because belief, belief determines behavior.

[28:57] that's a formula we should never forget. Belief determines behavior. And people who behave badly are people who believe badly.

Belief involves your intellect and your emotions and your thinking capacity and your values and your agenda and it is out of that that you act, that you conduct your life.

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. We do on the outside what we program on the inside. And this is a really important concept.

So, this is why this all begins with belief. Some have described it as the behavior of belief. Because belief does behave.

And unbelief does not behave. Unbelief is that rebel thing. This is why the text says without faith, without believing, it is impossible to please God.

[30:03] So, if it is impossible to please God without believing, then it's possible to please him by believing. Joe? the end of verse 6, it says that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

What are the aspects of seeking him? When and how are we seeking him in what we do in this? I can think getting into the word and studying the word is probably one of the ways we seek him, but is it more encompassing than that?

Well, yeah, that's an excellent question. And I think seeking God, you're right, I think seeking God encompasses a whole host of things. And I would just begin with, well, I'm thinking now of a verse, I don't know where, it's in the Psalms, I can't put my finger on it, but it talks about an unbeliever, and one of the ways he describes it, it's a curious expression, it says that God is not in all his thoughts.

Think about that. It's describing an unbeliever, and it says that God is not in all his thoughts. What exactly does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean that you go around thinking God all day long, God, God, God, you know, you've got other things to think about, you've got a life to live, responsibilities to fulfill, you can't be running this, like a wheel in your mind all the time.

And what I think what the text is requiring, what it is saying is, when it says that God is not in all of his thoughts, it means that he fails to take God into consideration in anything he is thinking or doing.

[31:59] and for an obedient believer, he is always bringing to mind, when he is pursuing a course of action, when he is thinking of taking a position, he asks himself, I think, automatically, immediately, is this something that would please the Lord?

Is there something that God has against this, that I should not do this? In other words, with every decision that you make, small or great, you pull God into the picture.

You are concerned about how this is going to come across to the Almighty, because it makes a difference. And this is the way that we, I think, seek the Lord, and he is a rewarder of them that don't diligently seek him.

And this word diligently means with purpose, with discipline, with intent, not just happenstance. Tell us, bottom line, what this means is simply this.

We are to be redeemed individuals who take our Christian life seriously. It matters that we are in Christ.

[33:26] in fact, it matters more than anything else. So, our being in him is supposed to color everything we are and everything we do.

We are not to divorce ourselves from him. We are not to compartmentalize our lives so that, yeah, I'm a Christian and you can really tell it on Sunday, but the rest of the week, look out!

I can get in there and mix it up with the best of them. I can lie and cheat and scheme just like they do because it's a dog-eat-dog world. And then when I go to church on Sunday, I put on my piety and I'm all spiritual.

That's called compartmentalization and there's no room for that in biblical Christianity. We are to be what we are 24-7. Did I see a hand? Yeah, Pat?

When you read this about Enoch and him being translated and then it comes down and it says that he was rewarded for them to diligently seek him. When we read that and we have the questions we have, why did they take the book of Enoch out of the Bible when that could have answered some of these questions?

[34:40] Well, I'm afraid I can't give you a good answer to that other than the fact that, and this is just a very good question. The book of Enoch is referred to as one of the extra-biblical writings, sometimes called extra-canonical writings, and if you have a Roman Catholic Bible, I don't know if there's a book of Enoch in the Apocrypha, I don't know if it is or not, but I know in the Apocrypha, the word Apocrypha comes from the Greek and it means the hidden, the hidden books, and in the Roman Catholic Bible, there are 13 or 14, I think it's 14 additional books that are sandwiched between the Old and New Testament, and they recount at least in part the 400 year period that separates the Old from the New Testament in its writings, and they are books that were never accepted by the

Jews, they refused to add them to their lineup of 39 books in the Old Testament, and they have not found acceptance in the New Testament except in the official position of the Roman Catholic Church that adopts the Apocrypha, and part of their theology is taken from that, and probably the largest doctrinal issue has to do with, I think it's the book, I think it's 2nd Maccabees, I'm not sure, it's Tobit, and 1st and 2nd Maccabees, and the rest of Esther, and I can't name all the other books, but anyway, one of them, I think it's 2nd Maccabees, that makes a reference to prayers for the dead, and this is a passage from the Apocrypha that Roman Catholics used to base their practice on of offering prayers for the dead, but the books were never incorporated into the

Old Testament, and they are not found in the New Testament, except in the Roman Catholic version, and this deals with the issue of canonicity, that's another subject which explores the rationale for why we have the books in the Bible that we do, and why we do not have a host of other books, and let me just say in closing, and this is a subject I'd like to pursue more, but we just don't have the time, the subject of the canon of Scripture has to do with the authority, of course, of the Bible, and let me just conclude this with saying this, if we cannot determine, if we cannot determine that the books that are in our Bible, and this, I'm going even back before the Roman Catholic to the ancient 39 books of the

Jews, which by the way, they don't have 39, I think they have 24, because they combine some of the books, but they have exactly the same content, and they were never accepted as canonical, that is, the Apocrypha never met the requirements of being incorporated in Scripture, and the issue has to do with who decided, or how was it decided, what books are there, and what books are omitted, because I don't know if you realize this or not, but the 66 books we have, Old and New Testament, are a tiny minority of all of the books that were written.

I've got a book in my library, it's called The Hidden Books of the Bible, makes for fascinating reading, and the book implies that these are books that should be in the Bible also, but are not, therefore, you don't have a complete Bible, and that's the gist of this book that was written, of course, it was written to sell copies, and some people find that intriguing, and some people believe anything that they see in print, and if this guy in his book says that we don't have all the books in the Bible, then he ought to know what he's talking about, we don't have all the books in the Bible, which, of course, is nonsense, and the study of canonicity is a study in and of itself, I could bring you some literature that might be helpful regarding that, but my point is simply this, the Bible makes it quite clear that the reason we have a Bible is for the exclusive purpose of God revealing himself to his creatures, and he has done this, God has taken everything that he wants us to know, and he has put it either in general creation, which is creation as a whole, or he has put it in special creation, which is the

[39:56] Bible, and the whole purpose is to communicate the person and character and requirements of God to his creatures, that's the whole purpose of the Bible, and it is to be done with authority, so that you can believe what you read there, now if God has not super intended what is included, and what is excluded in this book, if he has not personally seen to that, so that we get, and we have just what he wants us to have, nothing more, nothing less, if he has not done that, then the whole rationale and purpose of revelation is defeated, because you have no idea of knowing what is the word of God, and what is not, and let me just add this, I worked with a fellow in Olympia, Washington, way back when I had hair, back in the 1960s, and I was reading my New

Testament one day on lunch hour, and he looked over at me and he said, what do you got there? And I said, well, I'd only been a Christian maybe four or five months, I said, it's the New Testament, and he said, do you believe that stuff?

And I said, well, yeah, yeah, I believe it. Don't you believe the Bible? And I'll never forget what he said. He said, well, yeah, I believe parts of it.

And I said, parts of it? Which parts? And he said, the parts I can agree with. And boy, was that ever telling something, you know, he didn't realize what a mouthful he had said.

And that's exactly where a lot of people are today, too. When God says, in the word, in search of scriptures, does he also mean those scriptures? Because aren't they considered scriptures?

[41:56] No, they are not. The Apocrypha is not considered scripture. In fact, there are a whole lot of other books besides the Apocrypha. In fact, I'll bring you that book next week, and you can pass it around, you can look at it.

And there's the Gospel of Thomas. And some of this stuff is so ludicrous, and you read it, and I think it's in the Gospel of Thomas, where Jesus is said to have been a boy like seven years of age, and he fashioned with his hands a bunch of clay pigeons, little birds made out of mud, and then to entertain his friends, he threw them up in the air, these mud pigeons up in the air, and they became real and flew off.

Just stuff like that. Fantasy stuff that you find that is supposed to be Scripture, but it does not have the ring of truth. I'll bring that book next week and pass it around, you can look at it.

And it's just one of many. There are several other volumes like that that would claim to be Scripture, but as you read them, they just really fall far short of anything that you read in the Old or New Testament.

Hey, guys, I appreciate you being here this morning. Yeah, Dan? One other guy just said recently this last week, the purpose of that is to either believe the Bible or you don't.

[43:15] If you don't believe it, there's nothing in the Bible that will make you believe it. Or if you believe it, then you accept it all. it's true. The Bible is fake and stuff like that.

One way to prove an authenticity of something is how is it referenced in other works.

True. Before the Bible became a consolidated book, it was several books. Right. And to me, it's amazing that they all put together, they all mesh, they all create a story that is beautiful.

Indeed. Indeed. There is a coherence to Scripture. It tells a story. And the scarlet thread of redemption runs all the way through it from Genesis to Revelation.

And for those of you who have studied the Revelation in any depth, you will have to agree that it is inseparably connected to the book of Genesis. And that's an amazing thing.

[44:16] The book of Revelation has got Genesis written all over it. And it isn't hard to find, and we've discovered that in our going through it. So, well, thanks guys for your input and for your presence.