Jesus Sees Simple Faith

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[0:00] It's always good to see you on Monday night now that winter's got here.

! Hebrews chapter 11. The 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews has gone by many titles.
The Saints Hall of Fame, the Heroes of the Faith, the Honor Roll of the Old Testament Saints, the Westminster Abbey of Scripture, the Faith Chapter, and the Hall of Faith, to name a few.
Now, we all remember, surely by now, that the book of Hebrews, and this isn't rocket science, was written to Hebrews. Makes sense, right?
And in the Hebrew mindset, these were men and women coming out of Judaism. They'd been in Judaism for 1,600 years in Israel.
[1:25] And they had the mindset that everything pertaining to salvation and godliness was a matter of works.

You had to work for that. Even after the members of this congregation were exposed to the new covenant, they tended to want to return to their understanding of old covenant works righteousness. And works righteousness is still around. It's still in some denominations. It's still with us. When Christ walked upon the earth, Old Testament Judaism, and by the way, a parenthesis, isn't it interesting?
We've been talking Hebrews, now we're entering the 11th chapter, and all the headlines have to do with Israel and the Jewish people. I mean, this is interesting, not scary for Christians, but an interesting time, to say the least.
Keep looking up. Look toward the east. The Lord comes back and goes east to west. In a twinkling of an eye, you're going to have to look real fast. Very fast.
[2:48] When Christ walked upon the earth 2,000 years ago, Old Testament Judaism, as created by God, had all but disappeared.

In its place was a soul-condemning works theology. Judaism had been reduced to self-effort, self-salvation, and self-glorification.
Such a system was polar opposite to the grace that God had literally given to His chosen people. The Judaism of Christ's day had literally become a cult. This explains in part why Jesus on earth battled against the Pharisees, battled against the Sadducees, battled against the Judaism, and particularly the leaders of Judaism in Israel in His day.
The cultic religion in Israel in the first century actually issued a demand for the execution of the Son of God.
[4:19] They then induced the Romans to carry out the sentence. And the absolute catalyst, if you read it closely in the Bible, to issuing such a demand was the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

The leaders of the Jewish Sanhedrin said, now the Romans are going to take away everything including our positions. I mean, we've got a guy going around raising people from the dead?
They might think he's the Messiah. Well, duh, as my granddaughters were fond of saying when they were growing up. Some still say it. Any system of works for salvation, mark it down, is accursed by God.
Any system. This is particularly true when such a system is a perversion of the one true system that had been given by God to save a people.
Now, let me say this, and this is really important. Never in history has God redeemed even one person because of their works.
[5:37] Something they did that measured up to, well, I've got to save this guy. I wasn't planning on it, but I'm going to have to now. He did such a fantastic work. Redemption.

has always been by faith. God honors our faith, but not our works if they have been done to try and achieve a relationship with Him.

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Well, I did enough Hail Marys that I really impressed God this month. I got in a lot of Hail Marys. Works are commanded but only as a byproduct of faith and never as a system to procure salvation. And the definitive verses of Scripture on that and very aptly pointed out, I might add, by the Apostle Paul in the second chapter of the book of Ephesians.
chapter 2, verses 8 to 10. And you guys probably haven't memorized by now. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing.
[6:57] Neither the grace nor the faith is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Now normally we end there. But there's another verse. We should always add that tenth verse. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus.
Why? Why did He create us? For good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
There are no systems of reaching God based upon what man does. Now in regards to faith, the Old and New Covenants are the same.
Some people, and I'd have to say a lot of people, mistakenly believe that keeping the Ten Commandments saved the Old Testament Jew.
[8:06] They hold to that. Well, the Jew was saved by keeping the Old Testament. We're saved by the grace of Christ on the cross. That's absolutely wrong. No one has ever kept any of the commandments of God, and especially all of them, for one minute.

For one minute. faith predates both the Old and New Testament, meaning faith is older than the Old and New Testament.
God chose us before the foundation of the world in eternity past. That's a long time ago.
Well, how are we saved? Well, we're saved by faith. Therefore, in His mind, God created faith in eternity past and saved a people in eternity past.
And how confident was He of that? He wrote their names down in the Lamb's Book of Life. and He did it in ink. And I got that from Pam Farmer, of all things.
[9:20] She gave the graduation speed at Wesleyan University. She was the number one student and, of course, a member of our church. And she said, we're a lot like Wesleyans, except we believe our name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life in ink, and you guys believe it's in pencil.

And you have an eraser. And everybody laughed and they went on. So in our lesson this evening, we're going to cover the first three verses of Hebrews. I apologize for going so fast.
But in Hebrews chapter 11, I love this, the unknown author of the great book opens with these words that are packed with information. Hebrews chapter 11, verses 1 to 3.
Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
[10:36] So today we want to talk about faith as God defines it. Opening with the nature of faith in the very first verse of chapter 11.

Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. So, that very first word, sentence there is just packed with information.
And we find three words in this very first verse that we're going to deal with and I'm reading from the ESV but we see three words in there that are really important.
Faith, assurance, and conviction. So, the writer begins with faith. The word faith is used in the New Testament almost 300 times.
There's something very ironic here. There are only two books in the New Testament that does not contain the word faith.
[11:47] Ironically, they are the Gospel of John and the second epistle of John. Now, this is astonishing because the Apostle John talked frequently in his writings, he wrote five books, he talked about faith.

But I should point out that in the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit used the word believe 84 times. Well, the word believe and the word to have faith is the same Greek word.
so you can transplant that. So, I would have to argue, well, if we knew the Greek language, we would know he does mention faith, but he chose to use the word to believe.
The word faith in the epistle to the Hebrews, its use must be understood primarily in the context of Hebrews chapter 11, the great chapter on faith.

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And we're going to see in the next month just how great a chapter it is. The heroes of faith described in this chapter have one thing in common.
[13:04] They all put their confidence in God. In spite of all their trials, and we'll be looking at some of those, not tonight, in spite of all their difficulties, they triumph because of their trust in the Lord.

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that he believes in the promises of God, and he remains faithful to the Son of God.
He uses also the word assurance. What is true faith? in 1563, a German theologian, professor, by the name of Zacharias Ersanus, described his personal faith like this, true faith created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything that God reveals in his word is true, but also a deep rooted assurance that not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace earned for us by Christ himself. now, this is what's so interesting and I didn't know this, I was telling Wes, I got these from Banner of Truth and there's a bunch of them, about seven or eight, these are the great confessions that we can study, this is the Heidelberg Catechism, the German confession, they have the Westminster Confession, they have the Shorter Catechism, they have the New Hampshire, they have the Baptist Confession of Faith, all the ones, and a lot of them written on our website, you can get these individually or as a packet from Banner of Truth.
I carry a lot of them around and I read them. Well, Professor Ersinus actually was the author, he and another guy, of the Heidelberg Catechism, and this shows up what I just read you, his statement, that is in question and answer number 21 in the Heidelberg Catechism.
[15:50] And I really like this, it's really good to read this. The inspired scriptures use this phrase to describe faith and assurance.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. In the Old Testament, people relied upon the promises of God.
He promised that one day a deliverer would come. And when they believed that promise, they were saved. They believed God and it was credited to them or accounted to them as righteousness. They did not have a lot of specific light as we do today, but they put their trust and hope in what God had promised.
That's really the whole basis of the salvation of Abraham, father of the faith, father of the Jews, father of the Gentiles, the Christians. He believed the promises of God.
[17:05] This is what faith is. Faith is living a hope that is so real that from it the person derives assurance.

Assurance comes from faith. The promises of God were so real in the Old Testament that the people believed and based their lives upon those promises.
promises. These people, we would say today, took God at His word and they believed Him. That is, when you say believe, same Greek word, they had faith.
Pistuo in the Greek language. All of the promises dealt with the future, but it gave the people faith and assurance to believe in the substance of what was yet future.
They couldn't even see it. It was so far in the future. See, they weren't saved by the Ten Commandments. They were saved by the cross. Well, wait a minute. The cross didn't happen for another 1600 years.
[18:20] How's that possible? They look forward to it. They didn't have the light we have. We look back at it 2000 years. We have a lot more light than they did.

But they look forward to the promise. And it was a credit of them as righteousness. Faith, then, is conviction.
It's certainty. In other translations, they use the word proof. In this regard, faith is not something wished for.
When you wish for something, you know, it may or may not come to pass. True faith produced certainty even if it seemed a little far-fetched to them.
Christian hope is grounded in what will come to pass because God gives His guarantee. We follow a God, though we've never heard His voice.
[19:25] We've never seen Christ. blessed. God honors this and says we are especially blessed. He told Thomas, He said, there are many that have never seen me and yet they're going to believe.

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Well, it's us. Moses looked forward to Christ declaring that His riches were worth much more than the vast wealth of Egypt.
He could have been second to Pharaoh. Pharaoh. He turned it down. He believed in the coming of the Messiah, even though that event was some 1600 years away.
Christians who rightly understand the future live for that future. It is a better future when we shall see Jesus as He is and be with Him forever.
Are you ready for that time? Our present sufferings do not compare with what is to come. Many saints in both the Old and the New Testament periods sacrificed their lives rather than forfeit that future.
[20:44] They died in faith without receiving the promises. They held on to a more secure and certain future.

And you could say that theirs was a conviction of things not seen. They didn't see it, but they lived a life that was convicted that it was going to come true because God had said it's going to come true.
Assurance is something internal. Conviction implies something outward. faith is not something we have, it's something we live.
God gives us faith to live by. Noah believed God and for 120 years he built a boat on dry ground expecting a flood to take them away.
But there never had been a flood. I don't think there had been any rain. the water came from underneath to water the plants or whatever. And during all that time I could just imagine hundreds of people assembled probably built seats you know and sold tickets to watch this guy build this boat.
[22:04] And all while they were watching he preached faith to them. They hoped in faith and he built a boat in faith. He did not have to see to believe.

Well he didn't have any converts but that's not the issue. The issue was he was faithful. He preached Jesus to the crowds that will assemble and probably laugh at him while he was building the boat.
And a total of eight people got saved right? Noah, Mrs. Noah, the three sons and their three wives.
Now all that I'm saying is foolishness to the natural or the unsaved man.
He cannot comprehend these truths without the inward working of the Holy Spirit in his life. He is blind, absolutely blind, to the things of the Spirit because he's not been given spiritual eyes with which to see.
Such a man has never seen the light. That would be the vast majority of people on earth. They've never seen that light. We live in a spiritual faith when we submit to God.
[23:25] At the moment of rebirth, we do not understand everything we have done or has been done to us and for us by God.

God. But we begin a journey based upon faith and the promises of God. Spiritual trust only comes from God.
And then we have the testimony of faith in verse 2. For by it the men of old gained approval. Men of old gained approval from God because of their faith.
faith. And you can be sure it was faith alone and nothing was added to it. And always remember that it is in Christ plus nothing.
But God makes His approval known to those who trust Him. How God shows His approval varies from person to person. And we're going to be studying these people in the 11th chapter.
[24:28] There's a lot of them. Do not think of faith as one way to please God. Faith is the only way to please God.

All that we do apart from faith is meaningless. All that we do apart from faith is not approved by God. Now man has a great dilemma on his hands.
Man is commanded to live by faith in his creator God and yet modern man has been told there is no God to believe in.
It's taught in our universities. I'm amazed to watch the evening news at the universities that are supporting Hamas and they're screaming things like kill the Jews.
It sounds like Nazi Germany. Modern man does not know God and modern man not knowing God doesn't know himself.
[25:28] He doesn't know himself. He doesn't even understand his role in the cosmos. Such a belief system touches all of life.

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We see this anti-God spirit you can see it in art, in literature, education, theater, drama, music, politics, law, government.
You certainly see it in medicine. They rewrote the Hippocratic oath because the Hippocratic oath banned abortion 600 years ago whenever it was written. And now they took that out and they rewrote it allowing abortion.
It is everywhere in a relativistic culture. and because of this anti-God atmosphere, the things that matter such as faith, love, honesty, truth, and purity are all grounded up by the surrounding culture. the only rational answer in an irrational world is God. He's the only rational answer.
[26:43] He alone has all the answers. Only God can satisfy the spirit of man. We can look up at the stars and never understand their existence unless we know the God who made them.

but with the knowledge of men of old gained approval from God. Verse 3, faith illustrated.
By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. To the unsaved in this Jewish congregation the writer is saying you already have a faith of sorts.
You go out and you look up into the night sky and you know there is a God who created all of this. That is a form of faith. They believed that God was behind creation although they'd never seen him. They'd never seen God. No one has ever seen God create anything but we see his creation don't we? In seeing his creation it is enough to believe hey there's a creator he made all that.
[28:04] It's interesting that spirit refers here to worlds in the plural. God has created the physical universe and also the mechanisms by which it operates and is administered.

And God created all this ex nihilo meaning in Latin out of nothing. We saw nothing visible by which God was then able to fashion a universe.
Let me assure you it is not in the beginning hydrogen it is in the beginning God. The Bible is clear that the worlds were framed by the word of God.
The most brilliant scientists have yet discovered that fact. Creation cannot be duplicated in a laboratory. That's what science is and it can't be duplicated but it can be known if we believe God at his word.
He hangs those stars on nothing. He's got a name for every one of them. He brings them out at night. Our faith cannot be seen by men but it can be seen by God.
[29:25] I want to give you another illustration of faith that the Lord can see. John MacArthur is the one that told this very touching story.

He talked about two little boys that was during World War II in England. They were both in an English hospital in side-by-side cots.
They could reach out and touch each other. Little boys. One boy had a dangerous fever. They were trying to control it. the other boy had been struck by a truck.
It ran over the little boy and his body was badly mangled. The one boy said, Willie? True story. Willie? Willie was the one that got run over. I was down to the mission Sunday school and they told me about Jesus.
[30:28] I believe that if you ask Jesus, he will help you. They said that if we believe in him and pray to God, then when we die, he will come and take us with him to heaven.

And Willie answered, he says, but what if I'm asleep when he comes and I can't ask him? What do I do then? And his friend said, just hold up your hand.
That's all you have to do. That's what we did in Sunday school. The teacher said, how many of you boys want to be saved? And we held up our hands, most of us. So he said, Willie, just hold up your hand.
I guess Jesus sees your hand. When you raise your hand, tell him you want to be saved. Well, there was a problem. Willie's body was mangled by this truck and he was too weak to hold up his arm.
He couldn't raise his arm. And he told his friend, he said, I can't raise my either arm. The other boy came over and he brought his own pillow. He propped up Willie's arm for him in this position, put pillows under it.
[31:48] And during the night, Willie died. the nurse came in the next morning and found that Willie's arm was still propped up.

Now, this is MacArthur's words. We can be sure that the Lord saw his arm because the Lord sees true faith and the Lord accepts true faith.

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So when you go to bed tonight, you may have to explain this to your wives, put your hand up. By faith, Willie saw the way to heaven. By faith, he saw what the learned men never discovered in colleges and seminaries.
Simple faith is the only way to God. And we're going to close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the day.
We thank you, Lord, that your word has been given to us and has endured these thousands of years. And not one jot or tittle is going to go away.
[33:07] And Lord, I thank you for little boys like Willie. Though he is dead, yet he speaks to us tonight, 10,000 miles away from where he lived and died and where he's buried.

And I thank you for all the little boys and girls that are like Willie. What a faith. Lord, may we be men of faith. Be with these, my brothers.
Get them safely home and safely back here. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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