

Volitional Faith: Assent

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[0:00] We've been looking at the order of Saludis, the order of salvation.

! We're on faith, critically important obviously.! You may remember from our study last April that faith and repentance are a two-sided coin.

They can't be separated. They're one coin but two different sides. And in our lesson last week we mentioned that we'll be covering three elements to faith, being knowledge, assent, and trust.

And we spoke of knowledge last time, and my intentions were to go ahead and cover assent and trust tonight, and then I realized we'd be out of here about 10.30 or 11.

So I'm only going to cover assent. So we might even get out a little early, but we're not going to get out real late. And we'll do trust the next time we meet.

[1:22] Knowledge, which we covered last time, essentially is the acquisition of facts. That's how you learn. You go to school, you learn facts.

Knowing certain facts are essential to salvation. Otherwise, salvation is just sort of out there in a vacuum.

If we really don't have some grasp of what it is, then how do we articulate it? How do we know we're saved even? We have to have some facts.

And merely knowing facts, though, is insufficient to achieve salvation.

It's not just the acquisition of knowledge. It's not just assenting to knowledge. For instance, we can know many facts related to the gospel of Christ, and a lot of people do.

[2:22] But that doesn't mean they've put their trust in the finished work of Christ, the cross, the gospel. There has been many a theologian who knows much about God and much about the Bible, but rejected the key elements of the truths of Scripture.

And if you ever have the opportunity to study the works of the guys coming out of Germany in the turn of the century, the 19th to the 20th, first of all, my first advice is don't.

It would be a waste of time. But they had what they called the higher critical school. And their job was they tried to tear down Scripture and the truth of Scripture. But they knew a lot of facts.

They are in their final resting place wishing they'd known more about trust than facts. To prove my point, though, this evening, I'm going to mention this one thing, because you don't have to look any further than the Jesus Seminar.

Some of you may have heard of that. Most of you probably have not. If you've never heard of the Jesus Seminar, consider yourself to be very fortunate and very lucky.

[3:47] The Jesus Seminar, which has been around for quite a while, is a very controversial research team of academic New Testament scholars.

It was founded in 1985 by now the late Dr. Robert Funk. It attempts by a process of discussion and then voting to arrive at an answer to two questions.

What did Jesus really say? And what did Jesus really do? That's the engine that drives the Jesus Seminar.

One conservative theologian says, people have been looking for Jesus for a long time, but never quite like this. It's abhorrent what these guys do.

Their conclusions differ greatly from what Christian denominations and what leaders over the centuries have historically taught.

[5:04] They are also in major conflict with current beliefs of probably all present-day conservative Christians.

They're in absolute conflict with them. Now, when the Jesus Seminar started in 1985, initially they had 200 scholars, and those numbers have dwindled over the years down to about 74 active members.

They meet periodically to debate newly presented or recently circulated papers written by academics, particularly from their camp. Among its many recent publications, one stands out as the flagship, The Five Gospels, presented late in 1993.

It was a book towards which all else was preliminary. They include, in addition to the four Gospels, the Gospel of Thomas.

[6:16] Ironically, I thought I was going into a Christian bookstore in New York City when I was an FBI agent up there, and I literally felt an oppression.

I really did. And I started looking around, and it was all this stuff, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary, New Age, and I got out of there.

I felt a lot better once I left, and particularly after I ate. But I left. Well, these scholars with the Jesus Seminar attempt to reconstruct the life of Jesus.

They try to answer, who was Jesus? What did Jesus do? What did He say? And what did the things that He said mean as far as evidence and available tools that are available to researchers?

What did they mean? The Seminar's approach, which reflects Dr. Funk's approach, is historical and critical, with a strongly skeptical view of traditional Christian beliefs.

[7:35] Strongly skeptical. And again, these men meet periodically, they discuss portions of Scripture, and then to arrive at truth, they cast a vote.

And it's a secret vote. It's a ballot. But they use colored beads. And they pass around this big thing of beads, and you can kind of shield it and pick, you know, you've discussed this one verse of Scripture, you pick a bead out as to how you're going to vote, and then when everybody's got a bead, they stick it in, and then they count.

So far, and they're far from over, they have ruled out 80% of the New Testament saying that it is a creation of some man's mind and not inspired.

Certainly not inspired by God, whoever he or she might be. That's essentially what they would say.

Now, here are some conclusions that Dr. Funk published before his death and to his place that God assigned him.

These are quotes from Dr. Funk. Jesus did not ask us to believe that his death was a blood sacrifice or that he was going to die for our sins. He got that out of the New Testament.

[9:03] Jesus did not ask us to believe that he was the Messiah. He certainly never suggested that he was the second person of the Trinity. In fact, he rarely referred to himself at all.

Jesus did not call upon people to repent or fast or observe the Sabbath. He did not threaten anyone with hell nor did he give anyone a promise of heaven.

Jesus did not ask us to believe that he would be raised from the dead. Jesus did not ask us to believe that he was born of a virgin. Jesus did not regard the scriptures as infallible.

He didn't even believe they were inspired. Now, here's what's kind of interesting as kind of an aside here. I knew Dr. Funk.

I met him around 1960. My dad was with Phillips Petroleum Company and we got transferred to New York City in 1959.

[10:11] Now, I lived in a little town in New Jersey about the size of Dewey so I wasn't in New York City. My dad went through every day five days a week. We visited a number of churches when we got there and I'm telling you they were so radically different from our experiences here in this part of Oklahoma.

We just, we couldn't find anything that made us even remotely comfortable. Well, one day a guy knocks on our door. A really nice guy. I don't remember his name now but very nice and he said that he and some others were trying to start a church and would we be interested and my dad said, well, we might be.

We've been looking. He gave him some literature and we went for a visit a couple Sundays and we ended up joining. Among the attendees at that church, I don't think we ever got more than 25 or 30 people, but one of the attendees was Robert Funk of all people.

At that time, he was a professor of religion at Fairleigh Dickinson University. That's in New Jersey.

My dad told me later that he believed that Robert Funk was attending there kind of as a personal research project for his own knowledge and, you know, position as a religion professor and all that.

[11:47] He probably was researching for teaching or writing a book, but that, you know, he kind of wanted to see why do people get together and form a church? I mean, there's one on every corner.

Why would you start another one? So this was a research project for him. Well, enough of Dr. Funk who died a few years ago. Let's return to the truth.

There are many people who have a certain depth of knowledge concerning the gospel. Certainly, there are people out there with a deeper knowledge than Dr. Funk or the Jesus Seminar.

They know, for instance, that Jesus came from God. They know that Jesus died on the cross as an atoning death for sins.

They even know that Christ has borne the sins of his people and yet these beliefs must be received by faith apart from works.

[12:49] We don't work to arrive at those conclusions. Yet some of these people fail in the area, for instance, of repentance, which is an essential.

They fail to repent of their sins. They fail to trust in Christ exclusively for their salvation. Jesus is sort of an add-on.

We were talking at the VOM board meeting and we had kind of a presentation on India. India is an interesting place and right now they are slaughtering, Hindus are slaughtering Muslims and Christians.

they are an equal opportunity but they are killing Christians by the thousand. And so that was very interesting to hear a presentation of that and how they are persecuting the church there.

well, in regard to faith, faith does have sort of an emotional element. We often don't want to put a lot into emotion and in all truth the very extremes of the charismatic theology have scared a lot of us away.

[14:08] It just really has. I remember going through a period here where we were kind of afraid to mention the Holy Spirit and He's the third person of the Trinity. Of course we should mention it. But we saw such excesses that it made us nervous.

But when it comes to true faith there is a joining of the right kind of knowledge with the right kind of emotion. Faith knows the truth but also a sense and that's what we're studying to truth and enthusiastically embraces the truth revealed in the Bible.

And of course if Larry King were in the room he would say what he said to John MacArthur one time because John MacArthur said well I believe in the Bible and Larry King said which one? And John MacArthur said the Holy Bible.

That was his answer. These people called Christians know the truth and believe the truth. And we're going to be talking about that word believe in subsequent lessons.

This brings me to a place in Scripture that we have all read many times but I have to admit I don't have the depth of knowledge that I wish I had because it's a critically important Scripture.

[15:33] I just wish I knew more about it maybe through the course of this class I'll I mean I'm the chief learner in here you know because I can do all this preparation.

But I think this is one of those verses that we can never fully plumb the depth and I'm speaking of Hebrews 11:1. Now faith is the assurance of things hope for the conviction of things not seen.

Amazing passage of Scripture and of course you know that's in the great chapter on the hall of faith all those guys that the Lord's going to mention later in that chapter and this is what kicks it off.

It's faith is an assurance of things hope for conviction of things not seen. in this verse faith is described as an assurance I'll put another little kind of narrowed that word down to this faith is something we can be sure of.

It's an assurance we can be sure of true faith. The Greek word for assurance here is hypostatus I don't know if that's the right pronunciation but probably none of you know either it means to stand under or to stand upon I will try and clarify by asking a question what do we stand on?

[17:13] Well the answer is ultimately under here there's a foundation we stand on a foundation we build things like houses and skyscrapers on a foundation the faith spoken of here by the unidentified writer of Hebrews is something supernatural he's talking about something supernatural assent to the truthfulness of scripture and the trustworthiness of Christ the writer also tells us the faith spoken of here is a deep conviction but it cannot be seen can't be seen I got a dear friend on the beyond board wonderful Christian man and I mean that sincerely been all over the world but he loves charismatic theology we've debated and discussed never argued did it lovingly and there's no question

I don't think in my mind about his relationship nor in his with me but he likes to see and experience this is a faith spoken of here deep conviction that cannot be seen by that he means such faith

cannot be seen with physical eyes because our physical eyes can deceive us can't they the faith is revealed or better said unveiled for spiritual eyes to see that's a whole different genre we're talking about spiritual sight and the writer speaks of assurance a very important biblical concept extremely important and commenting on this verse back a few years ago 1563 to be exact the German theologian not in the higher critical school that came later

Zacharias Uranus had this to say 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 now I've read on a number of occasions the German catechism called the Heidelberg catechism is very solid very sound

I was going to and this is actually it's found in question and answer number 21 and I was going to then quote it but I got suspicious because old Zacharias he quoted this in 1563 and the Heidelberg catechism was published in 1563 so I looked it up well that guy he only left out one or two words that's the Heidelberg catechism what he quoted there he just applied it to himself he made it personal let me give you another example it's the faith of Moses it's Moses faith by which he was convicted or convinced rather and convicted that the riches of Christ were more valuable than all the treasures of Egypt remember he could have been number two in Egypt

Hebrews 11:24 to 26 by faith Moses when he was grown up refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin he considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward and consider how Moses lived this conviction out because the next verse says this verse 27 by faith Moses left Egypt not being afraid of the anger of the king that's Pharaoh for he endured as seeing him who is invisible he had a lot more trust and assented to the truths concerning

[22:21] Christ God than he did the power and the rewards available through Pharaoh Moses did more than just exercise intellectual faith so should we it went beyond that he was persuaded by the certainty of the faith that God had given him and remember where faith comes from for by grace are you saved through faith that not of yourselves it is the gift of God and Moses was certain of the faith that God had given him that Christ was more precious and he reacted to this by leaving Egypt now you might say well he didn't even know the name Christ no he didn't know his name but he saw him he looked forward to Christ we look back to Christ but same Christ it's the same

Christ another great example of all this is the apostle Paul he went through much suffering and was ultimately martyred and through it all he was resolute in his faith filled conviction concerning the sovereignty of Christ in all things this was the fuel that drove Paul's endurance through all he had experienced starting on the Damascus road 2nd Timothy 1:12 which Paul wrote I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me and we could mention others we could mention many others I mean Abraham by faith left his home country and started on a journey to a land he didn't know where he was going but God had told him to go by faith He started on a trip with Isaac his only son and God! said! you're going to martyr him you're going to offer him as a sacrifice to me you're going to kill your son and you know what kind of agony dads did he go through every step every step you know in the right set of circumstances I'd die for you guys you know former police chief I would have done that but I'm not going to sacrifice my kids for you you can take my life but not theirs I mean I'm sorry and you know it says that Abraham reasoned God had told him through Isaac the nations of the earth are going to be blessed and the number of believers are going to come out of Isaac like the sands of the sea and the stars of heaven so he reasoned that God is able to raise someone from the dead and he knew he was going to have to sacrifice his son but that God would raise him from the dead now we know God stayed his hand right and then

Abraham looked over there was a lamb a ram actually what was he wearing crown of thorns you ever think of that his head was caught in a thorn bush and that was the type of Christ that was the sacrifice another one would be Joseph great guy to study in Genesis great guy and when they took him before Pharaoh of course everybody bowed down I mean they were kissing the floor and he stood there and they were saying get down he said I can't I can't on penalty of death and Pharaoh said somebody are you not going to bow toward me he said I can't I have to only bow!

to the God in heaven and he said finally someone in my kingdom that doesn't lie to me you know pretty amazing of course you know the story of Joseph he became number two number two conversion involves a person receiving saving faith from above it's a gift of God comes down from above born again spiritual birth and embracing the truth concerning his own sinfulness and Christ's ability and willingness to save him this is interesting and I like this guy and they came to Jericho that's Jesus and his followers and they came to Jericho and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd Bartimaeus a blind beggar the son of

[27:18] Timaeus was sitting by the roadside and when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth he began to cry out and say Jesus son of David have mercy on me and many rebuked him and by the way in some of the other gospels the disciples were rebuking him time to shut up they told him be silent but he cried out all the more son of David have mercy on me and Jesus stopped and said call him so they called the blind man saying to him take heart get up Jesus is calling you and throwing off his cloak he sprang up and came to Jesus and Jesus said to him what do you want me to do for you now was Jesus confused of course not he knew that's for the benefit of the crowd and the blind man said to him rabbi let me recover my sight and

Jesus said to him go your way your faith has made you well and immediately he recovered! his sight and followed him on the way and there!

one TV camera rolling catch my point that is a great example from Mark chapter 10 we grew up of course calling him blind Bartimaeus when he heard that Jesus was passing by he exercised a resolute conviction that the son of David was equipped to meet his need for sight he even abandoned his property meager as it was crying out for the Lord to restore his sight and there's something unique about Bartimaeus and I like to always point this out when I talk about him based upon our reading of scripture that's the only time Jesus ever walked down that road as the first and only time based on reading of scripture well that is the way each of us should have been when we were saved as a newly awakened believer we were certain of our inability to save ourselves and we looked to

Christ because we were certain of his ability for help so we looked to the son of God and not suggesting we understood the depths of that we're getting ready to be reborn as babies by the faith granted us by God salvation is a spiritual gift from above we were made well and when we think of the things not seen we have another really great Old Testament example the example of which I speak is found in three young men named Hananiah Michelle and Azariah but we don't know them by those names do we that's Shadrach Meshach and Abednego I'm hopeful that you guys will read Daniel chapter three as an assignment verses one to thirty I'm not going to read all of it I've got it in my notes here so you can read it from my notes but you might remember that King Nebuchadnezzar built an image out of gold big one sixty cubits that's a lot I think a cubit's eighteen inches we theorize and then he gathered all the important people of the kingdom and they said when you hear the sounds of the horn and they even mentioned bagpipes I don't know what bagpipes were that day but always the lyre and all that fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up it was an image of himself that's a little egotistical and so it was time and they sounded all those things and everybody in the kingdom fell down and began to worship Nebuchadnezzar you see a problem with that well Shadrach Meshach and Abednego saw a problem with it and they didn't fall down they stood there well all these guys that were ruling underneath

[31:58] Nebuchadnezzar came to him and they said hey there's certain Jews remember they were in captivity in Babylon there are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon Shadrach Meshach and Abednego these men O king pay no attention to you they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up well the scriptures tell us that Nebuchadnezzar was furious with rage and they brought Shadrach Meshach and Abednego before him and he says to them is it true that you do not serve my gods you do not worship the golden image that I've set up and you know is it true that at the sound of the bag pipes and all the drums and everything you didn't fall down and I said no that's true and he said well

I'm going to give you another chance we're going to play those instruments again if you fall down in worship but if you don't you're going to be cast into a fiery furnace and who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands that's Nebuchadnezzar I love their answer oh Nebuchadnezzar we have no need to answer you in this matter if this be so our god whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of your hand oh king but if not be it known to

you oh king that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up for some reason this reminds me just the other day I had a conversation this was a believer and he's being checked for cancer and he's really worried and I understand that I'm worried about my wife but I said to him what's the very worst thing that can happen to you and he thought for a little bit and he said go home to be with Jesus he said that ain't so bad is it I said no it's not well when the three boys told Nebuchadnezzar that he was filled with fury and it even says the expression on his face changed and he ordered that the furnace be heated seven times more than it was usually heated I mean that's really mad I mean one time it had been fine that would kill you and then he got the mighty men out of his army and he says I want you to tie those guys up and you guys carry them up there into the opening of the fiery furnace furnace and cast them in so they were bound in their cloaks their tunics their hats and other garments and these guys threw Shadrach Meshach and Abednego into the fiery furnace because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated the flame of fire killed those men who took Shadrach Meshach and Abednego and took them up there and cast them in and these three men Shadrach Meshach and Abednego fell bound into the burning fiery furnace King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and he rose up quickly in haste it says and he told his counselors did we not cast three men bound into the fire they said that's true okay he said I see four men unbound walking in the midst of the fire and they are not hurt and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of God or a son of the gods in Nebuchadnezzar's mind

Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace he said Shadrach Meshach and Abednego and listen to how he's changed this is Nebuchadnezzar servants of the most high God boy there's a change isn't it servants of the most high God come out and come here I would have said why don't you come in and get us maybe I wouldn't but I've been stretching it just a little bit and and the all these guys the satraps the prefects the governors the king's counselors together and saw that the fire had not had any power over their bodies the hair of their heads was not even singed their cloaks were not harmed and no smell of fire had come upon them Nebuchadnezzar answered and said blessed be the God of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him and set aside the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own god and even the scriptures got little g to big g therefore I make a decree any people nation or language that speaks anything against the

[37 : 35] God of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses laid and runs for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way then the king promoted Shadrach Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon you know John MacArthur believes we're going to see him in heaven Nebuchadnezzar he believes that and he told the reasons why well they were confronted with the choice of obeying the command of Nebuchadnezzar whom they could see quite well he's right there and has power of life and death over him right to obeying a command of God whom they'd never seen they'd never seen God there was no hesitation in any of these three when they chose to obey God rather than a mere man and this goes against our natural senses as men and women not that there's any women in here the natural response is to trust the physical senses that's just natural we tend to put our trust in things we can see we can hear we can taste we can feel but as men of

God we know there is something more durable and more trustworthy than mere man even a king like Nebuchadnezzar there is something vastly more trustworthy than senses that something is the truth of God senses may lie to us God cannot lie to us that truth can be found by the way in Titus 1 2 God who cannot lie God who cannot lie now why did these men of God obey instantly God rather than man well the answer is this they possessed a faith that was the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen they were certain that

God was going to take care of God would deliver them one way or the other deliver them from Nebuchadnezzar or deliver them into heaven and they were convicted even though they had never seen God of his great truth and next time we're going to look at the great theme of trust as it relates to faith Thank you.